

Meeting 03. Ceci n'est pas un congrés

Coordination: Miguel Benlloch with the collaboration of Yolanda Romero

Venue: Sede UNIA Santa María de la Rábida. La Rábida. Palos de la Frontera (Huelva). Spain

Date: 1st - 5th September 2003

PRESENTATION

The idea behind REUNIÓN 03 is to gather together in one place the various different groups and people, who, with their artistic activities based on social interference, are creating new situations in Andalusia.

Taking an investigation process about the situation of these practices in Andalusia as a starting point, various groups and agents operating in the region were interconnected thus provoking, through a series of encounters, the setting up of a forum on the Net, a horizontal development of the project.

As at an initial stage, it was found that their activities are widely dispersed and that they have little knowledge about each other, proposals were put forward for creating a space which is inhabitable by everyone.

The inhabitable space created by REUNIÓN 03 generates a dual framework in which the project expands to originate places in which links between the real, the virtual, the social, and artistic practices can occur originating a magma, "a healing poultice", which can serve to soothe the ulcers in the epidermis of the Globe.

The inhabitable spaces are spaces for collaboration in which the isolated becomes connected, thus creating a network in which each nodule is both itself and its connection. This process has made possible an encounter between the following groups and individuals: Arquitectura y Compromiso Social (Sevilla); La Fiambrera Barroca (Sevilla); zemos 98.org / voluble.net (Sevilla); Rizoma (Málaga); Confluencias (Huelva); Ecléctica (Granada); EDITA (Huelva); Jaime García (Granada); Revista La Fuga (Málaga); Proyecta (Málaga); José García (Granada); José Luis Tirado (Sevilla); El Cable (Sevilla); hackitectura.net (Sevilla); Laboratorio (Córdoba-Málaga); La Palabra Itinerante (Sevilla - Cádiz); Balkanada. Asociación de Artistas Plásticos y Audiovisuales (Málaga); Revista Blitz (Sevilla); Saladeestar (Sevilla); Salamandria (Almería); Endanza (Sevilla); La Edad del Óxido (Málaga); Pollo y Berta Orellana (Sevilla); Mimalaguita (Málaga); El Tramallo de las Artes (Málaga); Antonio Orihuela (Huelva); Pablo Bouzada (Sevilla); Colectivo feminista Lilitu / Coñopolitan (Sevilla); Txema Martín (Málaga); Revista Parabólica (Sevilla); Plataforma Parque Moret (Huelva); Rejo Producciones (Sevilla); Al-hambre Subproductora (Sevilla); Galería Virtual [A.C.P.A.] (Granada); francisco m. m. cabeza de vaca/huella (Tarifa)...

The ongoing work of REUNIÓN 03 will lead to the following activities:

- Presentation of the participating groups
- Ora et colabora (Pray and collaborate), a poliedric debate on collaborative art
- Taller la_multitud_conectada (The Connected Crowd Workshop).

* Given the nature of the project, participation is open to all those Andalusian groups which for a number of reasons were not contacted during the setting up of REUNIÓN 03. However, the number of participants will depend on the capacity of the premises.

** Download the full PROGRAMME

LA_MULTITUD_CONECTADA
WORKSHOP

Technologies / social networks

The la_multitud_conectada workshop proposes a collaborative

space gathering hackers, media-artists and activists to theorise about, and carry out activities for, the construction of "a world in which there is room for many different worlds". This new movement, which some authors have dubbed the "digital crowd", was born at the end of the 90s as a result of unprecedented alliances between technologists, activists, and artists. The notion of Crowd, as seen by Negri and Hardt, refers to a new political subject composed of multiple independent and diverse agents, who are interconnected by a net and are able to produce creative convergences in specific circumstances. The word Digital refers to the relevance which they attach to information and communication technology in the conception and development of their activities.

The activities carried out by the digital crowd do not have an anti-globalisation character and by definition, are clearly not of an anti-technology nature. The digital crowd is constructing different relationships as defined by Deleuze and Guattari - between globalisation, technologies, and networks. The ethics of the first hackers, the forms of production and intellectual property of free software developers, and the hybrid activity between reality and virtual reality of the tactical media, are just some of the viruses produced by the digital crowd which are starting to infect other social fields.

