

Experimental Communities

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It might seem a strange paradox that, to begin a discussion of a number of recent projects pointing toward the formation of a new culture in the arts, we must start with a toilet. This toilet, however, is very different from the one that, almost a century ago, Marcel Duchamp presented at the Society of Independent Artists in New York. Duchamp signed his piece “R. Mutt” and gave it a title that served to distance or extract it from its daily uses. In 2003, the Slovenian artist Marjetica Potrc proposed the installation of two dry toilets in an outlying area of the city of Caracas, working in collaboration with the La Vega neighbourhood association, the Caracas Urban Think Tank (CCSTT) and the architects Ana María Torres and Lijad Esakov.¹ The toilets were proposed as a solution to the sewage contamination and water shortages that the inhabitants of the *ciudad informal* (“informal city,” the euphemism used to refer to the slums or shantytowns of Caracas) deal with on a daily basis. Potrc’s and Esakov’s solution was to take effect during a six-month trial period, after which it could be adopted by the area’s residential complex. In the artist’s own words, this project—which involved the establishment of a collaborative group, including neighbors from La Vega, the architects and the artist herself—represents the culmination of a long search for solutions to a number of concrete problems.

Potrc is part of a growing group of artists whose members do not necessarily know each other and whose importance in the contemporary art world has been steadily increasing during the course of the last decade. These artists refuse to make objects that are self-sufficient and stable, or specific events or performances confined to a clearly delimited place and a brief time; instead, they propose open projects whose development imply the formation of experimental communities that include artists and non-artists. Their work consists of inventing devices and providing resources for dialogues in which forms of knowledge, imaginaries, and social relations can be clarified, enhanced, and developed. At the same time, they generate presentations in art spaces of the images, sounds, and discourses that result from their specific projects. What is finally shown is both a set of more or less durable artifacts and a record of the production of the collectivities from which these arise.

Potrc, for example, employs the medium of drawing to convey the variety of urban situations that insistently attract her attention and to explore a range of possible solutions, both realistic and utopian. Reminiscent of Yona Friedman’s sketches from the seventies, Potrc’s colourful drawings seem to perform a pedagogic role, informing the art audience of the developments of the artist’s work outside the boundaries of the exhibition space. Combining words and images, the drawings bridge the apparent gap between Potrc’s investigations into the urban and her desire to operate in specific situations while functioning according to the conventions of a more traditional definition of artistic practice. A number of her recent drawings from Caracas allow the art audience to understand the process by which Potrc and her group arrived at the dry-toilet as a possible solution for an endemic problem of the city’s shanties.

Potrc usually complements her presentations in institutional contexts with a Web site devoted to her work, featuring examples of urban and architectural practices generated as responses to a wide array of local problems. She also includes display structures strategically placed in the exhibition space containing experimental prototypes and utilitarian objects that she calls “power tools,” which offer paradigms for a wide variety of already existing

“solutions.” Potrc’s solutions are not instrumental in the sense of merely proposing technical solutions to problems. Her works do not attempt to formalize what is informal about these neighbourhoods by integrating them into the macroeconomic urban system; instead, they explore the methodology of self-help and economically sustainable solutions in different environments. She is less interested in carrying out an activity linked to social engineering than in the progressive consolidation of a model of urban intervention. In this model, a problem is seen both as an obstacle to be overcome and as the occasion for an interrogation of social relations and the subsequent elaboration of alternative forms of sociality. During this process, the artist and the newly-formed community create archives that can be circulated outside the site of their original production, whose function is to memorialize and publicize the model.

The sociologist Stephen Turner has proposed a term that usefully describes Potrc’s work: the “boundary organization,” which he defines as a space and a group of protocols that provide “a framework of flexible mutual expectations.”² This framework allows for the collaboration between individuals or groups with very different backgrounds, skills, interests, and desires. A particularly relevant example of the kind of boundary organizations to which Turner refers is the increasingly frequent associations between scientists and laypersons that form to discuss ecological crises. These are temporary organizations that communicate between worlds whose coupling would initially seem unlikely. This coupling depends on the establishment of transitory domains where gatherings can take place, where processes of translation can develop, and where results can be accumulated and organized.

These domains are not isolated, in the same way that an eddy is not isolated in a current; rather, they are embedded in the social worlds that they link by the mere fact of their existence. We have chosen to call the gatherings that take place around projects like Potrc’s “experimental communities”: durable associations of individuals who explore anomalous forms of being together while addressing a problem in a certain locality, producing objects, texts, films, and images that can circulate in the art world as aesthetic manifestations of the social knowledge that emerges in the process. The particular profile that the universe of the arts has adopted in the last few years depends on the presence and the influence of a growing number of artists who are interested in developing boundary organizations where experimental communities can start, expand, subsist, and transform.

