Artistic research, thought and education

ÍNDEX

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Editorial

Zoom

How is it possible to put together another narrative of art? 'Zoom' is a space for new intellectual and bibliographic points of reference.

Display

How are exhibitions brought about? What does their research involve? This section attempts to make visible the processes by which exhibitions are conceived and defined.

Mediterraneans

A space for dialogue on the Near East, Europe and North Africa. Different voices offer new formulations regarding culture, art, religion, education and the common future of the societies in the Mediterranean region.

Artistic research

Why and how do I do what I do? Artists talk about their projects in the first person.

Academy

What is the role of education? How are critical visions constructed? 'Academy' deals with the relationship between art and the human sciences, as well as critical-social intervention both within the museum and beyond.

WHERE IS *ÍNDEX* HEADED?

Bartomeu Marí

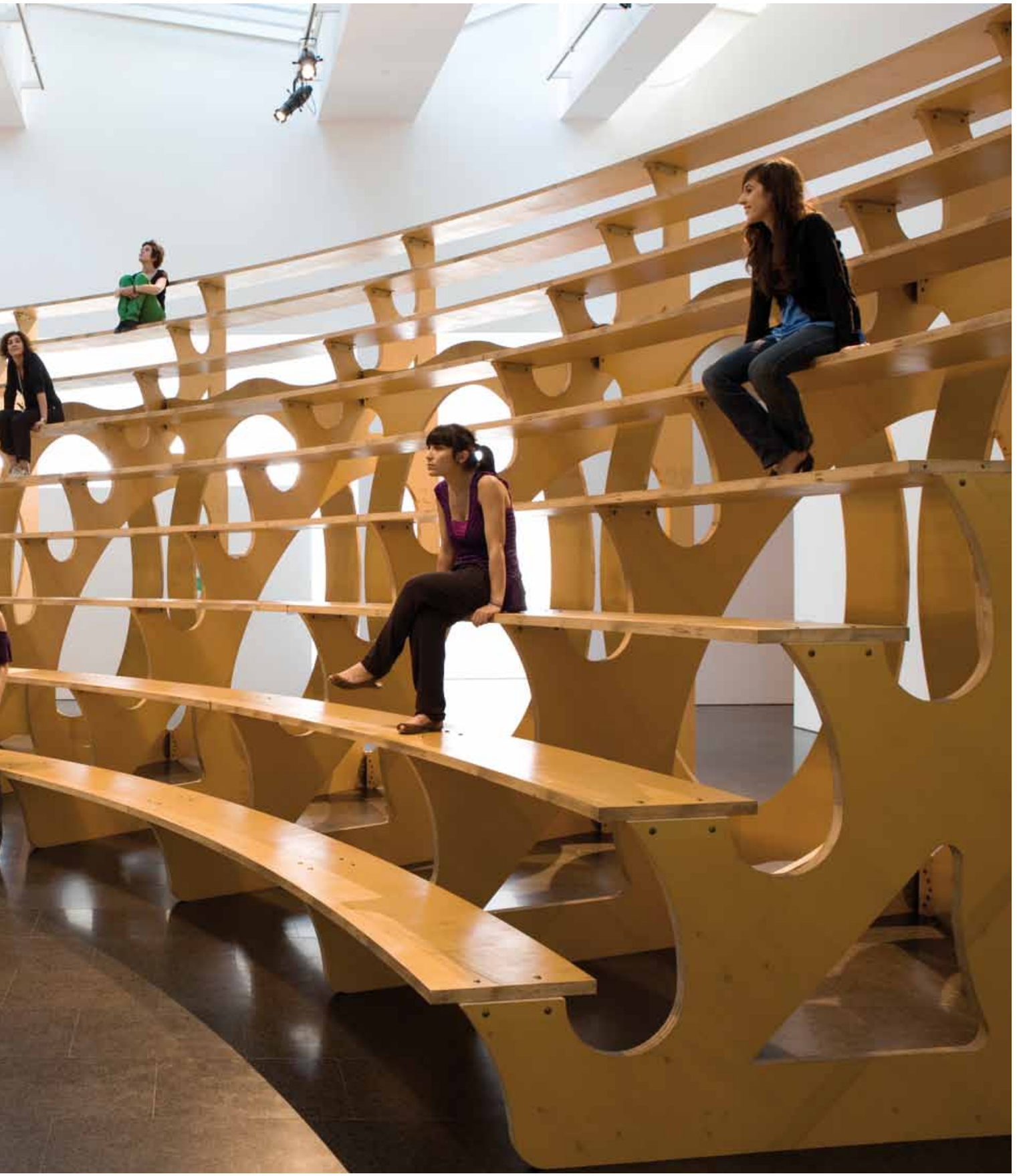
Director of MACBA

Índex translates into the two dimensions of the printed page a set of ideas put into practice by the activities of the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA). MACBA is not only a container of works of art; it is an intellectual engine in today's society. It is not part of the cultural sphere where culture is understood solely as heritage, but rather consciously locates itself in the sphere of education, and of the production of ideas and images of the world in which we live, as well as the one in which we would like to live.

Índex is a compass that guides the navigation of the different areas that connect the Museum to its various publics. MACBA attends to the need of constructing a culture that is receptive to the contributions of art from within a common space of performance. *Índex* will take shape as different agendas and projects, both present and future, evolve. It serves, above all, to generate and to exemplify the construction of a new bibliography that participates in the renewal of culture. The Museum is not only a site for the consideration of art, but also of the ways in wich individuals can negotiate their presence and actions through art. In the pages that follow, Piotr Piotrowski discusses the change from a linguistic to a performative paradigm, which we have witnessed over the course of the last decade. Well into the twenty-first century, the work of art exists through performance, an event in which we are implicated. We should consider the Museum as a set of events with different protagonists who are both viewers and actors at the same time. *Índex* is also a test bed for the construction of a new critical language that encourages thinking from and through art. Discourses on art, or theory, have always followed in the footsteps

Rita McBride. *Arena*, 1997 (detail)
Wood and Twaron structure
MACBA Collection. Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona Consortium. Long-term loan of the artist

Arena is a highly theatrical large-scale seating structure that turns the exhibition space into a space of vision in which the notion of expectation is crucial: what or whom are we expecting to see? The only response is action: the museum rendered a performative space, and the visitor another actor in the play.



of practices, innovations and inventions. But once these movements and shifts in value have been accepted, a new vocabulary and chronology become necessary. This is the spirit of The International, an association of museums created to bring us closer to the recent, but distant, history of non-central European countries. Addressing relevant artistic and cultural productions from regions bordering on the Mediterranean allows us to act as an interface on the Western side of a cultural context in which neighbours do not talk to or understand one another. In this publication, Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab reflects on the forms of representation of her culture as articulated by Arab intelligentsia over the course of the twentieth century.

This issue of *Índex* focuses on the question of artistic research, which it places at the heart of the Museum's current concerns. As Chus Martínez puts forward in her thesis, the notion of artistic research posits that artistic practice lies outside the modernist paradigm where the autonomous work of art is separated from the world in which and for which it is created. It is, rather, through research that works of art exist and are available to perception – that is, 'take place'. And, as artefacts, works generate opinion and action. Artistic research, like most disciplines in the humanities, engages in a speculative methodology. The research of artists Natascha Sadr Haghighian and Julie Ault, for instance, will be developed into exhibition processes to be held at the Museum. MACBA does not respond to outside events, it provokes and produces them. We are far from the paradigm of the white cube – and from its opposite, the black box – where the outside world must not get inside a space preserved for the genesis and perception of art. The Museum cannot divide the world into a sanitary and protected inside and a soiled and dangerous outside: what the Museum houses and generates form part of one unique reality. The facts of art are expressed in realities that often have yet to be named. One of the primary tasks of artistic research is to create a new vocabulary that allows us to relate not only to history and the recent past, but also to the present. Philosopher Christoph Menke speaks from the present when introducing the notion of 'force' in his update of Adorno's conception of art. Menke criticises the fact that 'never has the aesthetic at the same time so strongly reflected a simple means of enhancing productivity'.

The acquisition of knowledge is one of the features of the art experience, and neither research nor knowledge should be the exclusive heritage of science. Clearly, new standards for cultural production and distribution must be activated in order to create new productive models, new economic models like ours that will increasingly depend on the economy of knowledge. The question we must ask ourselves is whether we would like to position ourselves as producers or consumers. It is preferable, however, to consider the relationships within the culture sphere as barter, not as imposition or loss. Any new terminology or vocabulary endangers what has preceded it. We do not want the economy of knowledge to end up as the fuel for a new society of the spectacle in which public space has disappeared. MACBA wants to create academia while avoiding academicism. The Museum wants to educate without being professorial. With their contributions, Xavier Antich and Johanna Burton join MACBA in this challenge, which is expressed above all – although not exclusively – through its Independent Studies Programme (PEI).

MACBA acts as a constellation, a system whose components attract and depend on one another. The temporary exhibitions and the MACBA Collection are its most visible elements, but they are meaningless without the constant elaboration of narratives on the past and fictions of the present. The Study Center represents a clear decision to expand the collection into new areas where art interacts with different spheres of the humanities. The history of contemporary art cannot be written solely on the basis of individual works; it is also necessary to consider how these works were initially displayed and then received. The history of exhibitions and of the reception of art is one of the tools for understanding the transformation of the aesthetic, symbolic and moral values of art over time. The MACBA Collection and the Study Center could not be understood without considering the Independent Studies Programme.

Our cultural context is clearly lacking in knowledge and opinion about the present. The study of the recent past seems to hold no academic or social value. For this reason, it is meaningless to increase material heritage without heeding and communicating its intellectual and symbolic components, without investigating how art and its events have been generated and perceived. The PEI trains new kinds of professionals in the sphere of cultural production from a patently multidisciplinary perspective. From the Study Center and the PEI, two new types of activities guide the Museum's development: on the one hand, the history of exhibitions as a scientific discipline that is essential to writing art history, and on the other, the focus on cultural and artistic productions originated within the confines of the Mediterranean region, from the Balkans to the Maghreb, via the

Bosphorus and the Middle East as the gateways to the Arab world.

Working with individuals, institutions and entities located in the Mediterranean (whether in Europe or North Africa) should help create a unique and dynamic exchange in the near future. The MACBA Collection has already begun work in this direction, as will be evident in the presentations of the years to come. In the much shorter term, the collection will explore constructing a place for the interrogation of its own cosmopolitanism and the relevance of rationalism. In Spain, modernism in aesthetics emerged in the 1950s (not in the first decades of the last century). And that modernism was, from the beginning, deeply critical of the original postulates of the avant-garde: rationalism is regionalist and abstraction is material and gestural, not geometrical or cerebral. The way in which the comings-and-goings of the modern are passed on to these times is the essence of this historiographical project. And one of the main questions is how the local is manifest in the new global theatre of cultural transactions.

