

EXPERIMENTS IN A NEW INSTITUTIONALITY

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1. Memories of the future

Between 2000 and 2008, we at the MACBA have carried out various projects seeking to re-establish the relation between the museum and the city. A cycle of institutional experimentation extends from *The Agencies* (2001) and the photographic project about Barcelona and the exhibition *Universal Archive. The Condition of the Document and the Modern Photographic Utopia* (late 2008), to the exhibitions *How do we want to be governed?* (2004) and *Desacuerdos* (2005), paralleling the city's social dynamics. These projects, set in the tradition of the museum practice of institutional critique, sought to outline a model of metropolitan art policy for present-day and future geopolitical conditions.

The work of the Museum during this period constituted a project of institutional regeneration with the objective of offering a credible model of the art institution in a country like Spain, where these institutions had not evolved at an international pace and still today share the public discredit of a state with endemic democratic shortcomings. It is important to remember that under Franco's dictatorship, which dominated the central period of the twentieth century, Spain stood on the sidelines of the development of modern art institutions, which was happening internationally according to the model that the MoMA, New York, had implanted in the thirties, and which became generalised in Europe after the Second World War. It was only in the late eighties that Spain joined the process of modernising art institutions, once democracy had been restored but at a time when modern museums had given way to the new 'postmodern' art institutions, dominated by the tourism-related and economic imperatives of the growth model of post-industrial, neoliberal capitalism. In Spain, the development of these institutions has been determined by the paradigm of the culture industry, which overlooks the educational role of the museum and its role as a constituent part of the public sphere. As opposed to the spectacularised, instrumentalised, trivial conception (governed by a soft model of participation based on statistics and consumption) that dominated the emergence of museums in Spain throughout the

eighties and nineties, and still continues today, the MACBA's experience in the last decade has represented a counter-model, characterised by a search for a critical anchorage in the tradition of modern art institutions and by the determination to grant centrality to the educational dimension of the museum and its public.

However, the significance of the MACBA's experience in the last decade is not limited to the national scale; it must be seen in the international context of the debate about art and the museum. The so-called 'MACBA model' constitutes a singular understanding of the museum as a space for debate and conflict, and a critical re-reading of the modern tradition that brings together artistic methods, social knowledge and action in the public sphere as a way of reinventing the field of art and according it a new significance and social legitimacy. This has been a fundamental aspect of the MACBA during this period: its capacity for institutional experimentation. The Museum has moved forward in this respect with no institutional interlocutor of the same characteristics at the international scale. By means of a particular reading of the debates and experiences of institutional critique since the sixties, the Museum has tackled a series of projects drawing on the institution's anchorage in the city and has been able to reinvent itself and suggest hypotheses for a new kind of institution.

Historiography, post-colonialism and common heritage

In addition to rethinking the role of the museum in the public sphere, the MACBA's activities (visibly materialised in the construction of a collection, a programme of temporary exhibitions and a programme of activities) have sought to promote a different narration of the art of the second half of the twentieth century. They also aim to table the relation between modern art and modernity by establishing Barcelona's peripheral role in the configuration of the dominant discourses about modern art. Inspired by feminist and post-colonial studies, this line of work was based on the recognition of the fact that forms of knowledge and power structures are totally inseparable.

The concept of periphery is semantically inverted here; rather than what might be considered a culturally subordinate position, it adopts a process of self-recognition and the construction of a viewpoint that challenges the central power/knowledge structures, in opposition to which it is defined. In this way, it seeks to identify and understand the specific cultural processes that make Barcelona a peripheral centre of modernity (and I stress the contradiction of 'peripheral centre'). It also seeks to make the processes involved in the construction of these pre-



Circus versus Global Empire, campaign against a Europe for Capital and War, Plaça dels Àngels, Barcelona, 15 March 2002



Demonstrations against the Iraq War, Plaça dels Àngels, Barcelona, spring 2003

vailing relations of knowledge/power relatively transparent and open to debate.

This process has involved challenging a dominant conception of culture based on discourses of identity rooted in Romantic concepts, on the one hand, and in the cultural industry, on the other. This conception makes culture an ideological instrument for the construction and legitimisation of local and national myths of identity, which simultaneously serves to market its foremost figures in today's global market of programmed differences. Its hegemony is detrimental to other possible policies in which culture and education constitute a guiding nucleus. We will only be able to rework the project of a popular form of education inherited from modernity when we overcome this division between art and culture. It is important to stress the perverse effects of this dominant situation in which culture moves away from the production of discourse, debate and public life, and becomes a celebration of identity and localist myth-making and the economic driving force of a model of extrovert city.¹

In this context, we see the local in a sense that is neither identity nor essentialist. Rather than localist (that is, according to an ahistorical logic of reproduction of a metaphysical, immutable identity), it is a singular concretion in a territory of global conditions and historical forces. The local is the specific production of the various historical options with which we are presented and from which we have to choose, removed from any notion of identity. The question is not to celebrate what we are, but to ask ourselves why we are as we are or, even, what we can be. In this sense, there is no identity because there is no stable subject, but a multiplicity of relations producing various positions of subject. Defending this complex, relational, anti-Romantic understanding of the local therefore means promoting a self-critical relation with the forms of production of knowledge. It translates not into the logic of reproduction of what already exists, but into an incipient opening and readjustment of global relations of sovereignty over historical options, as expounded by Immanuel Wallerstein with relation to utopistics, seen as 'an alternative, credibly better and historically possible (but far from certain) future'.²

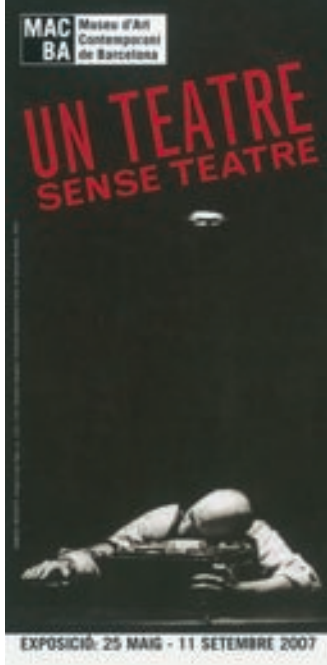
Nor is the local that which is close at hand. Today, notions of proximity are used to manage social conflict by means of an anti-modern neo-communitarianism that serves to override the antagonism and conflict that is constitutive of the social, thereby seeking to construct homogeneity and cancel out differences. Cultural management emerges as an instrument for new, soft, 'biopolitical' forms of governability, culture is used as a supposedly depoliticised agent for the construction of consensus



Plaça dels Àngels, Barcelona, 23 October 2006. Images recorded by Informativos Telecinco

1 Miren Etxezarreta, Albert Recio and Lourdes Viladomiu, 'Barcelona: una ciutat extravertida', in Manuel J. Borja-Villel, Jean-François Chevrier and Craigie Horsfield, *La ciutat de la gent*. Barcelona: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 1997, pp. 221–55.

2 Immanuel Wallerstein, *Utopistics*. New York: The New Press, 1998.



Flyer of the exhibition *A Theater without Theater*, MACBA, 2007

and social discipline, which is manifested in Barcelona, for example, in new policies to promote civic-mindedness. In the face of this, we defend an understanding of the artistic space as a space of debate, difference and radical alterity.

The local is, then, a specific way of being open to others and transformed by them. As anthropologist Alberto Cardín articulated, years ago,³ the local is not just the close at hand, the identical, it is also the alien. The local is a process of reinvention in which we must be able to look beyond the identitary and localist baggage that ties us to ancestral myths and the perpetuation of the prevailing order, naturalised by nationalist and essentialist ideologies. This baggage, *de facto*, prevents us accepting our historical conditions and options with all their consequences – that is, accepting them so that we are able to decide about them, change them and contribute to a new geography of centres and fringes.

How does this discourse materialise in the Museum? One way is an interest on the part of the Collection and the temporary exhibitions programme in artists and art scenes (such as Latin America or Eastern Europe), which have not occupied dominant positions in the discourses on modern art promoted by the central legitimising institutions of the twentieth century. Another is through thematic exhibitions that suggest hypotheses for other possible narrations of artistic modernity, taking as a departure point and interpretative axis some of the aspects repressed or pushed out by accepted formalist modernity.

Recent examples are exhibitions such as *Art and Utopia. Restricted Action* (summer 2004), which proposed an alternative reading of modern art after Mallarmé and the relations between art and poetry, or in the presentation of the Collection entitled *Relational Poetics* (autumn 2004). The latter was based on references to Édouard Glissant, suggesting a notion of relationality involving not just an anti-fetishist reading of the artistic object but also a peculiar version of the postcolonial theories of hybridisation and interculturality, an alternative to the nationalist identitarian discourse. Another example is *A Theatre without Theatre* (spring 2007), an exploration of theatricality as the repressed side of dominant artistic visibility since the second half of the twentieth century, determined by Michael Fried's classic condemnation of the theatre. More recently, *Be-Bomb* (autumn 2007), curated by Serge Guilbaut, presented his known theses on the fight for cultural hegemony on the post-war geopolitical scene. The most recent attempt to this end was the exhibition *Universal Archive. The Condition of the Document and the Modern Photographic Utopia* (late 2008), which looked at artistic modernity in terms of the photographic document, a genre historically

³ Alberto Cardín, *Lo próximo y lo ajeno. Tientos etnológicos II*. Barcelona: Icaria Editorial, 1990.

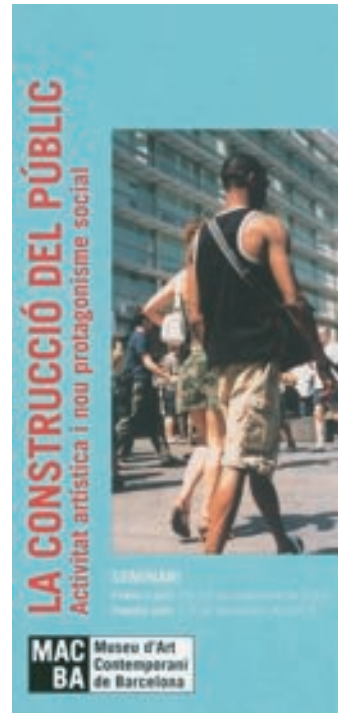
subordinated to the arts, and the structure of testimony (that is, an alliance between elites and subordinate groups) as the central issue of artistic and political representation in modernity.

This process is also self-critical in terms of the dominant mechanisms of representation and exhibition in the museographic field, and highlights the perhaps inevitable reification and monumentalisation represented by the expository complex. The exhibition tends to be a device at the service of the identitarian myth of authors who address neither the structural and social dimension of the construction of the public artistic sphere nor everyday collective forms of creativity that are hard to define. How can we break with this logic? Attention to the artists and scenes that are considered 'minor', alternative forms of distribution or a relative use of archive resources in the exhibition (including documentation and ways of appropriating the exhibition space that grant a use value and relativise the purely expository value) are attempts to explain not just a history of the works and their authors, but primarily a history of the collective social processes of the construction of artistic debates, a history of public artistic spheres. This historiography calls for self-critical museum mechanisms and methods that focus on repressed and elusive aspects in the epistemological model of the exhibition. This type of mechanism is also a way of introducing into the exhibition format a 'perverted' conception of the publics and the education I will go on to address.

