Carta(s)

Museo en Red Interweaving Ecosystems

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Artists in Quarantine

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Autonomous and Connected

Events such as the storming of the U.S. Capitol by Donald Trump's hordes have disorientated political analysts, including those on the extreme right.[1] The sight of a mass of people, enraged and disorganized, gaining access to the interior of the building and then wandering around aimlessly revealed their clear lack of a plan—beyond taking a selfie in front of Robert W. Weir's *Embarkation of the Pilgrims* (1837) or putting their feet up on Nancy Pelosi's desk. Further inspection of the images shared on social media suggests the crowd's main objective was to congregate and perform a previously rehearsed ritual, not to seize power. The significance of the crowd's actions lay in the gesture, not the meaning. The actions conveyed no sense of genuine intent, because intent was no more than assumed. And, no matter how much the Republican leader was beaten at the ballot box, Trump's program, based on lies and half-truths, had not gone away. This was not a case of "dead dogs don't bite." The architect disappears, but his words survive. As Victor Klemperer recounts in his book *The Language of the Third Reich*, the language and gestures of totalitarianism attach themselves to our subjectivities, shaping them and conditioning them for generations.[2]

For most of the past hundred years, radio and television reached audiences with zero interaction. By contrast, today's communication systems are highly immersive and organized into a vast, global info-entertainment apparatus. Followers are urged to involve themselves, thus providing information and data about their tastes and experiences. The nature of the content is irrelevant; what matters is the information. Max Weber's instrumental rationality has been turned on its head.[3] The most efficient means to achieve concrete ends are no longer sought. Nowadays the tactic is to endlessly devise new objectives aimed at consolidation and expropriation. In the past, war was thought of as a transitional period that would end once the enemy had surrendered or been eliminated. These days, enemies are invented so that war never ends.

Social networks are in a state of constant effervescence. Any event, real or fictitious, manages to trigger a disturbance. Some very active groups turn out to be loud but vague, moving in either one direction or the exact opposite. This means that images and statements can change meaning with frightening ease, for all points of reference have disappeared. Full of sound, they signify nothing. Now everyone is a potential enemy.

Just like the fascisms of the twentieth century, the neofascisms of today render any separation between public and private irrelevant. And just like their forerunners, neofascisms discredit democratic institutions and demonize minorities and foreigners. Today, however, a single event can have an irreversible and almost immediate effect on a majority of human beings and all other species, given that all forms of life have been drawn into the cogs of the global economy and the great war machinery that serves it.

Culture is a construction that can be used to aid coexistence or foment ignorance and fabricate a pejorative otherness in relation to those perceived as different or positioned outside the norms. It can be a guiding light, or it can conceal injustices. In his *18th Brumaire*, Karl Marx pointed out how a good many of the revolutionary ideas of 1789 were regurgitated in 1851, taken up by a conservative bourgeoisie desirous of reinstating its own claims. Marx believed that in moments of transformation societies conjure up the distant past to make sense of recent events. But he warned that in doing so they do not always appreciate the way history is transmitted nor the way it might impact on their own era, that it might weigh society down in a way that has the opposite effect to the one desired. "The social revolution of the nineteenth century," Marx said, "cannot begin its own task until it has stripped away all superstitious veneration of the past. Previous revolutions relied on memories of universal history in order to deaden themselves to their own content. The nineteenth century revolution must be allowed to bury its dead in order to conceive of its own content. Slogans transcended content then; now content transcends slogans."[4]

Whereas in previous eras conservative factions clamored for a return to institutional order, nowadays such factions use the

language of openness to thwart the same liberties they purport to defend. The difficulty lies in reclaiming the past they seek to hide and in recovering the language they took from us. The two things are inseparable, for epistemic aggression is now connected to human knowledge and the web that communication companies have woven. There is no logic to touting universal knowledge and forgetting that not everyone has access to it. Or forgetting that such knowledge is only partial or that it has its own agenda (when it is not simply fraudulent). One learns, for example, of the discovery of America, not of its conquest. Or as Bruno Latour notes, in the official narrative North America likes to describe itself as a melting pot and a nation of immigrants, when it has systematically eliminated its first inhabitants.[5] In much the same way, the collective and, to a degree, anonymous work of certain critical sections of the contemporary art world becomes, in some cases, a sort of neoliberal collectivism that reflects the positions of Silicon Valley without questioning them. The sort of empty community represented by relational aesthetics in the 1990s is a clear example of this.

The artistic and political vanguards of the first half of the twentieth century believed that their mission revolved around revealing the certainties of human existence and pointing the way toward a better future. As late as 1967, Bruce Nauman produced a neon work with an especially self-evident title: *The True Artist Helps the World by Revealing Mystic Truths*. But what is the role of the avant-garde when there is no path to follow, no mystery to get to the bottom of, because all have been co-opted or turned into slogans?

Resistance, revolution, and institutional process are intertwined concepts. They are not consecutive phases in a linear development but constitutive factors in a historical moment.[6] Our moment is characterized by the circulation of goods, money, and information: logistics, finance, and digital industries make up the backbone of the neoliberal economy. If Marx had the factory at the beginning of the value chain, goods these days are manufactured across a vast logistical area, with assembly and innovation applied in separate spaces.[7] Culture is not at risk of becoming scarce; rather, the danger lies in an excess of it and in its uneven distribution, in the fact that its commitments are drowned out by a system that

expands and strengthens by increasing its rate of exchange, irrespective of content.

In a 2015 text entitled «Duty-Free Art», Hito Steyerl highlights the existence of huge warehouses full of artworks in the free ports of cities such as Geneva, Luxembourg, and Singapore.[8] These spaces are not governed by state jurisdictions nor subject to any form of national sovereignty. Their purpose is not to display art treasures accumulated over generations or to edify citizens. Quite the opposite: their owners tend to hide their belongings, and their transactions are usually opaque. No one knows exactly what these warehouses contain, although hundreds of Picassos and other masterpieces are rumored to be stored in Geneva alone. If national museums reflect a country's history and authority, then these hangars represent their collapse. Steyerl wonders, therefore, whether the extra-state nature of these free zones might be reconsidered from a different political perspective, as has occurred with autonomist experiments in Hong Kong and Rojava. Steyerl sees it as a matter of connecting these places in what she terms a reinvented "circulationism," a system that favors circulation and acts of solidarity instead of expropriation and speculation. "If copyright can be dodged and called into question, why can't private property? If one can share a restaurant dish JPEG on Facebook, why not the real meal? Why not apply fair use to space, parks, and swimming pools? Why only claim open access to JSTOR and not MIT—or any school, hospital, or university for that matter?"[9]

Paul Valéry's idea of the artist working in isolation, self-sufficiently deciding upon his poetic exhortations, is a fallacy. However, the alternative is not constant connectivity. As Mario Merz reminds us, citing the Vietcong general Võ Nguyên Giáp: "If the enemy is concentrated, it loses territory; if it is spread out, it loses strength." Neoliberalism has invaded our personal space and time. Both have become homogenous, their differences formal and interchangeable. When everything becomes culture, culture disappears, there is no pause in the work-life continuum. Leisure has ceased to be a break in the working day and established itself as a constant state. The rites of passage and transit, which defined previous generations, have faded away. The ultimate

outcome is a never-ending redundancy, an unwavering present that looks back and nostalgically consumes a past that never existed. Through being connected, our thinking has become self-absorbed. We find ourselves trapped in a predetermined framework of representation, which neuters art's explosive potential.

The organic intellectual paradigm, which links to a political party or a traditional cultural current and seeks to steer social movements from the outside, has ceased to function. On the one hand, there is no longer a single class to aim at but a multitude of communities, networks, and groupings that may or may not prove durable. On the other hand, nobody broadcasts their opinions from a hypothetical exterior sphere. The absolute reason of Eurocentric enlightenment has been superseded by an infinity of approximations to knowledge. New technologies and social media have hastened this process.

The crafting of an alternative, shared narrative is now more necessary than ever. It requires the creation of a new lexicon, different to the one imposed by cultural and industrial elites. It must emerge from groups and individuals who have traditionally been denied a voice, and it must incorporate, in its constitution, what the Moroccan author Abdelkebir Khatibi calls "double-critique," a questioning of colonial reasoning and the position of colonized people within that reasoning.[10] We know decolonization processes have not always been a success and that they can even, as happened with the "Arab springs," lead to counterrevolutionary periods. It is imperative that we clarify why they failed, analyze the causes and consequences.

The decolonization of history and language requires agency, which can be attained only through institutional mutation. After all, as Virginia Wolf said, a woman needs money and a room of her own to write. The museum is our home and our purse. Museums therefore oscillate between being zones of power, which demand submission from all who seek shelter in them, and places of inquiry, which help nurture alternative ways of doing and thinking and which, in short, encourage the imagining and realization of life's infinite possibilities.

Museo en Red

Over the past decade, several cells have clustered around the Reina Sofía to form the MeR (Museo en Red, meaning "Network of Museums"). This molecular structure comprises heterogenic entities: L'Internationale, Red de Conceptualismos del Sur, Fundación de los Comunes, Institute of Radical Imagination, Museo Situado, and Laboratoria. Unlike other networks, MeR has no corporate or management board. No matter how laudable its intentions, no board aspires to defend a deontological code for art centers or promote best practice compliance. The MeR's ethos has nothing to do with enhanced business efficiency.

The MeR is an exercise in alternative institutionalism. It is committed to the present and a reality in which its every principle must be well-founded. While the world revolves around communication communities, the MeR aspires to revive the social side of artistic and cognitive activity, which is why it is not governed according to preestablished aims, academic norms, or administrative ultimatums. The MeR is not an abstract space. Its activities unfold in individual members' spaces, and they interact with one another and with their own environments. This requires them to continually evolve, in accordance with what the Chilean biologist Humberto Maturana defines as *autopoiesis*; that is, the basic property of living beings.[11] Thus, L'Internationale, which is a confederation of European museums, recently also constituted itself as a not-for-profit association headquartered in Brussels. While membership in the confederation has an institutional character, membership in the association is individual in nature. This generates flows and symbiotic relationships that allow the community of members that constitute L'Internationale to adapt organically to various social, economic, and political circumstances.

Unlike neoliberal organizational structures, the MeR's molecular arrangement veers away from taking up competitive or narcissistic positions, replacing self-evaluation and fear of failure with a spirit of inquiry and care. Decisions are negotiated collectively. The way the Red de Conceptualismos del Sur,

the Fundación de los Comunes, and the Institute of Radical Imagination collaborated on the campaign "Normality was the problem," during the first months of the pandemic, is a prime example of this.

While the MeR's members all have their own particular interests in the areas of research, collections, archives, education, and activism, they also share a series of values. First, that in the modern era, due attention must be paid to the importance of knowledge production and the extreme precariousness of the existence of knowledge providers. Second, that the need to democratize access to culture and to decolonize its practices is urgent. Third, that institutions must be built that offer solidarity and welcome, a welcome that is to be extended to all other living beings and helps answer the need for new frameworks, visions, and representations of the human-biosphere continuum. Fourth, commitment to the common good. And fifth, that change can be enacted only in conjunction with others: that constraints on disciplines must be dismantled, for every cultural impulse gains in strength when united to other sectors of civil society or other social movements.

The Reina Sofía of 2021 is very different to the Reina Sofía of 2008, when I became the museum's director. The institution has changed, as has the world. At the internal level, the museum gained its own legislation on October 5, 2011, giving it a greater degree of autonomy.[12] The museum's statutes now explicitly define the remits of the board of trustees, the director, and the Ministry of Culture, which oversees the museum. None of these three pillars can be usurped by another. The Ministry of Culture supports and supervises the running of the museum and has the prerogative to name or remove trustees. The director is responsible for fulfilling the museum's objectives, and those objectives must be approved by the board, though approval or disapproval cannot be arbitrary. Board members cannot interfere in the museum's technical operations. In this sense, the reply given by the Minister for Education, Culture and Sport, José Ignacio Wert, to journalists in November 2014 when questioned about a case brought against the museum by the Spanish Association of Christian Lawyers, was revealing: "the museum and its director have total autonomy."[13] The Christian Lawyers, who had taken offense at a work included

in the exhibition *Un saber realmente útil* (*Really Useful Knowledge*, 2014–2015), claiming that it incited hatred, called for the show be shut down and for the museum's director to be barred from public office. The situation would have been a lot more complicated had the museum not enjoyed such autonomy. Had Minister Wert acceded to the group's demands, the museum's ability to provide a platform to works of creative dissidence, as it has sought to do over the past decade, would have been severely compromised.

The Reina Sofía's alliance with the Fundación de los Comunes is much the stronger for this autonomy. The collaboration began in 2008 with a seminar, "El arte de la crisis" (Crisis art), that examined, in principle, the relationship between debt politics and culture. In subsequent years, the joint-work initiative has focused on other hot topics of public-sector interest: the politics and aesthetics of memory; and action and radical imagination, specifically in regard to archives, archival positioning, and ecofeminism. Thinkers and activists such as Immanuel Wallerstein, Toni Negri, Rita Segato, Suely Rolnik, and Yayo Herrero have taken part in conferences, workshops, and publications. Some activities have been held in the Reina Sofía's auditorium and classrooms, others in spaces run by groups including Traficantes de sueños, Tabacalera, and Ingobernable. This joint-work initiative culminated in an international gathering, "El nuevo rapto de Europa" (The new European rapture, February–March 2014), which called for the establishment of political actors drawn from a collective intelligence and for the breaking down of boundaries between debate and action. The filmmaker Pere Portabella captured, in careful detail, the atmosphere at these encounters in his film *Informe general II* (*General Report II*, 2015). The way debate at these seminars fed back into some of the proposals is evident in *Playgrounds* (2014), a film about the reinvention and occupation of public squares; in the aforementioned exhibition *Un saber realmente útil*, about the relationship between art, education, and activism; and in *Continuará* (*It Will Go On*), an installation devised by Maja Bajevic for the Palacio de Cristal in May 2011, relating to the occupation of Puerta del Sol by the *indignados* ("the indignant") that same year.

As a state entity, the Reina Sofía's scope naturally extends beyond its physical base in Madrid. To celebrate *Piedad y terror en Picasso: El camino a* Guernica (*Pity and Terror: Picasso's Path to* Guernica), an exhibition the museum held in 2017, the Reina Sofía teamed up with La Casa Invisible, a cultural center in Málaga, to organize a Picasso seminar. It made sense to hold the seminar in Málaga, Picasso's hometown and a place that has increasingly embraced his spirit in recent years. But rather than turn to Málaga's Picasso Museum or the Casa Natal (the "House of Birth" museum), an independent space was invited to host the exhibition. The Andalusian capital has reinvented itself as an outward-looking metropolis, with a cultural policy focused on tourism and a financial model based on real estate growth, and so taking a national museum to La Casa Invisible was sure to stimulate an artistic discussion on urban spaces.

Having Territorio Doméstico (Domestic Territory), a feminist collective connected to the Museo Situado, perform in one of the Reina Sofía's auditoriums represented the same strategy in reverse: this time it was the national museum that hosted another group's displacement. On February 28, 2021, the collective presented a dramatized radio soap opera, *Querían brazos y llegamos personas* (They wanted arms but people arrived). At the piece's conclusion, the participants—cleaning ladies from the Lavapiés neighborhood of Madrid, and so performers of and witnesses to their own experiences—discussed the work with the audience: its origins, their lack of legal protection, the injustices they have suffered. As was the case at La Casa Invisible, their participation was at once real and artificial, and it had a disorientating effect on the audience. Echoing the theater of Bertolt Brecht and Augusto Boal, both events challenged what is commonly perceived of as the norm. They interrupted reality's regular flow and turned the spotlight on themselves, making themselves visible, allowing what usually remains hidden or goes unnoticed to be seen. When the street becomes a stage and the museum becomes a spectacle, the content of cultural production inevitably looks to the former, while the reality of lived experience and activities not deemed worthy of the canon head for the latter.

These projects have not been without their critics or bones of contention. The Reina Sofía's connection with the Fundación de

los Comunes and the Red de Conceptualismos del Sur, for example, has not been well understood and has even been criticized in some artistic and political quarters. Complicity has been essential to defining what exactly was being exhibited or explained at every step and who was claiming authorship of the work or declining to recognize it as their own. In other initiatives the Reina Sofía has participated but chosen to maintain a low profile. In some situations, this has been for strategic reasons; in others, it has been to preserve an organization's independence. The museum has been careful not to "colonize" the MeR, though this has not been without the odd contradiction.

An exhibition that took several years of intensive preparation and would eventually travel to the Museo de Arte in Lima and the Museo de la Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero in Buenos Aires, initially opened in Madrid in 2012. Entitled *Perder la forma humana: Una imagen sísmica de los años ochenta en América Latina* (Losing the human form: A seismic image of the 1980s in Latin America), the exhibition was coordinated by the Museo Reina Sofía and the Red de Conceptualismos del Sur and involved more than thirty MeR researchers. Toward the end of the project, six of the thirty took collective responsibility for curating the exhibition. This was a challenge on several levels: What devices might serve to make aesthetic forms and dissident activists visible without turning them into monuments or reducing them to mere inert documents? How might a shared to-do list be negotiated and organized? How might such a list fit in with administrative procedures that can be excessively pedantic? How can expropriating knowledge be avoided when the system has perfected such sophisticated and automatic forms of capturing it? Several conferences, at which the results of different strands of research were discussed before public audiences, were held while the show was still being prepared. Soon afterward, art dealers approached the Reina Sofía offering to sell the museum materials that had been on display at the conferences, events that had been financed using public money. Situations such as these, and the questions and dilemmas they raise, can be overcome through dialogue and the establishment of a shared space. At a recent conference, Francesco Careri, the artist and cofounder of Stalker Lab / Osservatorio

Nomade, observed that his mission as an activist is always to push things to the limit. According to Careri, it boils down to a sort of game of cat and mouse, showing the institution some activities and hiding others.[14] Although the MeR has, at times, employed similar tactics, there is an essential difference: the commitment to building permanent links. The priority for the MeR has never been the performative action itself but rather institutional transformation.

We would like to think that the space the Reina Sofía and other MeR members have created is free from the routine aggression that blights many other contemporary cultural facilities. Such places tend to forget about people's right to hospitality.[15] The invitation to collaborate with a gallery is often accompanied by antagonism toward their way of doing or understanding things, be they artists, curators, or intermediaries. They are accepted, but only on condition that they put their idiosyncrasies to one side. We must be honest and recognize that the "hosted" party is usually the one who suffers from this kind of intimidation, but it can happen within organizations too.

In a period of mass privatizations, the Reina Sofía's connections to its MeR partners have helped it to preserve its public service nature. A network of mutual care, solidarity, and sorority—what Stefano Harney and Fred Moten might term the *undercommons*—has built up around the MeR.[16] The art centers confederated under the L'Internationale umbrella have ironed out their differences—the inevitable consequences of their being public-sector entities answerable to an array of national and municipal legislations—and organized themselves into a not-for-profit European association. From there, L'Internationale and the MeR's other members aim to break down barriers imposed by country borders and fan out across a common territory.