The struggle for the control of technologies - information and communication media - is one of the fundamental keys of the movement. We could call it the socialisation of the information and communication media. If systems are centralised and have a closed code - as is the case of television or proprietary software - society will tend to create relationships of domination and dependency. On the other hand, if multidirectional open networks with open codes are developed - such as with the telephone, free software, or the www during its first stages - autonomous, creative and free relationships will be promoted. Some of the technological advances which we will experiment with at the workshop - such as wifi, video streaming, bi-directional satellite connections... - are in their early stage of expansion and their future development will depend on the strategies and forces which the agents promoting each of the models manage to put in place. As a digital crowd, we represent the technological avant-garde. "Remember" - wrote Lovink and Schneider, "they are the dinosaurs."

Geographies. architecture of interactivity

Manuel Castells suggests that the era of information has transformed space and time. The space of places and historical time has been overlapped by the space of flows and timeless time. The collapse of the past and future brings geography and inhabitability to the foreground. We propose giving the name geographies of the crowd to the forms by which the new social movements, in collaboration with hackers, artists and thinkers, post their antagonistic actions in space. Inhabiting the space of flows, the digital crowd manifests itself in the nodes where it interacts with spaces-places, in brilliant events, "events that change life and transform the world" - as the situationist Raoul Vaneigem dreamt it.

Real time, open transmission, and participation from different geo-locations are the keys to redefining architecture and activating the new public space. (hackitectura.net / Okupa Futura / Corvera 04.2003)

The workshop will involve the participative construction of an experimental room for the presentation of the connected crowd: we will take possession of an open space in the university, and equip it with a telematic network which is connected via the Internet with artists and activists from Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, Morocco as well as several Spanish cities. With the remote actors we will exchange video and audio flows in real time. The images and sounds coming from Latin America and Africa will be mixed with those produced locally at La Rábida by the participants in the Reunión 03.

During the event, a sound and projection system will envelop the place in data, thus transforming it into a fluid space between the real, the virtual and the local: our proposal for a public square in the global village. At the same time, the event at La Rábida will be broadcasted live via the Net, thus constituting a purely virtual second interface, a public room, by which remote participants - from Latin America and Africa, as well as any other surfers visiting the web site of the event, will be able to experience what is happening.

We envisage this room as a space which acts as an activator of social networks which could be reproduced, for example, in the World Society of Information Summit (WSIS) which is to be held in Geneva at the end of 2003, or at Delhi's World Social Forum, in 2004. It could also be applicable in artistic, educational or cultural local events. As the whole structure is made up of low- tech systems - PC equipment and software, mostly free - it is a device for popular appropriation of technology. The incorporation of the satellite aerial, which we will use for the first time, turns the device into a mobile unit of bi-directional communication which is especially suited for places without connectivity, such as a settlement of immigrant itinerant agricultural workers, a shanty town area, a zapatista community…

Apart from the investigative dimension, the workshop will also have a didactic and participative character with exchange of experiences, and information and theoretical debates. We will use and demonstrate Internet connection with wireless technology and two-directional satellites, streaming / audio and video, webcasting, video / audio sampling, and mixing in real time with the Pure Data program. With zemos98, we will study analogical and digital technology for audio / video edition along with the adaptation of mixed methods represented by Djs and Vjs. In the theoretical presentations, questions concerning social activism on the

Net (social net war) such as smart mobs and digital crowd will be discussed and cases of emerging crowd geographies - such as the indymedia estrecho project, Evian 2003's v2v Project, Latvia's acoustic space lab, makrolab... will be examined, along with the architecture of flows and the collaborative models of free software. Theoretical presentations will be coordinated by Sergio Moreno, José Pérez de Lama, Pablo de Soto, and José Luis Tirado (hackitectura.net) and will count on the participation of Jaume Nualart (riereta.net), Ramiro Cosentino (optiq.xicnet.com) and Manuel Molina.

reunion 03 / hackitectura.net / wewearbuildings /
in collaboration with zemos98.org / voluble.net

hackitectura.net / wewearbuildings

hackitectura.net / wewearbuildings is a collaborative team of flow architects composed of Sergio Moreno, osfavelados, aka José Pérez de Lama and Pablo de Soto. They are involved in the theoretical and practical investigation of the territories in which architecture, urbanism, information technologies, communications and new policies converge. hackitectura.net works regularly with José Luis Tirado, an artist in new media.