Publics and counterpublics

The Museum's contribution to a radically democratic public sphere is, initially, to be self-critical and open to debate. Discursive activity plays a central part at the MACBA. It serves to help counteract the hegemony of the exhibition device and the representational paradigm as the museum's principal method or public discursive space. Our starting point is an understanding of social life as being constituted by different publics, with differing interests. According to this logic, the museum has to accommodate different and equal uses for these different publics, which are neither limited to the exhibition space nor excessively determined by the imperative of visibility. We also attempt to research methods of discourse circulation by means of the website and other forms of publication and publicity. Further, we question the prevailing privilege of author's rights over the rights of the public,⁴ with the emphasis on understanding processes of construction of publics and the social mechanisms of discourse circulation.

Public is a concept in which several meanings coexist simultaneously and which are defined self-reflectively. The concept of public has to do with that which is common, with the state,



Leaflet of the seminar *Constructing the Public*, MACBA, 2003

⁴ See in particular the editorial to the *Agenda informativa del MACBA*: 'Patrimonio común e institución pública: del derecho del autor al derecho del público', reproduced in *Ag 2004–2006. Selección de textos de la Agenda informativa del MACBA, Quaderns portàtils*, no. 05 (2006) at www.macba.cat.

with shared interest, that which is accessible. There is a historic mobility in the public-private opposition that lies precisely in the mobility of publics and their forms of self-organisation. The public has a twofold meaning of social totality and specific audience.

Michael Warner describes the ambiguity and multiplicity of meanings of the notion of public in his book *Publics and Counterpublics*.⁵ Publics are elusive forms of social groupings that form reflexively around specific discourses. Public is one of the recurrent terms in the culture debate, which does not mean that it is a simple term or one with an obvious meaning.

Art is a public activity, directed at debate and confrontation with others. Today we are seeing how art institutions and policies have gradually replaced the discourses of universal access to culture with a new discourse that places the cultural experience on a similar footing to processes of consumption. Unlike the abstract, homogenising conception of the spectator that characterises modern art and its institutions, the new discourse of the culture industry, which identifies public with consumption, tends to recognise differences, though it does so according to the criteria of marketing and generates populist cultural policies. From this viewpoint, working for the public means giving them what the public expects, presuming a pre-existence of such publics, which are supposedly comprehensible, measurable and controllable by statistical processes. This cultural policy follows the pattern of television consumption and therefore shares its consequences: a progressive trivialisation and impoverishment of experience, in which the critical, emancipatory dimension of cultural experience is eliminated in favour of false participation.

This consensual discourse has demobilising consequences in civil society, and for this reason we propose another approach. The public does not exist as a predefined entity to be attracted and manipulated; the public forms in open, unpredictable ways in the very process of construction of discourses, by means of their various means of circulation. Consequently, the public is not someone there to be reached, who are there passively awaiting cultural merchandise; the public is formed by the actual discursive process and by the act of being convened. The public is in a state of constant mobility. The consequences of this way of seeing in terms of cultural policies and practices means challenging dominant conceptions of the production and consumption of culture, according to which these roles are immovable, like closed processes, and therefore merely reproduce what already exists, and give way to a range of new possibilities for action, in which the public acquires the active role of

⁵ Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*. New York: Zone Books, 2005.

producer with the potential for organisation and other forms of sociability. In this way, the public can seem like a project, like the potential for constructing something that does not yet exist and may push back current limitations. It is precisely this non-pre-existence of the public (what we might term its fantasmatic dimension) that suggests the possibility of reconstructing a critical cultural public sphere. It is precisely this potential and this openness that guarantee the existence of a democratic public sphere, a space that does not have to be unitary to be democratic, as Chantal Mouffe has theorised.⁶

A multiplicity of publics is preferable to a single public sphere. Nancy Fraser speaks of the need to explore hybrid forms of public spheres and of the organisation of weak and strong publics, in which opinion and decision-making can find ways of negotiating and recombining relations. Fraser introduces the concept of 'subaltern counterpublics' to refer to the 'parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs', and adds: 'In stratified societies, subaltern counterpublics have a dual character. On the one hand, they function as spaces of withdrawal and regroupment; on the other hand, they also function as spaces and training grounds for agitational activities directed towards wider publics. It is precisely in the dialectic between these two functions that their emancipatory potential lies.'⁷ Ultimately, this exploration of counterpublics leads to a post-bourgeois public sphere, which should not necessarily be identified with the state.

This rejection of a consensual conception of publics gives rise to a pedagogical model for art and culture, directed at experimentation with forms of self-organisation and self-learning. The objective of this method is to produce new structures that can generate new forms (a non-hierarchical, decentralised, delocalised network, etc.) bringing together artistic and social processes. The idea is to give publics 'agency', to foster their capacity for action and look beyond the limitations of traditional divisions between actor and spectator, and between producer and consumer.

At the MACBA, we aim to rethink the dominant conceptions of the public and experiment with other methods of cultural work based on other possible forms of mediation. This means rethinking and redefining the public in terms of the contributions of feminism, subaltern studies, queer theory and the experiences of new social movements. It also involves seeing publics as agents of transformation rather than of reproduction, thereby reaching beyond the present-day limitations of

⁶ See for example her introduction to *The Return of the Political*. London-New York: Verso, 1993.

⁷ Nancy Fraser, *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the "Postsocialist" Condition*. London-New York: Routledge, 1997.



The Direct Action as one of the Fine Arts workshop, Barcelona, 2000

traditional political representation, based on a bourgeois conception of the public sphere.

The MACBA's experiments presented here are from the 2000–08 cycle. The central issue they all address is how to reinvent the artistic field as where social knowledge and action come together in the public sphere, using specific projects and constructing legitimacy as part of the process. These projects seek to develop a working method that has interiorised the demands of a democratic radicalisation inherent in the practices of institutional critique, and attempt to encourage the dissemination of spaces of criticism, freedom, play and experimentation in other institutional areas (schools or hospitals, for example), thereby extending the symbolic privilege of the artistic to other fields. These are contributions to an experimental public sphere with a deterritorialised conception of the museum, which is formed temporarily and provisionally by means of practice. To use the terms of Deleuze and Guattari, we could say that the idea is to introduce molecular spaces into molar structures. The experimental hypothesis is the possibility of constructing a new institutionality that is more in keeping with the conditions of forms of subjectivisation and the social experiences of our times and open to the future.

2. Agencements (2000–02)

The Direct Action as one of the Fine Arts workshops, which took place in autumn 2000, was the first attempt on the part of the Museum to set artist collectives and social movements to work together. It is important to grasp the singularity of the situation of social movements in Barcelona at this time and the way in which, since then, the MACBA's cycle of institutional experimentation has developed parallel to and inseparably from the cycle of social experimentation in the same period in the city. In addition to the long tradition of an active civil society in Barcelona (one of the singular features being the central role of the neighbourhood movement in the city's urban processes after democracy was restored in the late seventies), this moment coincided with the emergence of the movement for a civil society and global justice that broke out in Seattle in 1999. The movement triggered the series of mobilisations, which, in the following two or three years, gave way to the global resistance movement or anti-globalisation, a very broad-based, heterogeneous movement that came together at that time under the umbrella of debate about the negative effects of neoliberalism and the state of systemic chaos that capitalism had entered in the nineties.⁸ This state

8 The notion of systemic chaos is taken from work by Immanuel Wallerstein and Giovanni Arrighi. See for example the works by Immanuel Wallerstein, *Historical Capitalism*. London: Verso, 1983; *Antisystemic Movements*. London: Verso, 1989; and the book by Giovanni Arrighi and Beverly J. Silver, *Chaos and Governance in the Modern World System*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

reached its climax with the crisis in Argentina in 2001–02, which became the test ground for the future of neoliberal capitalism.

Discussion about direct action brought up to date by the global movement and its relation with politically involved artistic traditions (such as Situationism and its more directly antagonistic derivations) obviously formed the core of the project. As Ernesto Laclau suggests, political forms of self-organisation and direct action are a postmodern reaction to the limitations of traditional modern liberal bourgeois forms of political representation and a symptom of the structural dislocation of post-Fordist capitalism. Laclau refers to a 'spatialisation' of events as an alternative to the paradigm of modern temporality, based on a political programme projected into a permanently deferred future. This dislocation creates the potential for radical democracy by means of new policies of immediate intervention.⁹

The workshop was organised into five areas of work:

– New forms of underemployment and precarious labour. Here we were joined by groups such as Ne Pas Plier from Paris, which worked on starting up a new publication with local pro-basic income groups. Ne Pas Plier were known for the application of their designs to communication supports and intervention in public spaces, always in collaboration with groups of unemployed and underemployed people in the Paris region.

– Borders and migrations. Together with members of the Kein Mensch ist Illegal (No one is illegal) network, promoted by Florian Schneider, we worked with organisations for the rights of illegal immigrants on developing a criticism of the injustices derived from the dominant neoliberal ideology that favours mobility of the market and capital but restricts the social mobility of the working classes and accentuates social inequality. This debate gave rise to various Border Camps the following summer in the south of Spain.

– Property speculation and gentrification, with the participation of the Fiambrera Obrera group, based in Madrid and Seville, who also coordinated the workshop. They worked with Reclaim the Streets, famed for their imaginative strategies in environmental protests and carnival-type interventions in public spaces in England.

– The media was a theme running right through the workshop. The central idea was how to help generate new independent autonomous communication networks. This debate in the workshop produced the Indymedia network in Barcelona, the network that emerged from the Seattle protests and soon became a global figurehead for the movement. Here, we were joined by RTMark (later The Yes Men), which brought its experiences of

⁹ Ernesto Laclau, *Nuevas reflexiones sobre la revolución de nuestro tiempo*. Buenos Aires: Nueva Visión, 1993.



The Direct Action as one of the Fine Arts leaflet, 2000

tactical appropriation and distortion of corporate communication strategies, which had a great influence on subsequent local campaigns.

– Finally, another across-the-board theme were policies of direct action and the question of ‘agency’ or ‘empowerment’ as ways of reinventing emancipatory or revolutionary policies.

The aim of the workshop was to initiate processes to bring together local political struggles with artistic methods in order to create a continuum and constitute an institutional meeting point with the movements. It was successful in bringing together a broad spectrum of Barcelona’s social movements at a very special moment for political dynamics. After a long period of relative standstill, new political experiences were emerging in the city, such as MRG (Movimiento de Resistencia Global), which was very active between 2001 and 2002, and which, despite soon breaking up, was the germ of a multiplicity of later initiatives.

The Direct Action as one of the Fine Arts workshop was the starting point for a more complex project that followed on immediately as a logical consequence: The Agencies, a project carried out in the first half of 2001.

The Agencies

The concept of agency was a recurrent theme at the Museum in those early years. We understood the concept of agency in two senses. One was to do with the idea of ‘empowerment’ – that is, giving publics power and autonomy, in keeping with the idea of plurality of productive forms of appropriation of the museum. The other meaning was that of micro-institution, a body that mediates between the museum and publics. The agency structure sought to create a molecular organisation of the museum

with the aim of multiplying public spaces and processes of self-training by the various collectives involved in these agencies.