The MeR makes sure that the Reina Sofía continually questions the foundations it is built on. That said, things other than discursive matters are also worthy of a mention. Although museum collections have, by definition, a patrimonial slant, the MeR pushes the idea that its members are not the owners but rather the custodians of the artworks or documents they house. The duty is to preserve them,

keep them wherever makes the most sense, and ensure they are afforded due context. Furthermore, they must be made genuinely accessible. This entails establishing a glossary, rules, and norms of collective use that regulate such repositories.[17]

Like the Reina Sofía, the other MeR members are not the same entities they were a decade ago. Their relationship to the Reina Sofía has evolved too. They were perhaps initially suspicious and wary of the museum, given its innate capacity for homogenizing and smoothing away the edges of political acts performed by collectives who navigate between art and activism. But with time, the collaboration has grown through mutual support. Indeed, it would be no exaggeration to say that some of the projects that have come out of the museum's more traditional departments, such as Collections and Temporary Exhibitions, have given our MeR partners pause for thought, especially as regards how to present and interpret images.

Poéticas de la democracia: Imágenes y contraimágenes de la Transición (*The Poetics of Democracy: Images and Counter-images from the Spanish Transition*, 2018) was an exercise in microhistory that deconstructed cultural myths associated with a two-year period in Spain's transition to democracy, 1976–1978, a time frame spanning the 37th Venice Biennale and the Spanish courts' ratification of the new constitution. Two works, produced from distinct perspectives and using different techniques, summed up the show with their contrasting visions and irreconcilable nonconformity. The first image, placed in the main gallery, comprised a series of canvases entitled *Paredón* (*Up against the Wall*, 1975), by the Equipo Crónica, a group from Valencia. The canvases reference and represent the wall against which three members of the Front of Revolutionary Anti-Fascists were executed by a Francoist tribunal on September 27, 1975. The second image was a poster by Rafael González that, with the tagline "Salta la tapia" (Jump the wall), advertised a series of rock and flamenco concerts at the Miraflores Psychiatric Hospital in Seville in 1982. The billboard was posted everywhere and called upon people to storm the institution's walled barricades. Equipo Crónica's paintings protested against the execution but accepted the immutability of the wall.

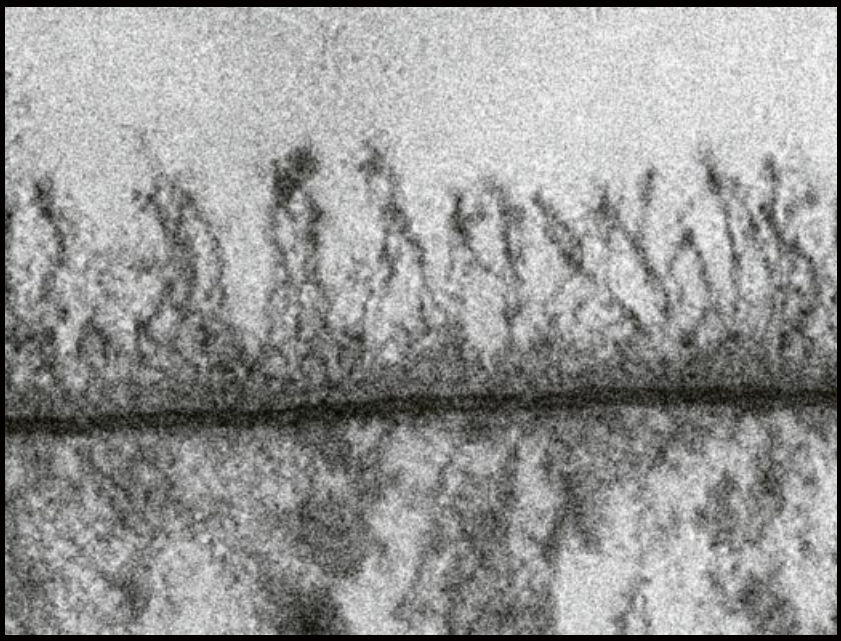
Equipo Crónica's acrylics were displayed in the International Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 1976, surrounded by works by the group's contemporaries, including Eduardo Arroyo, Agustín Ibarrola, Antoni Tàpies, and Antonio Saura. An iconography of impenetrable walls and doors was evident throughout their work. Tápies's pieces were actual walls: they offered literally nothing but their surface. Other works, such as Arroyo's painting *Ronda de noche con porras* (Night watch with batons, 1975–1976), showed how city streets, patrolled by the forces of repression, had become out-of-bounds. All these artists belonged to a heroic generation, one that stood up to a totalitarian state and frequently suffered its persecutions. They attacked Francoism and in doing so risked their own freedoms, but they were incapable of questioning their own practices. The impassable walls thus become metaphors for their inability to transcend the discursive parameters they were trapped in and that prevented them from seeing what was going on around them. Or from grasping that actual rupture with the regime would happen in the streets, in underground environments, and through movements such as antipsychiatry and feminism.[18] As Félix Guattari argues in another context, this was not just a matter of criticizing an anachronistic and dictatorial state but of denouncing the way its decisions and bureaucracy were tied up with people's desires and their day-to-day existence: "We are simply stating that large-scale change of our institutions and facilities implies simultaneous change in our molecular structures and politics of desire."[19]

Whether the sentiment expressed in Guattari's statement lives on in the teams and individuals that constitute the Reina Sofía and its current MeR partners is difficult to assess. But there can be no doubt that the entities that constitute the MeR find themselves increasingly connected. And if the pandemic has made one thing clear, it is the urgent need to learn to live together again. Rather than the much vaunted "think global and act local" of the neoliberal ice age, we have to come up with a situated knowledge based on interacting with others, internationally.

1. Richard B. Spencer, "The January 6th Bro-Maire," *Radix Journal*, January 8, 2021, https://radixjournal.com/2021/01/spencer-report-the-january-6th-bro-maire.
2. "When one uses the word 'fanatical' for 'heroic' or 'virtuous,' one eventually starts to believe that a fanatic is a virtuous hero; that without fanaticism one cannot be heroic. The words 'fanatical' and 'fanaticism' were not invented by the Third Reich, but the Third Reich transformed their essential meaning, making more use of them in a single day than such words might otherwise have been used in the course of a year." Victor Klemperer, *The Language of the Third Reich* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1947), ch. 1.
3. Zygmunt Bauman, *Retrotopía* (Barcelona: Paidós, 2013), 33.
4. Karl Marx, *18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), ch. 1.
5. Bruno Latour, *Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climate Regime* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2020), 4.
6. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).
7. Maurizio Lazzaratto, *El capital odia a todo el mundo: Fascismo o revolución*, trans. by Fermín A. Rodriguez (Buenos Aires: Eterna Cadencia Editora, 2020).
8. Hito Steyerl, "Duty-Free Art," *e-flux*, no. 63 (March 2015), https://www.e-flux.com/journal/63/60894/duty-free-art/.
9. Hito Steyerl, "Too Much World: Is the Internet Dead?," *e-flux*, no. 49 (November 2013), https://www.e-flux.com/journal/49/60004/too-much-world-is-the-internet-dead/.
10. Abdelkebir Khatibi, *Plural Maghreb: Writings on Postcolonialism*, Suspensions: Contemporary Middle Eastern and Islamicate Thought (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 25–71.
11. Humberto Maturana, *De máquinas y seres vivos: Autopoiesis: La organización de lo vivo* (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Universitaria, 1998), 15.
12. Spain, Law 34/2011, of October 4, governing the Reina Sofía Museum National Centre for Art, *Official State Bulletin*, no. 240 (October 5, 2011).
13. Peio H. Riaño, "La crisis de las 'cerillas quema iglesias' acorrala al director del Museo Reina Sofía," *El Confidencial*, November 5, 2014, https://www.elconfidencial.com/cultura/2014-11-05/la-crisis-de-las-cerillas-quema-iglesias-acorrala-al-director-del-reina-sofia_435494/.
14. Franceso Careri, lecture for "Housing All: Laboratorio Circo," Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart, February 18, 2021.
15. Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *La hospitalidad*, 3rd ed. (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de la Flor, 2008), 31–33.
16. Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (New York: Minor Compositions, 2013), 31.
17. Manuel Borja-Villel, "El museo interpelado," in *Objetos relacionales: Colección MACBA 2002–2007*, exh. cat. (Barcelona: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, 2009), 19–39.
18. Germán Labrador, *Culpables por la literatura: Imaginación política y contracultura en la transición española (1968–1986)* (Madrid: Akal, 2017).
19. Félix Guattari, *Líneas de fuga: Por otro mundo de posibles* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Cactus, 2013), 104.

AMOEBAEAN RELATIONS

A fable narrated by Amoeba Leningradensis



Dmitry Vilensky (Chto Delat)

Scene 1

The big amoeba meets a small one

--- Hi baby, you are really cool, let's talk

- Hi Giant, nice to meet you

--- You do cool stuff, baby

- Thanks a lot, I am flattered

--- Let's do something together

The big amoeba spread its pseudopods and small ameba has disappeared

Scene 2 part A

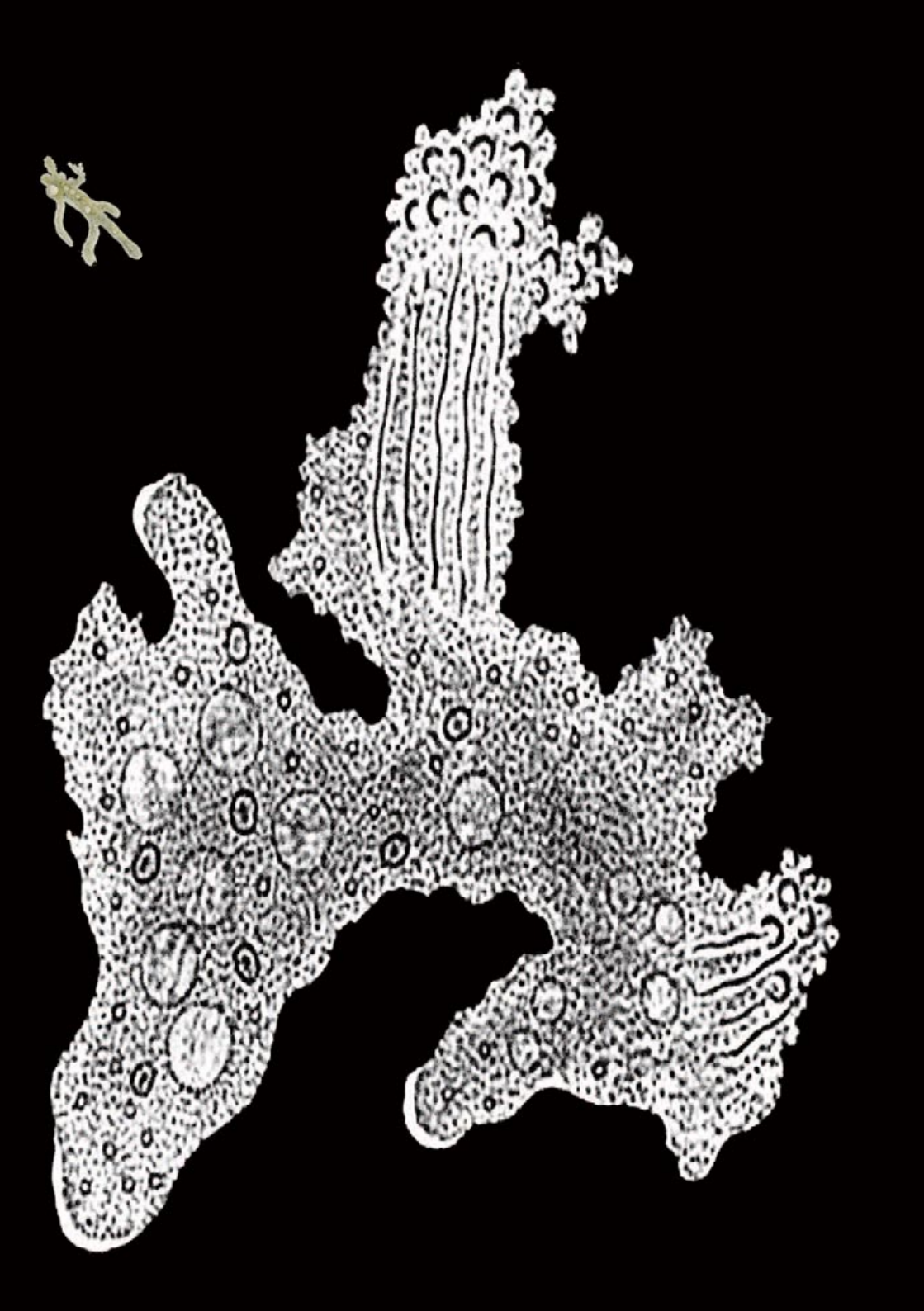
The tiny amoeba meets a big one

- Hi Giant, you are really cool,
I would love to talk to you

--- Hi baby, I can hardly see you,
what did you say?

- I said it would be great if I could
share my movements with you

--- I'll send you a signal,
do not worry



Scene 2 part B

The tiny amoeba meets a big one
in a few years

- Hi Giant, do you remember me?

--- Yes I do! We have met
sometime ago...What's new?

- I have followed
your movements and I am very impre
Such a pseudopods, so embracing
and elegant

--- Thank you, glad that you apprecia
Let's make something good together!

- Yes, let's make good together!
We create a proper chaos

And small amoeba has disappeared

The big amoeba slowly floating v
and it meets anc

--- How are y

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Ana Longoni

Museo Situado: A Personal Account of a Collective Endeavor

A series of verbs in the infinitive (and lowercase) allow me to highlight certain aspects—a select and limited few—of my experience working with Museo Situado, a proactive network linking the Museo Reina Sofía to community groups in the Lavapiés neighborhood of Madrid. Formed in March 2018, the network has expanded its means of expression and the range of its activities since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

to pierce

"Piercing the museum": this is how Museo Situado is colloquially referred to by locals and in the WhatsApp group we communicate through. In naming the network, we chose to invoke Donna Haraway's feminist theories and, in particular, her notion of "situated knowledge," in order to reimagine the Reina Sofía's relationship with its immediate surrounds. But piercing the museum's red metal walls, making the impenetrable porous, is a more striking image and a fair description of what the link between the museum and the assortment of community associations and collectives has done (and can do). Shake the foundations to create fissures, cracks, and holes; build bridges, doors, and windows; make the museum a communal space again, one inhabited by locals.

Some people in the community say *situado* sounds too much like *sitiado*, "besieged" in Spanish. They prefer to avoid any allusions to military terminology, war, and blockades, painful reminders of the extreme conditions many of them fled when deciding to migrate. Besieged is perhaps also a bit close to the bone for a neighborhood stigmatized as violent, with high levels of delinquency, a heavy police presence, CCTV cameras, persecution, raids, and arrests.

The network, on the other hand, is built on solidarity and empathy, hospitality and shelter, people from different backgrounds coming together and embracing diversity—long a marker of community life

in Lavapiés. The neighborhood is more than just a physical territory, for it originated as a place of refuge, centuries ago, for Jews and Muslims and the poor expelled from the walled city. It is, therefore—as Pepa Torres from the Red Inter Lavapiés association points out—a symbolic territory and, above all else, an emotional territory. Its history is one of sustained relationships, of alliances that are continually reinvented, and of the many people who no longer live in the neighborhood, banished by gentrification and rent hikes linked to tourism and property speculation, or because they moved on to pursue lives elsewhere.

to recognize

The impulse to build the network came out of tragic circumstances. In March 2018, Mame Mbaye collapsed and died just meters from the door to his home on Calle del Oso, in the heart of Lavapiés. He had suffered a heart attack after spending several hours running, chased by the police. In Lavapiés and other areas of central Madrid, *manteros* (street hawkers who spread out their wares on *mantas*, cloths) are often seen rushing by with their bundles over their shoulders, fleeing a police patrol and the risk of their means of subsistence being confiscated. Mame had been a *mantero* for thirteen years, ever since his arrival in Madrid, because he had never obtained the papers necessary to work "legally." Thus he was trapped in the vicious circle of not being able to get settled status because he did not have a work contract, and vice versa. Through his work as a *mantero* he supported his family in Senegal, and he was one of the leading instigators of the Sindicato Manteros y Lateros (*Manteros* and *Lateros* Union)—*lateros* being street hawkers of canned drinks—for which he also did graphic design and drawing. Much loved by colleagues and neighbors, his death and the circumstances surrounding it caused an uproar. For three days Lavapiés shook with sadness, pain, and indignation; there were spontaneous protests, smashed windows, clashes with the police, helicopters hovering over the neighborhood, and so on.

While all this was going on, life at the Reina Sofía, stationed at the far end of Lavapiés, went on as normal. Recognizing this deep disconnect was the spark that led to Museo Situado.

to (dis)trust

The first Museo Situado assembly, which (thanks to Torres's drive and intervention) saw the museum meet with members from a dozen Lavapiés collectives, was held in the backyard of the Senda de Cuidados (Path of Care) association. Three representatives from the museum took part: Manuel Borja-Villel, the museum's director; Mercedes Roldán, the museum's then technical advisor (and also a local resident and activist); and me, an Argentinian who had recently moved into the neighborhood after taking a job in the museum's Public Activities Department.

The main feeling emanating from that first discussion was a sense of distrust: "What does the museum want from our activist groups?" "Why are you suddenly cozying up to the neighborhood now?" "If the museum turns its back on the neighborhood even in its architecture, offering us the car park, the rubbish bins . . ." It was not the first time the Reina Sofía had linked up with the neighborhood; collaborative projects had occurred before, but they were considered sporadic, one-offs. Within the community, the museum was generally viewed as an alien entity, overrun with the tourist masses that flocked to it every day.

Rather than make proposals, it befit the museum to just listen. And right from that first session certain proposals and questions stood out: Could something not be done to stop the hawkers who gather on the corner outside the museum from being moved on? Would it not be possible for local residents to again visit the Sabatini Gardens, which had been off-limits to them for years? Could undocumented people not be given access to the library?

Responding to these questions without simply marching out the bureaucratic answer—"it's not allowed because of such and such a law or regulation"—required a leap of institutional imagination. Giving due consideration to these demands then created tension within the museum itself when different logics and engrained fears revealed themselves.

