

There is no other poetry than action

This seminar explores the use of “theatrical” gestures, behaviours and performances in the social sphere to express disagreement and dissidence, and examines the way that today’s art, specifically the theatre, has adopted and dialogued with these non-artistic theatricalities. The turn of political and social circumstances in recent years has allowed the public sphere to resume its role as a privileged place of collective manifestation. In contrast with the last third of the 20th century, dissident action does not flee from urban spectacularization, sheltering itself in private or clandestine spheres; rather, it transforms and materializes itself in the public sphere.

Concrete initiatives and large mobilizations have returned a sense of theatricality of the body and the gaze to the city; actions based on realization, that differ from imitation and that do not function to reinforce the performance of predetermined roles or choreographies. The theatre, the art of acting in front of other individuals and becoming someone else, provides means and models for public dissention, demanding other relationships and formulating new situations and courses of action.

The seminar provides a framework from which one can begin to think about the extent of real intervention involved in certain initiatives that make use of theatrically and staging in the city and how it dialogues with the practices that are currently developing in the theatre.

This seminar posits that the possibility of an art that is effective in the public sphere involves recognition of the artistic and the poetic in the “real” actions. Expressing this necessity, towards the end of *Poeta delle ceneri* (1966-67), Pier Paolo Pasolini wrote: *Only the actions of life alone will be communicated, and they will be poetry, because, I repeat, there is no other poetry than true action.* Unlike other artists of his generation, who promoted dissolution of artistic practices in life, the interests of the author of *Scritti corsai* focused on the practice of a poetry as real as the actions of daily life. Given perspective, still relevant today, involves the recognition of poetry, an art or a cinema, that continue to be autonomous, but that speak the same “language” of reality.

Speaking this language does not mean being in agreement, but rather situating oneself in a position conducive to interlocution; interlocution with those whom we could possibly agree and with whom we could build an “us”, but also with those from whom we dissent, with those who try to impose a reality with rules and models that are hostile, unfair, or undesirable. This requires resisting the essential aspiration of spectacular power; the theatre, like play, warns that the positions of the players are interchangeable, that there are no substantially assigned roles, and that, in short, the state of things can be transformed. In contrast with the legitimating function of the power reserved for the Baroque “theatrum mundi”, the theatrical metaphor applied to the social sphere currently offers a stimulus for immanent action. Therefore, in saying that *there is no other poetry than action*, means assuming that the distinctive methods and workings of the theatre can once again display a two-fold efficacy, the aesthetic or artistic and one that influences the social and political reality.

In attempting to detect this two-fold aesthetic and political efficacy, in the context of this seminar, the term “action” does not refer to gestures that expect a direct or explicit intervention, but rather to models of hybridity situated in the confluence between the visual and performing arts (mainly from the 1950s and 1960s onwards) and characterized by an expanded practice that eludes self-referentiality. It refers to practices that have abandoned the theatrical sphere, and also, those whose principle motivation is a commitment to reality.

This seminar aims to share reflections about the specificity of contemporary stage practices applied to the production of real action, as well as, discuss the

questions that arise from such practices and the theoretical tools one can use to think about them.

There is no other poetry than action seeks to explore, from the vantage point of artistic practice with Rabih Mroué, Rold Abderhalden and Héctor Bourges, as well as, from a theoretical and investigative perspective with Maaïke Bleeker, Adrian Heathfield, Simon Bayly, Leire Vergara, Jordi Claramonte and Ana Vujanović, the multiple artistic actions that aspire to exert a transformative efficacy over the current situation: one in which reality is felt to be expropriated and false. A reality, in which the requirements of political decision-making, are perceived more than ever as artifices, in contrast with the social conflict that is experienced in the face of the spectacularization of politics and society.

It is essential to stimulate a reflection about the operational logic of these practices, often dissident, as opposed to the theatre of hegemonic reality, in which the roles are known. A theatre in crisis that reveals a world without fissures, in which the only apparent option is to assume tacit roles and scripts, incapable of redefining themselves from a point of subjectivity.