At the time, we defined The Agencies project as ‘an element of mediation between narrative and public practices and subjects: that is, between the museum and the city’ and as ‘an activist project that uses the following methods: a) action or activity, related to certain social movements, which may materialise in events such as a party, the programming of activities or direct action, with the objective of generating democratic public space, of recovering the public sphere; b) workshops and debate as means of producing cultural resistance and c) the dimension of production rather than consumption’.

An understanding of the significance and impact of The Agencies requires a familiarity with the context of Barcelona in the months leading up to the World Bank Summit, planned for June 2001, but finally cancelled due to the organisers’ fears of a violent reaction in the city. This was after the anti-globalisation protests in different cities such as Prague or Gothenburg, when protests were reaching a moment of maximum visibility and influence, which came to a head (and began its decline) in Genoa, also in July 2001. Genoa marked a turning point in the cycle of protests that began in Seattle in 1999, though we did not realise this at the time. Among other reasons, the effects of the New York attacks of 11 September 2001 had a decisive impact on the political pressure brought to bear on the movement as a result of an increasing criminalisation by the police and in the media, which ultimately determined its dynamic. That moment in 2001 was perhaps the movement’s moment of greatest dynamism in Barcelona. Despite the cancellation of the Barcelona Summit, the counter-summit organised by the movements went ahead and The Agencies played a central role in the process, particularly in the design of communication and public profile strategies that transformed traditional methods of intervention on the part of anti-capitalist movements in the city.

The Agencies was an ongoing workshop, an experiment in self-education and also a proposed pedagogical method based on the assumption that learning is derived from immediate needs and takes place in a context of direct confrontation with real problems and protests. Learning is the result of the empirical need for effective solutions to specific problems.

There were five agencies:

– A graphic agency, which produced posters and printed matter for the counter-summit, like the ‘Dinero Gratis’ (Free Money) campaigns and posters against the World Bank that parodied official municipal campaigns.



Workshop and Show Bus of The Agencies during the campaign against the meeting of the World Bank, Plaça dels Àngels, Barcelona, June 2001

– A photography agency, which produced images and an archive for the various campaigns.

– A media agency, which was instrumental in the development of Indymedia Barcelona, and the magazine *Està Tot Fatal*, a communication and opinion-making instrument for the counter-summit.

– Another agency designed and produced tools for intervention in public space in protest situations. Inspired by the designs of Ne Pas Plier and Krzysztof Wodiczko, it developed projects such as *Prêt à révolter*, fashion for safety and visibility during demonstrations in the street, and *Art Mani*, a kind of photo-shield for protection against police charges designed to act as a photomontage in the illustrated pages of newspapers when photographed by reporters. There was also the Show Bus, a bus specially equipped with a sound system and video projection screens, which could be used as a mobile exhibition space for a variety of uses in public demonstrations or actions. All of these projects were visible and played their part during the events of June 2001 in the streets of Barcelona.

– Finally, another agency took over the running of the Museum's bar, which became a relational space, a place to eat and drink, but also a social space for events with groups, video programming and Internet access.

In addition to these projects, The Agencies involved the organisation of workshops with artists such as Marc Pataut (of Ne Pas Plier), Krzysztof Wodiczko and Allan Sekula. The workshops were organised to meet the needs of the groups involved in producing images and instruments throughout the various campaigns.

The Agencies took place at the Museum alongside two exhibitions, *Antagonisms. Case Studies* and *Documentary Processes. Testimonial Image, Subalternity and the Public Sphere*. *Antagonisms* was a major historical exhibition, presenting a series of case studies of moments of confluence of artistic practice, social movements and political activity in the second half of the twentieth century. For example, parts of the exhibition included a political reinterpretation of Minimalism from the radical materialist viewpoint of Carl Andre and a selection of the multiplicity of graphic work produced in the context of the AIDS protests of the eighties, involving collectives such as Act Up and Gran Fury; and the more recent work of Andrea Fraser, *Services*, which looks at the transformation of the productive status of artists in the context of a 'biennialisation' of the art scene, just to mention a few examples.



Poster of the 'Dinero Gratis' campaign, Forat de la Vergonya, Barcelona, June 2001



Newspaper of the exhibition *Antagonisms. Case Studies*, MACBA, 2001



Leaflet of the campaign against the World Bank, June 2001



Tutti Bianchi's demonstration against the World Bank, Barcelona, 24 June 2001

Documentary Processes

The third element in this constellation was the exhibition *Documentary Processes*. The idea was to organise the exhibition as a form of direct action and therefore as an instrument for the counter-summit and the needs of anti-capitalist groups. Images were used to construct a criticism of the social consequences of neoliberal monetarist policies as a contribution to a different critical imaginary to the consensual images promoted by the institution, which served to render all conflict invisible or neutral. The exhibition was a reflection on the documentary as an artistic genre that has been historically constructed as a political genre, and sought to generate opinion and debate (with the potential for real political change), centring on the representation of subordinate classes and a denunciation of their precarious living conditions. It also set out to situate this historical debate in the contemporary context of the status of photographic and audiovisual representation in the digital age. The hypothesis underlying the exhibition was that in order to have a real political effect, the documentary required more complex processes of mediation, a task in which the method and theory of testimony could be instrumental.¹⁰

The exhibition presented a selection of photographic and audiovisual works as a basis for examining the transformation of the documentary genre by means of hybridisation with forms of narrative and mediation derived from the concept of testimony. Testimony is a narrative genre that serves to make the voice of subaltern classes accessible to other social groups, including the elites, by means of the figure of a mediator. As John Beverley explains, 'the problem of testimony is also that of representation and representativeness'; it can represent the possibility of a democratising alliance between the intelligentsia and the popular classes without subordinating the heterogeneity of groups to official representation. Testimony emerges in

10 *Documentary Processes*.

Testimonial Image, Subalternity and the Public Sphere, MACBA-La Capella, Barcelona (summer 2001). This exhibition is documented in the publication *Institut de Cultura: La Capella, Temporada 2001* (Barcelona: Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2002) and at www.macba.cat (with the participation of Roy Arden, Ursula Biemann, Marcelo Expósito, Patrick Faigenbaum and Joan Roca, Harun Farocki, Marc Pataut, Andrea Robbins and Max Becher, Allan Sekula, Frederick Wiseman).

a context of crisis of representativeness among old political parties and is inseparable from the emergence of postmodern forms of constructing political identities by means of 'new social movements'.¹¹

In the context of the crisis of photographic and audio-visual representation in the digital age, the documentary has to come up with other strategies of resistance to legitimise a form of realism or 'representativeness' in order to preserve the critical, transforming potential of the image, which is the genre's precondition. In this sense, the notion of testimony is vital in that it involves a different working process that establishes negotiation between subaltern and dominant cultural positions, giving rise to a new relation of collaboration between an author and social subjects. This process involves a transformation of the figure of the author and his/her position and function. The collaborative dimension establishes an alliance between subjects



Documentary Processes exhibition, La Capella, 2001



that breaks with the implicit hierarchy of forms of pious, victimistic representation that characterise the paternalistic humanism of the classic documentary.

In the exhibition, the works were the product of a will to construct images that present historic and geopolitical conditions in which some subaltern groups are living today. It is evident that economic and cultural globalisation and financial capitalism have legible effects on some transformations of cities and the public sphere. These include the growing privatisation of public services and the crisis in public welfare policies, the speculative remodelling of urban space, new forms of exploitation and precariousness at work, and the rise of the service and tourism economy affecting the way cities represent their histories, supplanting singular identitary features with a simulacrum of history and an indistinguishable blur. At a time like this, it seems absolutely vital for the image to maintain a representative value and a realist ethic, so that it can stand up to the trivialisation of the real into mere effect and preserve all its potential by narrating the experience of historic processes.

11 John Beverley, 'Introduction', in John Beverley and Hugo Achugar (eds.), *La voz del otro: testimonio, subalternidad y verdad narrativa*. Lima-Pittsburgh: Latinoamericana Editores, 1992, pp. 7–18.

The theme of the document and the historic project of realism in this institutional process at the MACBA will be recurrent and reappear later on, at the end of this itinerary.

Relational spaces

What were the effects of these projects?

Evidently, they generated a public perception of the Museum as a space of debate and criticism. Anti-capitalist groups saw in the Museum an antagonistic space in the institutional framework, as shown by the spontaneous organisation in the Plaça dels Àngels, outside the Museum, of a circus against the European Community Summit, in March 2002, with which the Museum itself had nothing to do.

There were also effects at other levels. Indymedia Barcelona became a permanent structure contributing to a transformation of the discourses and communication methods of social movements. The year 2001 was also a watershed for the graphic campaigns of the city's movements. Most importantly, however, these projects contributed to a new political imaginary in the institutional field, which was then still resisting theorisation. It was possible to see an incipient new institutional space that broke with the traditional geometries of the social contract by means of new forms of alliance and asymmetrical collaboration between anti-institutional movements and the Museum. Rather than social processes being given an aesthetic makeover or deactivated, this generated a newly created collaborative space in which the Museum began to form part of social struggles. This took institutional critique to a new dimension.

What were the implications of this experimentation inside the Museum?

At this same time, a project that explored the redefinition of the protocols of use of the expository space and its hybridisation with non-traditional visibility mechanisms was the exhibition about the work of Pere Portabella, *Plotless Stories. The Films of Pere Portabella*, which ran at the Museum in early 2001. The exhibition combined the exhibition device with those of a self-service consultation audiovisual and bibliographic archive, a cinema and a programme of activities including an audiovisual cycle, a seminar and a series of lectures. While providing a discursive structure for a historic narration of the relevance of Portabella's work as a filmmaker in the context of the new cinemas of the sixties and seventies, the device left room for other possible constructions or readings of the same body of work and period. For this it used both the programme of lectures (during which guest speakers suggested these other constructions) and



Leaflet for the campaign against a Europe for Capital and War, 2003



Plotless Stories. The Films of Pere Portabella exhibition, MACBA, 2001

the self-consultation materials, allowing users to construct their own narrative. The device thereby avoided fetishising and mythifying the figure of the artist, and freezing his historic role by means of the logic of tribute; instead, it encouraged reinterpretation by leaving it open to other workings, present and future. This project could be seen as an example of how the museum can learn from criticism, in this case the practices of institutional critique (those of Michael Asher, Hans Haacke or Marcel Broodthaers, among others), and transform itself in a rather more transparent context that is open to interaction. In a sense, it also 'demuseumises' itself, or frees itself of some of the more rigid, authoritarian historic legacies that resist change.¹²

This experience gave rise to the video and film programme *Good Vibes. The Politics of Resistance and Music Cultures*, which ran from February to July 2002. It was the result of a literal interpretation of the phrase 'They came to dance, but ended up getting an education', which was used to promote the film *Thank God it's Friday*.¹³ The programme was organised as a look at some of the movements or styles of popular or consumption music over the last three decades, with particular emphasis on social and political aspects in the formation of these styles. *Good Vibes* was presented in two formats, offering different forms of use: a programme of screenings and a self-service consultation unit.