Índex is part of a publishing project that has evolved from the production of exhibition catalogues to a broader endeavour that constitutes a true pillar of the Museum's mission. The range of publications that MACBA intends to produce is now larger in scope. It will include scientific publications that not only analyse the evolution of aesthetic forms, but also help form opinion and spark debate. *Índex* stands in for the *MACBA Agenda* (*AG*), separating factual information on the programme activities from the discourses, inspirations, motivations and processes through which contents are developed. While the publishing industry and traditional print media are interrogating the future of paper, at MACBA we are decidedly anachronistic: we attempt to conciliate different tools for communicating ideas.

Rita McBride. *Arena*, 1997 (detail)

THE FORCE OF ART. SEVEN THESES

Christoph Menke

Full professor of philosophy at the Goethe University of Frankfurt, where he specialises in ethics and aesthetics. His publications include *The Sovereignty of Art: Aesthetic Negativity in Adorno and Derrida* (1998) and *Reflections of Equality* (2006).

1.
At no point during the modern era has there been more art – has art been more visible, more present, and more influential – in society than today. At the same time, art has never been so thoroughly integrated into the societal process as today; simply a further element in one of many forms of communication that make up society: a commodity, an opinion, an act of knowledge, a judgement, an activity.
At no point during the modern era has the category of the aesthetic been so pivotal for cultural identity than in the present epoch, which in its initial enthusiasm called itself 'postmodern' and is now increasingly moving towards its conception of a post-disciplinary 'society of control' (Deleuze). Never has the aesthetic at the same time so strongly reflected a simple means of enhancing productivity.

The ubiquitous presence of art and the central meaning of the aesthetic within society go hand in hand with the loss of that which I propose to call its *force* – with the loss of art and of the aesthetic as force.

2.
The way out of this situation cannot involve an attempt to position art and the aesthetic as mediums of knowledge, of politics, or of critique against their absorption into society. The conception of art or of the aesthetic *as* knowledge, *as* politics, or *as* critique only serves to further contribute to turning these into a mere segment of communication within society. The force of art does not lie in being knowledge, politics, or critique.

3.
In dialogue with the orator Ion, Socrates described art as an arousal and transfer of force: the force of excitement, of enthusiasm. This force first arouses the Muse in the artists, who then transfer it through their works to the viewers and critics – like a magnet 'not only pulls those rings, if they're iron, it also puts power in the rings, so that they in turn can do just what the stone does – pull other rings.' 'In the same way, the Muse makes some people inspired herself, and then through those who are inspired a chain of other enthusiasts is suspended.' The context of art is a context of the transfer of force. Being transferred to the artists, viewers, and critics is the force of excitement, of rapture, 'until he becomes inspired and goes out of his mind and his intellect is longer in him'.

4.
From this insight into the force of art Socrates drew the conclusion that art must be banned from the city to be built of reason. From the very beginning there have been two opposite ways of defending art against this conclusion. The first line of defence declares art to be a social practice. It asserts, in contrast to Socrates, that the idea of a force inhering within art that enthuses to the point of unconsciousness is not applicable. Rather, in art – in its creation, perception, and evaluation – there is a socially acquired capacity at play; art is an act of practical subjectivity. This is the meaning of the 'Poetics' contrived by Aristotle, as '*Poïétique*' (Valéry): the doctrine of art as action, as the exercising of a capacity that the subject has acquired through education, meaning his socialisation (or disciplining), and has now chosen to consciously practise. By contrast, there has always been another conception of art, which the eighteenth century would come to label 'aesthetic'. This 'aesthetic' conception of art is founded upon the experience of a force burgeoning within art that entices the subject to emerge from within, or likewise to go behind or beyond; a force, therefore, that is unconscious – a 'dark' force (Herder).

5.
What is force? Force is the aesthetic opposite of ('poietic') capacity. 'Force' and 'capacity' are the names of two antithetical notions of the agency of art. Agency is the realisation of a principle. Force and capacity are two antithetical notions of the *principle* and its *realisation*.

Having a *capacity* implies being a subject; being a subject implies having ability. What a subject is capable of is making something succeed, accomplishing something. Having capacities or being a subject implies being capable of making an action succeed through practice and study. Making an action succeed in turn implies being capable of repeating a general form in a new, always unique situation. Capacity is the ability to repeat the general. The general form is the form of a social practice. Therefore, understanding artistic agency as the exercising of a capacity implies understanding this agency as an action in which a subject realises the general form that reflects a social practice; this means understanding art as a social practice and the subject as its participant.

Forces, like capacities, are principles that become realised through agency. But forces are the counterpoints of capacities:

— While capacities are acquired through social practice, people already possess forces *before* they have become subjects. Forces are human, but presubjective.

— While capacities are purposefully enacted by subjects through conscious self-control, forces effectuate *of their own accord*; their effectuation is not guided by the subject and is therefore not conscious to the subject.

— While capacities realise a socially predefined general form, forces are *formative*, and thus *formless*. Forces shape forms, and they shape all forms that they have shaped back again.

— While capacities are geared to success, forces lack objectives and dimensions. The effectuation of forces involves *play*, the creation of something that they have really already surpassed.

Capacities turn us into subjects who can successfully participate in social practices by reproducing their general form. In the play of *forces* we are pre- and supersubjective – agents who are not subjects; active without self-consciousness; inventive without reason.

6.
The aesthetic conception describes art, as per Socrates, as a field of the emergence and transfer of force. Yet the aesthetic conception not only assesses this differently than Socrates; it understands it differently as well. According to Socrates, art is *merely* the arousal and transfer of force. But art does not exist in this way. Art is rather the art of transition *between* capacity *and* force, between force and capacity. Art is created through the diremption of force and capacity. Art is created through a paradoxical capability: being capable of being incapable; being able to be unable. Art is neither merely reason (*Vernunft*) of capacity nor merely play of force. Art is the time and the place for the reversion from capacity to force, for the generation of capacity from force.

7.
For this reason art is not part of society, is not a social practice; for the participation in a social practice evinces the structure of action, of the realisation of a general form. And this is why we are not subjects in art, in the creation or perception of art; for being a subject means realising the form of a social practice. Art is rather the sphere of liberation, not within the social but from the social; the liberation of the social within the social. When the aesthetic becomes a productive force in postdisciplinary capitalism, it is divested of its force; for the aesthetic is active and produces effects, but it is not productive. And likewise, the aesthetic is divested of its force when it is supposed to shape social practice, which allows a focus against the unleashed productivity of capitalism; for the aesthetic is liberating and altering, but it is not practical. The aesthetic as 'total unleashing of all symbolic powers' (Nietzsche) is neither productive nor practical, neither capitalistic nor critical.

The force of art pertains to our force. It pertains to the liberation of the social gestalt of subjectivity, be it productive or practical subjectivity. The force of art pertains to liberty.

This article is an extract from the book by Christoph Menke, *Kraft. Ein Grundbegriff ästhetischer Anthropologie*, 2008.

Christoph Menke, *Kraft. Ein Grundbegriff ästhetischer Anthropologie*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2008.

Force. A Fundamental Concept in Aesthetic Anthropology is the attempt to read modern aesthetics as a theory of 'force'. It does so by showing that modern philosophy begins twice in aesthetics – in two different, even opposite forms: as an aesthetic of the subject and its 'faculties' and as an experience and theory of force, which conceives the aesthetic as a play of imagination. Force defines the aesthetic nature of human beings, as distinct from the culture of socially acquired practices. Force is the concept of a difference – the difference between nature and culture, humanity and subjectivity, play and practice – that makes freedom possible. 'The last word of aesthetics is human freedom.'

CLANDESTINE HAPPINESS. WHAT DO WE MEAN BY *ARTISTIC RESEARCH*?

Chus Martínez

Chief Curator of MACBA

Thanks to a high intensity laser, Anton Zeilinger was able to teleport light particles (photons) for the first time in 1997. The laser shoots photons in different directions, and the photons then form pairs called 'quantum entanglements'. In this binding, the union of the photons is stable regardless of the physical distance between them. When Zeilinger, in his experiment, changed a quality of one of the particles, the twin particle immediately and spontaneously underwent the same change. Teleportation is based on the physical property that allows information to be exchanged between two particles, once they have been entangled quantumly, at a rate faster than the speed of light. Although science neither thinks nor expresses itself in these terms, we imagine that within a few decades it will be possible to teleport a micro-organism and, soon thereafter, objects and, finally, human beings.

The mere statement of this astonishing discovery so crucial to quantum physics whets the imagination not only of physicists but also of laymen who know nothing of matter. The fact that the finding is called *teleportation*, a name taken from a literary genre – science fiction –, is also significant. The choice of that word set the details of the experiment travelling through worlds beyond the laboratory. Teleportation incites curiosity and manufactures the fiction of an almost intuitive understanding of the experiment's logic: one word suffices to join the familiar and the strange. The fortunate choice of this term cannot be attributed only to the desire to communicate the news, though of course that played a part. It reflects, mostly, the need to produce osmosis between knowledges of very different natures, and it posits that generating communicative forms of meaning is key to future discoveries.

Much contemporary art shares this intuition. And the oft-repeated but poorly defined expression *artistic research* is the term that best describes the precise and acute movements between areas of knowledge, between the senses and understanding.

In answering the question 'what is reality', Anton Zeilinger says: 'That which we can agree on. We need to undertake a thorough reconstruction of the basic concepts that we use every day – reality, time, matter, space, light – so that we can use them to define new situations both inside and outside the laboratory. We live our lives immersed in categories. If we want to use those categories to interrogate reality, just as a lawyer interrogates a witness, we must understand what they mean at each moment. And that's where philosophy comes in; it is what best explains the historical dramatisation of those categories.'[1]

Artists, like scientists, are pioneers when it comes to creating new forms of connectivity between worlds that seem to have nothing in common. They embark on writing novels, conceiving treatises, discovering archives, devising therapies and choreographing bodies, that is, on the endless study of everything that contributes to different formulations of what we call *reality*. It would be banal to describe all that as mere play. We find ourselves, rather, before a strange form of research that is more aware than ever of the parallel between producing art and understanding the world.

[1] A conversation that took place at Traunsee Akademie on 21 July 2010. Anton Zeilinger is a full professor of quantum physics at the Institut für Quantenoptik und Quanteninformation of Vienna.

Armando Andrade Tudela
Untitled (2), 2008
Rattan and steel
51.4 x 37 x 31.5 cm
MACBA Collection. Barcelona City Council Fund

One in a series of five similar sculptures based on minimalist objects in steel and rattan, *Untitled 2* distances us from an analytical approach to immerse us in a more psychedelic and hallucinatory vision.