This process takes place against the background of that series of developments and transformations that is usually called globalization, a widely contested term that we understand as a large increase in communications and connections and a generalized de-structuring of the institutions and ways of life that were developed in the context of the Euro-American type of national-social states of the central decades of the twentieth century. The tasks that these artists seem to have set for themselves amount to the invention of new forms of being-in-common and representing that commonality, in circumstances in which the social forms that emerged in the context of the social capitalism that prevailed in the second part of the twentieth century are progressively dissolved.

In the world of globalization, the conception of art as a space in which a fundamental truth about individuals or communities is manifested through those objects or events usually called “art works” seems to be losing its centrality. The range of indicators of this process go from the passive acceptance, by some artists, of the role of producers of high quality goods

(as with the works of Takashi Murakami or Damien Hirst) to an aggressive affirmation of subjectivity that is more like a symptom of its own dissolution (as in the case of Matthew Barney or Tracey Emin, among others). That is to say, the art world cynically affirms exchange value as universal equivalency and spectacular displays mythologies of a strictly personal nature. In this context, some artists have generated strategies that react to this set of situations by taking up certain moments from the avant-garde tradition that remained insufficiently explored and developing them in original ways. Here, we are referring mostly to the several historical attempts to imagine possible connections between producers and receivers that would not be mediated by the traditional form of the artwork.

Thomas Hirschhorn's installation at Documenta11 in 2002 is an example of these strategies. The piece involved the construction of a series of precarious buildings in the Friedrich Wöhler-Complex, a public space in the north of Kassel, inhabited mostly but not exclusively by immigrants of Turkish descent. The set of buildings was called *Bataille Monument*. The project consisted of a set of discrete elements and actions, including a sculpture of wood, cardboard, tape and plastic (the "Sculpture"); a Georges Bataille "Library," with books that refer to Bataille's oeuvre, arranged according to categories of word, image, art, sports, and sex (a collaboration with Uwe Fleckner); a "Bataille Exhibition" with a topography of his oeuvre, a map, and books on and by Georges Bataille (a collaboration with Christophe Fiat); various workshops realized through the duration of the exhibition (a collaboration with Manuel Joseph, Jean-Charles Masséra, and Marcus Steinweg); a stand with food and drinks; a shuttle service to transport the visitors and neighbourhood residents between Documenta11 and the *Bataille Monument*; a television studio that broadcasts daily a brief show from the *Bataille Monument* on the Kassel public-access channel; and a Web site with live feedback from webcams installed in the different sections of the *Bataille Monument*.

In Hirschhorn's project, educational organizations (the workshops and the library) join mechanisms aimed at articulating the relationship between the audience and the work of art (the "Sculpture" and the "Bataille Exhibition"), which in turn are linked to parodic forms of public transportation (two dilapidated Mercedes-Benzes served as shuttles), a local television channel, the Web, and fast food services. This heterogeneous, stratified community is firmly anchored in the diverse instances of daily life, but subject to a radical temporality concerning its duration and intensity. It is the "form" of a possible community that seems to interest Hirschhorn primarily, a form not created once and for all but that is rather the result of an assembly process, open (to a certain extent) to the unforeseen. Although Hirschhorn seems at times an artist involved mostly with the tradition of sculpture, and more specifically, with its public incarnations, his concern seems to be the forms of experience that an object or set of objects might enable. The artifact that he constructs is precisely the assembly of relationships between a diverse group of actors and communicational situations. Through these multiple situations, the *Bataille Monument* set out to present a series of events and to open up a space where exchanges between the neighbourhood and its surroundings could take place. But it also tried to assemble a program in which the process of constructing the piece demanded the invention of a possible community integrated by locals and visitors, inhabitants and passers-by. This community, while composed from certain pre-existing instances and elements, would end up incorporating elements that were, initially, foreign to it.