It is no coincidence that the subject of *Good Vibes* was the subcultures surrounding different musical styles, which constitute a material setting for some of the social practices theorised in the radical democracy project and at the Birmingham School

¹² For more information see the publication coordinated by Marcelo Expósito, *Historias sin argumento. El cine de Pere Portabella*. Valencia-Barcelona: Ediciones de la Mirada-MACBA, 2001.

¹³ Quoted in Jeremy Gilbert and Ewan Pearson, *Discographies. Dance Music, Culture and the Politics of Sound*. London: Routledge, 1999, p. 1.

of Cultural Studies.¹⁴ This interest in popular or consumption music formed part of the redefinition of borders between popular and elite cultures. This does not mean that the differences no longer exist; rather that we cannot explain them by taking for granted the traditional elitist function of high culture, seen in an ideal, universalist sense. Here, we can learn from practices such as punk, which bring together strategies of avant-garde art (Artaud, Fluxus, actionism and extreme uses of the body associated with the most radical performance tradition), commercial culture (the record industry and its star system) and, as witnessed in the early eighties, political activism (the expression of rebellion by a generation of youths who suffered the first cutbacks in the welfare state with the advent of the neoliberal hegemony of the Reagan-Thatcher governments in the English-speaking world). This condition of an artistic practice that, depending on the context, functions alternatively as high or low culture involves a new, non-essentialist understanding of contemporary art and culture.

The different styles become attempts to create relatively autonomous public counterspheres in response to given contexts using the material culture available. As far back as the seventies, punk expressions such as ‘no future’ or ‘do it yourself’ heralded what Laclau was to define as the ‘specialisation’ of politics, referred to earlier.¹⁵ We also see how the practice of raves that emerged in Thatcher’s neoliberal England led to new carnival-style practices of political protest and public expression, now the habitual tools of anti-globalisation movements. Furthermore, music subcultures have been a breeding ground for the networks of communication and distribution outside the established circuits of commercial culture. They are also a favourable medium for the formalisation and expression of practices of transgression of identity by means of mechanisms and corporal habits that subvert the dominant codes of gender identity, in the form of clothes, tattoos and drugs, alongside new theorisation about the performative and socially constructed nature of gender identities.

Finally, music subcultures are also a prime opportunity to reflect on the ambivalences and contradictions of culture as a counter-hegemonic space of resistance and transgression in the face of the neutralising capacity of commercial culture. The idea, then, is not to idealise the space of consumption music as an advanced utopian social laboratory, but to understand this musical area as a singularly eloquent setting for the ambiguities and contradictions inherent in culture in global multicultural capitalism, where the supply/demand of instant gratification and the ideal of individual freedom promote permanent transgression. However, this endless transgression is balanced out



Good Vibes, 2002 and Sir Drone’s performance, opening of *Raymond Pettibon*, MACBA, 7 February 2002

14 The canonical study is the work of Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson (eds.), *Resistance through Rituals. Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*. London: Routledge, 1993.

15 Laclau, op. cit.

by the permanent assimilation and neutralisation undergone by an equally endless demand, a kind of mercantilisation and consumption of subversion. This constant demand for something different leads to its opposite: homogenisation. This complex tension between resistance and reproduction has to be the basis for thinking of new ways of working in the field of culture.

3. Another relationality (2003–06)

The Barcelona 2004 Universal Forum of Cultures was an event promoted by the City Council to draw together the economic, political and media resources needed for a major urban renewal of the city (in this case centring on the Besòs seafront, thereby finishing the process begun with the 1992 Olympic Games), with culture as an alibi. It took place in the summer and, in itself, the event signified new forms of interpenetration of culture, politics and economics in the post-industrial age and, more specifically, of the exploitation of culture to legitimise neoliberal policies for international promotion of the city. The City Council's choice of this event formed part of a strategy of urban growth based on big events, given the city's condition of capital without a state. The Forum represented a change of scale for the city, expansion beyond metropolitan limits, and was the biggest urban transformation since 1992, in a city whose modern urban history has been marked by the celebration of major international events since the 1888 Universal Exposition.

Forum 2004 was part of a global phenomenon of the transformation of Western urban economies to the tertiary sector that began in the late seventies with the first industrial crisis, when tourism became one of the principal economic objectives. In this process of capitalist restructuring, the new urban economies in the post-industrial or post-Fordist age have granted culture a major new role as a production sector. Various theorists have charted the process, from Fredric Jameson in the early eighties, with his well-known writings on postmodernity, to David Harvey or Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt more recently, to mention just a few. Jameson describes the process as a transformation in which 'everything... can be said to have become cultural'.¹⁶ The concept of 'cognitive capitalism' has emerged to denote this process of coming together of new information and communication technologies with immaterial, creative, relational and affective labour, which is acquiring new centrality in the cultural industries and breaking the traditional opposition between leisure and work. Capitalism 'sets subjectivity to work', as Paolo Virno says in his paradigmatic analysis.¹⁷

16 Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1991. See also David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1990; Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, *Empire*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000.

17 See his books *Virtuosity and Revolution: The Political Theory of Exodus*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996; and *A Grammar of the Multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life*. New York: Semiotext, 2004.

The economic model outlined for twentieth-century Barcelona was that of a tertiarised, creative city based on design industries, what the municipal government called ‘the city of knowledge’. A great deal of municipal institutional propaganda went into creating a high profile idealisation of this economy of knowledge and ‘immaterial labour’, involving new forms of self-employment in the cultural industries and the emergence of a new self-employed working class that was highly qualified but also over-exploited and impoverished in precarious conditions: the *cognitariat*.

Forum 2004 brought with it a massive new deployment of the institutional propaganda machine, continuing in a more radical vein the logic instigated in the run-up to the Olympics in the late eighties. The technique of managing consensus using idealised images of the city also seemed to respond to growing social pressure from the middle and working classes, who were having difficulty maintaining the material conditions they had acquired in the latter half of the twentieth century.

In this context, with the idea of offering a countermodel to the Forum of Cultures, in autumn 2004 the exhibition *How do we want to be governed?*¹⁸ ran successively in changing formats in various sites in the Poblenou-Besòs area, on the outskirts of the Forum 2004 site. It was an exhibition in process, involving a museum method based on a combination of artistic work and social dynamics. The task of the curator was to dialogue with city collectives, in this case the neighbourhood movement in the area around the Besòs, the *Fòrum de la Ribera del Besòs*.

The exhibition process began formally in January 2003 with a series of debates at the Museum entitled *From Les Glòries to the Besòs. Urban change and public space in the metropolis of Barcelona*,¹⁹ organised in the context of the Muntadas exhibition, *On Translation*. Muntadas’s project involved a debate about the cultural translation that could be extrapolated to the transformations under way in the city, the privatisation of public space and the loss of density and historic memory in the neoliberal metropolis. The series of debates was an attempt to analyse and publicly debate the situation in Barcelona immediately prior to the Forum 2004, with the participation of its principal institutional and social agents. This programme of debates was the visible beginning of a process of collaboration with local groups and neighbourhood movements in the Poblenou-Besòs area, particularly the *Fòrum de la Ribera del Besòs*, an umbrella for many social movements in the area that accommodated the Forum.

The social flipside to the advertising campaigns promoted by the City Council on the occasion of Forum 2004 perhaps



Newspaper of the exhibition *How do we want to be governed?*, MACBA, 2004

18 *How do we want to be governed?*, IES Barri Besòs, Palo Alto, Centre Cívic La Mina, 22 September–7 November 2004. With the participation of Sonia Abian, Ibon Aranberri, Maja Bajević, Sergio Bologna, Salvador Clarós, Alice Creischer, Ines Doujak, Miren Etxezarreta, Patrick Faigenbaum, Harun Farocki, Grup Taifa, Sanja Iveković, Paco Marín, Ramon Parramon, Carlos Piegari, Precarias a la deriva, Florian Pumhösl, Alejandra Riera, Joan Roca, Dierk Schmidt, Jordi Secall, Andreas Siekmann, Colectivo Situaciones, Mercè Tatjer and Minze Tummescheit.

19 *From Les Glòries to the Besòs. Urban change and public space in the metropolis of Barcelona*, public debates from 13 January to 13 March 2003, with the participation of Jordi Borja, Paco Marín, Salvador Clarós, Rafael González-Tormo, Mercè Tatjer, Eugenio Madueño, Oriol Bohigas, Josep Maria Montaner, Eduard Bru, Llàtzer Moix, Rafael Encinas, Eugeni Forradellas, Emili García, Ferran Sagarra, Marcelo Expósito, Josep Lluís Mateo, Muntadas, Ramon Parramon, Jaume Pagès, Josep Ramoneda, Joaquim Espanyol and Joan Roca.

reached its peak in the new forms of communication that emerged with the reactivation of social protest in Barcelona between 2000 and 2004, a process that has yet to be sufficiently explored. The movement took form around three major successive campaigns: in June 2001 against the meeting of the World Bank, in March 2002 against the European Summit, and the campaign against Forum 2004. At local level, these campaigns saw a radical transformation in the forms of communication and public intervention of the new social movements, and generated a wealth of experimental complexity in the field of intervention in a context that was strongly mediated by institutional advertising. Social movements gained a new awareness of the centrality of the image and the symbolic in social conflicts in post-industrial capitalism.²⁰

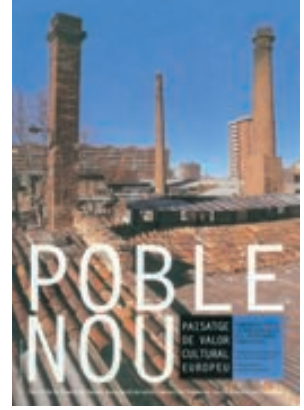
How do we want to be governed? was set in this climate of mobilisation as part of the critique of the logic of the big event, such as Forum 2004, as cultural policy and presented itself as a countermodel. In similar fashion to The Agencies, though in a very different metropolitan and global context, the project sought to foster collaboration between the institution and new social movements. Here, it is important to understand the widespread popular rejection of the Forum by the city itself, both by the more classic neighbourhood and social movement and new anti-globalisation or anti-capitalist trends, and by broad sectors of unorganised civil society. Such a broad-based rejection was not directed solely at the falsely participative populist rhetoric that the Council tried to use to create a soft discourse on multiculturalism; it also corresponded to a widely shared social need to create a breach in the image of consensus and point out the deficiencies, contradictions and myths inherent in the neoliberal tertiary model. This was symptomatic of civil society's demands for open debate about the urbanistic and economic model of tertiary, extrovert city adopted by local authorities, and of a mistrust of the model's social consequences. This social mistrust was corroborated in late 2004 by the failure of the Forum not just as a convincing, significant cultural event (which it never was), but also, to use its own terms, as a driving force of economic and social revitalisation for the city.

In autumn 2003, we had set up a collaboration network with anti-Forum movements, based on the experience gained in previous years, principally in The Agencies, and drawn up a strategy for programming public events in the city that would highlight the activity of the movements and their organisational capacity. The idea was to constitute a temporary public counter-sphere in the context of a city subject to an all-pervading insti-

20 There are publications that document this cycle of new social movements in Barcelona between 2000 and 2004. Special mention should be made of: Unión Temporal de Escribas (UTE), *Barcelona marca registrada. Un model per desarmar*. Barcelona: Virus Editorial, 2004; Various authors, *La otra cara del Fòrum de les Cultures S.A.* Barcelona: Edicions Bellaterra, 2004; and Enrique Leiva, Ivan Miró and Xavier Urbano, *De la protesta al contrapoder. Nous protagonismes socials en la Barcelona metropolitana*. Barcelona: Virus Editorial, 2007.