Since Marcel Duchamp, and perhaps much earlier – indeed, perhaps forever –, art has been eager to house a knowledge different from academic knowledge and to provide the ultimate reason for modifying that academic knowledge. Much contemporary art attempts to develop works and situations that make it possible to read the past freely, to take flight and approach the unknown.

There is a paradox that cultural studies and the heirs to critical theory consistently deny because it does not serve their purposes: artistic practice is temporal and atemporal at the same time. Art and culture must necessarily situate themselves in this contradiction in the attempt to be within history while escaping it.

Cultural studies recognise that they cannot be conceived in terms of progress, that there is no single Modernity but many, that universals are now always in the plural. Nonetheless, contemporary art runs the risk now more than ever of turning into a secondary source. Art and artists know themselves to be subject to a series of textual and institutional logics, and one of their achievements has been to reveal that fact in the sphere of artistic production and reception.

Artistic research names the effort to recognise the importance and explore the consequences of the following statement: meaning does not emerge from History but from Fiction. This names an effort, not a method. When we speak of artistic research, we are not speaking of the fact that many artist engage in exhaustive research before making a work. Nor should we confuse artistic research with contemporary art's proximity to the social sciences and their methods. The term has been coined, rather, to alert us to the fact that art has also become a quantum phenomenon. That is, the principle of indetermination is also operative in the social sciences, aesthetics and philosophy. In the very act of observing, we alter what we have observed. Neither theory nor philosophy nor criticism can aspire to determine what art is. It is simply ridiculous to question whether art exists or not, but forcing it to speak a single language, that of historical reconstruction, is sadly impudent.

The traditional hierarchical distinctions between theory and action, between criticism and creation are sterile. There is an obvious need to think of a more eloquent way of conceiving the aesthetic-cognitive back-and-forth between the production of art and the grammar of theory. Contemporary art practice has invited itself to the party of those who assume the complex mission of generating tools to grasp the world.

Taking artistic research seriously means accepting disorganisation in the relations between the disciplines that deal with contemporary art. The rise of cultural studies, critical theory and the many variations of post-Marxist understanding of the relationship between art and economics is fruit of an ungrounded – though perhaps historically necessary – confidence in the possibility of first unravelling and then stabilising the meaning of what happens in a work of art, as well as the 'creative' process as a whole.

Meaning cannot be explained by its context, though the context may help with its historical interpretation. If this were the case, the effort of art and artist to avoid juried shows and art academies would be pointless. Interpreting is not the same as understanding. Too often the description of the codes that constitute a system, of the relations that act on a work of art or any other cultural fact that can be reified, is geared towards passing judgment, to determining whether we are headed in the

Becky Beasley
A-Z of *Personal Stories*, 2009
42 copies
Design Toni Uroda
MACBA Collection.
Study Center

This work was part of the exhibition *The Malady of Writing. A Project on Text and Speculative Imagination*, held at MACBA from November 2009 to April 2010.

right direction. If contemporary art has strived to do anything, it is to *teleport*: to change green into red, to turn around the rules of the game to be freed of the constant allocation of meaning and thus 'unexpress the expressable'.[2] For a long time philosophy has been saying that there are no outstanding rewards and no certainty waiting around the corner. Yet, both criticism and the exhibition apparatus are determined to contradict this as they strive to render the notion of History plural.

The new importance of philosophy and the social sciences in the sphere of contemporary art is related to an essential discovery: art today is located in a space uniquely productive for the interrelation of knowledges that would otherwise never intersect. This is similar to what Gaston Bachelard attempted to describe in the introduction to *The Poetics of Space* (1957). Space appears where the logic of causality ceases and another principle takes hold, mainly the principle of reverberation. Stating that space does not emerge on the basis of laws of causality means that the public sphere is not constructed by merely ensuring a series of conditions, just as the existence of a parliament or alike does not guarantee that debate will take place. Something else must happen, and that is what Bachelard calls *reverberation*. Practice proves that transparency is not enough, that a system of logical argumentation does not necessarily unleash the will to change, let alone change itself.

Bachelard looks to *reverberation* as an image that expresses the movement between logics of thought and methods of work that have nothing in common. The possibility of different thinking depends on this so very abstract and difficult to define mental operation. Contemporary art attempts to exist in this space of reverberation, rather than in the work-commentary equation. Art is not a pretext for thought, but rather a thought that operates by means of the constant exchange between different systems that vacillate between the abstract and the concrete, and that make us vacillate between them as well.

Nothing productive emerges from translating ideas into images. The attempt to establish a correlation between ideas and their representation denies the unexpected and, hence, the hope for change. Reverberation names something quite different – and more complex – than interdisciplinariness, or the borrowing of ideas and concepts between sciences. Artistic research understands that artistic practice generates concepts on the basis of intuition and that the challenge lies in their formalisation. That amounts to affirming that art's relationship to theory should not obey a cause-effect logic. To be truly modern, theory cannot assume the role of the eternal mediator between the work and the viewer; it cannot limit itself to speaking after the fact. Locating thought outside artistic practice means accepting that History is the final instance and judgment the only way to relate to culture in order to ensure that the last horizon is always normative; it means that there is only room for the dialectic between good and bad. There are countless examples of interpretations of cultural production on these bases.

[2] Roland Barthes used this phrase frequently.

It is necessary to think and express oneself in other terms. To walk down a different path we have to unlearn the learned and attend to concepts neglected by critical theory. The mission is not to renovate thought, but to venture into other logics and place them at the core of artistic and cultural thinking. Sustaining, like Deleuze, that meaning emerges from fiction implies realising that it is not philosophy that makes an emancipated viewer possible, but rather an artistic practice that has made an unprecedented effort to understand itself before the figure of the viewer. And that understanding implicates us all.

That is what artistic research consists of, and that is why an institution that wants to think through, rather than from, art is now inconceivable. The production of space is an act of trust, of future-ness.

According to Bachelard, the mental function that brings us closest to the enigmatic vastness of what's to come is daydreaming. For philosophy, it is a fundamental exercise. Daydreaming is a way of creating access to grandeur, that is, to a sphere radically opposed to the domestic and different from the social. It empowers an attitude so very exceptional that it takes the daydreamer outside this world, to another world that bears the mark of infinity. It points in the direction of a vital multiplication of mortal freedoms; it builds world and counter-worlds. Daydreaming is a constitutive space that suggests the ability to imagine consciousness itself.

A series of books partake of this debate and the concern with thinking differently: Elaine Scarry, *Dreaming by the Book,* New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1999; Daniel Heller-Roazen, *The Inner Touch, Archaeology of a Sensation*, New York: Zone Books, 2009; Gaston Bachelard, *Essai sur la connaissance approchée*, Paris: Librairie Philosophique Vrin, 2006; Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1984 (original version, Gaston Bachelard, *La Poétique de l'espace*, París: Presses Universitaires de France – PUF, 1964); Sienne Gnai, *Ugly Feelings*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005; Gilles Deleuze, *Pure Immanence: Essays on a life*, New York: Zone Books, 2001; Matei Candea (ed.), *The Social after Gabriel Tarde. Debates and Assessments*, New York: Routledge 2010; Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Psychology of Imagination*, New York: Philosophical Library, 1948 (original version, Jean-Paul Sartre, *L'Imaginaire: psychologie phénoménologique de l'imagination*, París: Gallimard, 1940).

AN ART HISTORIAN BETWEEN THE UNIVERSITY AND MUSEUM. TOWARDS THE IDEA OF THE CRITICAL MUSEUM

Piotr Piotrowski

Professor ordinarius at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, where he chaired the Art History Department (1999–2008). He has served as Director of the National Museum in Warsaw since 2009 and is the author of a dozen books, including *In the Shadow of Yalta. Art and the Avant-Garde in Eastern Europe, 1945–1989* (2009).

Despite all the differences between the art history professor and the curator, concerning different methods of self-expression, the audience, channels of distribution, etc., there are aspects that bring these two occupations together. One of them is 'scholarship'. According to Ivan Gaskell, both the professor and the curator are 'scholars',[1] which means that both produce and distribute knowledge. At this point, we may ask a question about the role of scholarship framing one and the other type of practice related to art history, the museum and academia. In order to answer this question, one must ask another one about the present condition of the humanities and their attempts to overcome the 'linguistic turn' that now belongs to history. Maybe in this way we will be able to express our hope that in contrast of the humanities of that 'turn', separating the museum from academia in terms of intellectual interests (studying the work of art as an object versus studying it as a text), now, when the linguistic turn is becoming obsolete, we have a chance to build a scholarly and intellectual community of professors and curators working together.

What does the retreat from 'linguistics' in the humanities consist in? In a concise but sophisticated manner the issue has been presented by Gabrielle Spiegel, President of the American Historical Society, in her address published in the *American Historical Review.* Without getting into details of that programmatic statement, let us stress that Spiegel opposes the 'linguistic' turn to the 'performative' one, the study of structures to the study of social practices, and reflection on the systems of signs to reflection on culture. The 'performative' project focuses primarily on the problematic of identity and assumes significant destabilisation of the idea of subjectivity by isolating it from the 'soil and blood' by common migrations, diasporas, minority and transnational identities, globalisation, etc. The problem is by no means limited to the study of contemporary culture, but pertains also to the study of history.[2] In fact, if we take into account the studies of Rosi Braidotti (e.g., *Nomadic Subjects*), Judith Butler (*Bodies that Matter* or *Gender Trouble*) or Irit Rogoff (e.g., *Terra Inferna*), and add to them a plethora of feminist, queer and postcolonial approaches that constitute the present

[1] Ivan Gaskell, 'Magnanimity and Paranoia in the Big Bad Art World', in Charles Haxthausen (ed.), *Two Art Histories. The Museum and the University*, Williamstown, MA: Clark Art Institute, 2002, p. 14.

[2] Gabrielle M. Spiegel, 'Presidential Address: The Task of the Historian', *American Historical Review*, Feb. 2009, pp. 1–15.

cultural studies, we will have no doubts as regards the legitimacy of such a statement.

There are many examples illustrating the engagement of museums in this kind of studies. The question, however, is not whether and in what ways the practices of museums have been inspired by academic research, as in the case of Linda Nochlin's great exhibition, *Women Artists: 1550–1950*, shown in Los Angeles in 1976 (LACMA), but if the reverse is the case. In that respect, a good example is a Paris exhibition, *Magiciens de la Terre* by Jean-Hubert Martin (Centre Georges Pompidou and Grande Halle, 1989), which aimed at addressing the orientalisation of the postcolonial regions of the world even though it was criticised and accused of latent imperial and neo-colonialist tendencies.[3] In fact, that exposition was one of the first statements in the postcolonial debate in art history regardless of the criticism, besides, the statement was made by a museum, not a university. In contrast to the inspiration of museums by feminist studies, postcolonialism has been recognised by academic art history quite late. The direction of the influence has been opposite: not from the academia to the museum, but the reverse.