The array of practices to be addressed in the seminar is wide: small format experiences, experimental labs based on emotion, untouched by the colonization of the spectacular (or if it does, it is handled as one more form of theatricality with which to experiment), practices that seek the creation of communities and that can be located in the peripheries of the stage circuit and theatrical gestures that dialogue with daily life or that put in crisis the current representations and repertoires that resist impositions. But it also encompasses larger productions, conceived as critical reflections about the stage, in which dissidence operates precisely from the very act of questioning the certainties that make up reality, in a transformation of the audience's gaze. There are practices in which the body is recognized, exhibited and defined as a place of dissidence in the experimentation with identity, the history and biography, in which the body serves as anchor against a reality that feels inauthentic. And, of course, it includes theatrical practices that operate in urban life and that interact with it through tactics of invisibility and infiltration that aim to displace the routine experience of spectators unconscious of their condition as such, or on the contrary, that present themselves as artifices with which to engage in a confrontation with the difference introduced in daily life. Finally, also of interest, is the more visible confluence of theatricality and the dissidence in the use of the representation and organization of bodies to manifest disagreement in the streets, in public spaces, in the manifestation of citizen desire and dignity as opposed to the instances of entrenched power in a theatre where reality is regulated.

April 12. Nouvel Building, Auditorium 200

4:30 p.m.

There is no other poetry than action: an introduction

José Antonio Sánchez

5:00 p.m.

Shifting cartographies

Rolf Abderhalden

This proposal comes from a research project, *Cartografías movedizas*, conducted by Mapa Teatro–Artist Laboratory on the streets of Bogotá, in collaboration with the students enrolled in the Universidad Nacional de Colombia’s master’s program in Theatre and Live Arts.

5:30 p.m.

Because everything can always be different, even if it never is...Teatro Ojo or emotion as a field of political intervention

Héctor Bourges

In recent works this theatre without a theatre group has been engaged in a process or a quest not to let the contemporary conditions of Mexico become sedimented, in a narrative that “normalizes” a situation and a time that are out of balance. Teatro Ojo’s projects foment encounters in which fragility does not irremediably equal sadness but rather political potential.

6:00 p.m.

Break

6:15 p.m.

The body as a frontier. Artistic practice as dissident epistemology

Leire Vergara

This presentation analyses, through a series of contemporary artistic practices, the materiality of the body and how it can be approached from the new policies of border control. Parting from the idea of the body as a frontier, it will set forth the means by which different artistic proposals express dissidence regarding the interruption of the gestures, positions, attitudes and the protocols of vigilance and archive exercised directly on the migrant body.

6:45 p.m.

Necessity, possibility and effectiveness of the aesthetic

Jordi Claramonte

To paraphrase Theodor Adorno, if there is anything evident about art it is that there is no category in which all artistic activities and all contemporary aesthetic sensibilities can be grouped. The time has come to think of conceptual tools that are more capable and better articulated than the old hierarchical visions and more fertile than the obsolete post-modern belief that anything goes.

7:15 p.m.

Round table
Rolf Abderhalden, Héctor Bourges, Jordi Claramonte, José Antonio Sánchez and Leire Vergara.

Moderated by: Sebastián Asioli, Isabel de Naverán and Fernando Quesada.

April 12. Nouvel Building, Auditorium 400

8:30 p.m.*

Rabih Mroué.
The Inhabitants of Images

Performance, 2009. Co-produced by Tanzquartier-Wien, Bidoun magazine and Ashkal Alwan (Beirut)

*Admission to the performance is free of charge but requires a ticket. Tickets can be picked up at the box office starting on April 10th.

Three mysterious occurrences in a city haunted by images, of people known to me, and others unknown. Images abandoned by their occupants; some have become ruins. An image is invaded, a new face moves in—sometimes an ally, sometimes an old foe. One vanishes, while another travels from one picture to another.

Rabih Mroué.

The Inhabitants of Images is the title of a novel by Mohamad Abi Samra published by Dar An-Nahar in 2003. It has now moved into the title of a work by Rabih Mroué, without the permission of the author.



Rabih Mroué. *The inhabitants of images*. Performance, 2009

Rabih Mroué (Beirut, 1967) is an actor, dramaturge, artist and a contributing editor of the Lebanese publication Kalamon and The Drama Review. He is also the co-founder of the Beirut Art Centre (BAC). His work questions the processes of construction and representation of memory and historical and political narrative, from a varied and complex artistic practice located on the border between the theatrical and visual culture.

April 13. Nouvel Building, Auditorium 200

4:30 p.m.

Serious games

Maaïke Bleeker

This presentation will approach the new theatricality of dissidence in terms of a move away from what Alain Badiou has termed the passion for the real. The new theatricality of dissidence does not expose the spectacularized character of public life in order to reject it for being 'mere theatre' and therefore not real, but in order to take it very serious. And play with it.

5:00 p.m.

Carry on Camping?: spectacle and concealment in the performance of politics

Simon Bayly

This paper seeks to weave a relationship between the performance aesthetics of the protest camp, ranging from the actions that took place in Europe between 2005 and 2010 to the events of the Arab Spring and the Occupy movement in European cities from 2010–12. It proposes the protest camp as a space organized around a dialectic of ecstatic revelation and clandestine concealment.