Web: <http://www.hackitectura.net/>
; <http://www.wewearbuildings.cc>

zemos98.org / voluble.net

zemos98.org / voluble.net, is a team of communication experts who work in image and sound technology. At present, they are developing an investigative work on the narratives that are emerging from the new media (internet, digital video, radio net, web-logs, e-books...). They are also working on the development of specific services of counter-information, the creation of spaces of free expression on the Net and, naturally, in the generation of audiovisual and multimedia events such as the Festival Audiovisual zemos98 which is currently in the process of preparing its sixth edition.

Web: <http://www.zemos98.org/>
; <http://www.voluble.net/>

ORA
ET COLABORA, A POLIEDRIC DEBATE ON COLLABORATIVE ART

We propose an activity which is aimed at theoretical work on a variant of political art which we call collaborative art. A debate on a series of questions on the matter will be developed using theoretical material which has been previously prepared. In order to create the suitable collaborative environment for the debate, attendance will be by invitation only. Participants will be agents and individuals who are especially involved in these practices, the majority of whom are from Andalusia. However, there will also be groups and artists from other Spanish regions such as: Las Agencias, Yomango, Tramm, Citymined, and Nelo Vilar, who are currently developing initiatives and theoretical approaches along the same lines..

Towards a accumulative history of collaborative art

The main objective of this meeting, in which we focus on the intersection between the fields of public art and new social movements (NSMs)¹, is to define, debate and specify the practices which we are dealing with in order to contribute to create a history of political art.

We have seen the non-accumulation of parallel art during 90s². In fact most of the precedents which in the 70s pointed to these emerging art forms went unnoticed. It is very likely that, with the passing of time, some of the most distinctive stars of 90's art will be reclaimed and a version of the history of parallel art will be re-constructed as happened in the past with Fluxus, Zaj or Brossa himself. In the event that this happens, it will probably be a reconstruction which suits the person who performs it and their time, and will therefore be useless to those who contributed in an active way to its development or - even worse - to the ends for which this art was developed. Opportunism and asepsis in historical reconstructions are not new to us. We are also familiar with the fact that these reconstructions usually overlook anything that comes from the south.

A non accumulation of 90's art, which in 2000 is effectively (encounters, performance, mail art, visual poetry, etc.) being translated into an eternal going back to the beginning, a reiteration which, rather than a ritual, becomes a cliché, a repetition of failed attempts from - at least - a decade ago. It is often in the name of incorruptibility that any sign of aperture is rejected, this has recently been dubbed "crypto-art"³.

Only naive art does not admit that it responds (in one way or another) to questions which in fact are being posed around it. We are not referring only to those concerning the market, institutions or groups of interest, but also those asked by masters, disciples - whether aspiring, recognised, like-minded, or competitors - unless we are dealing with reduced and endogamic circles whose instability is such that questions lack consistency, are scarce and self-referential. This sounds like parallel art and it is where we are coming from. We are not going to deny this form of artistic experience, but we think that we should try to optimise it. Emerging art can boast of being indomitable, but if it is not based

in reality, if it refuses to broaden and accumulate its experience, it will lose the opportunity to learn from past errors and will stumble time and time again with all too familiar amateurism.

Thus we advocate accumulation around collaborative art; the systematisation of practices which are at the intersection between artistic and NSM fields and must respond to the questions posed by both.

It is not surprising that, despite our love of emergent and nomadic expression, aspects concerning the institutionalisation of artistic practices are overlooked. In this case, we use this term with its highly negative connotations for the tradition that we are discussing, to refer to the maturing and socialisation process of art which is quite different from the negative process of institutional clientisation.

