

COLLECTION

Territories and Fictions

Thinking a New Way of the World

Exhibition from October 26, 2016 to March 13, 2017
Sabatini Building, Floor 3



Zoe Leonard, *Analogie*, 1998-2009. © Zoe Leonard

Territories and Fictions. **Thinking a New Way of the World**

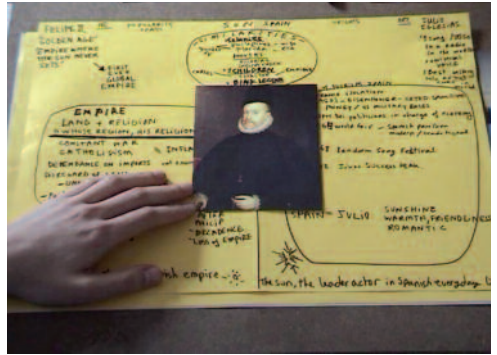
Neoliberalism, synonymous with privatization and the progressive reduction of the public in favor of the private, has become our condition, the social, economic, and political medium in which our activities have been developing in recent decades. Neoliberalism is opposed to any type of government interference in the lives of citizens, believes staunchly in a self-regulating market, and views public administration as a cumbersome impediment to economic growth. However, reality shows that both in its classical nineteenth-century version and in its contemporary equivalent, the ideology of liberalism has never ceased to create structures and norms, consolidating a society whose determination to preserve the free market has made it increasingly authoritarian, and in which apparatuses of control have acted ruthlessly with the principal goal of defending capital above citizens and the common good.

In this order of things, which the French thinkers Christian Laval and Pierre Dardot have called “the new way of the world,” culture occupies a position that is at the same time both central and marginal. The knowledge and communications industries have gained tremendous importance in the world economy and in our system of values as forms of articulating our abilities, preferences, and subjectivities. This preeminence has led to the absorption and subsequent cancellation of a whole series of once critical practices by placing them at the service of the new paradigm. As a revolt against this covert dictatorship, which grew exponentially throughout the twentieth century and started to reach worldwide proportions after the fall of the Berlin Wall, antiglobalization movements were born in the nineties and took expression in protests such as those in Madrid in 1994, social uprisings like that of Chiapas in 1996, and counter-summits like the one held in Seattle in 1999. In the Spanish context, those were years of neoliberal policies based on consumption and property speculation centered largely on the large cities. What Manuel Vázquez Montalbán called “Aznaridad” in reference to the then Spanish prime minister, José María Aznar, was a period characterized by post-1992 euphoria and the triumph of the conservative Popular Party after fourteen years of Socialist government. On the other hand, the international economic crisis that began in 2007, after the fall of Lehman Brothers, was the trigger for the appearance of new “alter-globalization” movements such as Occupy Wall Street, the Arab Spring, and Spain’s 15-M, all of which emerged in 2011.

These circumstances have led to the questioning of what until recently were regarded as unshakable truths, such as the idea of the nation-state, the agency of which has been depleted by the global market and is therefore undergoing a crisis of representativity and disaffection with its institutions and governors. Another outcome has been the disillusionment with technology and the collapse of scientific utopias and myths of ahistorical progress. In the same way, the role of the artist in society has changed, and intellectual activity has lost the almost aristocratic prerogatives it once enjoyed. Artistic production lacks the autonomy it is presumed to have had in the past, and we are constantly being dispossessed of our knowledge and experience.

In this scenario, and within the framework of their own artistic practice, how do artists position themselves with regard to this new way of the world? This exhibition presents various responses, ranging from a reterritorialization of practices and discourses based on the understanding that neoliberalism imposes a global and de-ideologized totalizing system, to the use of fiction as a possible arena for the articulation of alternatives.