Nevertheless, on the last Sunday in June 2018, when four hundred local residents, dressed in all their finery, descended upon the museum for the first garden picnic, the color and festive spirit made clear to all that

something was starting to change. Between that day and the second picnic, held a year later and with the participation of six hundred locals, many things happened: More than seventy library passes were issued to undocumented people (through the neighborhood associations they were connected to), which not only allowed them to consult the library's materials and take refuge in a calm space with Wi-Fi, but also, and perhaps more important, gave them a form of credentials, something that confirmed they lived in Madrid and made the prospect of them gaining citizenship seem a little bit closer. Guided tours—of the terraces, the library, the palace buildings in Retiro Park, the permanent collection, and temporary exhibitions—were organized in various migrant tongues (Arabic, Bengali, Chinese, Tagalog, Wolof). Rooms and auditoriums were made available for an array of activities and initiatives run by neighborhood collectives.

In no time at all, the number of proposals coming from the neighborhood became an avalanche, overwhelming what was a small (and precarious) team with scant resources. The key next step, therefore, was to have the proposals deliberated at assemblies, which were organized every month, where they could be approved and prioritized at the same time that Museo Situado's participatory budget was agreed.

to inhabit

The first months of the pandemic sent shockwaves through everyone's lives and brought further pause for thought on the whys and wherefores of the museum as an institution: its scale, its purpose, its means of inhabiting space. Until then, the museum had received hordes of visitors made up primarily of foreign tourists and school parties. When the museum closed for a few months, those two groups suddenly were no longer there. Their absence brought other means of filling the space into focus, means that had been timidly emerging but could now be promoted and allowed to flourish.

Nowadays, on almost every day of the week the Reina Sofía is the site of an initiative such as Spanish classes for migrants, a community health training group, a dance workshop for cleaning ladies and care workers, a legal rights tutorial, a pilot work experience scheme for

children from a nearby school, a feminist union assembly, the meeting of a group seeking to draft a "Statute of Care," and so on. Activities proposed at Museo Situado assemblies continue to materialize, such as (to mention but two examples) the premiere of *Querían brazos y llegaron personas* (They wanted arms but people arrived), a film about the cleaning lady association Territorio Doméstico; and *Una flor para Samba* (A flower for Samba), a collective tribute to the life of Samba Martine, a young Congolese migrant who died due to medical negligence at the Centro de Internamiento para Extranjeros (Foreigners Detention Center) in Aluche.

to listen

On March 14, 2020, the day before a "state of alarm" and national lockdown commenced in Spain, Dani Zelko boarded the last flight out of Madrid for Buenos Aires. An Argentine poet-artist-editor-activist, Zelko had come to Madrid to work with Museo Situado on a two-week project to produce an oral biography of Mbaye, based on the testimonies of those who had known him. The initiative formed part of a broader project called *Reunión* (Reunion), an exercise in "literary listening" whereby Zelko transcribes verbatim what the people he talks to say, starting a new line every time they pause for breath or thought. The resulting poetic text is then rushed to print in an express edition that is presented to interviewees and distributed, free of charge, throughout the community. In this manner *Reunión* has born witness to the lives of migrants on the Mexico-U.S. border; to scenes of desolation and self-organization in Mexico City in the days after the 2017 earthquake; to the repression of the Mapuche community in Patagonia, Argentina, culminating in a young man, Rafael Nahuel, being shot in the back; and to the first public testimony from the mother of Juan Pablo Kukok, a youngster killed by the "trigger-happy" Buenos Aires police.

Under lockdown, this kind of face-to-face listening exercise, performed close enough to feel the other person's breath, was impossible. But after hearing about the plight of Mohammed Hussein (a Bangladeshi resident of Lavapiés who died of COVID at home after calling the emergency services for six days straight but not being attended to because he did not speak Spanish) and the trauma his death had caused in the neighborhood, Zelko decided to adjust his methods and conduct

long-distance interviews over the phone. He talked to Hussein's nephew, to a family friend called Afroza, to Mohammad Fazle Elahi of the Valiente Bangla community group, and to Torres. And from these dialogues (personable, if not in person) another express edition was born: *Lengua o muerte* (Tongue or death). This small book was initially published as a pdf, then in paper, and eventually translated into Arabic, Dariya, English, Euskera, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian, and Urdu. It thus became a powerful tool for narrating the story of someone's life (and death) and showing that it mattered to us, as well as a polyphonic account of the right to speak one's own tongue, a vital and inalienable privilege. In this manner, the book contributed to a campaign highlighting the pressing need for interpreters and mediators in migrant tongues at health centers, hospitals, and public administration facilities throughout Madrid.

to strain

I do not wish to romanticize or idealize the Museo Situado project, which has had its fair share of friction and conflict. Tensions exist at all levels and on different scales, beginning with the strain caused by the fact that activism groups and public institutions operate according to different logics. Take timing, for example, and the urgency of one party versus the inertia of the other. Then there are the battles fought within the museum itself, where there is (albeit diminishing) resistance to, mistrust of, and discord over how Museo Situado should operate. Third, assemblies have seen disputes between those advocating different positions and strategies in the activism community. Recognizing the diversity of opinion and learning to find points of convergence have been key to the network's survival. It is essential that disagreements are acknowledged and heard and that collective exercises are attempted without anyone's opinions being treated as invalid just because they are "situated" differently.

Pushing the realm of possibility to its limits comes neither instantaneously nor automatically; it cannot be imposed or decreed vertically. Rather it is a daily exercise in straining, penetrating, and shifting the edges of those limits millimeter by millimeter, coming and going, advancing and retreating.

to name

In a time of lockdown and restrictions but faced with the pressing need to think collectively through certain aspects of the pandemic, Museo Situado proposed holding a virtual assembly; it ended up organizing six of them. The digital model continues today for initiatives such as Voces situadas (Situated voices), a periodic polyphonic forum that addresses the hot topics of the day. Begun at the museum in 2018 in conjunction with the 8-M feminist strike, when held in person the forums saw participants arranged in a circle, with no hierarchies and no distinction between exhibitors and spectators. This open-space format encourages horizontal debate and ensures diverse opinions are heard, with the microphone circulating and people taking turns to speak in quick-fire fashion.

A virtual format was forced on us by the pandemic and, despite all its disadvantages, distances, and faults, it did allow people in other parts of the world (including Burkina Faso, the Greek islands, and Latin America) to participate. The first Voces situadas of the pandemic, "Quién cuida a la cuidadora" (Who cares for the carer) put the feminist theorist Silvia Federici in conversation with representatives from four cleaning and care home unions in Spain, Colombia, and the Dominican Republic. Issues raised included how exposed and unprotected the people (most of them immigrant women) who do these jobs are, despite it being recognized as essential work.

The last forum of 2020 examined sexuality, desire, contact, and risk in times of social distancing and fear of the other. Entitled "Superficies de placer" (Surfaces of pleasure), it joined in conversation people of different sensibilities, including proponents of dissident and nonheteropatriarchal practices and other recent reinventions.

The topics covered in the intervening forums included the experiences of various community groups in attempting to alleviate hunger while dealing with a lack of personal protective equipment during the crisis; the dire situation (aggravated by the pandemic) of migrants detained at the border of Fortress Europe; public policy toward the elderly and the way the pandemic has exposed how some lives are deemed disposable; the interruption to grieving rituals, funerals, and mourning, hospice

for the dying, and counsel for those losing loved ones. We also questioned the "new normal" that established itself so quickly and unsustainably after the first wave of the pandemic. That particular forum was entitled "Otro fin del mundo es posible" (Another end of the world is possible), taken from a phrase that appeared as graffiti on walls in Buenos Aires and Santiago de Chile at the start of the pandemic. Humorously paraphrasing the slogan "Another world is possible," it appeared to reclaim the right to decide one's own future, no matter how bleak and troubled it might be. As Marta Malo stated in her presentation, "Another end of the world is possible" encompasses two viewpoints that are distinct but ultimately share the same passive sense of waiting: those who believe in science and hope the vaccine will be the definitive and absolute solution to the crisis; and those who think that if it is not this crisis, then it will be the next, for the world is imminently and inevitably doomed. "Another end of the world is possible" refuses to be naive or play down the seriousness of the situation we are in; instead it argues that the future is still in our hands and that we must not resign ourselves to it as if it were a given.

The delightful prints Mariana Chiesa provided to illustrate this edition of Voces situadas echo this call for us to invent the future ourselves: to invoke new words capable of articulating the unprecedented, the unknown, the unsaid; to imagine other possible worlds and other ways of life, even in the midst of a crisis.

to dream

On a recent Friday, Torres and I taught our first class together at the Reina Sofía's Study Centre, part of a seminar entitled "Por un museo situado: Pistas para habitar el ecosistema del museo" (Toward a situated museum: Tracks toward inhabiting the museum's ecosystem) aimed at the latest class of students to begin the Art Practice and Visual Culture master's degree program. As the class came to an end, the following dialogue, which I transcribe here word-for-word, took place between us:

— "During the pandemic, the symbolic act of opening the museum when other public spaces were closing struck me as a very powerful symbol."

— "Your dream, Pepa . . ."

— "I was going to tell them about it, but I wasn't sure whether you'd let me, Ana."

— "Of course!"

— "Well, the truth is that I—like everyone—have had a very bad time of it during the pandemic, mostly because I'm very involved in the neighborhood and I have a lot of friends there, many Bengali people who are very dear to me (my life is closely connected to the Bengali community for a variety of reasons). So, as well as Mohammed Hussein's death, I heard other terrible things like the story of a boy whose landlord threw him out on the street like a dog, in the middle of the lockdown, and other awful situations of rental abuse. I became obsessed with evictions and poverty. After our first Museo Situado virtual assembly, which paid particular attention to all the collectives and people who've stood up to be counted in this crisis, I had a dream. I dreamed that there was an eviction and lots of people were being thrown out of their homes, me included, and the police were coming. We set off running, without knowing where we were going, and then Ana appeared, in a bright-colored shirt that I love, and she said, 'Come on, come on, come into the museum.'"

— "Through a secret door."

— "That's right. We all started going in and there she was, taking a stand in her colorful shirt, and suddenly we were all inside and we found ourselves in an underground space."

— "Like a catacomb."

— "Yes, and there was a party going on, full of color, balloons, etc. And I had to tell Ana and my colleagues in the assembly about it, because Museo Situado is not just about providing material things or a space but the feeling that we're all in it together, and this is perhaps what the museum represents for a lot of local people now, people who didn't use to know what this building was, and today they know it's where people go to learn Spanish, to dance, that a legal rights class is going to be

set up, that it supports the food banks. I think this is the most powerful kind of social alliance possible, but perhaps the most intriguing thing, from a broader perspective, is what a colleague from Museo Situado said the other day: that it's about how to keep piercing through the borders, the borders between what's cultural and what's social, among other things; experiencing that you can pierce borders, topple walls . . ."

to overflow

Experiencing these things with Museo Situado, an experience I have distilled here through my own subjective and personal memory, can be interpreted as an experiment in a new kind of institutionality: a genuine spilling out of certain aspects of a contemporary museum's daily business, through collaborations and sustained alliances established with groups in the museum's immediate vicinity and amid a manifest crisis of the cultural ecosystem brought on by capitalist dynamics related to the leisure industry and to tourist consumption as we know it.

I also like to think that Museo Situado represents a mutual reconsideration and corruption of what was previously thought of by the term *museum*, furnishing it with new meanings while, at the same time, helping to energize and fulfill the potential of the community initiatives that go on, that went on, and that will always go on around it.

Mariana Chiesa Mateos
Furia y restos (Fury and wreckage), 2020

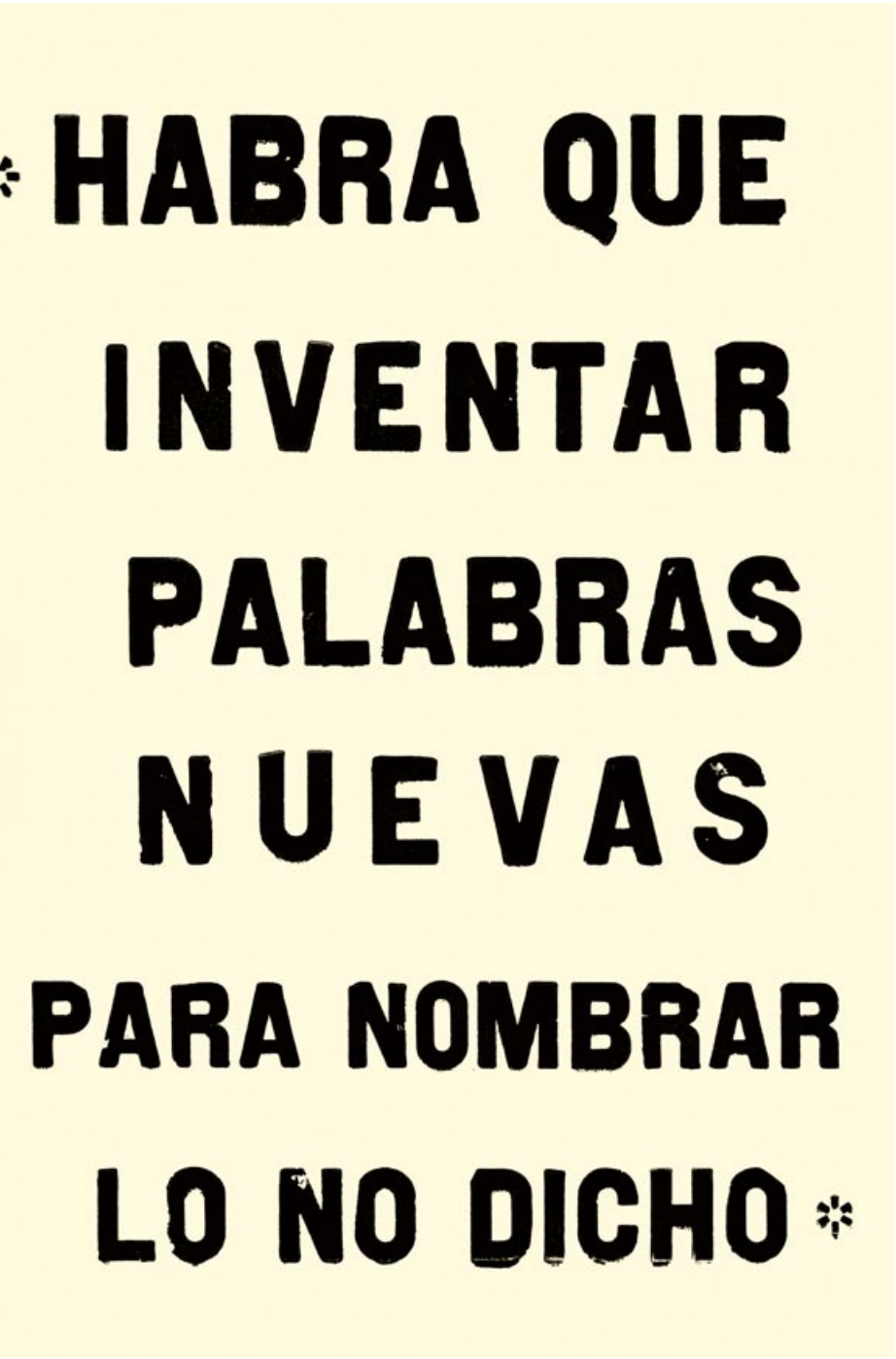
Inventar, nudo y nido (Invent, knot and nest), 2020
Xylography and mobile characters on paper
Triptych, 70.5 × 40 cm each
La Fulmine Handcrafted Press Printing, Sardinia
(pp. 38-41)

Furia y fiera (Fury and beast), 2017
Xylography, ink, and pastel on wallpaper
Diptych, 90 × 53 cm each
(pp. 42-43)

In the somber days at the start of the pandemic, graffiti bearing the slogan "Another end of the world is possible" appeared on walls in the cities of Buenos Aires and Santiago de Chile. The graffiti paraphrased, with a measure of humor, the old slogan "Another world is possible," reclaiming the right to decide our future, no matter how dark and turbulent it may seem.

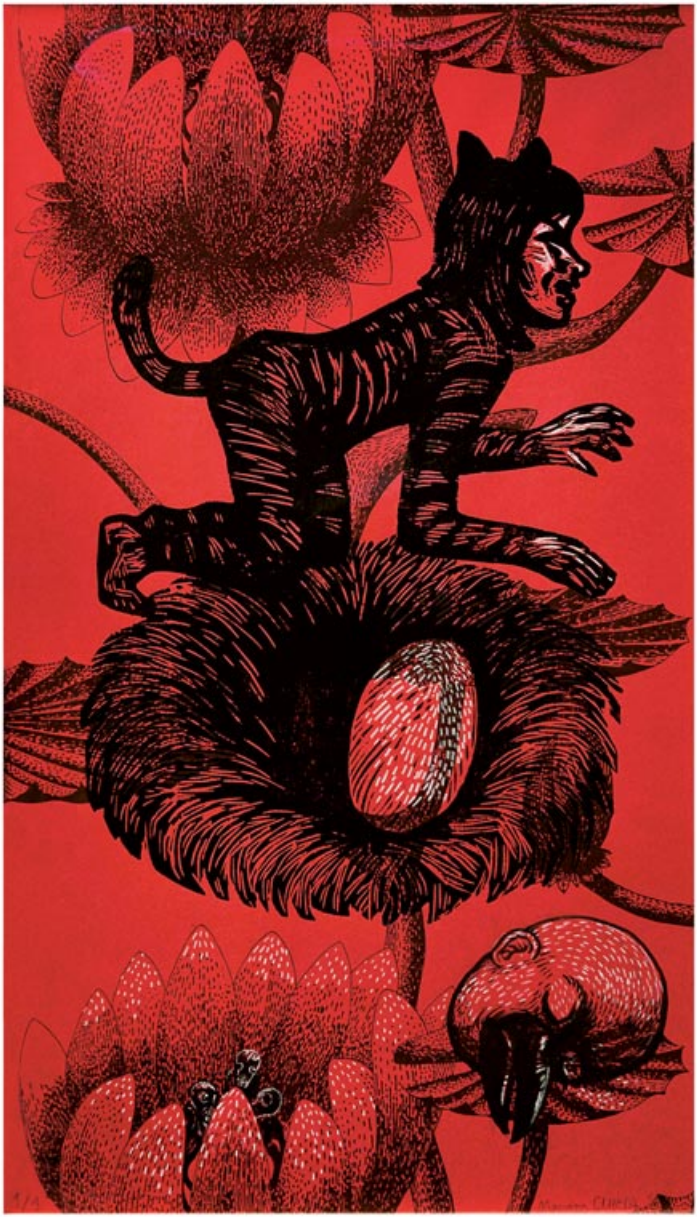
As with all crises, the one caused by COVID-19 has laid bare the strengths and weaknesses of our societies, bringing to light, once again, the need for global and radical change to guarantee the sustainability of life.