Thus far, we have been dealing with the relations between art history at the university and in the museum in the context of the new humanities. Now, let us ask a question about the post-humanities. Most likely, it is a part of a more general reaction to the 'linguistic turn', but it takes another direction and is perhaps more radical. In the post-humanities, the problematic of identity gives way to a much more profound revision that is a change of the status of the human being in the environment. Their critique of anthropocentrism reaches far beyond the rejection of a thesis that man is the hub of the universe. The point is not just to endow animals, things, cyborgs, etc., with equal rights or claim that they can have relations unmediated by humans, but that the human being as such can no longer be defined in traditional terms in the context of genetic engineering or organ transplantation technology. The post-humanities are humanities after humanism, which produce knowledge criticising or rejecting the central position of man in the universe – this means that they favour different non- or anti-anthropocentric approaches. The key research problems of the post-humanities are the limits of species identity, relations between the human and the non-human, the issues of bio-power, bio-politics, and bio-technology and the study of animals and things.[4]

I am most interested in the latter. It is not that a thing – for example, a work of art – suddenly becomes an object of study. What is significant is that things take part in social and political life, and the question is how to describe such participation. Specifically, I mean one project that combines research with display – *Making Things Public* prepared at the ZKM in Karlsruhe in 2005 by a scholar, Bruno Latour, and a curator Peter Weibel, the latter having many years of experience both in research and in organising exhibitions. *Making Things Public*, with its huge catalogue, is a very important event and probably the most significant contribution of art history and the museum to the study of things and their social and political role (Latour calls it the *Dingpolitik*),[5] demonstrating that there is room for us in the post-humanities. It should be noted that an impulse for such studies and considerations comes exactly from the museum and its engagement in the most radical research projects. It is a perfect piece of evidence that my thesis on the common scholarly and intellectual attitude of the professor and the curator, the academic and the museum-maker, has been proved by a fusion of two historico-artistic practices in one and the same project of a radical renewal of the humanities.

Finally, I would like to distinguish still another aspect of the debate on the comparison of university scholarship and the museum, referring to the local context of East-Central Europe, and ask whether the changes that took place twenty years ago (the fall of communism) can have any influence upon it? At the moment, there is at least one project combining research and public display, which addresses the year 1989 and makes an attempt to reconsider in that particular context the foundations of the West. It is the *Former West Project* carried out by the BAK in Utrecht, including a series of seminars and conferences to conclude with a big exhibition and a publication.

I will approach a definition of the 'former West' by referring to the title of a well-known book by Depesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* (2000). Using it as a metaphor, I would say that the matter is 'provincialising the West'. Only under such circumstances we can talk about the 'former West' – we must look at it as a province, but not in relation to another new centre (a new West). Instead, it must become one province among many, one among others. In other words, what is at stake is depriving the West of its central place in the global structure of the world and making it horizontally equal to other regions. Still, what is the significance of the 'provincialisation of the West' for art history and museums?

Let us realise that the decentralisation of the West and its culture, which means its 'provincialisation' in scholarship, is already going on. Among new initiatives, one can mention the December 2008 issue of the *Art Bulletin*,

[3] See *Third Text*, No. 6 (Spring 1989).

[4] Ewa Domańska, *Literaria Copernicana* (in press).

[5] Bruno Latour, 'From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik', in Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, (eds.) *Making Things Public. Atmosphere of Democracy*, Karlsruhe: ZKM, 2005, pp. 14–41.

titled – *nomen omen* – 'Decentering Modernism'.[6] Also the postcolonial art history has made the 'provincialisation' of the West quite clear. The same direction should (and most likely will) be taken by the study of the art of Eastern and Central Europe, and the post-totalitarian studies on a global, comparative scale, taking into consideration the post-apartheid in South Africa and post-authoritarianism in South America, i.e. cultures after the fall of the regimes based on violence and oppression in different parts of the world almost at the same moment in time – the late 1980s. As regards museums, the situation is somewhat more complex, particularly if the subject in question is a typically Western museum, called by Carol Duncan and Allan Wallach the 'universal survey museum', founded in the countries of the West more than two hundred years ago.[7] The reason for that is not just the globalisation of museums – their imperial strategy involved in the global politics and economy, such as the global expansion of the Guggenheim Museum or the Louvre Museum, the most spectacular example of which is the museum founded in Abu Dhabi. It is rather some kind of 'glocality', a combination of the global and the local perspective, and the recognition of changes in local communities evolving toward the cosmopolitism of the so-called 'nation state'. The population of specific countries, in particular of their big cities, has been changing from ethnic hegemony toward cosmopolitan differentiation, which makes museums turn into what Michel Foucault called the contemporary 'heterotopia', not the utopia of the national unity. Museums are becoming global not by their territorial expansion, but by addressing global problems in local, cosmopolitan environments. A perfect example of that tendency is a new concept of the British Museum developed by its director, Neil MacGregor, who refers the holdings of the museum, founded to legitimise British imperialism, to the ethnically differentiated, multicultural and cosmopolitan London of today, in which all the minorities can find their identities in the culturally relevant collections of the museum.[8]

In fact, simplifying to some extent, one can distinguish among three types of museums: the museum as a temple attended by the faithful who believe in the dogma of the 'sacred' character of art; the museum as a place of entertainment, 'McDonaldised', as it were, and involved in the global networks of consumerism and tourism; and the museum as a forum that wants to perform critical tasks and encourage reflection on the changing world both on the macro- and micro-scale. The idea of the museum-as-forum, which Hans Belting refers only to one type of the museum as a response to the globalisation of culture and its local aspects, i.e. to the MoCA,[9] should be applied to the mission of another type, i.e. the 'universal survey museum'.

The potential of the 'provincialisation of the West' in respect to museums I can see in the idea of the 'critical museum' – on the one hand, local, not to say 'provincial', and on the other, global. The role of museums is not so much to help develop a new 'empire', but a global *politeia*, a global constitution of the world in the local, not to say, 'provincial' agora. Only such a museum will be able to support the

ways of controlling international politics. It will do it by its influence and by addressing local problems, which, because of the cosmopolitisation of the local, are acquiring global significance. In other words, what gives us a chance is the idea of a local 'critical museum' with global ambitions.

There are at least two levels on which such a museum can operate. One of them is its participation in the local agora, analysing social and political questions, recognised as the key ones for a particular community. Since, however, local communities are in the process of global change, as I have mentioned before, to address local issues is at the same time global. London is not the only cosmopolitan European city with its multicultural social strata. Smaller cities in Europe, including Central and Eastern Europe, are changing their character in the same way, too; however, not to the same extent. Warsaw, for example, is not such a cosmopolitan centre as London, is not a metropolis in the above mentioned degree, and perhaps will never be. However, its character is changing very fast. The local society is much more complex and differentiated in terms of ethnic, political, sexual, etc., identities than it used to be before 1989. Thus, the critical museum should address these processes. The other level is to rethink the internal condition of the museum in such a historical context and develop a sort of self criticism. Something as a critique of local artistic cannons, or relations between local and international art history, should be a subject of a new museum strategy. In one word: both of them, i.e. museum participation in the agora and reshaping its traditional (national and hierarchical) concept of the museum, should be a point of departure in the process of creating the idea of the critical museum, and at the same time its new identity in the face of contemporary cultural and social processes. The theoretical basis of such a museum concept is museum studies, also called critical museum studies or new museology, and has been developing for some thirty years, mostly at the universities and art criticism.

Will museums – or, more precisely, the type of museum called the 'universal survey museum', rooted in a nationalist ideology and European, Western hegemony – prove able to face the challenge? Will the potential of scholarship, if one defines it as a critical reflection on reality, be used to transform museums into critical institutions, to cover the distance between the critique of the institution and the institution that is critical? Will the museum or, again, more precisely, the 'universal survey museum', use critical theory, well developed in the universities, and change it into critical practice? Will it drop its role of the mausoleum and become a public forum shaping a *politeia*? All these questions still remain to be answered.

[6] *Art Bulletin*, 'Decentering Modernism', Partha Mitter (ed.), Vol. XC, No. 4, December 2008.

[7] Carol Duncan and Allan Wallach, 'The Universal Survey Museum', *Art History*, No. 3/4, December 1980, pp. 448–69.

[8] Neil MacGregor, 'Global Collections for Global Cities', in Jaynie Anderson (ed.), *Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration, and Convergence. The Proceedings of the 32nd Congress in the History of Art*, Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, 2009, pp. 65–70; Neil MacGregor, 'To Shape the Citizens of "the Great City, the World"', in James Cuno (ed.), *Whose Culture? The Promise of Museums and the Debate over Antiquities*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009, pp. 39–54.

[9] Hans Belting, 'Contemporary Art and the Museum in the Global Age', in Peter Weibel and Andrea Buddensieg (eds), *Contemporary Art and the Museum*, Ostfildern: Hantje Cantz Verlag, 2007, pp. 30–37.

Piotr Piotrowski has been honoured with the Igor Zabel Award for Culture and Theory 2010. Initiated and funded by the ERSTE Foundation, the award acknowledges a cultural protagonist whose work is dedicated to internationally broadening the knowledge of visual culture in the Central and South Eastern European region. In December, MACBA hosted the award ceremony.

Igor Zabel (1958–2005) was a Slovenian curator, writer and cultural theorist, actively involved throughout his life in many fields of theory and culture: as philosopher, author, essayist, literary and art critic, translator and teacher of new generations of curators and critics of contemporary art.

Jean-Hubert Martin, curator of the exhibition *Les Magiciens de la Terre* held at the Centre Pompidou in Paris (1989) was one of the participants in the course *The History of Exhibition. Beyond the Ideology of the White Cube* that took place in MACBA in October and November 2010. His lecture is available in audio format online at www.macba.cat

POST-COLONIAL SOLITUDE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN: SOME ARAB THOUGHTS

Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab

Philosopher and researcher specialising in cultural studies in the Arab World. Her publications include *Contemporary Arab Thought: Cultural Critique in Comparative Perspective* (2010).

Three distinct questions characterise the three different phases of modern Arab thought, each question epitomising the whole mood of an epoch and a whole set of concerns.