*I Jornada Ilegat industrial i innovació,
La Escocesa, Barcelona, 30 June 2003*



Poster of the campaign for the conservation of the Poblenu industrial heritage, Grup de patrimoni del Fòrum de la Ribera del Besòs, 2003

tutional propaganda machine. In November, we presented a seminar called *Constructing the Public. Artistic Activity and New Social Protagonism*.²¹ Taking part, among others, were members of the Argentine collective Situaciones, whose theory had had a major influence on the experiences of popular mobilisation and self-organisation during the Argentine crisis, followed with close attention by social movements in Barcelona.²² The seminar also involved Paolo Virno, whose intervention took the form of an itinerant programme in various institutions and spaces of the new social movements in the city. In March 2004, we presented a seminar with Immanuel Wallerstein and, in April, another with Antonio Negri, once again travelling to various venues in the city. This cycle culminated in a seminar on decentralised communication and activism in late April,²³ coinciding with the celebration of EuroMayDay and with the keynote participation of Naomi Klein. Klein's participation was strategic to the movement because she had received an invitation to take part in Forum 2004. Her refusal of that invitation and her agreement to take part in the EuroMayDay seminar helped to delegitimise the Forum and denounce its incapacity to connect with the social movement.

How do we want to be governed?

How do we want to be governed? was curated by Roger Buerger and founded on notions of governability presented by him and based on readings of Giorgio Agamben and Michel Foucault. It came together in an exhibition from September to November in various spaces in the Poblenu-Besòs area, presented as an alternative, deterritorialised model of the museum, constituted in activity rather than as a prelegitimised, predetermined space. Its metropolitan setting sought to highlight local histories that had been forgotten or crushed by hegemonic versions of the city's history. The project's work with local collectives in the Fòrum

21 *Constructing the Public. Artistic Activity and New Social Protagonism*, 28 and 29 November 2003, with the participation of Roger Buerger, Alice Creischer and Andreas Siekmann, Colectivo Situaciones, Alejandra Riera, Catherine David, Michael Warner, Marina Garcés, César de Vicente, Brian Holmes and Georg Schoellhammer. The seminar with Paolo Virno took place from 1–5 December.

22 As shown in the book by Colectivo Situaciones, *Argentina. Apuntes para el nuevo protagonismo social*. Barcelona: Virus Editorial, 2003.

23 *The Revolution (will not be) Televised. Conference on the Decentralised Communication of Activism*, 30 April 2004. With the participation of Carles Ameller, Franco Berardi 'Bifo', Amador Fernández-Savater, DeeDee Halleck, Naomi Klein, Avi Lewis and José Pérez de Lama. Coordinated by Marcelo Expósito.



Photographs by Patrick Faigenbaum in Rambla Prim and urban routes around Poblenou and La Mina, as part of the exhibition *How do we want to be governed?*, autumn 2004

de la Ribera del Besòs was organised as a 'bottom-up board of trustees' that reproduced the organisational structure of the museum, redirecting it towards the participation of sectors of civil society that are politically active but do not constitute the political and economic elite that tend to form a museum's board of trustees. The working process took the form of meetings and discussions with the curator and local collectives to outline the exhibition and particularly the commissioned projects involving the local 'anchorage' of the exhibition and, therefore, critical reinterpretations of dominant urban histories and imaginaries. The commissioned projects (undertaken by Patrick Faigenbaum and Joan Roca in the Besòs, Sonia Abian and Carlos Piegari in Poblenou, and Ramon Parramon and Paco Marín in La Mina) aimed to showcase historic struggles for the memory of labour and industrial heritage, public services and facilities, precarious labour and the reconstruction of modern local political utopias associated with the political activity of the various social and historical union movements, among others. The recovery of the city's invisible popular memory resisted the potential homogenising, amnesiac effect of Forum 2004.

The exhibition was staged in various public spaces in the Poblenou-Besòs area and organised as a route through the city. This route took place in both space and time. The different spaces that hosted the exhibition opened and closed successively, like a constantly changing stage set. The exhibition layout generated a context for a programme of public activities (debates and lectures, performances, screenings) that took place in expository spaces and other places in the area.

The route began in a school, the Institut d'Educació Secundària (IES) Barri Besòs, which had played a major role in providing public services for the district and a meeting place for social movements. It continued to a historic industrial space that is now in use for tertiary production (Palo Alto, in the important Carrer Pellaires complex) and the Centre Cívic La Mina, a cultural centre that is characteristic of the social democratic urban planning of the eighties in Barcelona, in a neighbourhood that historically embodies the shortcomings and inequalities of public policies in the metropolitan area. The route ended at a shopping mall that is emblematic of both the privatisation of new public spaces and unforeseen forms of social appropriation: Diagonal Mar. This itinerary, with its discontinuities and tensions, represented a reading of the city's history that formed a counterpoint to the dominant imaginary and aimed to draw out other images and reconstruct subaltern histories that have been cast by the wayside by the hegemonic construction of the modern metropolis.

The content of the exhibition was organised according to three themes:

Firstly, modernity seen as a category that is not exclusively universal, but that incorporates specificities or anomalies in the way it takes place in different parts of the world: industrialisation, urbanisation, secularisation, individualisation, bureaucratic administration, and so on.

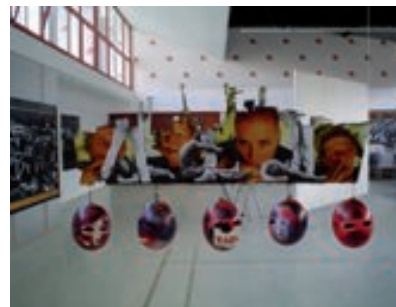
Secondly, neoliberal immanence and the passage from Fordism to post-Fordism. What kind of post-Fordist mentalities do we find in different parts of the world? What lessons can we learn from the local in a transnational dialogue? The revival of pre-modern phenomena such as radical regionalism was of particular interest here, though rather than ethnic districts within multicultural metropolises, the focus was on the relations between diasporas and origins.

Thirdly, the state of exception as a norm (the total mobilisation of subjectivity in post-Fordism, or 'subjectivity set to work') and the discourse of the radical subject, theorised by Agamben and Virno.

The themes were monographically developed with relative independence in the three respective venues.

The exhibition at the IES Barri Besòs centred on the issue of good government, using the reproduction of an allegorical mural by Lorenzetti, and staged the device of the art exhibition as a means of political intervention. It did so using documentation of a historic cycle of art exhibitions presented in non-artistic spaces. These included the 1968 Latin American Art Biennial at the headquarters of the Confederación General de Trabajo de Rosario, in the context of the Conceptualist experiences of the *Tucumán Arde* cycle, and Alice Creischer and Andreas Siekmann's *ExArgentina* project, about the 2001–02 crisis in Argentina, presented some months previously at the Ludwig Museum in Cologne²⁴ as institutional therapy right after a G-8 summit held in the same venue. Another was an artistic experience that had taken place at the IES Barri Besòs itself in 1989, in the context of a conference about the future of city peripheries, marking the foundation of the area's neighbourhood movement and the formation of the *Fòrum de la Ribera del Besòs*.²⁵ While telling this micro-history, the exhibition was presented in the school as part of this tradition of constructing spaces of confluence between art and the social movement, at the same time centring on the issue of the exhibition as a medium and a public space.

Set in a former Poble Nou factory, Nave XYZ in Palo Alto, the exhibition staged the movement towards post-Fordism and neoliberal immanence using the metaphor of workers leaving



How do we want to be governed?, IES Barri Besòs, Palo Alto Nave XYZ and Centre Cívic La Mina, 2004

²⁴ See www.exargentina.org.

²⁵ See the publication produced as a result of this experience, Joan Roca (ed.), *El futur de les perifèries urbanes. Canvi econòmic i crisi social a les metròpolis contemporànies*. Barcelona: Institut de Batxillerat Barri Besòs, 1994. The conference and exhibition took place 10–13 May 1989.

the factory, one of the images marking the birth of the cinema and the subject of a work of the same name by Harun Farocki (also archive research into the memory of this foundational moment in the cinema in the twentieth century). The image of workers leaving the factory brought together various meanings. The first was the documentary tradition as an artistic and political genre historically involved in the representation of new subjects of the masses and social movements. Then it was a metaphor of the change to post-industrial economy and post-Fordist production and sociability, of the change from proletariat struggles to the new protests of self-employed, cognitariat workers. It was also an allusion to social life after work, to the 'night of the proletariat', to the time for culture and political education, for self-organisation, pointing to the inseparable confluence of education and politics in movements for emancipation. In this case, it was also an allusion to the memory of the worker movement and, by extension, to the present-day struggle for Barcelona's industrial heritage.

Finally, the exhibition at the Centre Cívic La Mina presented the idea of the state of exception as a norm, in the form of a monographic presentation of the *ExArgentina* project, by Creischer and Siekmann.

At the metropolitan scale, this exhibition was determinant to the organisation of citywide debate about industrial heritage (which was the catalyst after Forum 2004 for debate about the city's model of growth, centring on the Can Ricart campaign). At the scale of the Museum's work, meanwhile, its consequences were determinant to the revision of education programmes. The experience at IES Barri Besòs pointed out the need to form a more complex, organic part of the field of education, transposing the spaces of experimentation from the field of cultural institutions to the field of education institutions. The Museum had to go into the school curricula. This was also a way of radicalising the premises of institutional critique, opening up to other institutional spaces than the museum.

The reorganisation of education programmes also involved the Museum offering training at all education levels, including the university, and thereby contributing to the training of professionals in the field of culture. This was the origin of the Independent Studies Programme.

Political education

In his lecture as part of the *How do we want to be governed?* programme, Sergio Bologna judiciously raised the key question in this age of flexible accumulation, self-employment and tertiary economies: where and how does political education take place?²⁶

²⁶ 'How do We Want to be Self-employed Workers?', a lecture given on 30 September 2004 at the IES Barri Besòs.



Photography exhibition at Can Ricart
as part of Open-doors Day, 11 June 2005

In Fordist capitalism, the factory, as well as being the place of production, was the space for political education. Conflict was inseparable from innovation; historical knowledge and social agitation were the two sides of the coin. With the new centrality of self-employment in post-industrial capitalist production, an entire political culture generated in the factory disappeared. Post-Fordist flexibility demands processes of self-training and continuing education, but leaves a question mark hanging over the venues for political education. Nonetheless, the education imaginary is still modelled by the culture of full-time factory work, no longer the dominant form of employment: 'we are no longer in a situation in which 'emancipating thought' can be disseminated by a laborious task of training', and therefore, as Bologna concludes, the construction of new spaces for political education is now the fundamental task. The will to take on this task was the starting point of the MACBA's Independent Study Programme (PEI), which started in January 2006.