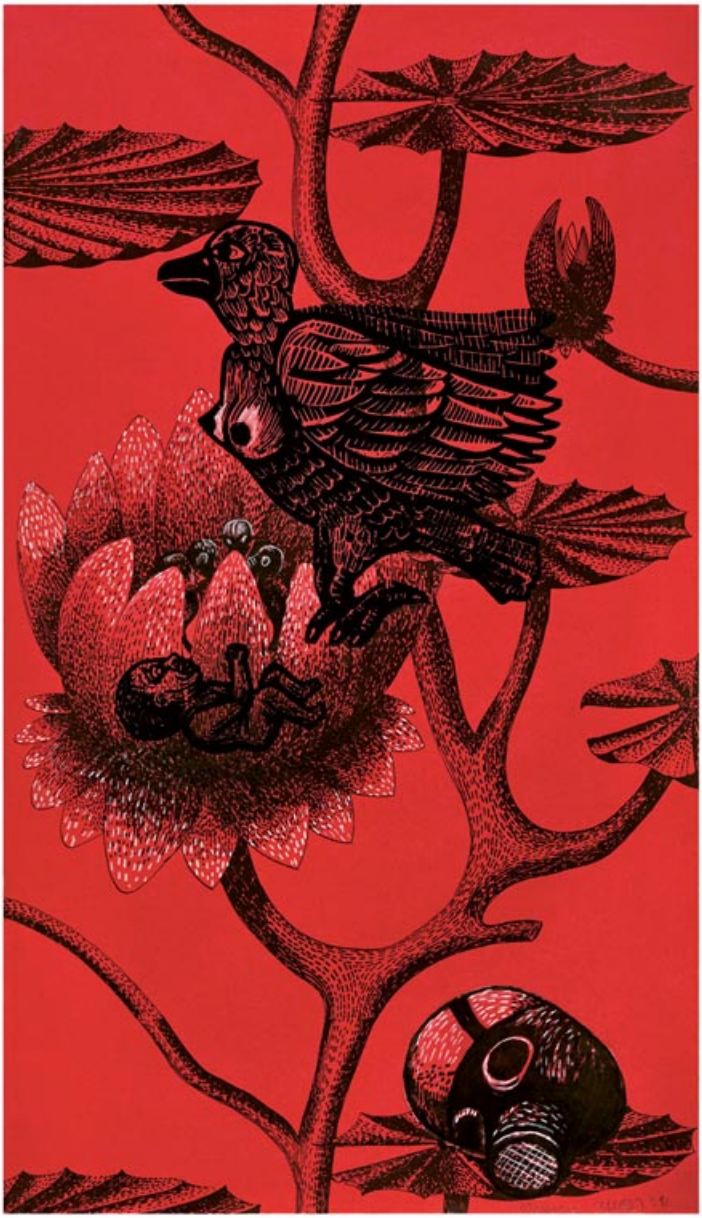
Situated Voices 16: Another End of the World Is Possible: Examining the "New Normal", 2020, Museo Situado


HABRA QUE
INVENTAR
PALABRAS
NUEVAS
PARA NOMBRAR
LO NO DICHO

Tengo un nudo en la garganta.
Cómo decir de manera precisa
aquello que sofoca?

Para que surjan como de
un nido palabras*alma
palabras*desatanudos
palabras*NIDO
Donde germinen brotes
de FUTURO





Marta Malo[1]

Everything We've Got

1.

How should we think of our relationship to an institution? And how should we think of it specifically when that institution is a museum of art like the Reina Sofía? I put these questions to you here in order to think through them "out loud," and I put them like this because that is how they are expressed in conversations at home. But formulating them this way contains a trap, for it implies that institutions are fixed entities. I might have liked to rephrase things to avoid such a misleading idea, and I might have liked to avoid any preconceived notion that institutions are centers of power: Bastilles or Winter Palaces that might merely be occupied to bring about change.

For this, my contribution to the tide of institutional analysis, I take the institution to be a hardened amalgamation of heterogeneous elements that govern human action—legislative and administrative regulations, organizational structures, relationship frameworks, knowledge systems, and norms and codes of cultural and social reference that significantly impact on the life of a group—for these elements are internalized by each group member and thus shape their private thoughts and perceptions, directing which meanings are attributed to the world around them.

Defined like this, there can be no such thing as the Institution with a capital I, one that we relate to as free and self-determined particles, for our entire social fabric and our personal subjectivity are products of numerous institutions. Schools, hospitals, family: all are undoubtedly institutions, as are trade unions and certain well-established social associations (neighborhood groups, irrigation communities, etc.). All provide guidelines, norms, and frameworks that give practical answers, preserved over generations, to fundamental questions such as: How are decisions made? According to what criteria and priorities? How is collective work organized? How is communally generated wealth distributed? How are conflicts resolved? How do we foster our way of being together?

I also come to this reflection along my own particular path. I, like thousands of other young people in the 1990s, participated in squatted, or "Occupied," social centers, and I was passionate and desperate enough to throw my then short life into them. Alongside countless allies, I experienced the creative power of collective action that is bold enough to question everything, and I tasted thousands of minor setbacks and contradictions.[2] With several evictions behind us, we began to ask ourselves how we could make things last. By the 2000s we were not old, but we knew what it was to be pushed to the limit and were preoccupied with how to remain open to the present and maintain our drive for transformation: how to resist, when strength is flagging, the temptation to fall back on old structures, ones we never thought were for us, or get stuck doing things in ways that had worked for us before but might not be effective now; how to combat entropy, the tendency to implode or die common to every living system that is incapable of opening itself up to the outside, to otherness, to new life, over and over again.

From these concerns arose, among other things, an interest in the pressure points between conservation and change, between the institution and the instituted, between the apparatus and the machine. From this vantage point, my initial questions must be reframed: at issue is not how we relate to an institution but how we move the institutions we inhabit and/or create and, above all, in what sense we move them and according to what logic.

2.

In his lectures at the Collège de France, Michel Foucault proposed a method of analysis that is particularly relevant to dealing with this problem.[3] Foucault argues that our judgment must not be clouded by the apparently eternal and fixed nature of institutions. We must go further and identify their "technologies of power," the strategies, tactics, fields, domains, and objects of knowledge that constitute, sustain, and eclipse them. What is interesting about this perspective is that it allows us to map out the genealogy of power relations that run through and constitute our institutions: how they form, multiply, repair, and transform

themselves through something other than themselves. Even more important, it helps us to see how and why these power relationships are unstable and permeable, shattering the mirage that they are somehow impregnable and immutable. Viewed through such a lens, our way of thinking about institutions and the instituted acquires extra layers and prompts different political ideas. It sharpens our awareness of the underground currents that move things.

Foucault uses the same method in these lectures to sketch out the entire genealogy of the art of government from its birth, around the sixteenth century, to the present day. According to Foucault, the main characteristic of government compared to other forms of rule is that it is an indirect exercise of power: it not only exerts specific pressure and aggression upon its subjects but also, and more significantly, steers them, "makes them do," "makes happen," by arranging the board in such a way that certain games are taken for granted, while other games, harder ones, more arduous and painful, are left to players excluded from the main arena. These, Foucault says, are the terms in which neoliberalism must be understood: not as a mere package of economic measures but as a "technology of government" that shapes people's behavior, the way they move through the world and go about their business.

Foucault outlined all of this at the same time Margaret Thatcher was bursting onto the political scene as Britain's prime minister, literally waving a book by the biggest exponent of neoliberal thought—Friedrich A. Hayek—in the face of her more moderate colleagues.[4] Foucault's analysis, developed at the very moment neoliberal hegemony was establishing itself, proved to be exceptionally visionary.

Building on Foucault's analytical endeavors, in the late 2000s the French thinkers Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval described "the new way of the world" as a form of neoliberal government that manages to make market principles fair game to all spheres of social life, even those where no monetary exchange is involved.[5] Thus, through a set of techniques, devices, knowledge, and strategies, we are all "free to choose," but the playing field is set up so that, ultimately, we always play out the same game: that of

supply and demand, the calculation of costs and benefits, competition as the guiding principle governing every facet of society, and entrepreneurial spirit as a universal model for all public, social, and individual activities. The cards are dealt; some behaviors are rewarded, others are penalized; some players are winners, others losers; and if you do not play your cards right, you risk falling into social nothingness. Either way, you are solely responsible for your own destiny. The neoliberal mantra is repeated ad nauseam, sowing the seeds for the proliferation of mindfulness techniques and other variations of self-control that help us to survive and contain our anxiety in a world where it is every human being for themself.

As Laval and Dardot make clear, "New Public Management" is precisely this form of neoliberal reasoning applied to public institutions.[6] Contrary to popular belief, what lies at the heart of the neoliberalization of public services is not, strictly speaking, their privatization but the introduction of competition and entrepreneurship regardless of the service's formal ownership. Thatcher's "compulsory competitive tendering" might be considered the starter gun for what we now see as no more than the "state of things": the obligation to tender for offers that compete with one another to provide a service and the compulsion to choose the most "competitive" offer; that is, the cheapest, the one that manages to give more for less. The competition imperative, presented as a public guarantee of quality, actually introduces constant downward pressure on conditions for everyone, service providers and users alike, because only by worsening conditions can services become ever cheaper.

Competitive pressure has also become key to the internal management of public services. The old systems of appraisal and remuneration for every functionary are being replaced with evaluations based on the productivity of every worker, team, and department, alongside various kinds of related incentives. The effect is a gradual "defunctionarization," whereby services are no longer run by functionaries due to an increasing array of new forms of contracting, each one more precarious than the last, but also because of the demand for productivity at every level of institutional hierarchy.

Although in most cases these changes are carried out under the guise of a fight against bureaucracy and are claimed to enhance quality by governments and technical experts of every stripe, the ultimate outcome is not debureaucratization but quite the opposite. Assessing individuals, teams, departments, and units based on whether they meet objectives creates long surveillance and productivity control chains of command and a form of bureaucracy in which middle managers are the new kings. Furthermore, these evaluation mechanisms, in their quest for standardization, give rise to the fetishizing of measurable and comparable results, which may not reflect the reality of a particular service, disconnecting it from its context and its relationship with service users (i.e., citizens). In this way, evaluation instills itself as a "technology of government" that is at odds with the experiences of the sector (education, health, culture, care) and its unquantifiable, interconnected, ecological elements.

What does this "results culture" mean for justice, medicine, culture, art, and education, Laval and Dardot ask? "The act of judgment, which depends on ethical and political criteria, is replaced by a measure of efficiency that is supposed to be ideologically neutral. Thus, we tend to hide each institution's own purposes for the benefit of an identical accounting standard, as if each institution had no constitutive values of its own."[7] In the name of flexibility, an accountable rigidity is introduced that reduces the institution's autonomy and its capacity to connect and interact with the place it is located. Relations between public institutions and citizens thus become depoliticized, and users become atomized consumers who judge institutions not as part of a political community but from the perspective of a consumer.

Why introduce all of this analysis? How relevant is it to the way we think about institutions in general and, specifically, an institution like the Reina Sofía? I bring it up because museums, like so many other institutions of Western modernity, are no longer the rigid, bureaucratic structures that, of late, have become fashionable to criticize. They, too, have become struck through with this new kind of managerial, entrepreneurial, competitive logic. Therefore, if we want to think about how to inhabit the institution that is the museum, how to move it forward, we first have to consider the

concrete effects that neoliberalism has had on museum's inner workings and, more generally, on the art world itself, as well as the specific role art has played in the broader neoliberal takeover.[8]

The analysis is also relevant because it helps us to understand just how much the game is rigged so that we view one another—all of us, all the time—as rivals, connected only to the extent that one individual might aid the advancement of another, and undercut with a constant fear of falling behind. As others have written elsewhere, the figure of the loser is not a position at all but a ghost that haunts us lest we ever stop competing (and running).[9]
In thinking about how to inhabit and transform institutions, we must, therefore, bear in mind that the technologies of government that shape them also shape us, and intimately so. Institutional reinvention must, therefore, be a reinvention of, among other things, ourselves (our mental maps, our sensibilities, our ways of being in the world and with others).[10]

3.

Brilliant as is Foucault's analysis, augmented by Laval and Dardot's further probing, of the "technology" of neoliberal government, it nevertheless lacks in feminist and decolonial thought. Foucault, Laval, and Dardot's thinking is extremely useful in helping us understand that the idea of human beings as free masters of their own destiny, which liberalism claims is the only possible basis for rational human action, is a fiction. Their teachings likewise give a good account of the way neoliberalism exacerbates this fiction to the point of paroxysm through the figure of the entrepreneur, and whether this figure really is in charge of (exploiting, molding, and selling) his own life.[11] But what Foucault, Laval, and Dardot do not tell us is how this fiction is sustained, how it manages not to be suicidal, given that we, as human animals, are born not as independent individuals but as highly vulnerable beings and that we go on to experience periods of extreme vulnerability throughout our lives; for example, when we rely on our surroundings and other human and nonhuman beings to survive.

This fiction of man as master of his own destiny is based on the tandem abuse and denial of the laborious work of nurturing life and ecosystems, and of those who perform such work: women, colonized and/or racialized populations, and other downtrodden people of every kind. That is, to be master of his own destiny, man requires this work to be performed, but though he benefits from the labor of those who perform it, he ignores their existence. He either acts as if they were never there, as if he never needed them, or he acts as if the work they perform is insignificant and the people who perform it just part of the decoration, eternally available, at the service of the only individual who really matters: the great, heroic creator himself. I trust the irony here is clearly noted. Countless feminists and decolonial thinkers have written extensively to expose this fallacy, and I invoke them all here.[12]

Like so many institutions of modernity, museums of art were founded on these patriarchal and colonial acts of denial, which is why they struggle to deal with any gesture that points toward the wealth of behind-the-scenes work that every individual artistic activity is built on. And if the pointing is serious, rather than merely rhetorical or abstract, the struggle becomes profound. Back when we were young and impulsive, part of the "aimless, precarious youth," a group of us were invited to participate in an exhibition at a prestigious art gallery. Our proposal was to examine the network of lives that sustained the gallery, following the thread that connected the space to its staff and money: What labors and livelihoods lay behind the gallery's doors, its polished floors, its smoothed walls? Who cleaned the toilets? Where do they live? What do they think of the art on display? How do salaries differ? What is paid for and what is not? Our proposal was treated like a bad joke, despite the fact that this was exactly the kind of thing that we, as a group, had done before in other spaces, albeit less consecrated ones perhaps. We were left hanging, curious to know whether this kind of exercise was capable of producing anything other than blushes.

A decade ago, Bojana Piskur gave students at the Reina Sofía's postgraduate seminar an exercise of similar inspiration: to apply Karl Marx's 1880 workers survey to the working reality of the museum today.[13] Despite great enthusiasm from the students,

who saw in the proposal a means to address many of the concerns they felt as culture students/workers, the survey got stuck in the cogs of the museum's machinery. It was not that someone from above blocked or sabotaged it, more that nobody seemed to want to answer the survey. "We don't talk about that," the prevailing silence seemed to imply.

4.

The Reina Sofía has changed a lot since then. It has become bolder in its commitment to institutional transformation, it has hosted internal and external forums on what a feminist museum might look like, and it has done these things without sweeping uncomfortable truths under the carpet. Bojana's survey would likely have a good chance of coming to fruition today and might have helped instigate a reflection on the potential for change across the entire institutional apparatus, on the labor and workforce that sustains it, and on means of redress. If asked today, it would find more support points, more receptive membranes, more open conduits.

Through initiatives such as Museo en Red, Museo Situado, and the proposals of its education department, the Reina Sofía has allowed itself to be inhabited by outsiders who challenge and strain it. And it has not simply "tolerated" this but made sure the resulting tensions have led to the museum opening itself up to other relationship spaces, other artistic experiences, other notions of what really matters, other ways of thinking about resources and priorities. All of this coexists with old and new bureaucratic procedures, managerialism, generalized competition, savage defunctionalization, and productivity pressures.

And here we arrive at the question to which all the preceding ones must lead: Can we think of things that already follow a different logic not as marginal or innovative niches, little havens of goodwill and kindness, but rather as instituting impulses (no matter how stuttering and tentative) of different philosophies, applicable to the world of museums and beyond? Might we dare to imagine the possibility of instituting another kind of institution, one guided by

other kinds of "technologies"? An institution that nurtures and protects other kinds of behavior, that facilitates collective endeavor, that restrains competition, that eschews quantitative evaluation, that is egalitarian, that compensates and repairs? An institution that puts caring at its core, not as some nod to fluffiness but as a concrete set of support measures that protect people from the vagaries of life, that does not deny the existence of a workforce but places it at the center of the institution?

In these times of social emergency, amid inescapable evidence of planetary damage, individual or small-group ethics are not enough. We need to institute a new game, one that favors different forms of behavior, nurtures them, cultivates them, promotes them. We need to control depredation, of ourselves and the environment, and provide encouragement and orientation to those who seek other ways of being in the world. We know we are steeped in neoliberal reasoning but are also in a state of rebellion, married to a world we wish to commit to but are on the cusp of setting ablaze.

"The dimension of what needs to be done," Foucault said in his lecture of January 11, 1978, "can only manifest itself, I think, within a field of real forces, that is, a field of forces that a speaking subject could never create on his own and from his word."[14] He went on to add that, if a theoretical discourse must be supported by some kind of imperative, then that imperative must start from a particular position, one that is aware of and committed to its own place in the big scheme of real forces, and that it must seek to develop strategic markers that are of use there. In the Reina Sofía's quest for institutional reinvention, now being explored through dialogues with outsiders, the strategic markers seem to be labeled "care" and "common." The time has come to identify which "technologies" and devices sever our common links and which ones care for them, nurture, protect, and partner them, bring out their potential. Which rules of the game and standpoints make us rivals, subject us to productivity criteria that override everything else and impose hierarchies on jobs, placing some on a pedestal and denying the existence of others? And which rules establish and strengthen ties, make us equal, bind us by holding distinct positions, support solidarity, and alleviate our fear of falling? Because we need to bet everything we've got on the latter.