At first, these projects might seem close to things familiar: forms of art for the community as they are conceived by state bureaucracies, or the projects associated with a “new public art” of a few years ago, like Mary Jane Jacob’s *Culture in Action* of 1993. But the conception that lies at the base of both those strategies is essentially conservative, insofar as they conceive of artistic production as a compensatory activity, an activity where individuals, in their leisure time, communicate their personal emotions, goals, and desires through texts or images without linking them critically to the matrix of social forces from which they emerge. At the same time, they tend to operate under the assumption that communities have an identity that is independent of the acts of expression in which they engage, not recognizing that identity formations are contingently constituted by these very acts. Projects associated with identity politics usually fall prey to exactly this set of problems.³ The relevance of projects like Hirschhorn’s resides precisely in the fact that they occur in spaces and situations where even the existence of a set identity cannot be assumed. Indeed, the very premise of projects like the *Bataille Monument* is that all identities, even the most stable ones, are inexorably volatile and constantly being produced and reproduced.

Hirschhorn’s *Bataille Monument*, like several of his previous “Monuments,” attempts to disturb the presumed stability of the contexts in which it takes place, while also proposing a new space in which the knowledge and actions that arise from this disturbance can circulate, be recorded, displayed, and metabolized by the newly constituted community. In this way, a project like Hirschhorn’s differs from those earlier projects that Nicolas Bourriaud addressed in his brief book on relational aesthetics.⁴ The corpus of relational aesthetics, as it was initially presented in Bourriaud’s book, consisted mostly of punctual interventions in relatively homogeneous and stable regions of social life. Examples included Rirkrit Tiravanija organizing a dinner at a collector’s house; Philippe Parreno inviting people to practice their favourite hobbies on May 1, Pierre Huyghe assembling a casting session, or Gabriel Orozco placing oranges in an empty Brazilian market. All of these projects are micro-actions that inflect a state of things without breaking it. Bourriaud’s book—extremely valuable in its introduction of both a group of artists that would become particularly central to the current critical discussions and a useful perspective to look at their work—carries with it the early-nineties ethos of modesty, an instinctive refusal to engage in anything that could smell of Grand Politics. To this attests his insistence on the value of the micro-gesture and the interstitial. But this modesty is also its main limitation. The artists that we mention (who are, we would suggest, some of the most interesting and intense of the more recent artistic production) try to overcome this limit by designing and producing engagements that are sustained in time and take place in tense environments, where forms of conflict can’t be avoided.

Hirschhorn’s *Monument* is clearly an example of these kind of engagements, specifically meant to be the occasion for the development of a particular type of learning process that, starting from a specific situation (a group of residents of Hamburg who design a park, a group of residents and architects in Caracas who design toilets), involves the formulation of objectives and the production and self-representation of the agency of the collectivity concerned. These are truly open processes in relation both to the contingencies that may occur while the project is being carried out and to the makeup of the communities that they

assemble. In his *Art as a Social System*, Niklas Luhmann suggests that an artwork is an entity that “directs the beholder’s awareness toward the *improbability of its emergence*.”⁵ From the point of view of the artist, this means the invitation to practice her art in such a way that the results of her actions could not be anticipated—perhaps the oldest imperative of the culture of the arts in modernity. In a recent interview Hirschhorn, commenting on the *Bataille Monument*, states:

My monuments aren’t spectacles for me but rather events. An event is also something you can’t plan ahead of time because you never know what will happen. And in fact that is what happened [in the *Bataille Monument*]. If I already know in advance what kind of experience will be generated, it wouldn’t be an event, it wouldn’t be an experience. I feel that the condition of spectacle always results from thinking of an event in terms of two groups, one that produces something and another that looks at it. That is not the case here. And it is possible to create an event that will be so difficult and complicated and incredibly exhausting that it will always make excessive demands on the spectator. The first to be overburdened was me, the next was my coworkers, or the people from the housing project, and then perhaps the third, I hope, was the visitor. In this sense I believe that if there is such constant challenge, one can fend off the spectacle.⁶

We call “experimental communities” communities formed under the pressure of the kind of “excessive demand” to which Hirschhorn refers. It is of the nature of the excessive demand to allow for a redistribution of positions and of roles in the site in which it takes place. This redistribution allows for processes of learning that subsist at least for as long as the project continues. Intensity not just in contemplation but fundamentally in learning is what these projects propose.