1.
During the period known as the Arab Renaissance (*al-Nahda*), roughly between the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century, Arab thinkers wanted to understand why others had progressed while they lagged behind. The colonial encounter with Europe, experienced in the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt in 1798, had shown a disturbing gap on all levels and the need was felt to grasp the secret of progress that had led that continent to such an advanced stage. Most thinkers at the time were confident that once that was grasped nothing prevented Arabs from improving their situation and from catching up with the Europeans. Identity as such, whether Islam or 'East', was not the issue. Rather, a lot of importance was given to the political basis of this progress: political justice, namely a constitutional rule that would hold rulers accountable and define the rights and duties of rulers and people, was seen as the necessary condition for civilisational progress, i.e. for economic prosperity, popular solidarity and patriotic loyalty, for the advancement of knowledge as well as for civil peace. In fact, the turn of the century abounded on the one hand in critiques of despotism, and on the other, in presenting local, Islamic values and principles that are equivalent to the European progressive ones. But the early European colonial forays into the area in the late nineteenth century had already started to alter this preoccupation with comprehensive progress and to shift it toward a concern with the acquisition of the means of power that would allow Arabs and Muslims to resist Western imperialism. This trend became even more pronounced with the establishment of the French and British mandates on Arab lands after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. The comparative civilisational difference became increasingly perceived as a threatening confrontation of power.

2.
The second half of the twentieth century was a time of self-reflection as Arab thinkers started to examine their liberation efforts to date. The 1967 defeat against Israel came to accentuate this soul-searching mood, and the central question was: Why had the *nahda* failed? What had prevented the fruition of its liberation and renaissance impulses? Why had the post-independence Arab regimes failed to carry out development, real independence and democracy? Why had they failed to vindicate the cause of Palestine? Why had they not achieved Arab unity? In the seventies and eighties much of the search was done in the cultural sphere, in a culturalist tendency to explain the malaise primarily in cultural terms. The cultural heritage was revisited in order to find in it the seeds of a second *nahda* or the deep-seated causes of backwardness. Some thought that the *nahda* critical effort had not been radical enough and some others blamed that effort for estranging people from their own traditions, and proposed instead holistic visions of the future based on a nativist, 'authentic' tradition, often an ideologised Islam. Indeed, the post-independence era in most Arab countries turned out to be a disenchanting experience. Revolutions and coup d'états, which were supposed

Yto Barrada
N of the World Nation in Arabic, 2003
C-Print
80 x 80 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Polaris, Paris

Yto Barrada
Foundations, 2003
C-Print
60 x 60 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Polaris, Paris

to bring to power more dedicated rulers, truly committed to patriotic goals, whether in Egypt with Abdel Nasser, or in Syria and Iraq with the Baath party, ended up being more authoritarian, repressive and self-serving regimes than the ones they replaced.

3.
For many Arab countries the turn of the millennium brought with it further defeats in all domains: in democratic struggles, in economic conditions, in educational systems and in oppositional structures. It witnessed an alarming social, political and military polarisation with a growing foreign occupation of the area. The dominating feeling since then has been one of incapacitation, of impotence, of total bankruptcy (*'ajz*). The question now is: Why did the project of Enlightenment fail in the Arab world? While the first phase was one of hopefulness, supported by a sense of possibility, the second phase was one of soul-searching in the midst of an ominous mood of humiliation and anger. Now was the time of overwhelming despair, but also of a come back of the political, after a long interlude of culturalism. Critical thinkers, former political prisoners, artists as well as activists started to emphasise again the political nature of the general malaise, combining cultural critique with political critique and pointing the finger again to the absence of democracy, the rule of law and public spaces of debate. It is at this intersection of cultural, moral and political critique that the concept of Enlightenment is actively discussed, between surges of activist mobilisation and dips into severe resignation and hopelessness.

While much attention has been devoted to the study of Arab ideologies, whether nationalism or Islamism, little if any attention has been paid to the critical efforts that have been made throughout these phases, especially after the 1960s, when the critical gaze was turned inwards, away from polemics and justificatory rhetoric. Indeed, the last decades have witnessed a critical revisiting of commonly used notions, such as authenticity, identity, national community and cultural indigenisation. They have produced critiques of hitherto prevailing ideologies, such as secularism, Islamism, Arabism and the Left. These critical efforts are an integral part of the Arab intellectual landscape. They need to be acknowledged and they also need to be put in the larger post-colonial context of such cultural critiques. For not only has contemporary Arab thought been reduced to its extremist ideologies, it has also been explained self-referentially, i.e. in terms of its alleged essence, of 'Islam' or some essential 'Arab' character. It has rarely, if ever, been understood through a post-colonial prism, i.e. through the post-colonial quest for an empowered sense of self, for a thought of one's own and for an affirmation of identity without losing sight of the universally human dimension: a formidable challenge, not only for Arabs, but of all peoples who have had to operate with the defining parameters imposed by a dominating other. Typically, the malaise that is at work here is experienced in solitude, as if one were alone in carrying its burden. Perhaps, Arabs, more than others, have fallen into the trap of exceptionalism, some of it, self-inflicted. Only a comparative study of Arab debates, which puts them in conversation with African, Latin American, Indian, African-American, Native American and, closer to home, with Greek, Turkish and Iranian discourses, can help us appreciate better the challenges and promises, as well as the universal and specific aspects of those Arab debates. In all these discourses across regions, religions, languages, cultures and traditions, one finds at a certain point in time, a certain shift of interest: from identity to democracy, from essentialism to agency, and from ideology to critical thinking. One also sees a growing concern with historicisation, and a need for a double critique, internal as well as external. Artists of all kinds participate in voicing this complex and difficult critique. A comparative attention to them can be highly enlightening and rewarding.

Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab participated in the series *The Next Mediterranean: shore-to-shore dialogues on art, economy and society* held at MACBA in October and November 2010. Other participants in that event included: Costas Douzinas, director of the Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities at London University, and Yto Barrada, artist and co-founder of the Cinémathèque de Tànger. The lectures will be available in audio fomat at www.macba.cat and the text by Costa Douzinas will be published in the digital collection *Quaderns portàtils* (Portable notebooks).

HISTORICAL INQUIRY AS SUBJECT AND OBJECT

Julie Ault

Artist, researcher and editor. In 1979, she co-founded the New York-based artists' collective Group Material, which explored the relationship between aesthetics and politics.

The archive of Group Material during the process of recompilation, at the Downtown Collection (Fales Library) of the New York University

'Each person who sits down to write faces not a blank page but his own vastly overfilled mind. The problem is to clear out most of what is in it, to fill huge plastic bags with the confused jumble of things that have accreted there over the days, months, years of being alive and taking things in through the eyes and ears and heart. The goal is to make a space where a few ideas and images and feelings may be so arranged that a reader will want to linger awhile among them... But this task of housecleaning (of narrating) is not merely arduous; it is dangerous. There is the danger of throwing the wrong things out and keeping the wrong things in...'[1] Janet Malcom

Since the New York-based artists collaborative Group Material disbanded in 1996, I have continued its representation through live narration and writings, and responded to inquiries on a case-by-case basis. As the only founding member who remained until its conclusion I felt a responsibility to keep recounting the group's practice. (Long-term member Doug Ashford has done likewise.) Group Material's cultural practice was temporal and the forms employed were ephemeral. When the group ceased its activities I was intent on preserving its ephemerality and *not* becoming history. Fearing a revisionist encapsulation in which conflicts and contradictions of collaboration are resolved in their representation, I resisted our work being defined or objectified in a monograph by an art historian, and reserved the right to cohere our history at some future point.

Following a decade of active narration I decided it was time to relinquish responsibility (and control) and address Group Material's history with lasting effect. I needed to confront the material traces that had infiltrated every closet, cabinet and spare spot in my apartment, as well as the psychic traces that permeated memory. Collecting material saved by other members' as well and joining it all together in an archive would permit access to Group Material in a more coherent way than had been possible, and open the door for further historical representation.

Tackling the mission of recuperating Group Material as a two-pronged 'housecleaning' operation involved gathering and organising the pool of material to constitute the archive, and simultaneously distilling from that body of information to make a book. While formalising the archive sought to make Group Material newly public, the process was also conceived as a laboratory in which to investigate the logic, structure, implications and practice of the archive. I spent several months processing the material in its soon-to-be permanent home – the Downtown Collection at New York University: handling, reading and looking at every paper, image and item; taking note, cross-referencing, recollecting and reflecting. The more I reviewed the more deeply I understood the malleable and fallible nature of memory, and memory repeatedly threw documentary fact into question. Alternatively edified and mystified, the experience demonstrated the utter insecurity of the categories 'subjective' and 'objective'.

Looking back, I realise while telling the story of Group Material these past years I have unwittingly told some lies. This discovery occurred when encountering information in files that I had long since blotted from memory. Surprised, I read on and the divide between recollection and fact

[1] Janet Malcolm, *The Silent Woman. Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes*, New York: Vintage, 1995, p. 205.

Detail of the installation of Group Material *Democracy*: *Politics and Election*, Dia Art Foundation, New York, 1988

Detail of the installation of Group Material *AIDS Timeline*, Berkeley Art Museum, New York, 1989

expanded. Certain retrieved information was basic while some signalled that Group Material is much more complex and debatable than I had meanwhile fabricated. It seems I had convinced myself that the streamlined storyline, which I repetitiously recounted for years, was accurate.

Of course documents and artefacts are not intrinsically truth telling either; they are fragmentary and disconnected from context. Archives set the stage for history writing, yet they can mislead and even lie through omission. Essential pieces of information, which might answer questions and redirect research, are not necessarily tangible or archived.

While retrieving Group Material for myself, for the group and with the larger purpose of public representation in mind, inhabiting the dual roles of observer and observed created a central methodological challenge, which at times was confounding. Flipping between my own and other members' muddle of memory as well as the accumulation of material sometimes felt like too much and not enough. But, ultimately my insider relationship to the subject in conjunction with a more independent association to the potential for archives to shape historical representation seemed to productively balance one another.

Each aspect of cohering the archive and making *Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material* has embodied specific and abstract purpose. A set of vexing questions fuelled the work. How does bringing documentation together imply shaping history, and writing history? How do artefacts – whether material or informational – communicate? Can contexts be in effect communicated? What archival structure and practices will animate and complicate without over determining meanings? How does the archive archive? What tense is the archive? Where does the archive end? What defines its frame? What can the collective subjective do when given the chance to write its own history? What is gained and lost in the process of subjecting ephemeral and peripheral activities to conservation, from inducting them into history? What kind of suitable forms can be shaped to embody the historicising processes, gathered knowledge and diverse purpose that drive this inquiry? How to make what is missing evident as a layer of historicising? How does the subjective transform the material to a public sphere without manipulating it? Can one effectively challenge history writing while writing history?