1. One always writes from within a tangled web of conversations with others. This text emerged and was informed by exchanges with my dear colleagues at Entrar Afuera (http://entrarafuera.net), Manos Invisibles (http://manosinvisibles.net), and La Laboratoria (http://lalaboratoria.red), as well as with others who are, in their own ways, seeking to bring about institutional reinvention at the Museo Reina Sofía.
2. Part of this collective memory is gathered in an archive created through Ana Sánchez's research project "El Laboratorio (1997–2003): Una genealogía para las prácticas del común," which itself connects to other archives. See http://www.hacerlaboratorio.net/.
3. Transcriptions of Foucault's lectures at the Collège de France began to be published in 2004. The two I refer to here, originally delivered from 1977 to 1979, have been published as *Sécurité, territoire et population* (*Security, Territory, Population*) and *Naissance de la biopolitique* (*The Birth of Biopolitics*).
4. Hayek's influence on Thatcher's austerity politics is well known. The journalist John Ranelagh tells the story of a Conservative Party policy meeting in which someone was arguing in favor of adopting a moderate middle ground, only for Thatcher to pull out a copy of Hayek's *The Constitution of Liberty* from her briefcase and interrupt him, exclaiming vehemently, "This is what we believe in." See John Ranelagh, *Thatcher's People: An Insider's Account of the Politics, the Power and the Personalities* (London: Fontana, 1992), ix.
5. Christian Laval and Pierre Dardot, *La nueva razón del mundo: Ensayo sobre la sociedad neoliberal* (Barcelona: Gedisa, 2013).
6. Ibid., 299–324.
7. Ibid., 317.
8. See Chin-tao Wu's exhaustive study of the increasing role large financials play in cultural institutions: *Privatizar la cultura* (Madrid: Akal, 2007). Nelly Alfandari, in turn, analyzes how the role of art educators was used to start a conversation about converting former grammar schools—public-sector schools of a local and egalitarian bent—into *academies*, colleges that remain public but are managed like businesses. "Dentro, contra y más allá de la educación que tenemos: Una conversación con Nelly Alfandari," in *Escuela presente* (Madrid: Traficantes de sueños, forthcoming).
9. See Manos Invisibles, "Loser," *Glossary of Common Knowledge*, February 2015, https://glossary.mg-lj.si/referential-fields/subjectivisation/loser. This reflection forms part of a research project on neoliberal social policies conducted in tandem with Débora Ávila within the collaborative space Manos Invisibles. See http://manosinvisibles.net/. Débora Ávila, Marta Pérez, and I are currently preparing a book based on these questions.
10. This is brilliantly explained by those who, alongside Franco Basaglia, led the Italian movement for the abolition of mental asylums and the end of psychiatric internment. The radical transformation of psychiatry would have been impossible without the radical transformation of psychiatric professionals, who were required to get down off their pedestals and cease to question, in any deep sense, psychiatrically affected people. The Franco Basaglia Permanent Conference website contains an abundance of material relating to the movement's institutional reflections. See https://www.confbasaglia.org/.
11. See Laval and Dardot, *La nueva razón del mundo*, chs. 4, 9.
12. Of the many that might be cited, I find, for a feminist perspective, Almudena Hernando, *La fantasía de la individualidad* (Madrid: Traficantes de sueños, 2018), particularly clarifying. For a postcolonial perspective, I recommend Gayatri C. Spivak, *Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), which follows the trail of denial through various celebrated texts of Western modernism.
13. The project was part of Bojana Piskur's research residency at the Reina Sofía in 2010–2011 and is available at https://www.museoreinasofia.es/sites/default/files/ historico-boletines/historico / n016.html. An English translation of Marx's workers' survey ("A Workers' Inquiry") is available at https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/ni/ vol04/no12/marx.htm.
14. Foucault, *Sécurité, territoire et population*, 17.

Maggie Schmitt
Images of a Research Trip in Morocco, February 2020

Spanish factories where women from Tangiers work. Spanish tourists in beachfront hotels in Martil (Tétouan). Moroccan women picking strawberries in Huelva. Lives that take place here and there, a continual transit of people, capital, histories, and powers across and through this narrow strait. Yet, in relation to social movements, in particular feminism and its capacity to contribute significantly to ways of understanding, caring, and organizing, the connections between the one territory and the other are scant.

In February 2020, Hanan Dalouh Amghar and Maggie Schmitt embarked on a research trip through northern Morocco with a view to establishing contact and engaging in dialogue with collectives and women who are active in feminist struggles. In the encounter celebrated at the Museo Reina Sofía, the two researchers, along with three activists from northern Morocco whom they met on their trip, discussed the feminist movement in the context of present-day Morocco.

Feminisms in Morocco: A Drift through Territories, 2021, Museo Reina Sofía and La Laboratoria: Espacios de investigación feminista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Fernanda Carvajal

Areas of Convergence

Since 2009, Red Conceptualismos del Sur (RedCSur, or simply Red, meaning "Network") and the Museo Reina Sofía have been building, inhabiting, and exploring, artisanally, a link that provides them with a unique space of convergence. It is a link replete with tensions and asymmetries, but also possibilities; a heterogeneous link that is neither static nor exclusive but mutates with the passing of events. This link is concerned not with the interaction between two entities of clearly different scope but with the curious kinship that exists between them and the common ground that can be established through *doing* together. One way of thinking of this link is as the point of contact between two bodies that are drawn together and then part, modifying mutually but also in relation to the areas they operate in.

Red, which formed in 2007, unites activists, researchers, and artists from countries in Latin America. It describes itself as a *weave* that, "from its position in the plural south-south, seeks to intervene in epistemological, artistic and political disputes . . . involving itself in the different conjunctures that define the non-synchronous present we inhabit."[1] Due to the diverse origins, professions, and affiliations of its members, Red, as an entity, can be in multiple times and places at once, and this is what makes the relationship between Red and the Reina Sofía so unique: a global network and a national museum are acting together in disputes over Western artistic-cultural hegemony. To continue the theme of two bodies coming together, imagine that one is made of rock and the other of gas: their relationship is an alchemy of the rock's magnetism and the gas's capacity for infiltration. Over the course of ten years, we have disproved the notion that only static resistance is possible between the institutional museum—that embodiment of centralized, bureaucratic, monolithic power—and the autonomous organization, forever in danger of being co-opted or absorbed. To see the Reina Sofía as no more than a support valve for Red is no less reductive than to see Red as a mere ancillary of the Reina Sofía. In fact, the relationship between the

two parties subscribes to neither an affiliate nor assistance dynamic, nor does it run along preprogrammed lines or five-year plans. More than anything else, it is a relationship open to the happenstance of two transforming bodies.

Red and the Reina Sofía have established an area of convergence that is neither entirely national nor entirely transnational. Their bond is infused with possibilities and tensions other than those the museum might find, for example, with collectives and institutions in Spain. A transatlantic relationship is, of course, bound to have unique facets—a here and there marked by colonial history and internal and external forms of colonialism. Thus, the link between the two entities continues to be written and rewritten. Furthermore, in the time since the link was first established, Red has undergone its own process of transformation, one that is still underway and that seeks to revise its "amphibious" composition by addressing its inherent whiteness and cissexism, on the one hand, and its class structure and majority migrant (or nomadic) makeup, on the other, along with the different linguistic textures and intraregional asymmetries we inhabit. Our own internal mutations have opened up new areas of activity and pushed us to pursue a policy of forging multiple alliances with actors, groups, and institutions in Latin America, expanding away from the field of art and archive politics and toward critical ecology, anti-racism and feminism, and fag-dyke, queer, and multispecies movements. The Reina Sofía, too, is not frozen in time but is a blend of, on the one hand, its history as national museum and contemporary art center since 1988 and, on the other hand, the project that has given it new life over the past ten years and made its institutional skin more porous. Throughout this time, the link between us has allowed each of us to come and go, to have experiences and re-experience them, and to reformulate those experiences without being subjected to the tyranny of immediacy. The area of convergence that Red and the Reina Sofía have created is thus a space in which both parties can question one another on the disidentification processes they have each been through as they explore new ways of being more communal.

The link between Red and the Reina Sofía cannot be understood in the abstract but must be approached through what we have been

able to *do* together. This *doing* together has meant entering into areas of epistemological, artistic, and political dispute, and it has, at times, caused our asymmetrical geometries, determined by location and capacity, to switch.

What follows, then, is a possible overview of the Reina Sofía–Red link, tracing the journey from *Perder la forma humana: Una imagen sísmica de los años ochenta en América Latina* (Losing the human form: A seismic image of the 1980s in Latin America) through to our current collaboration on communal archival policy.

1.

The title *Perder la forma humana* (*PLFH*) might be understood as a form of performance fiction that allowed us to swim against the tide while analyzing the relationship between art and politics in 1980s Latin America. But it can also be understood in the sense of a mutation, describing the transformations Red itself went through with the project, which became a sort of rite of passage.

The first steps to formalize an alliance between Red and the Reina Sofía were taken in 2010, and the first big project was *PLFH*. Although preceded by *Cartografías críticas* (Critical cartographies) and the conference "Memorias Disruptivas, tácticas para entrar y salir de los Bicentenarios de América Latina y el Caribe" (Disruptive memories, tactics to get in and out of the bicentenaries of Latin America and the Caribbean), both of them joint ventures, *PLFH* represented a much bigger commitment and a more audacious undertaking.[2] Its audacity lay in the Reina Sofía agreeing to some rather irregular rules of the game. Red got the museum not only to commit to financing the research process (which was itself unusual for an exhibition project) but to forfeit all individual curatorship terms. What Red proposed was a collective conceptualization involving thirty-one researchers drawn from various Latin American countries, with budgets and fees to be negotiated for each. The number of researchers alone gives some indication of the monstrous scale of the project, which in addition to the research and exhibition also led to the publication of a book-glossary, two

touring exhibitions (in 2013 and 2014), numerous public events, and a film cycle.

The first point to highlight, therefore, is that *PLFH* deliberately did away with all individual forms of authorship and authority. Curatorship of the exhibition was developed by Red through collective research, with all the problems, contradictions, and possibilities that entailed. That is, we all pledged to give up individual authorship of our own work (and all related symbolic and epistemological privileges) and embrace a chaotic kind of cross-pollination of unexpected pairings and random interactions. The research process lasted for roughly one year and was conducted almost entirely remotely, with only two in-person meetings (in Lima in July 2011 and in Buenos Aires in December 2011). The next stage involved finalizing a curatorial program, which became the responsibility of a committee of six members of Red. Here the major challenge was balancing the fact that research takes time with the bureaucratic-administrative pressures that require a list of artworks to be finalized a year ahead of the exhibition, budgets to be put forward for approval, and so on.

PLFH never sought legitimacy in an academic, canonical sense—through the history of academic art, for example—and, although it was a research project conducted under the auspices of a museum, it was not primarily aimed at the curatorial world. What really drove the research-exhibition was the will to establish a situated knowledge so that a history of art might blend in with a history of political resistance movements.[3] As indicated by one of the exhibition's key concepts, the "amphibious" term *artistic activism*, the project's main argument was not "artistic." The exhibition was based around two political milestones: the Chilean coup of 1973 and the emergence of Zapatismo in Mexico in 1994. Thus, the 1980s sat at the core of the project, and the exhibition painted a harsh picture of that decade in Latin America, a period when state terrorism paved the way for neoliberalist forms of government and the economy tightened its grip on the production of subjectivity (a subjectivity of debt). As stated in the introduction to the exhibition catalog, the exhibition mapped out three main areas of politicized confrontation with the hegemonic order: 1) residual guerrilla activity; 2) human rights and feminist

movements taking to the streets; and 3) underground activities and cultures linked to the punk scene, sexual rebellion, drug use, bodily experimentation, and the right to party. A fourth element was introduced in the form of ritual masks used by the Guarani people for their *arete guasu* (big party) harvest celebrations, placed interrogatingly around the exhibition space. Each of the four strands thus articulated a different aesthetic-political grammar and a different temporality.

Unlike with academic disciplines—which, like art history, have their own rules, procedures, and conventions—there are no established rules for how to create a system of situated knowledge. That put us on malleable ground. We would have to come up with our own methodology for giving density to what we were developing. With *PLFH*, we moved from a cartographical methodology to a relationship diagram; that is, we diagrammed relationships of affinity and contagion in multiple heterogeneous episodes. From these episodes we created a common lexicon that grew continually until the time came to tweak it and narrow it. This is where the diagrams and glossary of terms in the exhibition catalog came from.

The consequences of such a collaborative process were two-fold. On the one hand, *PLFH* forced Red to establish a common narrative, something it had not done before. This tallied with and was inseparable from "the production conditions of the show, whereby everyone's research is put front of stage."[4] Prioritizing a collaborative research practice led to the artisanal creation of a narrative, to a series of concepts, to ways of making relationships visible, and to what became a common vocabulary. This is important because it is through this form of *doing* together that Red, as a collective mode of subjectivation, is able to emerge. That is, Red becomes the common ground that did not exist prior to the shared *practice*.

However, the process has several flipsides. Our championing of the collective was expressed as anonymity, as epitomized by our self-exclusion from the exhibition catalog, in which Red is not, as such, credited as author. This prompted further discussions about the nature of authorship and the different forms it can take, whether

collective or individual-collective. In recent years we have, as a result, experimented with more polyphonic ways of composing a "we" so that singularities can be made visible.[5]

On the other hand, many of the activities that constituted *PLFH* were not conceived of as art and were thus making their first appearance in a museum. This raised questions about the means of remuneration. The Reina Sofía has a policy of paying the curator but not paying those who loan artworks or documents to an exhibition. This prompted us to question, for later projects such as *Giro gráfico* (Giro graphical), how artists and activists are remunerated for their work; that is, whether we, as Red, could come up with a form of reciprocity that ensured collaborators, activists, and groups (people who are, furthermore, our allies) who take part in a show get a proper return or due "compensation."

In turn, Red learned to be less naive about how researching artistic/political practices increases not only the symbolic value of those practices but also their monetary value.

Finally, the project highlighted the need for balance to counter forms of exhaustion and self-precarization. It brought to light asymmetries within Red; for example, differences in the symbolic positions of members, amount of work contributed to the common cause, and levels of commitment. *PLFH* was ultimately a full cycle of collective work, begun in 2007 and culminating in 2014, and as a process it led to Red reconfiguring its own structure. In the aftermath of the exhibition, Red was "reset," and the structure in place today began to take shape, a structure based on nodes that operate as small assemblies of delegates, with generalized coordination.

It would be interesting to ask the Reina Sofía whether it thinks the research-exhibition process led to any changes in its own institutional structure. But there can be no doubt the exhibition marked something of a milestone in the relationship between the Reina Sofía and Red. One can speak of a before and after when discussing the interinstitutional policy the two entities have developed over the past ten years as part of an exercise in rewriting a colonial relationship that predated us and will most likely outlast us too.

Perhaps, faced as we are with predetermined ways of assigning roles and competencies, the call to "lose the form" not only insists that establishing a non-prefabricated critical space is possible but presents it as an opportunity to instigate institutional, group, and subjective processes of transformation.

2.

Following the *PLFH* project, Red and the Reina Sofía began to develop joint forms of financial management. These were rooted in an awareness that the two parties work with very different resources and production values and have distinct forms of economic, symbolic, and political capital. The story of this development can be told multiple ways, one of which is through the various accords that have "legalized" the link between the two entities and that, to a degree, demonstrate how the Reina Sofía's rocky membrane has become more permeable in the presence of Red's more gaseous, ubiquitous essence.[6] These accords framed and formalized the conceptual and material interchange we sought to develop. They also show that all common spaces like this require a political component, a stated commitment to joint responsibility, dedicated finances, and a legal-technical framework to protect it.

That said, the Red–Reina Sofía link cannot entirely be explained by a series of accords. No formal agreement can bring to light the complexity of experiences and affections, donations and debts, possibilities and tensions that spill off the page and characterize the bond. Nor can they hope to capture the overlapping dimensions of different areas of activity happening simultaneously on both sides of the Atlantic.

The relationship between Red and the Reina Sofía has thus also become a testing ground for developing a common policy for the keeping of archives. This has meant experimenting with various ways of assembling archives and has involved other entities—some institutional, some not—from across Latin America. The emphasis has been on developing a pragmatic policy but also a political

perspective reached through dialogue conducted in forums, publications, and conferences.[7]

For Red, carrying out research, setting up archives, and producing curated experiences of those archives are not just academic or professional activities but political ones. The field of archival policy has shown us just how complex the dichotomy of the North/South relationship can be. Archives represent a convergence point in today's epistemological, symbolic, and economic wars. With the "judicialization" of politics and historical revisionism on the rise, disputes over archives have become the focus of legal battles and fights for historic truth. Red initially entered this minefield to try to better understand the politics of archiving, moving beyond the purely patrimonial to examine disputes over the conditions of knowledge production. Little by little, we resignified our archival practices until we had established an archival policy for the "institutional use" of archives conceived of as communal records.[8] Rather than think of the archives as being the exclusive property of an individual or institution, or even of Red itself, a communal archive implies communal participation and responsibility based on collective use.[9] In our experience, an archival relationship based on comanagement and coresponsibility requires navigating the tensions between two logics, one communal, one capital. The communal is not, therefore, some kind of end point but a series of moments in an ongoing process in which ownership and capital continue to operate.

In the setting up of certain Latin American archives, the Reina Sofía has been a multifaceted ally: a guarantor in localized cases involving the institutionalization of heritage documents; a facilitator of unusual financial and symbolic instruments underpinning constitutional processes for archives that might not end up being physically stored in the museum's own facilities; an active party in accords that have allowed us to jointly develop medium-term policies.[10] Landmark examples include the establishment of the Archivo del Colectivo Acciones de Arte (CADA) at the Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos (Museum of Memory and Human Rights) in Santiago, Chile, and the Archivo Clemente Padín, recently donated to the Universidad

de la República Archive (UDELAR) in Montevideo, Uruguay.[11] Both involve shared commitments and decentralized, internationalist means of redistributing capital in para-institutional, interinstitutional and extra-institutional ways. They are action plans specific to the strange Reina Sofía–Red relationship and alliances rooted in more informal and scattered structures than the usual forms of international cooperation.

The relationship between Red and the Reina Sofía is a conduit through which new configurations emerge that can decipher the flow of symbolic and economic capital while simultaneously reciphering it. Contact between the two entities requires an examination of the policies that the Reina Sofía, like any institution of its kind, employs in relation to archives and acquisitions. Rather than have these policies operate solely according to a patrimonial logic, the Reina Sofía's current institutional analysis project has ensured that a patrimonial-ownership logic combines with a communal one. This, too, creates tensions and requires responses that force the museum to adopt unexpected positions and unsought roles. For example, when the Reina Sofía acquires work by an artist connected to Red, Red assists the artist and gets involved in the legal and commercial side of things, without becoming an art dealer. Red plays an intermediary role—for which it seeks no financial recompense—to ensure these acquisitions have a political component. We know this kind of intervention can contribute to an artist's subsistence, but the effort is also about bringing out a sense of worth that goes beyond the merely monetary; it is a matter of historical, political, and social worth—dignity on its own terms. Returns on some sales have been put back into the self-management of the archives, further safeguarding their integrity (this was the case with the Archivo de Graciela Carnevale and the Archivo de la Resistencia).

The call "For a Communal Policy for Archives," begun in 2019, is undoubtedly another consequence of our experimental work in this field.[12] Trying out different ways of doing things, on different scales, ultimately led to Red and the Reina Sofía expanding its link and incorporating other institutions, artists, lawyers, and collaborators. The call, then, arises from the belief that what makes the archives communal is not simply the archives

themselves but the archival practices and accumulated knowledge, along with all the tensions, mistakes, and validations that come into play. Doing away with a philosophy of exclusivity means popularizing these practices and these pools of knowledge, exposing them so they can be passed on, reappropriated, evaluated, and reformulated by other parties and other institutions. The call, therefore, seeks to initiate a process of contamination and interdependence that meets international standards for the care of archives and fosters the necessary tools to fend off market advances.