How can a discussion about the museum as producer of historiographic narratives be linked to the aspirations and responsibilities of a political education, of a 'perverted pedagogy' inspired by René Schérer and Jacques Rancière?²⁷ Though very different, the two cases are attempts to denaturalise the area of institutional education and manifest some of its premises, particularly the way in which the education framework constructs its own subjects and reproduces existing conditions of inequality by means of rigid divisions. Drawing together these two debates makes a critical understanding of the historic task of the museum inseparable from a likewise critical pedagogy that is capable of challenging the existing framework and restoring the links between the fields of science, education, art and culture. This means contributing to the conditions needed for the emergence of other subjects – other publics.

The confluence of historiography, collecting and education has another sense. Education is patently one of the most basic, fundamental forms of heritage and was crucial to the progress of the popular classes in the twentieth century. In this sense, the debate about heritage is linked to the potential of

27 René Schérer, *La pedagogía perversa*. Barcelona: Editorial Laertes, 1983; Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster. Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991.

a museum's collections to transform, not merely reproduce. The challenge lies in exploring new ways of managing common heritage in a dialogue with social subjects and, in the process, bring down the existing administrative and social borders. At that point, it seemed necessary to insist that the often condemned distance between contemporary arts and society is a breach constructed by the administrative organisation of the various state competencies into culture on the one hand, and primary and secondary education on the other and, on yet another, further education and research. This division of competencies between three different administrations has decisive consequences for the insertion of the artistic in the everyday lives of people and reproduces a separation that effectively deprives citizens of a fundamental potentiality in their personal training, which will affect them for the rest of their lives. While these structures remain administratively separate, it will be difficult for art to escape from the ghetto of the market and the culture industries, and to formulate itself socially in a different way to how it does today.

The Museum had seen the consolidation of various discursive lines that have emerged from previous years' work in different workshops and programmes. In 2005, we undertook a new organisation of these programmes (critique of discourse, gender studies, new social movements, economy, critique of therapies, urban studies, artistic historiography, etc.), with the intention of consolidating a unitary organisation that would shape a Study Programme. However, rather than reproducing the academic structure, the idea was to create another type of complex model that would respond to a coming together of academic training, theoretical research and practice, social interaction and cultural intervention. The aim was to develop a completely new way of bringing together intellectual and academic practice with social practice and the public sphere, beyond the established disciplinary fields of art and theory.

In this sense, the PEI sought to incentivise the capacity for action in the field of professional activity based on a critical approach to art and culture. Taking as its basis a conception of the artistic field as production, drawing together different social systems and individual knowledge, it aspired to produce activity that could question the framework established by neoliberal technocracy. We realised the necessity of reconsidering the significance and importance of the museum as an institution that emerged historically from the enlightened project of popular education. The field of museum studies therefore became inseparable from criticism of the processes of construction of knowledge and their politics.

Another relationality

In autumn 2004, coinciding with *How do we want to be governed?*, a new presentation of the collection opened at the Museum with the generic title *Relational Poetics*, prompting reflection on the texts by Édouard Glissant about the poetics of relation as a criticism of or alternative to an essentialist conception of cultural identity. The exploration of relationality continued with the exhibition *A Theatre without Theatre*, which extended the debate to the issue of theatricality as the repressed side of post-war artistic modernity, according to the dictum of the great formalist critics such as Clement Greenberg and, in particular, Michael Fried, whose canonical essay *Art and Objecthood*²⁸ constitutes the purest late-modern formulation of the radical opposition between modern visuality and the theatre.

This line of work on relationality and theatricality explored the hypothesis of a possible relational paradigm as a criticism of the representational model of the museum's work, which submits its public activity to a visual paradigm, the central device of which is the exhibition. In this respect, and as an attempt to go beyond the limitations of representation and promote spaces of experimentation that further processes, activity and debate rather than their objectification in works of art, the relational model could be a useful theoretical and practical framework.

The concept of relationality formed part of the working method of *How do we want to be governed?* and later took the form of a two-part seminar entitled *Another Relationality*, which took place in November 2005 and March 2006.²⁹ Relationality was a concept that allowed us to make an openly controversial intervention in the debate about art institutions and their publics, restoring the political density to a concept that was used to defend a soft pseudo-organisation of artistic and social phenomena and create a simulacrum of participation based on the trivialisation and spectacularisation of the concept of antagonism as a constituent part of the social space. We, conversely, saw the relational as a space for the art that questions a hyper-legitimised institutional autonomy, investigating new forms of interaction with the social, though without seeking to over-stage them.

We had to rescue the relational debate from the aristocratic ghetto of 'relational aesthetics' of Nicolas Bourriaud and his Palais de Tokyo, which seemed to us to be a perverse objectification of both political activism and the new forms of immaterial, affective, communicative and relational production of post-Fordism. Capitalism penetrates into subjectivity and sets it to work, and, in this way, the traditional modern idea of culture

28 Michael Fried, 'Art and Objecthood', *Artforum*, no. 5, June 1967, pp. 12–23.

29 *Another Relationality. Rethinking Art as Experience*, with the participation of Alexander Alberro, Leo Bersani, Claire Bishop, Bernard Blistène, Jesús Carrillo, Helmut Draxler, Kaja Silverman, Beatrice Von Bismark and WHW, 25 and 26 November 2005; and *Another Relationality (part 2). On the Cure in Times Devoid of Poetry / On Poetry in an Age that has no Cure*, with the participation of John Beverley, Antonella Corsani, Marcelo Expósito, Brian Holmes, kpD, Maurizio Lazzarato and Suelly Rolnik, on 17 and 18 March 2006.

and art as an independent sphere, set apart from instrumental reason, is plunged into an irreversible crisis. The crucial issue tabled by the debate about relational art seemed to be precisely this: how to reinvent artistic autonomy in a context where this autonomy appears to be unthinkable. As we saw it, Nicolas Bourriaud's relational aesthetics corresponds to a superficial, soft and falsely consensual conception of artistic experimentation, which is actually immobilist and regressive in that it 'aestheticises' the immaterial communicative paradigm and its implicit social and creative processes, imposing an expository regime that interrupts their mobility, and freezes and makes fetishes of practices. Hence the search for 'another relationality', a search that is inseparable from the search for 'another artistic autonomy'.

However, relationality was not just a debate about the social space in museums: as a fundamental epistemological question it is inseparable from discourses that are critical of the various forms of essentialism. As Leo Bersani explains, 'notions of social relationality have, at least since Descartes, been determined by the privileging of epistemological concerns over questions about the nature of being. Following Heidegger and his critique of Cartesian epistemology, we would reverse this priority, although by being we of course do not mean an ontological essence or entity, but rather something like a principle of universal connectedness. A modern reflection on being must be aware of itself not as an approximation of metaphysical truth; rather, the ontology most congenial to an age of information is one that identifies being as relationality, as the principle of connectedness assumed by all technologies of transmission, as well as by the social imaginary that can refract or violate it.'³⁰

Bersani defines the relational subject as being constituted by and as positions of subject, stripping of meaning the opposition between subject and object. Art, Bersani continues, 'illuminates relationality by provisionally, and heuristically immobilising relations'.³¹ From the viewpoint of the Museum, we saw the relational as a space for art that temporarily suspends pre-constituted institutional autonomy and investigates new forms of interaction with the social, though without seeking to overstage this process. We saw the museum as a space for this experimentation, not solely or principally to exhibit it. We tried to find ways in which art could make a significant contribution, based on its specificity, to a multiplication of public spheres.

Having reached this point, from the perspective of work done, we also considered that some caution was needed with regard to the relational paradigm in order to avoid a determin-



Seminar *Another Relationality (part 2)*, MACBA, March 2006

30 Interview with Leo Bersani, at www.macba.cat/uploads/20051107/bersani_eng.pdf (accessed December 2009).

31 Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit, *Caravaggio's secrets*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1998, p. 72.

istic logic or a teleological view of relational art as the historical superseding of artistic autonomy and liberal forms of aesthetic and political representation. After several years of institutional experimentation, we could see how radical practices (which we had attempted to theorise under the umbrella of ‘another relationality’) can pave the way for the emergence of regressive new forms of populist, communitarian cultural policy, which have to be shown up and criticised. We found that governments of social democratic descent (though actually neoliberal) appropriate to themselves the language of radical experimentation and promote communitarian forms of socio-cultural management, the effects of which are highly perverse and destructive for public life. This context gives rise to pseudo-artistic proposals that tend to replace political forms of organisation and representation of civil society with new forms of cultural management and marketing. This process turns political, juridical and social questions into cultural questions, consequently proposing their management by strategies of socio-cultural facilitation. In this way, the cultural appears as a synonym of consensual space, of false social homogeneity, with universalist, pre-political connotations. An example at the large scale of this process in Barcelona was Forum 2004. But this logic also operates on the small scale, and possibly much more perversely. In short (and this concerns those of us who think that this experimentation is fundamental to the construction of civil society and democratic public space), radical experimentation in combining the aesthetic and the social movement can pave the way for the reappropriation and consensual, aesthetic resignification of these experiments by the new pseudo-progressive neoliberal technocracy, thereby leading to their annulment. We have to be aware of this risk, and our immediate challenge would seem to be to find ways of avoiding it without, evidently, relinquishing radical experimentation.

In our promotion of debate about relationality, evidently we do not aim to reproduce that which we were criticising – that is, consensual communitarian logic – without restoring political density to artistic activity, and not just in its ‘relational’ forms. It is therefore necessary to warn of the dangers of the relational discourse. Avoiding communitarianism means promoting positions of differentiation and the visualisation of antagonism. The idea was to conceive of a relationality that annulled neither the conflict nor the space of the other, nor the potential for difference of the artistic space.



Cover of the *Ag*, Autumn 2004

Disagreements

The experience of a metropolitan institutional network that was asymmetrical in nature as a form of public intervention, the organisational method behind *How do we want to be governed?*, was translated to the state scale and an explicitly historiographic project with *Desacuerdos* (Disagreements), an institutional collaboration between 2003 and 2005.³²

Desacuerdos emerged from the will to construct a historiographic countermodel that went beyond the academic discourse and helped to lay the basis for the reconstruction of a possible critical cultural sphere at state scale. How do we go about producing a historiographic narration of the singularity of artistic modernity in Spain, an unorthodox modernity that is inevitably linked to the political and social avatars of the last century? To what extent can cultural institutions contribute to new processes of radical democratisation of society? What meaning and utility was there in a new historiographic account produced by cultural institutions, when civil society was showing clear symptoms of revitalisation in the face of growing economic and state authoritarianism? These were some of the questions behind the desire to rethink ways of telling our history of art of the last half century, in opposition to established versions.

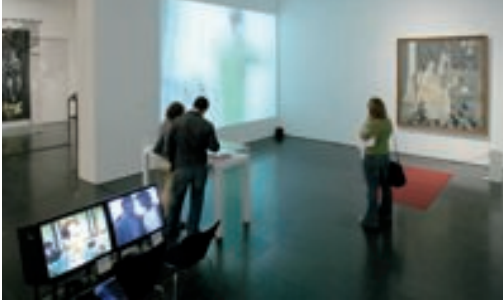
It was impossible to produce a critical historiographic account of given artistic policies without implementing different models of cultural management. It therefore seemed crucial to us to implement a process of research³³ with a decentralised network structure involving cultural institutions of various kinds, which activated working dynamics that reached beyond institutional limits, so that other critical areas of culture could operate without being subsumed or conditioned.