Therefore we are not talking about clientisation or assimilation, or the institutional co-opting or sweetening of proposals. When we talk about institutionalisation of practices, we are referring to the definition of objectives, setting up of criteria, searching for spaces and audiences, of self-criticism, and self-management. In other words, accumulation of a specific history which frees us from spontaneity and dilettantism, elements which are usually associated with the commendable and eternally emerging arts.

In this construction process, is it justified to demand from art institutions what corresponds to an emerging art but wishes to stop being so? This is what we are trying to do, we're not just talking about furnished flats for the lucky few (us first) and it does not mean to say that we accept with resignation the conditions of institutional art. All arts imply a negotiation of the condition of production, there is no more room for artists in the land of the innocents. Are performance and public art not carried out with specific parameters in mind (rules in accordance with traditions-trends), taking into account a series of conditions and aspiring to convey something to a specific public? It is time for us to put purisms in their place and relativise the autonomy of art. This does not mean backing down but simply calling things by their true name.

Purity tends to be associated with veiled conditioning. The parallel art of the 90's, at least in Valencia, has nourished itself with a group of students who are in the last years of their studies in Fine Art and graduates who find themselves at the impasse of trying to enter the labour market. The continuous renovation of this group meant that the expected consolidation became difficult. Furthermore, the institutional negotiation for claiming spaces and resources involved going through the processes of being recognised by the institutions and its numerous clauses. In this way, as artists, we turned our needs into a virtue, thus denying ourselves the possibility of claiming or negotiating, a task which by the way, is not at all easy.

In effect, we were part of that contingent of artists. Perhaps our reconciliation with this endogamic and circular art comes from the collaboration with social movements, experiences through which we have found that it is possible and legitimate to make political art, which reinvents and vindicates its own space and inevitably involves having to negotiate with institutions. After years of self-employment in which we tried to present political projects to the institutions camouflaged under the formulas of well-intended public art, we have opted for removing our masks and claiming things in a clear and straightforward manner. Perhaps, the outcome of this will be another "no", but this will not put an end to our action and, in the meantime, we will have accumulated a certain knowledge which will help us to examine where we stand and where we want to get to.

Excessive focus on the object, entrapment, institutional sweetening. These are the risks we are already exposing ourselves to by writing this text within an institutional framework and accepting an incidental discussion of political nature. A true paradox, especially if we bear in mind that political art is essentially an indomitable, eternally emerging force, but necessary, if what we demand from art's institutions, is political art in the sense of an exercise of appropriation, democratisation, popularisation, and utopia-isation.

Circulation of cultural elements

Undeniably, the aestheticisation of social practices is not exclusive to artists since, by definition, the New Social Movements have found in originality a new way of articulating their practices and abandoning anonymity.

In fact, in this respect we can talk about a coetaneous effect: both the contemporary political and artistic initiatives which criticise, or are not in line with, the establishment, suffer an estrangement and separation from the mass distribution channels and are victims of their media-related "noise". Thus, both for the NSMs and the Artistic Movements, discovering new channels becomes a necessity in order to be able to fight against ostracism and the information maelstrom. These are simply parallel responses to similar conditionings of cultural transmission of an era.

However, to analyse the progression of the poetics between the NSMs and the Artistic Movements - treating them as social environments with an ongoing nature - it is convenient to pay attention to the dynamics of circulation of cultural elements.

When we examine the role of artists in popular culture, we find that on the one hand there are certain patterns of production

and distribution, but on the other, there are others of "active consumption", i.e., of reception and appropriation by the audience. Social artists, due to the imperatives of the field, have to involve themselves in the investigation and systematisation of their knowledge, in self-criticism, and continuous change. This is translated into productions which are received and emulated by "active audiences". The active audiences - which are - among others - made up of the NSMs - nourish themselves from forms, from narratives, from poetics, which develop in the form of creative practices, new approaches and symbolic frameworks.

Generally, the transmissions of processes by the artistic movements to the NSMs also develops within the framework of a curious popular literature, in which a cultural production by the NSM takes place through a series of devices for reception and re-creation. This transmission of approaches usually occurs in the form of narrations in which urban legends are abundant.