3.

Red and the Reina Sofía engender the convergence of two bodies that are affected and altered by their coming into contact. And although gas seems more alive to mutation, one ought not to forget the mutable composition of rock. Some rocks reach an almost gas-like state when subjected to certain temperatures and pressures. When faced with the need to become more porous, to deconstruct itself, when the hierarchies and power imbalances it has traditionally operated under are called into question: what currents of disidentification and estrangement have washed through the Reina Sofía in its contact with Red? We merely put the question out there, like sending a letter in the hope of a response.

We do not believe the common ground established between Red and the Reina Sofía should be thought of as a link between two closed and fixed entities; rather it is something much more fluid, something shaped by day-to-day and specific interactions between staff at the Reina Sofía and staff at Red, through conversations, and through doing things together, activities that necessitate complicity, negotiation, agreement, and areas of reflection. Given that this is not an abstract link but a material link sustained by real people, the historic happenstance of an association of this kind becomes tangible. What remains to be seen is what will become of this link in the future, for the Reina Sofía's current institutional project is reaching the end of its cycle.

1. “Declaración Instituyente,” RedSur, https://redcsur.net/declaracion-instituyente/.
2. The following reflections are based on points that arose when Red met in person in Buenos Aires in 2018 for a *PLFH* debrief. Some of these reflections were recorded in an internal document, Red Conceptualismos del Sur, “Relatorías y registros: Encuentro RedCSur—10 años,” 2018, in Red Conceptualismos del Sur Archive.
3. This aspect of the *PLFH* project was highlighted by Rachel Weiss, “Thinking Back on Global Conceptualism,” *Post: Notes on Art in a Global Context*, May 1, 2015, https://post.moma.org/thinking-back-on-global-conceptualism/.
4. Red Conceptualismos del Sur, “Relatorías y registros,” 16.
5. For example, the declarations, rallying calls, and graphic art campaigns Red encouraged through Fuera el Temor denouncing the coup against Dilma Rousseff in Brazil in 2016.
6. Initially (2013–2018), we established a series of lesser contracts with the aim of guaranteeing the fulfillment of several shared projects. This process reached new heights in 2018 when we signed a master agreement that gave a more permanent indication of the Reina Sofía’s willingness to work on projects with Red, albeit without committing to any budgets. In 2019, we signed a more specific agreement that specified a series of activities and projects to be developed and approved, along with estimated budgets, over the next four years by Red and the Reina Sofía in four main areas: archive management; exhibitions and public activities; critical teaching projects; and editorial projects.
7. The “Archivos del Común” conference, which has taken place biannually since 2015, has been crucial for the exchange of experiences and ways of thinking about archives, as well as for strengthening partnerships. Red’s publications include *Desinventario: Esquirlas de Tucumán Arde en el Archivo de Graciela Carnevale* (Santiago, Chile: Ocho Libros, 2015); and *Archivo CADA: Astucia práctica y potencias de lo común* (Santiago, Chile: Ocho Libros, 2019).
8. Fernanda Carvajal and Mabel Tapia, “Tocar lo inapropiable: Disputas por el valor de uso de los archivos,” in *Archivos del común II: El Archivo Anómico* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Pasafronteras, 2019), 37.
9. Fernanda Carvajal, Moira Cristia, and Javiera Manzi, “Imaginación archivística y co-responsabilidad: Interrogantes y propuestas para una política común de archivos,” in *Archivos del común III: ¿Archivos inapropiables?*, ed. Red Conceptualismos del Sur (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Pasafronteras, 2021).
10. Examples include the agreement between the Juan Carlos Romero Civil Association, the Reina Sofía, Red, and the Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero; the collaboration agreement between the Archivo Mariotti-Luy and the Museo de Arte de Lima; the contract between Memoria Abierta and the Archivo-AIDA (Asociación Internacional de Defensa de Artistas); and the collaboration agreement between UDELAR, the Reina Sofía, and Red to digitize and make available the Padín archive (recently donated to the Archivo General of UDELAR).
11. For a detailed description of the Archivo del CADA’s institutionalization, see Fernanda Carvajal, Paulina Varas, and Jaime Vindel, *Archivo CADA: Astucia práctica y poéticas de lo común* (Santiago, Chile: Ocho Libros, 2019).
12. Red Conceptualismos del Sur, “Por una política común de Archivos: Llamamiento a un acuerdo de buenas prácticas,” RedCSur, December 22, 2019, https://redcsur.net/2019/12/22/por-una-politica-comun-de-archivos-llamamiento-a-un-acuerdo-de-buenas-practicas/.

Kike España

Incomplete Complicity

A variety of signs suggest that political imagination is currently in a critical state: reduced, constrained, and suffocated by the rise of new forms of authoritarianism, the staunch defense of minimal things, and the evident revival of fascism on a planetary scale. The pandemic has accentuated, accelerated, and exposed structural problems in the global economy, not least the weaknesses of capital and its inability to survive without (the appropriation of) a workforce. The dire consequences for life on earth and the planet's survival are not new, but we do seem to be entering a particularly terrifying phase. The current situation has also highlighted just how weakened the production of subjectivity and the development of checks and balances has become.

Less than three decades ago, the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (Zapatista Army of National Liberation) took up arms against the neoliberal regime and government of Mexico. Almost two decades ago, anti-globalization movements took shape, first in Seattle and later in Genoa. A decade ago, Spanish town squares were occupied by the powerful 15M movement—and its transnational precursors and extensions. More recently we have seen an "institutional offensive" on municipal governments, which saw "activist" mayors take charge of Barcelona and Madrid, among other places, before being neutralized and diminished, condemned to all but disappear. Without wishing to reduce all the struggles and social actions currently underway in Spain and across Europe to the question of institutionality, my intention here is to open up the debate about constructing our own institutions,[1] to breathe in some of the long-term air of institutional processes,[2] and to argue against any institutionalization that does not insist on being subversive, undisciplined, and alive via concrete, fleshed out measures mapped out on an emancipated horizon.

Experimentation with new forms of undisciplined institutionalism—through movements that can fire the political imagination toward new transformational territories—is perhaps not enjoying its most prolific moment. But the last couple of

decades *have* seen a multitude of undisciplined and rebellious institutional practices emerge, which sometimes get called "common" or "movement" institutions: social centers, community bookshops, *copyleft* (free distribution) publishers, militant training and research groups, hacker communities, political design workshops, "artivist" collectives, and so on. Their existence always precarious and difficult, but also somewhat collective in their reappropriation of the conditions of production, they have of necessity found themselves linked to the push to build social counterweights and new political machines. The Fundación de los Comunes (Commons Foundation) is one such example of these action networks that experiment with the institutionality of grass-roots movements to stimulate political intervention and knowledge production.

A recurring question concerning these spaces is how the institutional practices of a grass-roots movement can combine, clash, and even crystallize into some form of collaboration with state institutions (museums, universities, hospitals, schools, etc.) that tend not only to monopolize knowledge production but to control the production of subjectivity besides. Gilles Deleuze, building on the work of fellow French philosopher Michel Foucault, spoke of how "disciplinary society" long ago reached a crisis point and made way for a "society of control" in which institutions are "no longer the distinct analogical spaces that converge towards an owner—state or private power—but coded figures—deformable and transformable—of a single corporation that now has only stockholders."[3] Museums are the sum of their visitors, hospitals the sum of their patients, schools the sum of their graduating students, universities the sum of their published papers. Only by viewing things this way can we see how the algorithms of capitalism control society through sums and data, from financial derivatives to Big Data, geolocalization, and rental prices based on social media "likes." And so we are all complicit in this voluntary data grab through our use of Airbnb, idealista, Uber, BlaBlaCar, Glovo, Facebook, Instagram, Google, and so on. That is not to say all forms of cooperation and collaboration can be measured by this control logic, for some collaborations remain, and continue to arise, that defy measurement. Even within some

museums, some universities, some schools, and some hospitals, some collaborations cannot be measured. They are what Stefano Harney and Fred Moten call the "undercommons," because they operate in an informal and discreet manner under the radar of individuation processes.[4]

And it was in this context that the relationship between the Fundación de los Comunes and the Museo Nacional de Arte Reina Sofía was set up. The relationship might seem strange, even hard to understand, if looked at from the perspective of a movement that is now collaborating with an institution it had previously criticized and sought to confront; or if viewed from the conservative perspective of an institution seen to be "devaluing" its art and artistic practices by associating with social reality "phenomena," upstarts that are "too" political, undisciplined, and subversive. This is where Harney and Moten come in again, for they use the term *complicity* rather than *collaboration*, which is especially useful in showing the ambivalence that this type of relationship entails.[5] An accomplice is someone who helps someone commit a crime, although they do not necessarily take part in the actual crime itself, making for an implicit sense of conspiracy, which might be understood as collaborating with state apparatuses or as political interference in grassroots movements. On the other hand, complicity is a sentiment, a feeling, something that is neither on one side nor the other but straddles both parts. Something important is revealed in both cases: its incompleteness. Complicity is not complete, nor is it ever completed, because the accomplice is never quite safe from being captured by the state. Nor is it ever on the verge of being completely captured, for, whenever that risk arises, warning-contingency mechanisms kick in. Complicity thus remains incomplete, and its incompleteness is at once its biggest weakness and its major strength. This complicity is neither general nor complete but is a complicity confined to certain areas, for specified conspiracies and particular schemes in which walls are scaled and algorithms from inside and outside the "disciplinary" institution are exposed, revealing inconsistencies and showing that the only loyalty possible is toward protection of the life of the undercommons.

An interesting deepening of this incomplete complicity occurred in March 2017 between the Reina Sofía and the Casa Invisible social center in Málaga. When planning activities to celebrate the eightieth anniversary of Pablo Picasso's *Guernica*—including an exhibition curated by Timothy Clark—the Reina Sofía decided to organize a series of conferences in Picasso's birth city. This is when things started to get interesting: instead of choosing to hold these conferences at Málaga's Picasso Museum, Pompidou Centre, or Museo Carmen Thyssen, or even in the city's Centro de Arte Contemporánea (Center for Contemporary Art), the Reina Sofía plumped for La Casa Invisible, a self-run, "Occupied" social and cultural center that is alternately targeted and ignored by Málaga's city council. Málaga is a paradigmatic example of a city radically moving from disciplinary society to one of data control, the city as *a single corporation that now has only stockholders*, and one whose only aim is to attract: tourists, capital, and value. Málaga represents the new mutation of the urban capital that combines gentrification, touristification, commercialization, and "museumification" in a *city of attractions*.[6] Everything is at the service of tourism. The city has been remade as theme park, its museums, franchises concerned only with visitor numbers, are managed by the marketing departments of disciplinary institutions in other cities or outsourced like some kind of private-property art market. Picasso exists in Málaga only as a brand to be exploited, a lucky mascot with which to beat the sales records of souvenir shops, a neon sign advertising a tourist-trap pizzeria, a warped money-making figure that serves both corner kiosk and tourist tower block.

These days the Luftwaffe may not be answering the Francoist call to enact genocidal experiments by dropping bombs on Guernica or on refugees fleeing Málaga for Almería, as in 1937. But that does not mean life is not seriously threatened today by other dangers that are more indirect and encoded, that endlessly attract other kinds of aviation—now Lufthansa and Ryanair, easyJet and Vueling—that squeeze the life out of cities by increasing rents, removing the fabric of sustainable urban living, and replacing all forms of social complicity with a number. Violence operates not only in direct and brutal fashion by fascist regimes dropping

bombs but in indirect and institutional ways when we meekly accept that giant cruise ships may come to our ports but any migrant who arrives in that same port will be imprisoned or left to die. This conflict is played out in every eviction, in every local business that is shut down, in every "refurbishment" of a block of flats that becomes a hotel wrapped in an algorithm, in every undocumented migrant, in every privatization of a commonly held resource. Picasso no longer shows horror to the world. Today he is used to bring horror to it, for the *desbanda* (as the 1937 bombing of Málaga is known) of today is almost willfully accepted through self-exploitation and disciplined acceptance of the "fun city."

The Reina Sofía and La Casa Invisible held their "Picasso en la institución monstruo: Arte, industria cultural y derecho a la ciudad" (Picasso in the Monster Institution: Art, the Culture Industry and the Right to the City) conference on March 25–26, 2017. A series of events and roundtables took place in which the declared topics were discussed, no doubt navigating all the limitations associated with a state institution and its bureaucratic mechanisms. In truth, though the content was interesting enough, it was of secondary importance to the fact that the event was jointly organized in the first place and the effect this had on the city of Málaga. The event's organization was strategic, feeding off the notion of incomplete complicity to highlight the shortcomings of a local government that tells its citizens it is investing everything in culture when it is merely account-managing the financial flows that profit from the city by destroying its sociality. The asymmetry is more than evident: on one side is a strategically important state museum with considerable institutional clout; on the other side, a precarious Occupied social center. Which begs the question: Who won a nd who lost from the relationship? Who came out with the most credit, and who got the bigger return? Whose life was complicated by it, and who profited from the complication? Even more relevant is to look at the productivity specifics of the complicity: What resources and relationships were risked? What wells of desire were stirred? What attachments and alliances were formed? What political imaginations were opened up? These are not two entirely separate sets of questions; rather, they are vectors of

incomplete complicity moving through a terrain where the risk of state-institutional capture is high but where one also finds a climate of antagonistic effervescence with the institutional power to develop means of defending the very communal life that today is so threatened, detached, and uncared for.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that, if the number-crunching machine breaks down in a tourist-attraction city, that same city becomes a social desert, a ruined city devastated by its own attraction. But capitalism's mutations are perfectly adaptable to this extra-activist logic. The question, then, is whether through self-organization and social cooperation we might be capable of articulating institutional modes of production and mutual care that facilitate new political imaginations. Complicity will always be incomplete because its relationality is based not on a union of individuals who become complete by entering into that relationship but on an infinite and transindividual ecology of nonhierarchical relationships—an ecology that itself remains incomplete, that transverses, condenses, and disperses, constructing and deconstructing institutions as it moves and as it occupies, fights, and confronts data and other attempts by capital to appropriate the creativity and strength that come from working together.

1. See Raúl Sánchez Cedillo, "Hacia nuevas creaciones políticas: Movimientos, instituciones, nueva militancia," in *Producción cultural y prácticas instituyentes: Líneas de ruptura en la crítica institucional* (Madrid: Traficantes de sueños 2008), 217–41, https://www.traficantes.net/sites/default/files/pdfs/Producción%20cultural-TdSs.pdf. Available in English translation as Raúl Sánchez Cedillo, "Towards New Political Creations: Movements, Institutions, New Militancy," trans. Maribel Casas-Cortés and Sebastian Cobarrubias, *transversal texts* [blog], May 2007, https://transversal.at/transversal/0707/sanchez-cedillo/en. Sánchez Cedillo stresses that the *construction of our own institutions* means "the material capacity to construct non-capitalist—or communist—production and reproduction conditions for everyone involved in a social relationship" (232). Our own institutions are a type of *movement institution* (like a social center) where the social force acts as a counterweight and has the capacity to generate its own rules and impose them while, at the same time, being able to generate its own production (also called *communist production* by Toni Negri or *political entrepreneurship*) with the potential to transform society.
2. See Gerald Raunig, "Instituent Practices, No. 2 Institutional Critique, Constituent Power, and the Persistence of Instituting," trans. Aileen Derieg, *transversal texts* [blog], January 2007, https://transform.eipcp.net/transversal/0507/raunig/en.html. "Long-term" in the sense of a deep breath that traces out a genealogy that does not adhere to the concept of institutional criticism but has more to do with the calls by George Steiner, Gilles Deleuze, Paolo Virno, and Negri for the "construction of a non-dialectical way out of purely negating and affirming the institution."
3. Gilles Deleuze, "Post-scriptum sobre las sociedades de control," in *Conversaciones*, trans. by José Luis Pardo Torio (1995; Valencia: Pre-Textos, 2014), 283.
4. Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Wivenhoe, UK: Minor Compositions, 2013).
5. Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, "Plantocracy or Communism," in *Propositions for Non-fascist Living: Tentative and Urgent*, ed. M. Hlavajova and W. Maas (Utrecht: BAK, 2019); also available as Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, "Plantocracy and Communism," *Ill Will*, May 20, 2021, https://illwill.com/plantocracy-and-communism.
6. K. España and G. Raunig, "La ciudad de atracciones," in *Rogelio López Cuenca: Yendo leyendo, dando lugar*, exh. cat. (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2019), 131–46.

