

Seminar Divergences (October 2003)

Direction: Julián Ruesga

Venue: Rector's Office of the International University of Andalusia (UNIA), Monastery of Santa María de las Cuevas, Isla de la Cartuja (Seville)

Date: 21st-22nd-23rd October 2003

Guests: Por la sombrita, Joystick, a.k.a. (Also Known as) Identikit, Colectivo Z_van, Ramón Parramon

PRESENTATION

"The legacy of tradition gives us concepts such as novelty, sophistication, endogamic expression, the figure of the artist as a visionary cryptic being, barely accessible to large sections of the population, unusual, extravagant, formally able, seductive and eager to be the protagonist. The majority of institutions, art centres, museums, competitions, and galleries, contribute to the perception of art in terms of cultural spectacle, often allowing this traditional vision to persist and hindering other new initiatives which are being developed. I believe that those of us who form part of the art establishment in any of its fields, have to become involved in aspects, contents, and realities which look at things from other perspectives or in disciplines which fall beyond artistic expression (educators, anthropologists, urban planners, activists from local neighbourhood groups, sociologists, etc.). Creative processes encouraged by those of us who are linked to the world of art and work with aspects of socio-political reality, which, given its magnitude and complexity, requires a rethinking about the figure of the artist, as we understand that the terminology used up to now is obsolete and irrelevant.". Ramón Parramon

"The aesthetic reality has nothing to do with a collection of objects or fetishes. … This means we work with people who are not always recognised as "artists" by some in the traditional art world which allows us to broaden the horizons in terms of representation and means so as to bring certain problems to light. Rather than traditional art spaces, we are interested in creating contexts to seek other forms of encounters which allow debate to exist and do not conceal antagonisms. Making an aesthetic approach more visible means providing a space for its manifestation and its polemic as an alternative to specialisation and spectacularisation". Catherine David

In order to deal with the institutionalised approach which is based on the logic of the markets and immediate profitability, it is important to bear in mind the reactions which occur at the limits of the system, because it is precisely there that divergences and the emergence of alternative thinking become more striking. In this peripheral space, art fulfils a different function in that it introduces themes and forms of expression which may seem irrelevant and unproductive to the hegemonic thinking. By questioning the normal relationship between cultural

experimentation and economic profitability they fulfil the public function of encouraging us to rethink aspects that the economy of symbolic industries impose as public and exclusive.

The instrumental thought processes of art tend to ignore behaviours and symbolic expressions of social movements who are trying to legitimise or express - or simply position - identities, values, or ways of living and seeing the world. In some cases they are struggles for signification and social visibility, in others, affirmations of ways of thinking and understanding culture. "The unusual political connotations of actions which are similar to those of art become apparent", writes Nestor García Canclini, "in that they do not pursue a literal satisfaction of demands or any return in the commercial sense, but instead vindicate the structures of meaning of certain ways of life".

In a world perceived as a global reality which gives the impression of containing and explaining everything, these divergent artistic practises with their expressions and procedures, represent the unresolved contradictions of commercial policies and make visible the conflicts which are camouflaged by the dominant culture: the other memories of the local, the tension between the representations of the world and the world which is constructed from those representations, between divergent ways of living and thinking. They essentially expose the tension between social reality and the forms of representing it.

Divergences intends to record and debate the work of various Latin-American collectives who use very distinct means and strategies to get involved in the complex contemporary urban and social realities. By the very nature of the kind of projects undertaken by these groups they are hardly visible away from their immediate working area.

PROGRAMME

Tuesday, 21st October 2003

- 18:00 h. Presentation by Julián Ruesga. Participation of the Por la sombrita collective
- 19:30 h. Participation of the Joystick collective
- 20:30 h. Video session

Wednesday, 22nd October 2003

- 18:00 h. Participation of the a.k.a. Identikit collective
- 19:30 h. Participation of the Z_van collective.
- 20:30 h. Video session

Thursday, 23rd October 2003

- 18:00 h. Participation of Ramón Parramon
- 20:00 h. Closing
- 20:30 h. Video session

[All the presentations will be fully open to the public]

VIDEO SESSION

Por
la sombrita:

Historias
del Ahuizote (Ahuizote stories) 2003, episodes 1 and 2, 20 min.

They tell the story of Héctor, a Mexican immigrant living in Spain who after a hallucinogenic accident turns into Ahuizote, the superhero he always admired as a child and embarks on a crusade against evil.