5:30 p.m.

Staging ideology: Immunitas and communitas in today's neoliberal democratic society

Ana Vujanović

In order to reflect on how the social order can be breached and changed, this presentation seeks to revitalize the outdated concept of the social drama, since in the 'postideological world' – usually analyzed by postdramatic theatre model – it emphasizes the critical moments of a conflictual society. Therein the social structure as we know it collapses in mass performances of communitas and immunitas reveals itself as a governmental tool of normalizing ongoing precarization.

6:00 p.m.

Break

6:15 p.m.

The Ghost Time of Transformation

Adrian Heathfield

This paper looks at questions of curatorial strategy in relation to radical performance and dance histories, and their reactivation and alteration through contemporary works. In particular examines *Moments: A History of Performance in 10 Acts* (ZKM, 2012), and the use of fluid, processual and transformative approaches to the display of performance histories in the present. What might these radical approaches have to do with the survival and transmission of some ineffable qualities of performance?

7:00 p.m.

Round table

Simon Bayly, Maaïke Bleeker, Adrian Heathfield and Ana Vujanovic.

Moderated by: Esther Belvís, Victoria Pérez Royo and Luca Zanchi

7:30 p.m.

Debate and conclusion

Participants

Rolf Abderhalden. Artist. Manager of the interdisciplinary master's program in Theatre and Live Arts at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia. Co-founder of Mapa Teatro (Bogotá).

Sebastián Asioli. Artist and independent researcher. Participant in the study program Expanded Theatricalities at Museo Reina Sofía and member of the collective Enclave (Granada).

Simon Bayly. Artist and writer. His recent publications include *A Pathognomy of Performance* (2011) and is a Principal Lecturer in Drama, Theatre and Performance at the University of Roehampton (London).

Esther Belvís. Researcher, writer and pedagogue. PhD in Theatre and Performance from the University of Warwick and the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona.

Maaïke Bleeker. Dramaturge in theatre and dance and President of Performance Studies international (PSi). Professor of Theatre Studies at Utrecht University (the Netherlands).

Héctor Bourges. Artist and member of the company Teatro Ojo (Mexico City).

Jordi Claramonte. Author of various books on aesthetics and philosophy and professor of aesthetics at the National University of Distance Education (Madrid).

Isabel de Naverán. Independent researcher. Member of ARTEA and Bulegoa Z/B (Bilbao).

Adrian Heathfield. Writer and curator. Professor of Performance and Visual Culture at the University of Roehampton (London).

Rabih Mroué. Artist, co-editor of The Drama Review and co-founder and commission member of the Beirut Art Centre (Beirut).

Victoria Pérez Royo. Researcher, professor of aesthetics and art theory at the Universidad de Zaragoza and member of ARTEA (Madrid-Berlin).

Fernando Quesada. Member of ARTEA. Architect and tenured professor of architecture projects at the Universidad de Alcalá de Henares (Madrid).

José Antonio Sánchez. Chaired professor of art history at the Universidad de Castilla La Mancha and member of ARTEA (Madrid).

Leire Vergara. Curator, independent researcher and member of Bulegoa Z/B (Bilbao).

Ana Vujanović. Freelance theorist, dramaturg, and cultural worker in contempora Streaming en www.livestream.com/museoreinasofia ry performing arts (Berlin/Hamburg/Belgrade).

Luca Zanchi. Artist, author of critical essays and participant in the Art History and Visual Culture program offered by the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, the Universidad Complutense de Madrid and Museo Reina Sofía.

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from 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Sundays

from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p. m.*

(*From 2:30 p. m. onwards only
the Collection galleries can be visited)

Closed Tuesdays

Rooms close 15 minutes prior
to museum closing

www.museoreinasofia.es

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April 12 – 13, 2013

Nouvel Building, Auditorium 200 and Auditorium 400

Organized by: ARTEA and Museo Reina Sofía

Text: ARTEA

This seminar takes place within the Program for Advanced Studies in Critical Practices “Expanded Theatricalities: gestural models and dissident repertoires” that is offered at Museo Reina Sofía, in collaboration with the master’s program in Performing Arts Practice and Visual Culture at the Universidad de Alcalá de Henares.

This activity is linked to ARTEA’s research project “Dissident Theatricalities” HAR2012-34075, which is funded by Spain’s State Department for Research, Development and Innovation.

Admission free of charge, but space is limited.

Admission to the performance *The inhabitants of Images* (Auditorium 400) is free of charge but requires a ticket. Tickets can be picked up at the box office starting on April 10th.

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