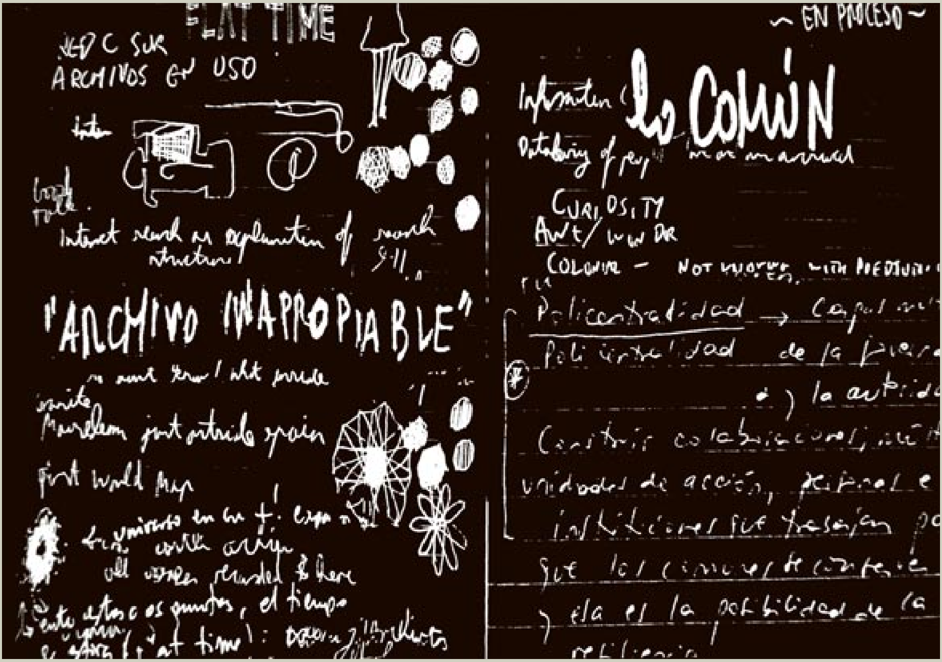
Lucía Bianchi
Register of the Commons II, 2019

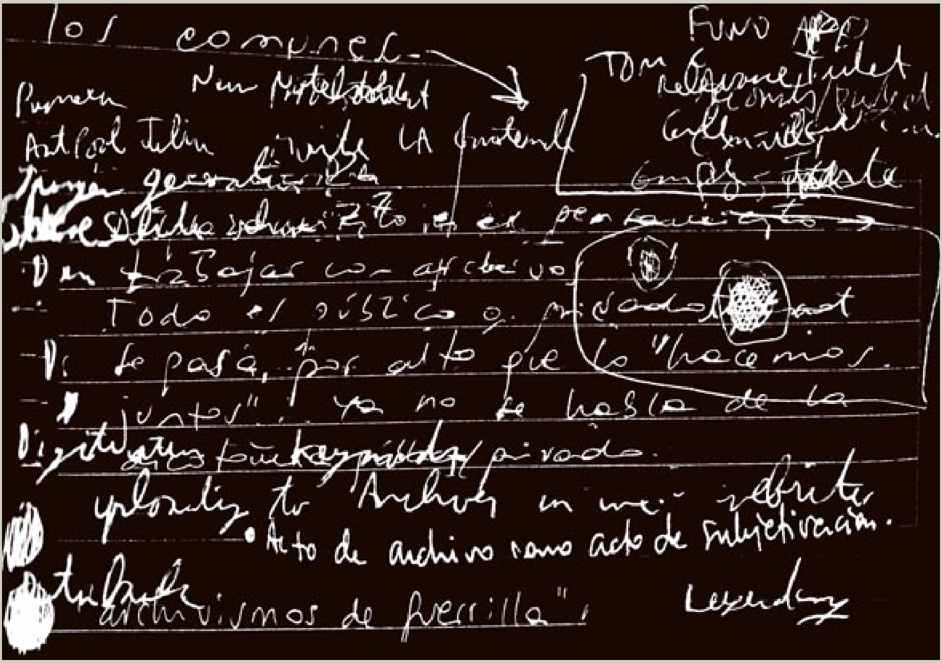
Silk-screen printed postcards
10 × 15 cm each
Edition of 490 copies

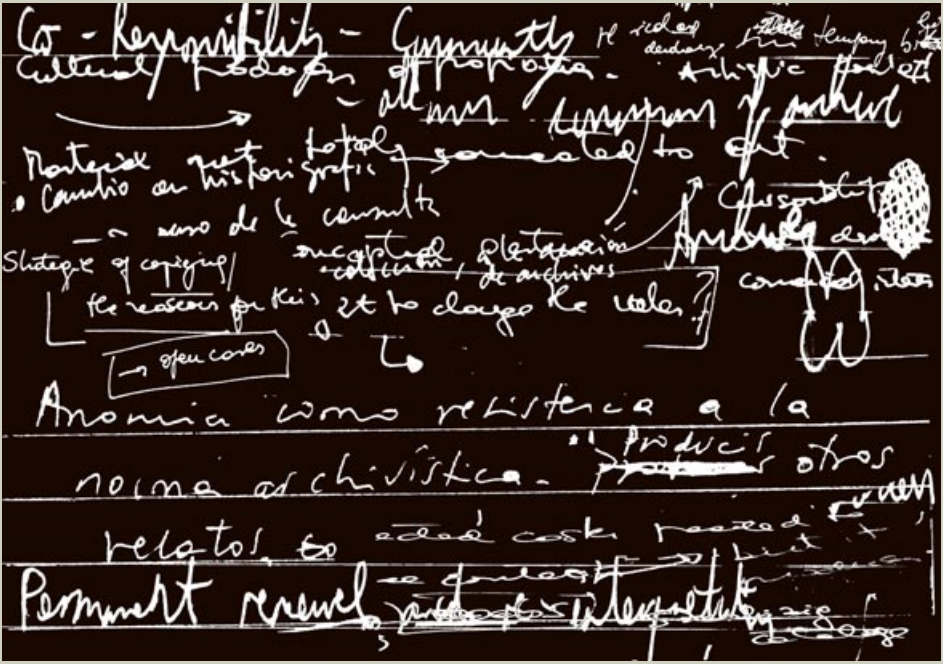
Over the past six years, the Southern Conceptualisms Network and the Museo Reina Sofía have joined forces to arrange a periodic encounter that stems from a shared sentiment that the need to strike up a dialogue between spaces where memory gestates is urgent.

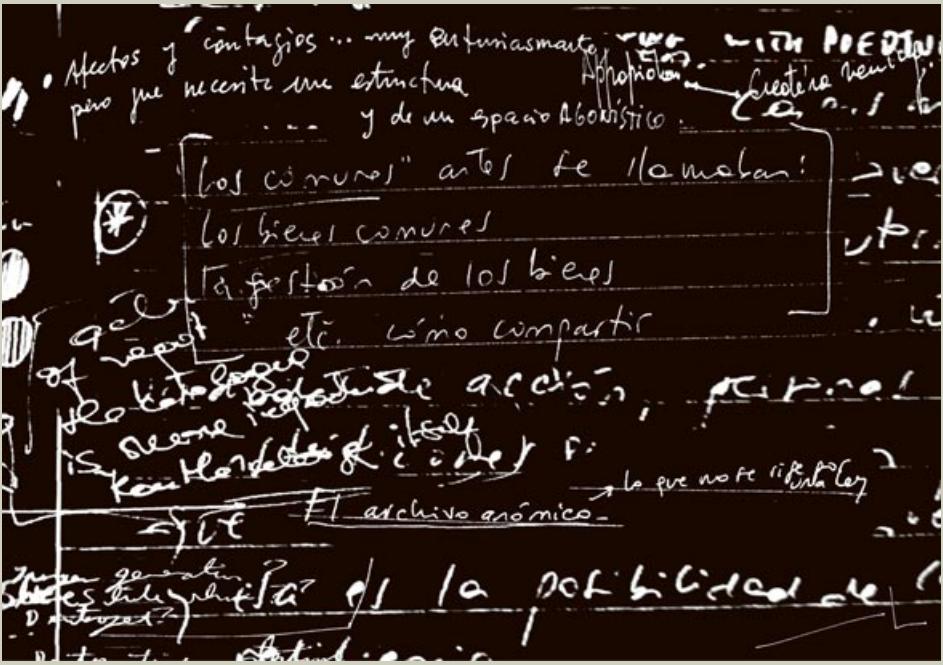
The aim is to put forward opportunities for exchange and reflection around archive practices as exercises of political, artistic, and social commitment, experiences that set forth future memories, pasts to come, which are key to articulating and constructing narratives of a memory in resistance.

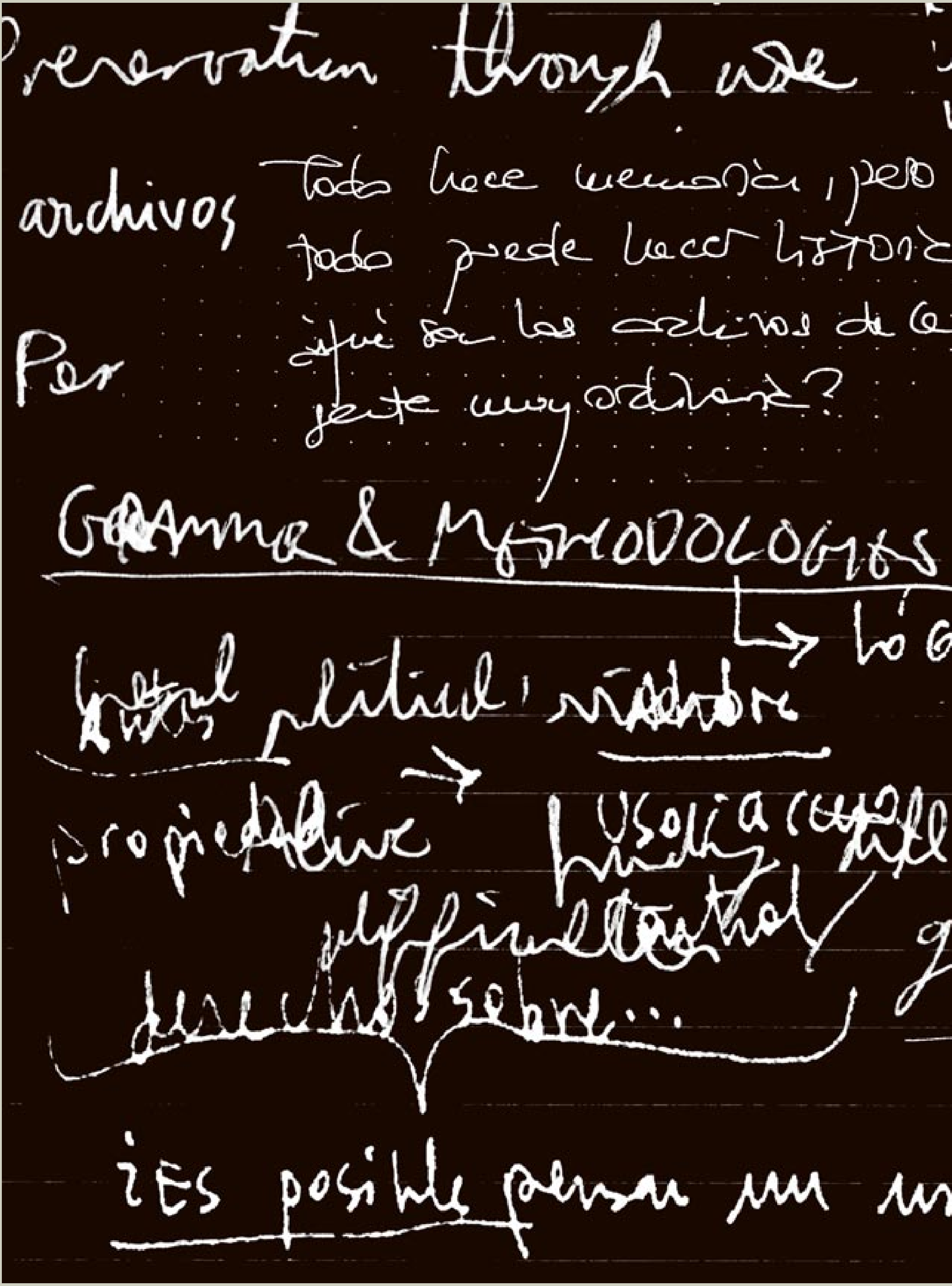
Archives of the Commons and Museo Reina Sofía, 2015-2021


FLAT TIME
~ EN PROCESO ~
ARCHIVOS EN USO
"ARCHIVO INAPROPIABLE"
Lo COMÚN
CURIOSITY
Policentralidad


los comunes
Todo el público
hacemos juntos
Acto de archivo como acto de subjetivación.
archivismos de guerrilla


Anomia como resistencia a la
norma archivística.
Permanent renewal


Afectos y contagios ... muy entusiasmante
pero que necesita una estructura
... y de un espacio agonístico.
"los comunes" antes de llamarlos
los bienes comunes
la gestión de los bienes
etc. cómo compartir
El archivo anómico.



Preservation through use

archivos

Todo hace memoria, pero

todo puede hacer historia

¿qué son los archivos de la

gente muy ordinaria?

Per

GRAMMA & METODOLOGIAS

→ lóg

¿Es posible pensar un un


archivado.
Reconfigurar el presente a través del pasado
Archivos en balance
texto colectivo de la Red
ica de lo COMÚN
Aceleración de la lógica
improductivo del archivo?

Zdenka Badovinac

L'Internationale: The Museum as a Verb

The Museum as a Verb

L'Internationale (L'I), a confederation of, today, seven European art institutions, was founded in 2010. Its birth was precipitated by its founders' failure to receive funds from the European Union's cultural program, which rejected their application on the grounds that they had insufficiently explained their method of collaboration. This was a pivotal moment, when we, the members, came to the full realization that the question of how we do our work—our work methods—was no less important than what we do when we work. That is, for the L'I members, the verb became equal to the noun. That L'I took its name from a song is not surprising: a song exists only in its "singing," and L'I is like a choir without sheet music.

The importance of verbs over nouns has been gaining in strength, slowly but steadily, over the past thirty years, which in my view is related, among other things, to a deepening planetary need for change—that we stop merely explaining the world and, as Karl Marx would say, start changing it. Globalization, the economic crisis, the climate crisis, and, not least of all, the crisis caused by the COVID pandemic—all have led to worsening conditions in Europe and around the world. Everywhere the space of freedom is shrinking, sometimes without us realizing it. Political populism, the media, and cultural industries work in subtle but persistent ways to shape our subjectivities. But with the rise of autocratic governments, repression, too, is again appearing in harsher ways. In Slovenia, at demonstrations against the increasingly autocratic government—protests have been going on since 2020—the poet Boris A. Novak often recites his poem "Freedom Is a Verb," which begins with the following lines:

> Freedom is not the famed memory of the monument,
> Freedom is not the hollow phrase of the politician,
> Freedom is not the lawbook's pointed punctuation,
> Freedom is not the noun's moribund definition

As found in the Dictionary of Standard Slovenian,
Freedom is lifeblood, is wing, is the winged exclamation[1]

In the past few decades contemporary art has seen the flourishing of different forms of participation, including relational art, community projects, and the self-historicization of art activism. Art has brought a similar logic to its museums, which we have begun to label with modifiers, hence "relational museum," "performative museum," "constituent museum," "museum of the commons," and "situated museum." For my purposes here, however, verbs seem the most appropriate way to name the museum—all the designations I have just listed could perhaps be covered by the phrase "the museum as commoning." A museum so designated does not allow the total institutionalization of languages; rather, it demands that automatic signifying processes be suspended and that its doors be open to freer relations in which the weaker are given an active role. By "the weaker" we mean not only individual people and their communities but also subordinated systems of knowledge, unknown histories, marginalized geographies, and even nonhuman agencies.

Interrupted Histories

The museums in the L'I confederation have, for instance, devoted a great deal of attention to the histories of marginalized regions and communities and thus to different narratives. I have often written that the new narratives we are constructing do not have as a goal the formation of a new master narrative, and in this connection I have, for several years, used the term *historicizing*, which underlines a history that is not itself the final object of expert knowledge but a living process in which various actors participate. Here, archives compiled by artists and other noninstitutional actors play a major role, as do, more generally, various horizontal connections. In this way, other sources of knowledge do not merely supplement but continually interrupt the expert knowledge. Historicization thus represents a ceaseless dynamic composed of different interruptions and thus opposes the idea of history as an unproblematic continuity that follows certain symbolic nuclei in the given community.

The "museum as commoning," as advocated by L'I, emphasizes the importance of different kinds of knowledge and horizontal collaborations, but the question remains as to how much we are truly able to avoid the traps of institutionalization. I expect we will be able to assess this only over the course of time, but for now, as we try to answer this question, we can compare our approach to the work of, in particular, the dominant, most influential Western museums, which still dictate the trends. And indeed, the trend of focusing on alternative histories from different political geographies and marginalized communities has already started replacing the old modernist canon. So what specific difference do we see with the practices of the L'I museums? Keep in mind that the powerful museums follow their own inherent logic of accumulation—the accumulation not only of artifacts but of knowledge, all in one place. No matter how much goodwill, effort, and knowledge are invested in this effort, the position of the center of the accumulation (whether physical or online) is itself the determining factor. The advantage L'I has lies precisely in its polycentricity—its network of museums of differing status and power, which are central in their own regions and collaborate with their local and international constituents. The L'I confederation is a dynamic organism in which perfect harmony is rarely the rule; instead, various antagonisms are continually confronted. The assembled institutions differ not only in their historical and political contexts but also in their economic situations. With the exception of SALT, in Turkey, they are all financed predominantly with public funds and, in this sense, are also committed to representing those who pay into the public coffers. In addition, funding from the EU's cultural programs also plays a significant role, and as a result the idea of the "European museum," which naturally should represent our common European heritage, is also given prominence. To respond to the question of institutionalization, L'I developed the notion of the *constituent museum*, which, in line with the model of Western democracy, relates both to representative and, partially, to direct democracy—through direct public actions, statements, petitions, and other proposals from the interested public to the museum. The museums in L'I have on a number of occasions already demonstrated their willingness to offer their infrastructure and

relative autonomy to particular initiatives, especially to those that demonstrate concern for the public space, which also includes public institutions.

Who Does the Museum Represent?

The traditional museum represents its communities; it speaks in their name and is patronizing toward them, for it addresses them from the elevated position of the expert. Given the increasingly rapid change in our societies due to communications technologies and physical migrations, it makes sense to ask who in fact makes up our community. Also, how much can the European democratic tradition alone, with its principle of diversity and equality, still help us in answering this? European democracy works to a large degree on the basis of inclusion, adherence to quotas for weaker groups, and political correctness—here, its main "verb" is to participate in, not to radically change society. Western democracy is based on symbolic orders that necessarily domesticate all that is alien, reducing it to the languages we are familiar with. But what happens when our identities are ever less in harmony with one another, with our "unique" culture, with our national identity, and even with our identity as human beings? To be human, we must suppress all the animal in ourselves—European culture, in accordance with G. W. F. Hegel's idea of the evolution of the spirit, relies on this notion. But the climate crisis and the current pandemic—both consequences of unbridled capitalism—have again reminded us that we share our fate with animals. Neoliberalism shapes our subjectivities as well and seems to expect the museum to speak primarily to the consumers of the culture industry. If the museum must represent somebody, then the ones it should represent must first define themselves. Here the museum can play an important role in making people more aware of the mechanisms involved in the production of subjectivity.

The Language of Alienness

In the late 1970s, during the socialist period, the Slovenian poet Jure Detela wrote about ecology in a way that connected the

liberation of animals and nature with revolutionary social change that transcended existing socialism and capitalism and the profit-based logic of both systems. In this regard, he also argued for the "self-essence" of all living beings that form "the common node of pan-terrestrial life expansion." This "common node" is similar to the "crossline intersecting the worldviews of different beings," as he describes it in the following poem:

> Streams—long have I wanted to write
> a poem in general about them—
> as a form of aesthesis, a crossline
> intersecting the worldviews of different
> beings, from tadpoles in pools
> to water bugs to roe deer and red deer,
> which drink from streams.[2]

Museums in their traditional role reinforce the existing mechanisms by which meaning is created. Within the framework of the existing symbolic order, the art museum can add only new superlative creations of the human spirit. But what happens when art does not want to be merely an object that is presented by the museum but wants, instead, to participate in developing the museum? Art is becoming a point of intersection between various languages that may not even necessarily be of human origin, and this is exactly what art expects from its museum.