The book's main section was conceived as a chronicle composed of reprinted documents and images, with a guiding text running throughout. *Show and Tell* takes its ingredients and methods from the archive, which embodies both private and public material. The making of the group as a specific context along with its structure and process is inseparable from its public creations, yet the bulk of existing representation focuses on Group Material's projects. *Show and Tell* widens the focus to include conveyance of internal workings in each layer of material that forms the book, and stresses aspects of the collaboration that are otherwise invisible.

Group Material comes to life in the archive. Working through the material, I was struck by the vividness and changing character of internal correspondence, minutes of meetings, exhibition proposals and press releases produced by the group. Emotional intensity is palpable in early communiqués, proposals and press releases are bombastic, topics and debates of the times are glimpsed through language, and graphic design bespeaks period styles. A selection of documents is reprinted in their original form and scale in *Show and Tell*. They are valued as 'original language', which vividly conveys what we perceived we were doing at the time far better than writing that depicts from the distance of time would, whether by someone inside or outside the group. This material would commonly be considered source for writing rather than substance for presentation. By design the book encourages that the documents be regarded as primary texts rather than ancillary illustrations. This method situates readers *in the archive*, inviting a multiplicity of interpretation.

Contradictory evidence is at the heart of the archive and prominently figures in this portrayal of Group Material. A four-page incendiary letter written by cofounder Tim Rollins to the group in 1980 is fully reprinted alongside documents that represent a more harmonious collaboration. Tim's letter rants and rails rhetorically. It evidences major clashes in the collaborative's first months but it also shows how seriously he regarded the collaboration and articulates what was at stake for the group. As Janet Malcolm asserts, 'Letters are the great fixative of experience. Time erodes feeling. Time creates indifference. Letters prove to us that we once cared. They are the fossils of feeling… conduit to unmediated experience.'[2]

The guiding text that filters throughout the chronicle was conceived as a nonspecific voice imparting otherwise inaccessible circumstances, facts and anecdotes alongside the archive materials. It represents a close reading and distillation of multiple documentation and composite memory. This text captions, reports, digresses and discloses, coalescing subjective and objective knowledge into a seamless voice that augments the material. A depersonalised present-tense mode is used, intended to situate readers in the times of events and suggest collective subjectivity, distinct from first person retrospection. Trains of information such as the continuities and discontinuities of the group's composition, conflicts and contradictions endemic to its process, and how Group Material structured itself and financed its work run throughout.

While reading through the files I noted many interesting segments in all types of documents, initially regarding this as source material for the guiding text. The number of full documents that could be reproduced was limited by the budget, which led to creating a layer of diverse extracts varying in author purpose, length and style. Unified by typographic design treatment, these also filter throughout the chronicle.

Image wise, snapshots portraying the various members and incarnations of the group, although in some cases there are no photos, and formal installation photography of the collaborative's forty-five projects are presented on equal footing.

Despite the multiple layers of motley material that compose the chronicle, the goal was to bring the elements into a carefully designed formal system that stresses all the material as primary and equivalent. The book's visual tone builds on Group Material's aesthetic style. Analogous to the decentralised thematic exhibition format the group advanced, the chronicle is thought of as an exhibition space in the form of a book.

Revisionist and interpretive tendencies have been restrained in *Show and Tell* in favour of creating a useful documentary foundation and introduction to Group Material's archive. The organisation of the archive and the response to that process through the book provide a platform and base interpretation to use, negotiate and take issue with. The project is also a case study in archiving, historical investigation and history writing, shaped from the questions and problems enmeshed in an amalgam of personally, collectively and socially vested inquiry.

[2] Ibid., pp. 109–110.

Julie Ault (ed.), *Show and Tell: A Chronicle of Group Material,* London: Four Corners Books, 2010.

From 1979 to 1996, the artists collaborative Group Material produced over forty-five projects tackling a wide range of social, political and artistic issues of the period. While many of its exhibitions and projects took place in art institutions, the group also used subway cars, buses, newspapers and billboards. This is the first book to chronicle Group Material's practice and chart the origins, processes and contexts of their activities. Organised by founding group member Julie Ault in dialogue with long-term member Doug Ashford, and with the input from other former members including Sabrina Locks and Tim Rollins, the book draws heavily on Group Material's archive. It also includes reflections by three of the group's members, as well as an investigation of the seminal project, *AIDS Timeline* (1989).

Some of the issues addressed by Group Material resonate in *SICK 80s / The AIDS Crisis, Art and Counter-biopolitical Guerrilla*, a seminar directed by Beatriz Preciado that took place at MABCA in November 2010. Portions of the contents of the series are available in audio format online at www.macba.cat

THE GEOMETRY OF A CROSS-EYED SUBJECT

Natascha Sadr Haghighian

As an artist, she has worked in different formats, including video, performance and sound. Both in her solo works and group projects she is concerned with socio-political questions.

Image of the Israeli trial against Nazi officer Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem in 1961. This was the image used by Penguin Books in 1994 for the cover of Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil.*

My deliberations over the incident described below have brought me to the edge of my mathematical capabilities, which are not, admittedly, especially developed. Still, to me it seemed vital to reconstruct the situation geometrically in order to understand what was happening to my eyesight. Basically, I started going cross-eyed in a strange sort of way. Not that I was seeing double; instead, a hole developed exactly in the middle of my field of vision – meaning straight ahead, when looking from my seat in the cinema in the House of World Cultures – and it permitted me to look only at the left and right sides flanking the projection screen.

The incident occurred during the programme *Documentary Moments* at the Documentary Forum in Berlin. The filmmaker Eyal Sivan announced the previously unscreened film *Henchman Glance*, which Chris Marker had passed on to him, and which is based on Alain Resnais' short fictionalised documentary film about Nazi concentration and extermination camps, *Nuit et Brouillard* (*Night and Fog*, 1955). However, the film explicitly does not originate from Marker himself. As became evident, *Henchman Glance* is composed of simple

edits (shot /countershot) of two plot threads that get synchronised through the editing. *Night and Fog* was cut together with the recordings of the trial of the State of Israel vs. the Nazi officer Adolf Eichmann. One sees Adolf Eichmann from above, a slightly slanted frontal shot. He sits in a glass booth, his gaze directed ahead, and apparently, or in fact, watches a screening of the film *Night and Fog*, which can be seen alternating with the images of Eichmann himself. The sound of *Night and Fog* runs continuously through all the film's images. According to Eyal Sivan, *Night and Fog* was in fact shown to Eichmann during the trial. Chris Marker reconstructed this occurrence through editing.

I was already unprepared for what was about to unfold on the screen because I had never seen *Night and Fog*. But as early as the first minutes of the film, I was predominantly preoccupied with my optic apparatus, which had gone completely haywire. I simply could not look at the screen. But I was also unable to exit the cinema. It was one of those events that one attends out of respect, above all if one has grown up in Germany. So for thirty-three minutes my eyes wandered aimlessly along the dark edges of the projection. In the corner of my eye I hazily chased the screen in hopes that something would change and enable me to look at it again. Like when I was a child, secretly watching scary movies that I actually could not endure. I had always said to myself, now that you have begun, you have to 'see' how it turns out.

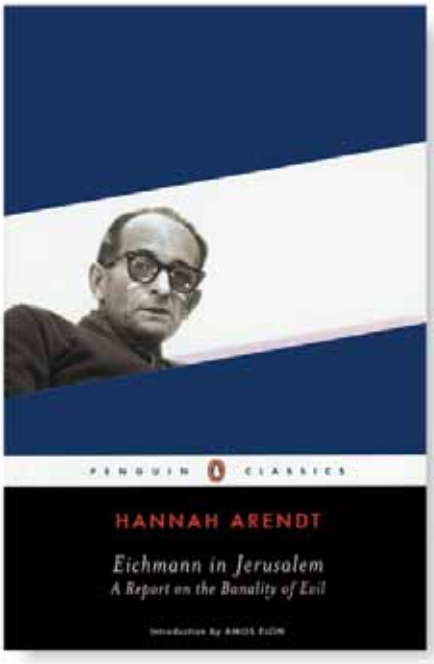
In his book *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Lacan through Popular Culture* (1991), Slavoj Žižek describes a scene from the film *Manhunter* (1986) in which the policeman watches super 8 films belonging to murdered families over and over again in order to learn something about the murderer's motive. He discovers the thing that connects the families: they all had their film developed in the same laboratory. And ultimately that is where the murderer is found. As Žižek says, the irony of the film lies in how the policeman's method, on a formal level, creates a perversion. The perversion consists of the overlapping, or even coincidence, between his gaze and that of the murderer. His method requires that he view the super 8 films with the eyes of the murderer. In the course of this operation, the subject splits and his gaze becomes perverse. The perverse gaze onto the victim takes place in faithful service to none other than that victim, in its name, and in its interests. Žižek places this overlapping of gazes into a correlation with pornography, which I have yet to fully grasp. Here, pornography is the genre that shows all there is to show, hiding nothing from view, while in a radical way bringing about the loss of the side view. But maybe the feedback that emerges from the short circuiting of complex fields of vision helps to reconstruct the hole, which occurred during the screening of *Henchman Glance*. Neither the subject-object relation, nor the associated lines of sight arising while showing images, are *unidirectional*. The object gazes back, and depending on what the intention of the production of that relation is, this gaze, owing to circumstances, gets reflected back. If I understand the concept of jouissance correctly, it is to be found precisely here. The subject is penetrated by the object's gaze and vice versa, and the principle of pain within this relationship turns into a suffering that, to be sure, differs from an emphatic compassion.

In my contemplation of Eichmann, of how he contemplates the horrible crimes he helped commit, I attempt, on the one hand, to see the pictures with his eyes. This means that I take on his gaze, placing my gaze parallel to his, and I try to see what he sees in the images of the concentration camp. I do this in the name of the victim, as does the policeman in *Manhunter*. On the other hand, I try to read his face. This means that I watch from the opposite direction, from *Night and Fog* towards Eichmann's face, and I try to recognise where and how his face is stimulated by the images. Thus, on the one hand, Eichmann in his glass booth seems like a wild animal in the zoo; on the other hand, he sits next to me, so to speak, and passes me his popcorn. It is probably clear that something perverse, maybe pornographic, occurs here; but, as it seems to me, the question of what part I play in this is only answerable geometrically. On which axis is the eye of the subject located, and from which cut-set does the object gaze back; and, above all, which coordinates are subject and object here?

When two sets intersect, a cut-set comes into existence. In my case, at the moment of the screening of *Henchman Glance*, intersections emerged that created a hole in the projection screen instead of a cut-set. Like an endless feedback loop that happens when one pivots the axis of the camera and holds it towards the screen. A feedback that needed me as a coordinate in order to pivot the axis. The emergence of a hole during this event may lie in my coordinate's inability to develop a direction or a radius of action within the array of *Henchman Glance*, making my coordinate begin to rotate. The murderer, the evil, is already well-known and, yes, already put to death, and therewith the motivation for my complicity draws a blank. The already-well-known axis with the coordinates murderer/policeman-witness/victim, which uses the policeman-witness in order

to rectify the murderer/victim axis (and therefore has a clear direction) turns around on itself, becomes locked into a zombified loop of the resurrection of evil. In the process, a blindness-causing monster emerges from the screen, whose motive we will surely never be able to resolve; for here it is the idea of evil-in-itself, in its totalitarian monumentality, that is being animated.