The exhibitions at the MACBA and the Centro José Guerrero de Granada granted a foremost role to the notion of archive and document as alternative elements to complement traditional artworks, necessary to a reading of history and the present, and they were presented as a visibilisation of the research process. They also reflected the work of groups, collectives and associations, which were put on a level with the individual author. An important part of *Desacuerdos* was given over to public debates, meetings and activities by the protagonists, scholars, collectives, groups and associations that carried out artistic and social practices.

This expository visibilisation did not set out to be a literal or sole translation of the research process, however. Research had produced multiple discourses and brought to light largely unknown or overlooked phenomena, aspiring to redefine what had hitherto been a subaltern history. But this was by definition a contradictory process. Not all practices can be translated to

32 *Desacuerdos. Sobre arte, políticas y esfera pública en el Estado español* (Disagreements. On art, politics and the public sphere in Spain), a research project coproduced by Arteleku-Diputación Foral de Gipuzkoa, MACBA and the Universidad Internacional de Andalucía–UNIA arteypensamiento, along with the exhibition and activities coproduced by the same institutions and the Centro José Guerrero-Diputación de Granada.

33 The results can be seen at www.desacuerdos.org and in the publications *Desacuerdos 1* and *2*.



Desacuerdos exhibition, MACBA, 2005

an exhibition space, which in itself proposes a model for experimentation and knowledge that converts practices into objects. This is an important consideration in that one of the difficulties addressed by *Desacuerdos* is precisely the difficulty or impossibility of representing that which has come into being with the aim of being unrepresentable, of breaking with the given conditions. How, in an institutional exhibitionary framework, can we render visible antagonistic, process-based and experimental practices that seek to explode the established institutional frameworks and their implicit disciplinary divisions, such as for example the division between creativity and art – that is, between subjective forms of appropriation and practice of methods and artistic knowledge and the exhibitionary-institutional monumentalisation of these practices? This project embraced the paradoxes and difficulties of combining action and representation, intention and materiality, and therefore constituted historiographic investigation of a context that was close and distant, familiar and unknown. But it was also a self-critical reflection on the conditions and relations of the power of institutional knowledge and the limits of the museum.

The exhibition covered a historic period spanning the last three decades. Despite following a chronological order, however, it was presented not as a single itinerary but as a broad time framework with various possible itineraries or chronologies that were more or less continuous while also presenting discontinuities. The idea was to present a multiplicity of possible historiographic organisations of the period, thereby subverting the

logic of the single hegemonic account. The objective was not to replace one account by another, but to manifest a multiplicity of potential stories.

4. Molecular museum (2006–08)

During this period, we had constant recourse to the notion of institutional critique. We saw it as a tradition of artistic practices at the museum to emerge from the transformations of the sixties, which aspired to lay bare the institution's working conditions and implicit power relations, particularly in the expository device. Here, institutional critique appears as the continuation of the modern enlightened tradition that sees the museum as a space for popular education. At the same time, it represents a self-critical break with this tradition. Institutional critique is the representation of the antagonism that constitutes the social space within the museum and corresponds to a pluralist understanding of the public sphere. Insofar as institutional critique is a translation of liberal democracy within the museum, it configures the museum as a model of the democratic public sphere.

The results of the various projects undertaken by the Museum in this process of experimentation are uneven, but they do serve to show the true limits of institutional critique, the limits of the museum itself. These limits are, firstly, the notion of representation and, secondly, the administrative and organisational forms to which the museum is subject as a part within a larger state structure.

Experimentation with the shift from a representational to a relational paradigm was one of the Museum's central tasks in this process of self-critical exploration. At this point, however, we could say that the vocation of institutional critique involved its socialisation beyond the limits of the museum. If institutional critique remains limited to the museum and the exhibition, it could easily become a new formalism. The vocation of institutional critique is to go beyond its own limits and contribute to the construction of new institutions, new practices and new rules. We at the Museum were able to contribute to this process, which is why we sought to bring down the institutional borders that exist between different fields.

We realised that the radicalisation of institutional critique involves its de-institutionalisation – it has to be removed from the museum to contribute to a new global institutional framework that takes into account demands for democratic radicalisation. We need to reinvent institutions. The big question these



Leaflet of *Desacuerdos* at Arteleku, 2005

days is how to effect a transition from a culture of resistance to a culture of management, how to translate the radical artistic and social experiences of recent years into an effective form of management that does not lose the potential to transform.

Photographic survey

In 2006, in the framework of the PEI, we undertook another project that aspired to intervene in the space of the city beyond the walls of the Museum and bring up to date previous forms of intervention in the new specific conditions of the moment. This was a time marked by a cooling off of the social movement, the breakdown of the social democratic urban planning project and the noticeable absence of a project on a metropolitan scale for the new century. Our aim, then, was to contribute to the city-wide debate about the state of the city, post Forum 2004, this time with a project to photograph the emerging city and help to shape the city of the twenty-first century.

The project took the form of a photographic survey. It set out to address the debate about the city and its image in the misnamed post-photographic age. We thought that in a context that discredits photographic realism, due to new technologies such as Photoshop and digital photography, it was more necessary than ever to defend the photographic document and stand up to acceptance of the discourse on the death of photography, which is actually an attack on its indexical, realistic and documentary dimension. As we see it, in a situation that is tending to naturalise the end of photographic realism by means of discourses about the 'post-photographic age' or the 'death of photography', the decisive question is whether photography without realism is possible and relevant. We know that the history of photography is the history of a hybrid, contradictory but inherently realistic medium, which is inseparable from its documentary dimension, the representation of historical reality. A photograph without realism is an irrelevant, dead photograph that has lost its historic mission and its capacity to create opinion and induce social transformations. We did not consider this a desirable condition for photography. The challenge facing us was therefore to explore how photography can retain social relevance at a time of crisis for photographic realism. This gave rise to the need to invent methods to re-establish the link between the image and historic reality in a way that incorporated self-criticism. The challenge consisted in producing practices in which realism was restored and reinvented in a complex process of negotiation. The impetus for this project was not nostalgia but the pure need to recover the field of representation of self-referential debates and, therefore, to recover the possibilities of



Images of the photographic survey, 2007

significant intervention of the field of art in the social world. And to do so, evidently, by accepting the conflicts and contradictions that such a task supposes today.³⁴

Aware of the controversial nature of debates about realism in modern art since Courbet, from the viewpoint of defending the project of realism as an art form that turns on issues of public interest, our aim was to adopt the format of the photographic surveys of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in a critical, deliberately controversial way (based on the premises of institutional critique). These surveys constitute a great modern tradition running through the history of photography since its origins, from the Mission Héliographique of 1851 to the DATAR mission in the eighties, via the geographical explorations from 1850 to 1870, projects such as the FSA and other big, more or less canonical projects of documentation such as those undertaken by Charles Marville, Eugène Atget, Lewis Hine, August Sander, Berenice Abbott and others, in approximately the last three decades of the nineteenth century and the first three of the twentieth. We considered that photographic missions or studies were the best embodiment of the modern photographic campaigns, of the production of great photography archives to be seen publicly with the purpose of visualising historic moments and their relation to models of government.

³⁴ I refer more extensively to present-day conditions for the reinvention of the photographic document in 'Molecular Documents: Photography in the Post-Photographic Era, or How Not to Be Trapped into False Dilemmas', in Robin Kelsey and Blake Stimson (ed.), *The Meaning of Photography*. New Haven and London: Sterling and Francine Clark Institute and Yale University Press, 2008. See also the materials in the exhibition *Universal Archive*, MACBA, 22 October 2008–6 January 2009, particularly the guide to the exhibition.

Our project about Barcelona began with a series of commissions to local and international photographers to find an image for an emergent metropolis that lacks representations and is, partly for this reason, difficult to imagine and understand.³⁵ Studying Barcelona also meant studying the global urban condition in the early twenty-first century. There seemed to us to be a shortage of eloquent images of the present-day city. It was therefore necessary to begin with a defamiliarisation of received ideas and images of the city, which even today seem to be firmly anchored in the persistent icons of the mid-twentieth century, of the golden age of the humanist paradigm. This defamiliarisation is the first step towards awareness of the real city that is being shaped, of the future city. The role played by images in this process is to allow us to visualise and sense complex and often highly abstract urban processes. This visualisation may be the basis for citizen debate and political intervention. If our photographic project sought to construct the image of the future city, it was precisely in order to contribute to the debate about that city's future.

This project was promoted as a form of public interpellation by appropriating the model of the photographic survey, historically sponsored by governmental bodies. It was a gesture of appropriation that raised questions about the prevailing model of city government. The survey came into being with the aim of constructing the image of the emergent city at a time of great transformations that were difficult to visualise. As in former key moments, the survey was the means of formalising the emergence of new historic subjects at moments of change. Unlike the fifties and sixties that saw a peak in the process of industrialisation and urban expansion, today Barcelona lacks a strong image to make the processes underway visible and provide new urban majorities with instruments for grasping the scope of the transformations, opportunities and dilemmas being presented, and understanding what is new and singular in the process. In this sense in particular, we do not yet have images and, therefore, are unable to understand the overflowing of the metropolitan framework established in the twentieth century and the need for a new model and urban project.

The working method began with a selection of specific urban polarities, which were the confluence of territories, historic processes and emerging trends-subjects, and the idea was to study them by means of various commissioned works. The aim was not to take a merely topographic approach, but to produce eloquent images of the temporary nature of historic processes. While recording the emergent processes, it situated them in the course of the twentieth century.

35 Invited to take part in the project were Xavier Basiana, Lothar Baumgarten, Sandra Balsells, Patrick Faigenbaum, Hans-Peter Feldmann, David Goldblatt, William Klein, Manolo Laguillo, Ana Muller, Marc Pataut, Xavier Ribas, Andrea Robbins and Max Becher, Gilles Saussier, Jean-Louis Schoellkopf, Allan Sekula and Ahlam Shibli.

Universal Archive

The exhibition *Universal Archive. The Condition of the Document and the Modern Photographic Utopia*³⁶ arose from the need to give the Barcelona survey a historic framework, seeking to contribute to an understanding of the complexity of the notion of the document in the history of photography by studying and tabling certain specific debates about the genre at various different historic moments in the twentieth century. The aim was not so much to produce a history of the genre or a comprehensive list of possible definitions, but to study the way in which the photographic document has always been ambivalent and controversial with regard to specific historic conditions, seeking in each case to outline the historic subject of the documentary genre and how it is constructed.

By studying specific cases, the aim of the exhibition was to put forward hypotheses as to the changing meanings and mechanisms of the documentary in a historic cycle that began with the rise to hegemony of the photograph in the illustrated press, in the first three decades of the twentieth century, and continued until the supposed crisis of photographic realism in the digital age, at the century's end. The exhibition was organised in non-chronological fashion around specific debates situated in time, proposing a pluralist historiographic method that explained the inherent tensions in the historical account. There were two main parts, subdivided into three and two areas, respectively. The first was a historic look at some of the principal question marks overhanging the photographic document in the modern age (approximately 1850 to 1980). The second situated the debate in Barcelona's history, as a specific case study.