The history of avant-garde art is replete with examples of artists trying to establish connections with other languages, or at least to demonstrate their awareness of them. The Russian futurists invented *zaum*, a language that exists "beyond the mind" (*za umom*). The poet Velimir Khlebnikov called this, among other things, "the language of the birds" and "the language of the stars." Whereas the avant-garde movements of the twentieth century set themselves in opposition to existing signifying processes, which they believed had to be destroyed and replaced by new ones, the task of art today seems to be more about creating a transversal space where different languages and their representatives can enter into relations with one another. Art institutions are becoming platforms for such endeavors. As an illustration, let me mention the transversal L'I project called *Glossary of Common Knowledge*, which brings together

languages from different sociopolitical and cultural contexts.[3] Within the framework of individual seminars, "narrators" propose specific words, or terms, that are then discussed and undergo a kind of collective editing process. The designation "narrator" was chosen intentionally as a way of underscoring the presence of their voice and, therefore, of oral history. But this alternative, oral presence should not be understood in terms of the preeminence of voice over text but as something already present in the other; for example, the text that is already present in voice (there is no original voice). The *Glossary* reminds us of the specific uses of language and their impurity. By spending time together at the seminar, and by remaining in touch with one another afterward, the narrators become more sensitive to the message of the other.

Detela was writing against the tyranny of the established aesthetic, which is unidirectional and never asks how the Other (he was thinking primarily of animals) hears its own voices. He intentionally uses the word *aesthesis*, which not only refers to "art" but, in Greek, primarily means "experience through the senses." This sensate experience is the ceaseless maintaining of sensitivity for "beings from alien worlds," as Detela understands animals. But not only them: alienness exists also within ourselves, so this sensitivity is also about being aware of this alienness, which is the common denominator of all that exists.[4]

Detela's crossline—the stream—can be understood as a transversal space where we enter into one another. The relevance today of what Detela wrote over forty years ago lies in the pressing need to stop making images of the Other, to stop describing the Other from some "objective position," and to recognize that we are literally already embodied in one another. For museums, this realization is essential. Detela himself would almost certainly be opposed to using the stream as a metaphor for the museum as a verb. But perhaps we can still allow ourselves this, provided we maintain a certain critical distance. When, in the mid-2010s, refugees started arriving in Europe in large numbers, their columns were described as "rivers," "a wave," "a tsunami." Metaphor is not only the way human language colonizes the world, as Detela might say; it can also be

a way to avoid defining the victims and addressing the problems. In many cases, examples from nature warn us that a certain problem has become unmanageable. This is how Zygmunt Bauman describes the period of "liquid modernity" (postmodern society) that has outstripped the still-manageable rhythm of time and space we need for high-quality social reproduction. Bauman argues that, in the period of "software modernity," nothing is lasting and stable; everything is fluid and changing.[5] The philosophers of Ancient Greece, of course, also said that everything is changing, but in every age this awareness derives from a different experience. Our age is defined by opposing extremes. On the one hand, we live in a time of acceleration created by capitalism through modern technology; on the other hand, a pandemic has brought time to a stop throughout the world. In L'I, after we survived the first long period of lockdown and, like most people, were connecting with one another online, our need for touch became ever more intense, and we started talking more and more often about the difference between nearness and remoteness, between passing and duration.

Contemporary art has long cultivated an interest in duration. Here, the most interesting projects are not, for example, performances that last several hours and test the artist's physical endurance but projects that extend over much longer periods of time: months and even years. This is an art that lives the same life as reality, which includes art institutions. This kind of time, which is not merely the project-based time of deadlines, allows artists, institutions, and their communities a similar experience that is also a social experience—that of personal contacts, where other kinds of relationships can develop, where one is no longer presenting the other, but all are working together, taking care of one another, and imagining other worlds. The future of our museums lies more in our respect for such shared duration than it does in fluid programs. The period of liquid modernity, where relations and ideas simply pass too quickly to be able to establish a certain attitude toward them, may already be waning. Ever more plainly, the crises of the present demand that we slow down and establish clear ethical positions.

The Ethics of Transversality

The L'I mission statement explains that the confederation's ethics are "based on the values of difference and antagonism, solidarity and commonality."[6] This means, among other things, that our museums are distinguished by dynamic horizontal relationships and processes, which develop in particular situations. In these relationships, the key question is how to avoid reductionism, patronizing attitudes, and instrumentality. Just as Detela labeled poetic metaphor as simply another case of human beings appropriating nature, so we, too, can speak of certain languages dominating other languages within the human world. One of these dominant languages is the classifying language of the traditional museum, which alters the world to accommodate its own register of knowledge. If we understand the museum not as a filing cabinet with clear and precise labels but as a channel linked to other channels, through which flow different kinds of knowledge and experience, then we are closer to understanding the museum as a verb. Such a museum connects various issues and adapts its infrastructure to this flow, through technology that creates shared information and mutual communication, blogs and websites, as well as physical meetings and gatherings that enable the translation of different experiences and languages by working together and socializing. Here I am thinking also of gatherings that include those to whom the museum may be currently able to offer protection and a space of visibility. More than anything else, in this age when finding ways out of various crises is difficult, when we have wedged ourselves into different mental boxes, we need ideas about new worlds of the possible.

Current theories of posthumanism offer new answers to dilemmas from which there seems to be no escape. The Russian philosopher Oxana Timofeeva, for example, wonders about "escape routes" from an unfree world when existing knowledge can no longer provide them. She says that gates make sense only to those who know they are caged: "The animal will find its escape route precisely where there seems to be no escape."[7] So it is only our Other that can show us the escape route—the Other that comes from outside, and the Other that resides within ourselves. So why not start learning about museums from those

who have inhabited them as stuffed artifacts, exotic curiosities, other cultures—all those we do not connect with Western high culture or privileged social groups? In addition to researching lesser-known histories, the museums in L'I are also continually engaged with the urgencies of the present and work together with our constituents to develop a different way of thinking about the uses of art, about an art that is no longer bound to its own ontology but keeps one foot in life, an art that is sometimes difficult to distinguish from reality. L'I reacts to the problems of today's Europe, to the growth of fascism and the formation of authoritarian regimes, and during this time of pandemic we are developing new programs and adapting old ones to demonstrate greater concern and solidarity, especially toward those who have been left without employment and income. L'I is already well supplied with voices that come from other places, and its doors are always open to them, but our fear is that, without more radical changes, society will remain at the level of isolated and perhaps only temporary modifications.

The Day-to-Day Life of the Museum

With all that has been said, how should we in the museum live our day-to-day lives, especially when everything is still so unstable and uncertain? With all our knowledge and awareness, how can we, on a daily basis, help to build firm ground on which we can walk? What is the verb that sustains the meaning of what we do? We are used to thinking on a large scale, in terms of events, media attention, quantitative criteria, and so on. Now, when we do not know how much money the pandemic will take from us, when we do not know when we will again be able to hold openings and in-person conferences, be able to travel—in this moment, time acquires a different, nonlinear structure.

Working together in L'I means continually learning from one another. Our confederation allows us to generate ideas faster than would be possible if we worked only in a single museum, unconnected to others. This is an advantage, but it is also a trap: in this kind of collective work, ideas become amplified and are often produced faster than practices. Thus, we must keep returning to the material reality of the museum, where we can

test the consistency of our ideas and ways to realize them. Working collectively in a transversal space also allows us to challenge and be challenged by one another, to offer mutual advice and corrections, to observe one another's work. Even here, though, a certain competitiveness and struggle for dominance can be seen, but in the end what matters is how our transversally generated common knowledge returns to the individual museums and our local communities. What goes beyond the responsibility of the transnational confederation, however, is the fact that, in the end, our individual museums always run up against the local political situation. But the more our museums strive to be the verbal form of "the commons," the more they can resist regressing into their former representational role. *Commoning* means connecting; it means strengthening the voice of the Other and increasing the emancipatory gestures that will cut through the vicious circle in which we currently live.

1. This is the first stanza of Novak's poem "Svoboda kot glagol" (Freedom Is a Verb), published in the magazine *Mladina*, May 14, 2020, https://www.mladina.si/198333/boris-a-novak-svoboda-je-glagol.
2. These lines appear in one of Detela's notebooks from 1979. Jure Detela, *Orfični dokumenti: Teksti in fragmenti iz zapuščine* [Orphic documents: Texts and fragments from his posthumous papers], ed. Miklavž Komelj (Koper, Slovenia: Hyperion, 2011), 1:157.
3. The *Glossary* is available online at https://glossary.mg-lj.si/.
4. Miklavž Komelj writes about these concepts in detail in his commentary to Detela, *Orfični dokumenti*. See especially his notes "Bitja iz tujih svetov" [Beings from alien worlds] (2:467–76) and "Aisthesis proti tiraniji estetike" [Aisthesis against the tyranny of aesthetics] (2:477–88).
5. See Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2000).
6. See the L'I website, https://www.internationaleonline.org/about/.
7. Oxana Timofeeva, *The History of Animals: A Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 181.

Artists in Quarantine

The museum confederation L'Internationale has invited a diverse group of artists to offer, from their present working and living spaces, their current conditions of confinement, readings, reflections, and proposals on that situation. During this time of global isolation, virtual space, as well as the windows, balconies, or facades of our homes, has taken on the role and importance of town squares for collective expression while also blurring the boundaries between public and private spheres.

The project Artists in Quarantine, devised to be shared on social media, is a modest way to contribute to the conversation about the effects of the current pandemic, using these channels of digital communication to also rethink the potential of existing spaces.

A L'Internationale project, inside the framework *Our Many Europes*

1. Sanja Iveković
Trokut (Triangle), 1979
Photograph of the polyptych, which consists of four photographs and a text
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía
(p. 101)

2. Sanja Iveković (in collaboration with Sanja Bachrach-Krištofić and Aida Bagić)
The Advantages of Being a Woman Artist in Quarantine, 2020
Poster
(p. 101)

3. Ola Hassanain
how shall we live?, 2020
Photograph, text, design, and video (25")
(p. 102)

4. Rogelio López Cuenca and Elo Vega
Calma urgente: Accionando el freno de emergencia (Urgent calm: Pulling the emergency brake), 2020
Germinal action
(p. 103)

5. Akram Zaatari
Second reading, 2020
Video (5' 38")
(p. 104)

6. Osman Bozkurt
Domestic Archeology / Covid-19 Studio Logs, 2020
Video (2' 36")
(p. 104)

7. Daniela Ortiz
Sus pies descienden a la muerte · Sus pasos nos enseñan a vivir (Their feet descend to death · Their steps show us how to live), 2020
Mural painting
(p. 105)

8. Kate Newby
I can't feel good until I do this, 2020
Photograph
(p. 106)

9. Simnikiwe Buhlungu
My Dear Kite (You Can But You Can't)– Late Yawnings 01h43, 2020
Video (4' 54")
(p. 107)

10. Babi Badalov
Egaliti - bis, 2020
Video (9")
(p. 107)

11. Zeyno Pekünlü,
...but it's never capitalism, 2020
Gif
(p. 108)

12. Siniša Labrović
You, 2020
Performance
(p. 108)

13. Isidoro Valcárcel Medina
Paisaje de balcón, 40 textos, uno por hoja (Balcony landscape, 40 texts, one per sheet), 2020
Handwritten text on recycled graph paper
(p. 109)

14. Guy Woueté
L'heure de conter (It's time to tell), 2020
Poetry and photography
(p. 110)

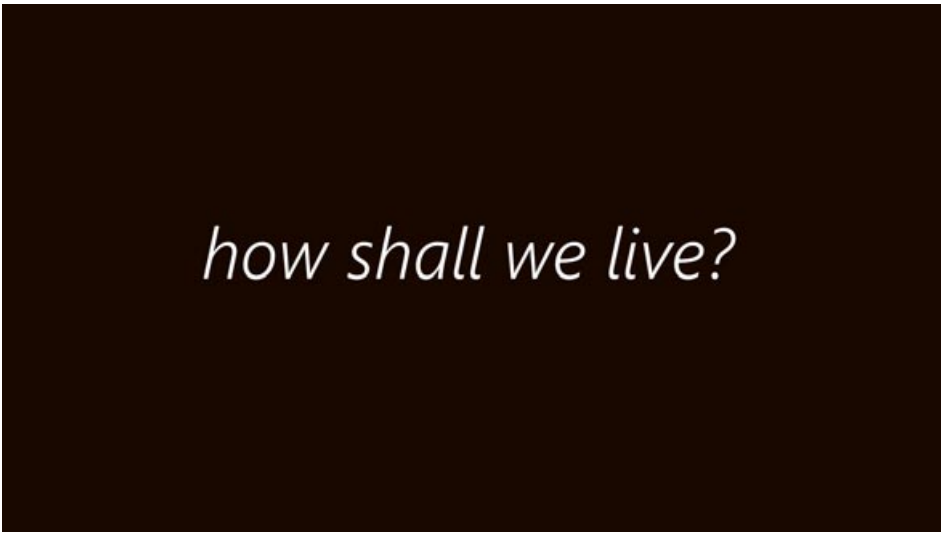
15. Paweł Żukowski
Cardboards, 2020
Photography
(p. 111)

16. Maja Smrekar (in collaboration with Urška Lipovž)
Internationale, day 04, 2020
Video (1' 30")
(p. 112)

THE ADVANTAGES OF BEING A WOMAN ARTIST IN QUARANTINE:

Working without the pressure of success.
Being included in numerous museums' online exhibitions without getting paid.
Having the opportunity to wear the latex gloves you bought with your last kinky lover.
Being free to keep a social distance from curators.
Having an escape from the art world in your 12 hours domestic labor.
Discovering the opportunity to finish bad date by shutting down your computer.
Knowing your career might pick up after you die.
Not having to undergo the embarrassment of being called a great artist.
Seeing your ideas spreading like a virus.
Having more time to work after your gallerist forgets about you.
Discovering that your artwork is either highly relevant or totally irrelevant.
Having plenty of time to imagine how you could cure the world with your art.
Getting your picture in the media wearing surgical mask and protective suit.

DEDICATED TO THE FEMINIST ARTIST PROTEST GROUP KNOWN AS THE GUERRILLA GIRLS.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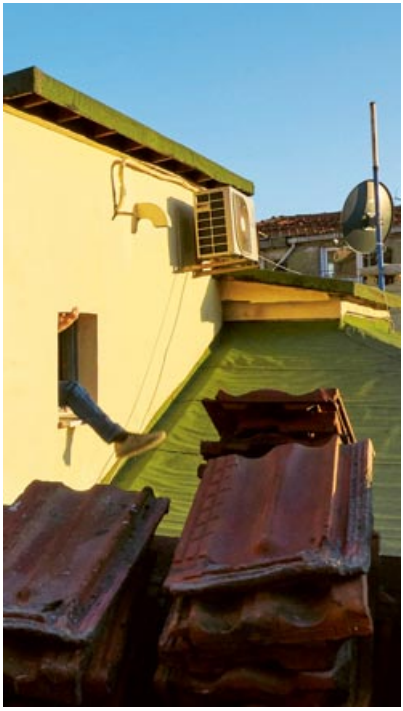


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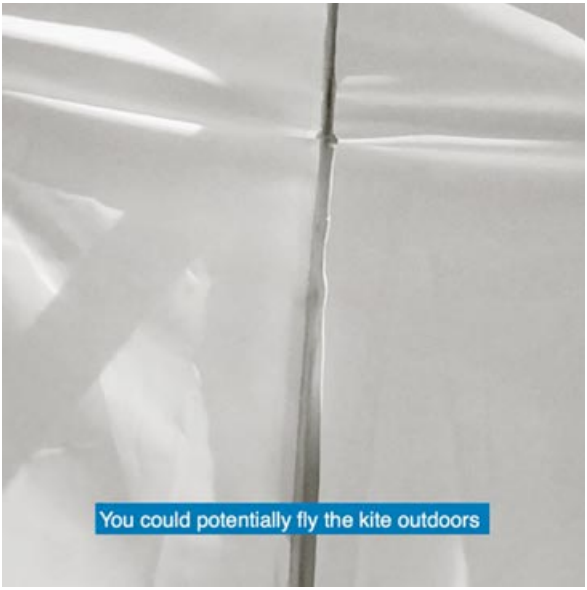
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artist
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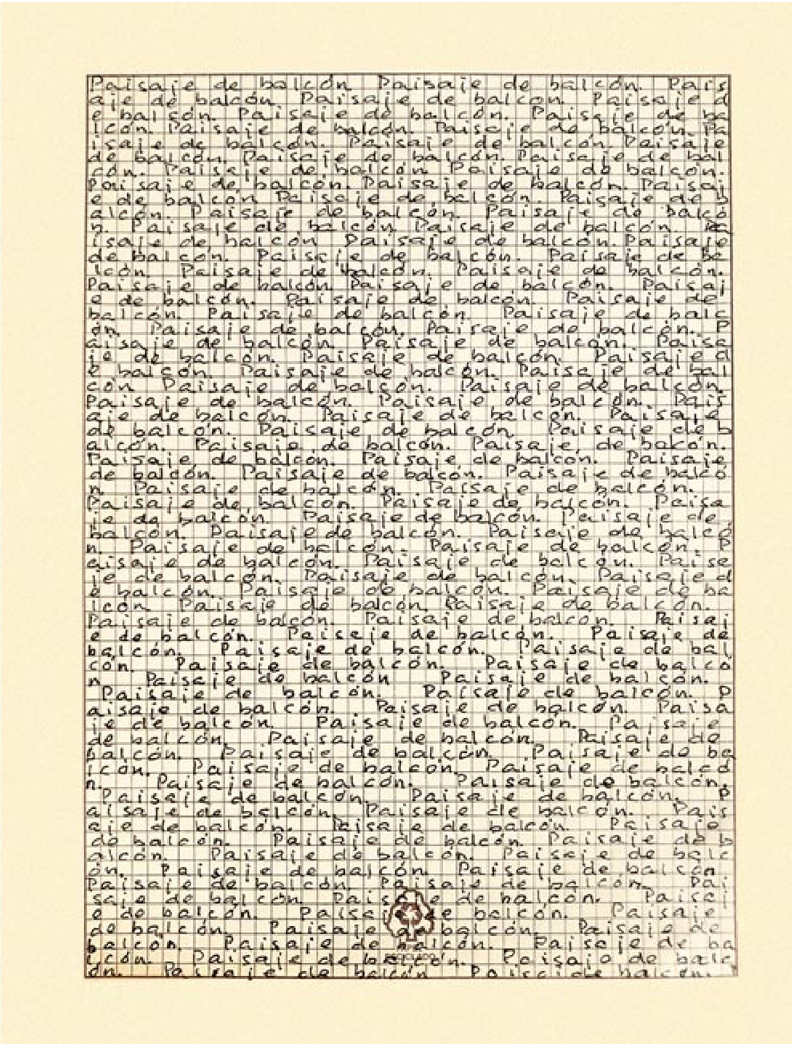
... but it's never capitalism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La terre comme je devrais apercevoir si j étais habité
par la science.


DAMY
RADĘ


CHCEMY
TESTÓW


DAMY
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DAMY
RADĘ

A series of events is sliding through light speed
It aggravates the state of the world
The hardened warrior
Survival instinct
Observing ravenously a piece of meat

It weighs the deceived for herself and against everyone
sharp, calm focus of the gaze,
Reaching very far

Her dog has defected to the wolves

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