The cover of my edition of Hannah Arendt's book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1994) also shows the courtroom of Eichmann's trial. One sees Eichmann in the glass booth, from above, a slightly slanted frontal shot; before him, set up with the same line of sight as Eichmann, stands a 16 mm projector that gets truncated at the edge of the picture. One does not see what Eichmann sees. The other people in the image – three police officers guarding, one person who sits behind the projector, and another person wearing headphones – look with Eichmann in the direction of the projection. Our gaze stays on the side axis, and something in this graph stays incomplete, exits the picture, so to speak. It is the gaze-axis of Eichmann that we unavoidably incorporate, that directs us, however, not onto the 16 mm projection, but into the inside of the book and therewith into Hannah Arendt's deliberations over the banality of evil. Here too the incorporation of the axis of the gaze enables the monster's exit from the glass booth, though not in the sense of him taking our gaze hostage, but, rather, in the sense of his gaze being taken apart, being dismantled into everyday-seeming decisions that are met, decisions that are capable of creating the monstrous. Something becomes apperceptible, allowing for a process of cognition.



In the newest edition (2006) of the Penguin Classics Series, the cover image of *Eichmann in Jerusalem* was, interestingly, replaced. Instead of the courtroom, the cover now shows a slanted image of Eichmann, looking from above into the camera. With this gaze looking down on us and the magnified eyes caused by his thick spectacles, he seems to target the viewer. The figure of Eichmann is cropped, out of context. A slanted white stripe forms the background behind his head and chest, framed above and below by blue spaces. Obviously this gaze does not lead into the book. The film continues. N.S.H.

In April 2010, **Natascha Sadr Haghighian** participated in *On Artistic Research*, a lecture series held at MACBA that will be compiled in the Contratextos collection, which is published jointly by MACBA and the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.
In 2011, she will present her new work at the Capella MACBA. This production furthers the concerns of her earlier work, which revolves around the notion of 'representation' and the recovery of archives from art centres.
An interview with the artist is available in audio format at www.macba.cat

FOUR DECADES OF THE INDEPENDENT STUDY PROGRAMMES

Xavier Antich

Director of the MACBA Independent Study Programme (PEI). A writer with a PhD in philosophy. He teaches art theory at the Universitat de Girona.

Lecture by Doug Ashford, member of Group Material, in the framework of the seminar *The New Productivisms*, MACBA Auditorium, March 2009

Class of MACBA's Independent Studies Programme (PEI) with Xavier Antich, MACBA Study Center, October 2010

The emblematic, indeed almost foundational, beginning of the Independent Study Programmes (ISP) lies in activities that took place at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. In the field of art studies, the history of these programmes is inseparable from a certain moment in theory and politics that took shape in the seventies. In retrospect, it hardly seems an overstatement to compare the influence of these programmes on the sphere of education in art, theory and politics to the influence exercised by the workshops at the Vkhutemas, a school founded in the Soviet Union in the twenties.

In any case, what was perhaps most essential to the process that got underway at that time was – if it is possible to formulate it in these terms – a double impugnation and, hence, a double proposal. First, there was awareness of the irreversible nature of the rupture between stagnant categories of artistic practice, on the one hand, and critical reflection and theory, on the other. Different strains of conceptual and political art had already introduced what would eventually give rise to a new sort of practice that would not await later conceptualisation or theorising. That practice is – and defends the right to be – a theory of itself, a formulation of its own meanings, and indeed the meaning of artistic practice in general and its social dimension. These new tendencies would end up wholly altering the nature of Fine Arts Studies almost everywhere. Second, there was an equally irreversible awareness of the fact that academic studies in art history and museum practices were undergoing a sort of deforestation; attention was shifted away from them and focus was now placed on defining new tendencies in artistic practice, a fact that forced a reformulation of staid academic studies of art histories. This was, then, the two-fold context in which Independent Study Programmes began their experiment.

At present, it is evident that the history of Independent Study Programmes is intrinsically linked to the evolution of critical thought. It is not surprising that the Whitney's ISP in the seventies revolved around theoretical concerns related to semiotics, post-structuralism, feminism and Marxism that gave a specific meaning to the 'theoretical turn' on which Independent Study Programmes were based. Thus, in their commitment to rejoining theory and artistic practice and in the need to construct a space outside the realm of institutional and academic knowledge (from which these programmes affirmed their 'independence') and outside their organic burdens, Independent Study Programmes had an educational component more focused on producing knowledges at the intersection of forms of practice than on conveying knowledge.

Four decades after their launching, Independent Study Programmes everywhere are still struggling to define the nature of their 'independence' and the production of knowledge to which they are, more or less intensely, committed. The Whitney programme, for instance, now involves three interconnected, though conceptually differentiated, programmes: the Studio Program, the Curatorial Program and the Critical Studies Program. The design of other programmes is less conventional and perhaps more demanding from an epistemological perspective: the modest programme at the Escola de Artes Visuais Maumaus (Lisbon), for instance, and mostly the newer Campus Expandido programme of the MUAC (Mexico), which reaffirms the urgent need to rethink the museum as, among other things, a sphere for the production of critical knowledge. MACBA's Independent Study Programme (PEI) formally began in January 2006 (on the basis of activities that had been taking place for the previous five years). It emerged within the context of the reformulation of independent study programmes, an attempt to find a new place for these programmes in the face of the new challenges generated by cognitive capitalism and the onset of a new wave of discourses that openly encouraged assimilating any and all cultural experience into consumerism. Just like the 'theoretical turn' that had been explicitly and radically assumed when these programmes emerged four decades earlier, the re-politicalisation of educational practices in the arts, as well as the need to reformulate the social dimension of those practices, constituted a deeply rooted attempt to find a new meaning for Independent Study programmes that aspired to continue to be independent' from the aforementioned challenges.

A series of initiatives and activities (lectures, seminars and courses) that took place before the launching of MACBA's PEI served to define the various conceptual, theoretical and practical approaches that would eventually constitute its framework. This was an attempt to open reflection and research on artistic practice to the sphere of theory and the criticism of discourse that emerged on the basis of post-structuralism, gender technologies in critical feminism and queer theory, psychoanalysis and therapy, different forms of political imagination connected to social and political activism, the study and analysis of urban transformations and processes, and the criticism of the economy of culture. On all of these fronts, MACBA's PEI worked with academics and university professors, artists and curators, theorists and cultural critics, as well as different actors involved in social and political activism, local movements, educational reform, and museum-related work and research. It was on the basis of these efforts and alliances that, in 2006, MACBA launched its Independent Study Programme, the first of its kind in Spain. From the very beginning, the programme received the support it was due from a museum that wanted to make knowledge, research and the production of discourse the core of its practice.

Just as, in the early phases, Independent Study Programmes evolved alongside cultural studies – especially those related to visual culture, feminist, subaltern and critical theory in general–, recent reflection on the development of the 'independent' nature of these programmes necessarily entails evaluating to what extent they have caused academic programmes in leading universities to evolve. This can be analysed, to a certain extent, by looking to, for instance, the Master of Arts Program in Curatorial Studies at Bard College (New York); the Master of Science in Visual Studies at MIT's Program in Art, Culture and Technology (Cambridge, MA); the Master in Modern Art: Critical & Curatorial Studies (MODA) at Columbia University (New York); the Curatorial Practice Program & Visual and Critical Studies at California College of Arts & Crafts (San Francisco); and, in Europe, the post-graduate programmes at Goldsmiths College at the University of London and the Royal College of Art (also in London), the Critical Studies programme at the Malmö Art Academy (Lund University, Malmö), Kunstraum at the University of Luneburg (Germany) and the curatorial programme at the De Apple Arts Centre (Amsterdam).

While this is not the place to draw conclusions about the dialogue that has taken place in recent years between Independent Study Programmes and academic programmes, it is possible that, given the relative uniformity of these programmes (even in terms of their names), it is still somewhat pertinent to question from what 'place' these spaces for the production of knowledge define themselves. And perhaps for this reason it is not farfetched to rethink the privileged place occupied by New York as the 'city' in the early years of Whitney's ISP. If Independent Study Programmes today, as always, have to rethink their task, that first of all should imply knowing where they stand, a question that in turn implies, among other things, defining – by problematising it in a dialectical manner – the place of enunciation to which the processes of subjectivation that they mean to promote are committed, as well as the social and public sphere to which they aspire. And that seems no small thing.

INDEPENDENT STUDY: PROGRAMMES AND PARADIGMS

Johanna Burton

Art historian and critic; associate Director of the Independent Study Programme of the Whitney Museum of American Art of New York from 2008–10. She currently serves as Director of the graduate programme at the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, New York.

Artist Martin Creed with students at the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, New York, on the occasion of his exhibition *Feelings*, held there in summer 2007

The recent attention and emphasis placed on what has been called during the past few years by many in the field of art 'the educational turn' is a good place to begin my brief comments on the history and contemporary evolution of the 'Independent Study' Programme. Indeed, while I would not wish to cast a blindly disparaging eye on this latest enthusiasm for – or perhaps better, valuing of – the endlessly malleable (if nonetheless rarely tested) structures of teaching and learning within the sphere of artistic conceptualisation and actualisation, it is perhaps useful to consider just what the implications are for such a focus, to say nothing of such a nomenclature. Unlike previous well known 'turns' – *linguistic*, *ethical* and, more recently, *affective* – the stakes for said *educational* turn seem to operate mostly at the level of rhetoric, and I mean this for better and for worse.

Even as I touch on this subject merely as a precursor for my larger discussion, this thought is still worth developing here since in many ways, in fact, it makes the larger context for our understanding of education today all the clearer. And so, to clarify what I mean by 'rhetoric' and the role it plays: On the surface of things, an emphasis on education should only be good, particularly at a moment in which a rampant anti-intellectualism defines a great deal of the art world (not a historical first, but as urgent as ever to combat). Yet, just what comprises education as it would want to be redefined – which is to say how its presence is performed, how it is represented, how an audience is meant to recognise its contours – is another matter. The implication, de facto, of the educational turn, is that previously education *per se* was turned away from, rejected, repressed or, at the very least, ignored. While there are obvious (and, yes, persistent) examples of programmes (in both art practice and art history) wilfully deaf and dumb to the political and ideological shifts of the last four decades (at least), there is at least a fairly widespread general competency when it comes to recognising the increasing roles of mediation, discussion and research (and other such nebulous terms) as central to both artistic practice and the evaluation of its forms – and this not over the last five years but over the last hundred and fifty. In other words, as empathetic (and even delighted) as I am to believe there is a new imperative for education afoot, I can't help but feel inclined to ask what this shift enumerates or if, somewhat counter-intuitively, the claim works to preclude further investigation. In other words, in claiming a radical mode of interrogation, one that disperses and dispels known modes of analysis, the educational turn might render its own means tautological, its own ends inconsequential. There is nothing one can't ask; therefore there is nothing one *can* ask.