Circulating amongst the activists are a series of actions or "stories", some anonymous, some attributed to specific authors, in which the artistic approaches, in their condition as mythological references, are combined with highly implausible anecdotes. Quite frequently, authorship is wrongly attributed, and works whose authors are unknown are usually assigned to a known artistic group, which tends to create resentment between the different artistic movements.

The symbolic environment of the NSMs can be stimulated by artistic contributions by virtue of their capacity to create a "state of the possible". The virtuality which changes the semantics of art offers the possibility of re-discovering collective action for social change and the utopia-isation of everyday life.

However, circulation does not only go in one direction. Moreover, political artists continuously appropriate the ideas and initiatives of the NSMs - which form part of their patrimony of references. Experience tells us that these initiatives, when elaborated and "brought" to the artistic field, become processes or forms which are then liberated and fed back to the NSMs

What we understand by collaborative art

Below we outline some of the approaches which we believe are appropriate in defining collaborative art.

We are interested in an art whose artistic objectives are clearly political and are linked to the NSM processes. In other words, it is not a question of embellishing out-of-the-system-work with exotic contexts, but taking an active part in the processes, such that works, rather than hanging on the most attractive walls of a house, are displayed in a busy corridor, in which there are not only courtesies and access

rules, but also where one can trip over and find "look where you're going" situations

Networks, in which collaborative work with national and international political and artistic groups searches for convergent initiatives. This does not preclude a local projection of initiatives, whose applications aim to attain a contextual integration with social processes and with the paths opened by the NSMs.

Openness to trans-disciplinary approaches. On the one hand, paying attention to a wide range of formats and applied arts as a way of supporting action - rather than creating a cult of formats - from fine or graphic art, to multimedia, cyber, performance, and public arts, etc. On the other, having an interest in theoretical approaches to various disciplines which can serve as an intersection between knowledge and practice - not from a perspective of technicism or academic navel gazing - of areas ranging from social sciences to architecture, environmental sciences, etc.

A relationship with the media and institutions as accessible environments. We believe that the creation of spaces which are other, is legitimate and appropriate. But the appropriation of already existing spaces is also valid, as, even though they are in the hands of the establishment, they have cracks that call for their exploitation.

Creation of new symbolic frameworks and social uses by conferring new semantics to vital experiences. In other words, interpreting literally the slogan *otros mundos son posibles* (other worlds are possible) and focusing all efforts in that direction.

These and other questions will be posed in the meeting in accordance with the past and present experiences, methodologies and vicissitudes of the participants, so as to create a theoretical framework around political art for the sake of its historical accumulation. The intention is not to organise a select group of thoroughbreds with a desire for posterity, but to create a space for like-minded people who can find answers to specific questions concerning art and its (maybe eternal) gestation process. Will we manage to bell the cat? If we achieve this, will it last? These, and other issues, will be discussed in the present and future meetings.

La Fiambrera Barroca, Sevilla.

La Fiambrera is an active-art group which started its artistic political activity in the mid 90s in Valencia. In 1999, after the group split up, two of their members came to live in Seville and started working

under the name of Fiambrera Barroca. Over the past four years, they have developed their artistic production in collaboration with different local social movements.

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NOTES

1.- By New Social Movements, we understand the heterogeneous spectrum of collectives including antimilitarists, ecologists, anarchists, anti-authoritarians, indigenists,. They are against neo-liberalism, defend human and women's rights, etc. [back]

2
.- We wish to thank Nelo Vilar for contributing with various texts, a preview of his doctoral thesis on the 90's parallel art in Spain. [back]

3.-
See "Criptoarte, criptoartistas, criptorevistas" (Crypto-art, crypto.-artists, crypto-magazines) by Nelo Vilar. Paper presented in Edita 2001. Encuentro de Editores Independientes de Punta Umbría (Meeting of Independent Publishers from Punta Umbría). <http://usuarios.lycos.es/fpperformaticas/teoria/criptoarte.htm> [back]