The search for the origin of the contemporary restructuring of thought and language promises to be one of the keys to understanding how history and the present have been constructed. One way to carry out this archaeological research is through the theatricalization of the different moments of modernity and its systems of representation in art, as in the proposals of Jorge Ribalta or Peter Friedl, or by proposing narratives and research methodologies that escape from the dominant models, like those of Patricia



Patricia Esquivias, *Folklore #2*, 2008, © Patricia Esquivias



Alice Creischer and Andreas Siekmann, *Las trabajadoras de Brukman* [Brukman Workers], 2004-2006 (detail), © VEGAP, Madrid, 2016

Esquivias. However, it is not only in this attempt to revisit the origins, and so make the progressive deterritorialization of subjectivities visible, that history forms part of the exhibition. It is also present in the firm emphasis placed on the difference between the theoretical presuppositions of a modernity that aspired to judicial equality and the cohabitation of ideological differences sustained by a faith in science and reason, and the totally contrary result we see today. Dystopias thus appear in the narratives of some artists, such as the apocalyptic landscape of Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster's *Atomic Park* (2003) or Josiah McElheny's fictions based on modern architecture.

As a project of the Enlightenment, modernity prised itself away from Christian

theology and the civilizing mission undertaken by the colonial empires, but after World War II it was attacked from within by the god of consumerism, the new "pan-colonial" empire. The transformations on various levels implied by this global market and by constant consumption as the only available lifestyle are explored in Zoe Leonard's work *Analogue* (1998–2009), on the textile industry and commercial fabric in New York City; in the work of Alice Creischer and Andreas Siekmann on the women laboring at the Brukman textile factory in Buenos Aires; and in Allan Sekula's *The Lottery of Sea* (2000), on the regulation of maritime traffic.

The critical agent is now the "Other," which the system continually tries to swallow up



Josiah McElheny, *Model for a Film Set (The Light Spa at the Bottom of a Mine)*, 2008
© Josiah McElheny



Still from *Salomania*, Renate Lorenz and Pauline Boudry, 2009

or, if it fails to do so, to eliminate, classifying it as “minor” in terms of identity. The reflections of Mapa Teatro on gentrification; of Joaquim Jordà on the urban redevelopment of Barcelona in the nineties; of Hans Haacke, in *Castles in the Air* (2012), on the social, political, and economic conditions of an outlying suburb of Madrid; and of Harun Farocki on control and competition in capitalist labor—all explicitly or implicitly underline the existence of that denied otherness. Outskirts, borders, everything expelled from the norm and the nucleus becomes the space of the non-adapted, the true face of a system that claims to accept otherness but whose resources are designed precisely to eliminate it, as is made patent by the video by Antoni Muntadas, *On Translation: Miedo/Jauf* (2007).

Serialization and the normalization of the individual are the objectives pursued by neoliberalism in order to dynamize its abuse of power. That “Other,” which in the origins of colonialism was identified with the indigenous and with woman or the feminized male, now peoples modern cities, and the system therefore pretends to respect



Dora García, *Men I Love / The Great Gastby Read by Andy Kaufman*, 2009 (detail), © Dora García

it in its singularity, since it now has enough value and solvency to be converted into an element of mass consumption. The body, in its differentiation of the male/white model, was the element used to identify and reject that “Other,” and it is also the body that is reclaimed in this exhibition through works by artists like Renate Lorenz, Pauline Boudry, and Itziar Okariz, reflecting on exclusion and sexual, gender, or racial difference.

For their part, some artists share a desire to recover spaces of subjectivity on the basis of the ludic and the poetic. This attempt at reappropriation uses irony as a tool, often throwing the system’s own mechanisms of extenuation and saturation back in its face. In very different ways, Néstor San Miguel and Dora García explore this path and show that the mental model imposed upon us will lead us to involution if the referents that guide us are merely those of efficiency and productivity. Throughout the exhibition, in fact, these two premises appear as the key notions to be shrugged off if the political capacity of the individual is to be recuperated.

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from 2:15 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
are open Collection 1
and one temporary exhibition
(check website)

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Exhibition rooms in all venues
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Related activities

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Territories and Fictions.

Thinking a New Way of the World

Guided visits with commentary
by the mediation team

Fridays at 7:15 p.m.

and Sundays at 12:30 p.m.

(From November 10)

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