Episode 1

Tells the story of the incident after which he turned into Ahuizote and the existential distress he feels as a result of having assumed such an important role.

Episode 2

Gives an account of the first adventure of our hero: he confronts Karlitos, a rogue businessman who takes advantage of the situation of illegal immigrants to exploit them (making them do unpaid work). The duel ends

with a full contact fight. .

a.k.a. (Also Known as) Identikit:

Mil caras (One thousand faces) 2002,
10 min.

Colombian immigration is the central theme of Mil caras, a video documentary in which the immigrants themselves describe their experiences. Exposing a wide range of stories, the documentary intends to question the image of immigration which is normally offered in the media. The testimonies reveal a reality which is shared by all immigrants independently of their countries of origin. Behind the immigration figures are real stories and a way of starting to understand those stories is to listen to their protagonists. Mil caras was made by Alejandra Chaparro, Leonardo Espitia, Lucas Maldonado and Luis Noriega.

Singladuras, 2002, 10 min.

Short documentary made by an anthropologist and a group of filmmakers. The idea came from a study on urban anthropology aimed at exploring immigrants' mobility within the instability of the urban environment and the appropriation of public space. The documentary follows five immigrants as they move around Barcelona. They themselves describe some aspects of their journey. The intention is to discover whether the supposed cultural immensity really exists in the public space, rescuing the anonymity of foreigners, who are continually pigeonholed by their place of origin. Singladuras was made by: Lucas Maldonado, Diana Arias, Oscar de Gispert; photographed by: Takuro Takeuchi; edited by: José María Lorenzo; and produced by: Grup Media Art.

GUESTS

Por
la sombrita

This collective developing various projects with the immigrant community in San Sebastián, Irun and Errenteria, from a culturally hybrid perspective. Formed by immigrants (from Ecuador, Cuba, Mexico, Peru, Cape Verde), and Basques who live in the province of Gipuzkoa. Their projects include: radio programmes such as Tu ayudame and Vaskitas; Locutorio

Móvil; Historias de El Ahuizote, five video episodes; and Postales de mi tierra, huge images placed in various public sites in Irun

Joystick

Collective based in Barcelona involved in the promotion of experimental multi-disciplinary work on the Internet. Amongst their objectives is the establishing of alternative communication spaces and channels through exhibitions, events and interventions in public areas. They use the Net as a fundamental platform for the exchange of information, the launching of projects and competitions, and the publication of works .

a.k.a. (Also Known as) Identikit

The collective which is behind Identikit has its roots in Proyecto Laberinto, a multidisciplinary work presented in public spaces - part of "Identitat Calaf/Barcelona 2001-2002", which had migration as its central theme. Identikit emerged from the desire by some of the participants in Proyecto Laberinto to continue exploring forms to transfer the reflection of the social sciences to other types of spaces using other types of languages. The theme, in this case, is "identity", a question which they want to address by examining its most prosaic representation: identity cards. The group is currently working on an identity card dispensing machine, to be set up in a public space, where anyone can obtain a randomly selected new personal identity and history. a.k.a. Identikit's membership is continually evolving, but on this occasion it is represented by María Alejandra Chaparro, Diana Arias and Luis Noriega.

Colectivo Z_van

The work of the Z_van collective and Ariel Jacobovich is structured around an approach in which tradition, that which exists and that which is conventionally established, are used as tools and instruments to construct a material reflection. Thus, in both their intervention projects in public spaces, and in their exhibitions and constructed objects, intensity is expressed in the way in which things are done. Working within architecture, not on the boundaries with other areas, but extending the range of activity of the discipline itself. Understanding practice as theory and as a way of thinking.

Ramón Parramon

Director of master's and post-graduate courses at Elisava and of the master's degree in Diseño y Espacio Público (Design and Public Space) at the Elisava/Universitat Pompeu Fabra. Director of "Identitat Calaf/Barcelona", a programme which organises projects, and promotes interventions and debates in the field of creativity in public spaces. Currently working on the i[&]Territorio/Participación project for the Torre Baró underground station whilst being in charge of the micro - exhibition project which is currently being developed in collaboration with Plataforma d'Entitats i Veïns del Barri de la Mina. Worked from 1996 on the Territorios Ocupados project, exhibited in the Centro de Arte Santa Mónica in Barcelona (2000) and, through the Centro de Cultura Contemporánea

of Barcelona, in the Barcelones exhibition (1999). His work focuses specially on interdisciplinary projects and the functions which art can fulfil in a specific socio-political context.