The first part was organised around three main areas that looked at the subject of the documentary, the relation between the document and propaganda, and the epistemic and archival dimension of the document. The exhibition began with the official emergence of the documentary genre in photography and film at the change from the twenties to the thirties, associated with the representation of the popular classes and the underprivileged. It explored how the figure of the victim became the subject of reformist documentaries, establishing a dialectic with the models of self-representation of the international worker photography movement that aspired to supersede the paternalist-victim model of the documentary.

The second section, 'Public Photographic Spaces', presented the historic evolution of the paradigm of photography exhibition with an expanded conception of space introduced by El Lissitzky in the late twenties, its dissemination throughout



Rutes metropolitanas per la nova Barcelona guide, MACBA, 2008



2007. Imatges metropolitanas de la nova Barcelona magazine, MACBA, 2008

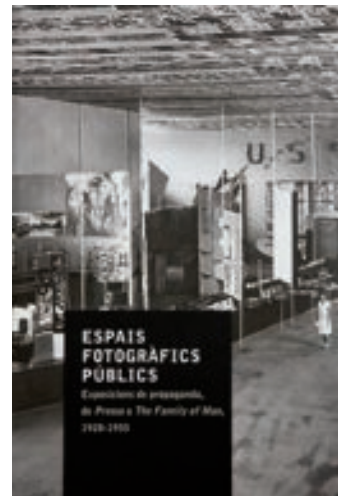
³⁶ *Universal Archive. The Condition of the Document and the Modern Photographic Utopia*, MACBA, 22 October 2008–6 January 2009.

Europe after 1930 by the designers and architects of the Bauhaus, its totalitarian reinterpretation in the thirties in Italy and Germany, its introduction to the United States by Herbert Bayer and its reworking in various exhibitions at the MoMA, culminating in *The Family of Man* in 1955. It traced the path of the utopian architectural-photographic space, which involved a new type of spectator, from revolutionary Russia to the America of the Cold War.

The third area explored the notion of photography as an instrument for social science and the creation of archives in historically important projects, from the Mission Héliographique of 1851 to the DATAR mission in the eighties. This section was the largest, including some of the classic photographic explorations of the nineteenth century. Some examples were the 40th Parallel survey in the American West, Frith, Du Camp and Salzmann's journeys to the Middle East; Marville and Atget's works on Paris; August Sander's 'People of the Twentieth Century' project; various ethnographic and photographic projects about cities in the twentieth century, and the New Topographics of the seventies and early postmodern debates about the document.

The second part of the exhibition centred on photographic representations of Barcelona from the time of the 1888 Universal Exhibition to the Forum of Cultures in 2004. This section presented some hypotheses for a photographic historiography associated with a historiography of urban development. It studied the correspondence between various dominant photographic paradigms throughout the century and their correspondence with the urban model of each time. It set out to present the photographic representation of the metropolis as a space of conflict that is inseparable from the struggles for the city, at the same time examining the tension between the construction of official images and counter-images.

This part of the exhibition opened with the first images and albums of the city, from the 1850s to the 1870s, with particular emphasis on the sudden increase in photographs of the city on the occasion of the 1888 Universal Exposition. It continued with the guidebooks about the city produced for the 1929 International Exposition and the emergence of a modern official photographic construction with the transition to the Republic; the humanist paradigm from the new photographic avant-garde of the fifties and sixties to the democratic transition, showing the grey city under Franco's dictatorship; the new topographic documentary of the late seventies and eighties in association with the urban recovery of the city and democratic institutions, and the emergence of a new role for image in the urban promotion policies of the Olympic transformation in the late eighties.



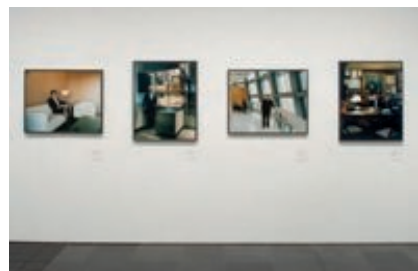
Public Photographic Spaces. Exhibitions of Propaganda from 'Pressa' to 'The Family of Man', 1928-55 book. Barcelona: MACBA, 2009

It concluded with the image struggles in the nineties and the early years of the twenty-first century, between the 1992 Olympic Games and Forum 2004, in the context of a shift to an extrovert, post-industrial urban model, in which the image has acquired a new centrality both in municipal government and social conflict.³⁷

The exhibition closed with the survey of the photographic work that had been commissioned in the course of the previous year, as the germ of the debate and the exhibition project, which



Universal Archive. The Condition of the Document and the Modern Photographic Utopia exhibition, MACBA, 2008



offered a diagnosis of the present-day city and its focuses of innovation for the twenty-first century.³⁸

Molecular museum

How should we interpret in political vein the photographic project of Barcelona and the *Universal Archive* exhibition? Did this project help to expand the limits of institutional critique and radicalise previous experiments, or did it contradict them? What is the place of critique in large-scale projects? Does the shift to large-scale projects involve a reduction or even an annulment of critical potential? Does hegemony have a margin for critique?

The central political issue of this project was the question mark hanging over the possible bringing together of the macro- and micro-political scales (or, according to Deleuze and Guattari, the molar and the molecular). While the previous interventions in the city described here took the form of micro-political/molecular experiments and collaborations with social movements, in this case it is evident that the aim was to intervene in Barcelona on the molar scale, or to explore the issue of the need to address this scale to produce a politically significant, transforming project. A political reading has to take into account the pertinence of this tension between the molecular and the molar, and address both the concrete effects and the experiences of the various agents involved, and the macro-

37 On the history of photographic representations of Barcelona, see Jorge Ribalta, 'Paradigmas fotográficos en Barcelona, 1860–2004', *Quaderns del Seminari d'Història de Barcelona*, no. 22, Institut de Cultura, Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2009.

38 See the materials in the exhibition *Universal Archive. The Condition of the Document and the Modern Photographic Utopia*, particularly the guide to the exhibition. For a political interpretation of *Universal Archive*, see the interview by Miguel López, 'Ver la modernidad desde la fotografía en como entrar en la historia por la puerta de servicio', in *Ramona* magazine, issue 88, March 2009; *Papel Alpha*, no. 7, 2009, and Blake Stimson, 'I Am Nothing and I Should Be Everything', in *Artforum*, XLVII, no. 6, February 2009, pp. 77–80.

institutional context of the museums and their capacity for intervention in city debates. Overall, it seems obvious that the change in scale inevitably introduces a new complexity or ambivalence into the political dimension of institutional critique, in that it suggests a new limit for the museum.

In her intervention in the *Another Relationality* seminar, Suely Rolnik explored the ways in which capitalism's penetration of subjectivity represents the 'procurement' of creativity: capitalism has turned pimp on us. At the end of this itinerary, we are inevitably brought face to face with this question. What are we being pimped for? In other words, are we breaking with the logic of neoliberal capitalism and the culture industries, or are we reproducing and extending it? Is micro-political criticism of the molecular museum a way of interiorising the demands of cognitive capitalism or a form of resistance? I stress that the obvious initial response is that it is necessary to attend to the participants in the projects, to their effects, to the singularity of the experiments – in short, an empirical, non-ideological bottom-up reading is required. This reading must also take into account the dominant logics of the institutional framework of existing museums of modern and contemporary art, and, in this context, analyse the way in which the forms of institutional work described here take their place in the macro-institutional context.

In June 2008, we organised a seminar-workshop in the framework of the PEI on the hypothesis of the molecular museum, seeking to reflect the new institutional demands being made by social movements.³⁹ In recent years, we have been stressing the need on the part of the new social movements to establish a type of structure that will give protest continuity. How to define a new institutional agenda on the basis of the experiences of the latest wave of institutional critique and the anti-institutional experiments that have emerged from the expansive process of the various movements in the last decade? The idea, then, is to create a space for debate about the potential of the discourses and practices of open code, copyleft, creative commons and so on, in order to implement a new institutional practice in models of management and cultural policy in the public sphere. Is this possible? And, if so, how?

Faced with the weighty institutional models that reproduce the philosophy of state bureaucracy, how could we begin to conceive of fragile, temporary, deterritorialised institutional models that have interiorised the demands of institutional critique and are capable of supporting the mobility of micro-political practices and avoiding the deadlock and bureaucracy inherent in the institutional framework, at the same time guaranteeing a framework for experiment with a degree of continuity? How can we

39 *Molecular Museum. Can Cultural Heritage be Managed by Deterritorialised Networks?*, 14 June 2008.

construct molecular spaces in molar conditions? And, conversely, how can we make the molecular more molar? The aim was to sound out some departure points for a new form of institutionality, a kind of postcolonial museum or institution that supersedes the dominant model that came to the fore in the nineteenth century as the product of a cultural and geopolitical order determined by the emergence of the culture of industrial and colonial capitalism. What is the museum of the post-industrial, postcolonial age?

Deleuze and Guattari suggest a possible direction for this new molecular institutionality: 'The real difference is, then, between on the one hand the molar machine – whether social, technical or organic – and on the other the desiring machine, which is of a molecular order. Desiring machines are the following: formative machines, whose very misfirings are functional, and whose functioning is indiscernible from their formation; chronogeneous machines engaged in their own assembly, operating by non-localizable intercommunications and dispersed localisations, bringing into play processes of temporalisation, fragmented formations, and detached parts...'⁴⁰

Again, does this operate in accordance with the logic of capitalism, or is it a form of resistance and creation? Is the will to extend the field of institutional critique and the freedom of the artistic sphere beyond the museum a way of reproducing what is being criticised? The answers of detractors and supporters alike will be as predictable as they are insufficient. The floor is open to anyone wishing to address the question.

At the end of the nineties, we saw the birth of many new social movements. Though they had a relatively short moment of intensity, perhaps between 1999 and 2001, they brought lasting consequences. The present moment, aggravated by the worldwide financial crisis, is manifesting itself not as experimentation or social innovation, but as a time of ebbing and uncertainty. In this context, it will be necessary to rethink the spaces of institutional experimentation in a different way to the last decade, since in this respect the museum cannot work alone, and innovation can only take place when there are active social subjects with which the institution can establish alliances. My purpose here is to present experiences and actions in the form of some of the experiments undertaken by the Museum during this period. These memories of a possible future offer prototypes, cases and experiences of models or fragile, temporary, deterritorialised institutional modulations that have inter-organised the demands of various waves of institutional critique. Their aim is to suggest some starting points for a new type of radically democratic institutionality.

40 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. New York: Viking Press, 1977.

To imagine the future of this molecular museum and a possible new critical and deterritorialised institutionality, it seems pertinent to recall Raymond Williams and his thesis about the 'long revolution', or the revolution seen not as a logic of instant transformation but as a long haul: 'It is characteristic of the history of what I see as the long revolution that such aims, once achieved, are quite quickly absorbed, and either new expectations are commonly defined or, in their absence there is a mood of both stagnation and restlessness.'⁴¹

41 Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution*, Broadview Press, 2001 (1961).