In pointing up what might be only one outcome of works, practices, events, exchanges that profess themselves as educational (thus enumerating in one word both the process and the content), I don't actually mean to overturn or even disavow the 'educational turn', but rather to refocus attention on just what such words mean when they become used too easily as shorthand. As Irit Rogoff (among others) has pointed out, the 'educational turn' opens up all manner of epistemic inquiry yet simultaneously threatens to calcify (if it hasn't already) into a kind of style – less an activity than a new, strange, formalism. While I am interested in ways of telling the difference and evaluating this condition, my own immediate driving question for the context at hand is more pragmatic.

As an art historian and critic who has never operated strictly upon my own turf (I have taught not in art history departments but in the context of art practice, cultural theory and curatorial studies), I never turned away from education and so did not need to turn back. Central to my practice (both writing and pedagogical) has been a belief that a constellation of argument, debate and analysis is foundational to every practice and to every practitioner, regardless of where on the spectrum of production they fall. And yet, it should be said (regardless of my own position), that the word 'education' within the academic and art context has never fallen easily on the ears. Indeed, it's worth pointing out, I think, that 'education' programmes in institutions of higher learning and museums are still regularly disregarded, held apart from more refined modes of conceptual production and equated with outreach to 'the public' or with modes of translation that operate on a top-down model using 'access' as a catchword more or less equatable to mitigated knowledge, doled out in tolerable spoonfuls. This works in marked counter-distinction to what I outline above, where the 'educational turn' is posited as an investment in rigorous, informed, yet experimental investigations – where, in other words, structures are rendered transparent, self-reflexivity is required, and the very site of meaning-making is necessarily one of contestation.

Of course, I highlight these institutional inflections (whereby the 'educational turn' is an extension of conceptual practices, while institutional education is seen as a kind of bending to the lowest denominator) only to offer context for my own position. Within the academy (or even its strange extensions, such as those I've been lucky enough to be a part of) education is seen neither as a form to be inhabited nor as the bridge to a general population. It is the medium neither to be turned away from nor toward, but instead to be inhabited powerfully and historically. (This is my view; others would have it otherwise.) This is to say, it is only within education itself that we debate the use-value and relevance of things like: linguistics, ethics, affect, etc. That one could take or leave 'education' itself is of another order, and I hope it's worth the admittedly winding path to get here that this comes to be one of my main points. Education, in my view, is not taken up or let go: it is the vehicle, the framework for inquiry, and it is neither a free-floating nor an empty signifier.

The etymology for 'education' is telling: its origins pertain to 'training', specifically the training of children and animals. The implication of 'education' at its roots, then, is

Lecture organised by Ana Paula Cohen at the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, New York, September 2009

that it addresses individuals neither ruled fully by cultural mores nor by biological drives but rather informed by – and challenging – both. Perhaps this is, in a sense, the promise of the 'educational turn', though I've never seen it enumerated as such: to locate, reveal and repurpose the site to which we cleave and bend those rules we never even realised we had learned. But if the 'educational turn', as I understand it, is both open-ended and yet extremely self-referential (it purports to be flexible and ranging, yet serves mainly those already inaugurated), how might we think its untapped potential but also regard more accurately its past?

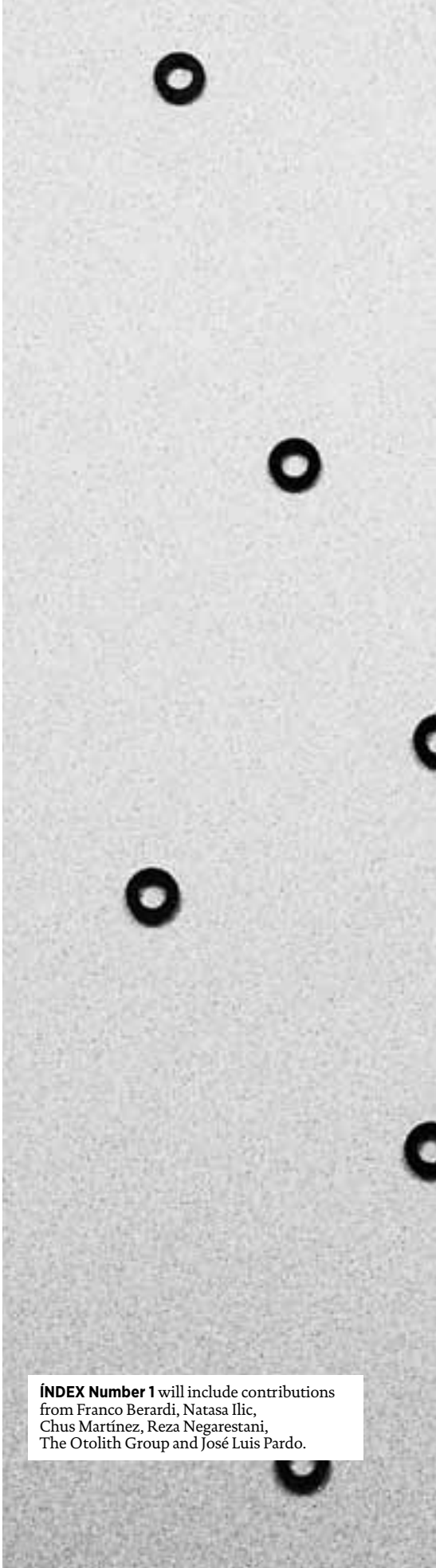
All manner of experimental schools and pedagogical scenarios are in existence globally today, with so many different aims and constitutions. The one I know best is very clearly also a model for most of the others: the Whitney Independent Study Program (ISP), which I attended ten years ago and then worked within as a faculty member for two years. The history of the Program is long and rich, starting in 1967 and continuing to run today, headed up by a singular figure, Ron Clark. The ISP – for America very unusually comingling international students who work as artists, curators and art historian/critics – does not situate itself each year as newly plumbing the terrain of our current, up-to-the-minute context, but opts instead to engage a set of questions that must be regarded as both historical *and* contemporary. There is something beautifully stubborn – if, for some, also frustrating – about the unapologetic agenda of the ISP, which refuses to move on from foundational questions of ideology, hegemony and representation as they were set out in thinkers from Brecht and Lacan to Stuart Hall. (There is no lack of newer readings, but the foundation of the ISP should be seen as that: a solid ground upon which the rest is built.) What has remained 'independent', then, about the ISP is its resolute *disinterest* in occupying a continuously, ever-overturning 'contemporary' space, and its dedication instead to pointing back (and perhaps, then, forward) to moments of historical (and recent historical) paradigms that can and should be newly reconsidered, folded back onto themselves – and pressed into new form.

There are much more obvious ways that the ISP is 'independent'. There is no degree, almost no fees. It is, I always thought, a little like going to a school that has seced-

ed from the realm of 'education', or at least from its general complexion. But this is to grant it too idealised and too safe a status: any independent entity, and this includes the one under discussion, is also always under threat of dissolution, due to the very operations it outruns.

Currently I direct (as of July 2010) the graduate programme at the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College. Students do get a degree, and they pay a great deal in tuition. Perhaps denoting one sense of 'independent', it is unclear at times, what they are being trained in or what the outcome of their efforts will be. It's a different structure, a radically different structure, from the idea of the 'independent study' I detail above. Yet, there are seeds here, within a graduate programme that sits within a teaching museum on the campus of a mostly undergraduate liberal arts college (itself interestingly understood as signifying a kind of liberal, left-leaning, gently politicised ecology). The Center has been in operation for nearly twenty years, it is one of the first such facilities to come into being. The notion of the 'curatorial' is always forcefully under debate, though like 'education', this word tends, at times, to eclipse its own strange pragmatism.

Throughout his career, and to very different ends at different times, Lacan returned to what he named the 'four discourses', which, he believed, could account more or less for the way we, as subjects, understand ourselves to be addressed (and to speak) in the various contexts we are considered (and constituted). These are The Master's Discourse, The University Discourse, The Hysteric's Discourse and The Analyst's Discourse. The four discourses, while being in a kind of obvious oppositional tension, all generate one another. The Hysteric's Discourse, that is to say, deeply informs the Analyst's Discourse (and vice versa), which deeply informs the Master's Discourse and so on. What matters to me here – in regard to 'independent study' – is that when one focuses too myopically on a single discourse (The University Discourse is described by psychoanalyst and theorist Bruce Fink as 'a kind of encyclopedic endeavour to exhaust a field'), the most important effects (which occur *outside* this singular frame) can never be considered, and the inquiry merely collapses back on itself. In other words, a discourse that examines only its own terms, ironically enough, can't see its own contours at all. If we are to pursue a legacy for 'independent study' it can't be by way of institutional autonomy (impossible anyway) or radical withdrawal (something I often wish were possible but fear is not), but, rather, by pursuing the intersection of discourses, turning not *toward* or *away* but burrowing in.



ÍNDEX Number 1 will include contributions from Franco Berardi, Natasa Ilic, Chus Martínez, Reza Negarestani, The Otolith Group and José Luis Pardo.

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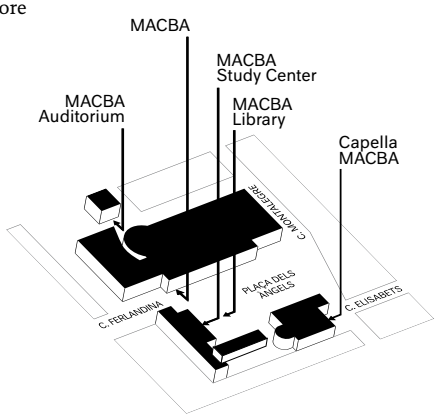

‘The mission is not to renovate thought, but to venture into other logics and place them at the core of artistic and cultural thinking.’ Chus Martínez

‘Will the potential of scholarship, if one defines it as a critical reflection on reality, be used to transform museums into critical institutions, to cover the distance between the critique of the institution and the institution that is critical?’ Piotr Piotrowski

‘What can the collective subjective do when given the chance to write its own history? (…) Can one effectively challenge history writing while writing history?’ Julie Ault

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