The work of Jeanne van Heeswijk clearly incarnates these distinctive facets of the experimental community. *Face Your World*, a 2002 collaboration between the Wexner Center for the Arts, the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA), and the Children of the Future program of the Greater Columbus Arts Council (GCAC), was intended to allow a group of children ages five to twelve to produce their own images of their urban surroundings by using computer software. This software, called the “Interactor,” was developed by van Heeswijk in collaboration with the poet and philosopher Maaïke Engelen and a group of software designers from the city of Rotterdam, the V2 Organization’s Institute for the Unstable Media. The software was installed in a number of computers inside a small COTA bus that was used to take the kids around the city of Columbus. The bus functioned simultaneously as an exploration tool and an urban laboratory for the imagination. The results of the children’s work, a collection of personalized images of imaginary public spaces, were displayed on three “bus stops,” which were in fact slightly anthropomorphic public sculptures designed by another van Heeswijk collaborator, the Dutch artist Joep van Lieshout and his Atelier van Lieshout.

Face Your World operated through images. The dimension of excess that is always implicated in the image (excess of meaning, to start with, as images are always that which escapes the very possibility of being signified) is precisely what authorizes its audience

of users to appropriate their world while they produce it. This appropriation was, of course, not entirely factual. The audience (although it might be better to refer to them as “actors,” as their participation in the project was an active one) was not intended to reconstruct the actual city, but simply to imagine or produce the possibility that their environment could change. What the project created was, first and foremost, the possibility of collective invention.

Potrc’s, Hirschhorn’s and Van Heeswijk’s projects start from an affirmation of the primacy of collaborative production processes over individual ones. This stance is linked to the assumption that where a large number of individuals with access to different types of knowledge converge, a situation is created whose complexity is impossible for individuals to attain. This condition allows for the development of a practical conception of society in which a human group takes form through a learning process carried out by means of a sustained conversation between its members.

The same process occurs in another recent project, *Cybermohalla*, ongoing in New Delhi since the year 2001. Started by Sarai: The New Media Initiative, the project consists of a group of Indian artists, filmmakers, and computer experts who work in collaboration with Ankur, a NGO dedicated to experimental educational processes. *Cybermohalla*, sets up meeting spaces for young people and provides them with assistance to carry out collaborative projects that usually take the form of interviews and annotations in hypertextual diaries that are later submitted for public discussion. The project takes place in various parts of the city: in 2002, in Dakshinpuri, a resettlement colony in the south of Dalhousi; in 2001, in LNJP, an illegal squat in the middle of the city; and in 2000, in the Sarai Media Laboratory, in the north of Delhi. A combination of text, image and sound, these materials originate in conversations that take place in the spaces themselves, in the neighbourhoods, or through email exchanges. From this process, particular forms of representation have developed, forms that are, at the same time, sites for the construction of subjectivity. “Keeping and maintaining diaries is a practice that allows for an engagement with ‘reality’ and the context one is situated in, through constant reflection and articulation via the language of text and other media,” writes Shudda Sengupta, a member of Sarai. “Diaries have the potential to evolve newer languages that further displace dominant discourses because they are situated and personal, outside of the domain of the ‘expert’ and the technocratic language, that expertise entails. Written across dimensions of space, time, specific contexts and subjectivities, diaries can also be seen as databases of multiple narrative strands, as a plurality of comment, observation, word-play and reflection; as adventitious micro-histories of the present.”⁷ For this to occur, the diaries must become public. The “interviews, stories, write-ups, photographs, animation on GIMP (free software image manipulation application) and audio recordings (sounds of the basti, interviews taken, etc.) that make up the diaries have been presented in a variety of ways: A book (*By Lanes*), a set of 10 booklets, 5 postcards and a CD that the practitioners call the ‘Book Box,’ a batch of stickers with statements culled from diary entries, monthly wall magazines and a multimedia installation titled *Before Coming Here Had You Ever Thought of a Place Like This* which uses video, animation, photography, print and posters to create an immersive recension of the *Cybermohalla* experience.”⁸

In the St. Pauli district of Hamburg in 1993, the final stage of another process of this kind brought together exhibition, conversation, and celebration in a circuit in which each one of

these instances reinforced the others. That year, a diverse alliance of neighbours, musicians who performed in a club in the area (Pudel Club), and members of a network of squatters started a protest to keep the city government from giving an important lot in the neighbourhood over to private developers. When some artists, including Christoph Schaefer, Cathy Skene, and later Margit Czenski joined the effort, they proposed calling the complex series of activities in which this multidisciplinary group engaged, "Park Fiction." In the words of Schaeffer, the terms that best describe the project are a "collective production of desire" and "collaborative planning." The idea was to propose to the Hamburg city government an urban plan and program of activities that would be carried out jointly by the neighbours and the members of the group. Their plan consisted of a series of activities aimed at making manifest the knowledge and desires in the St. Pauli neighbourhood, while at the same time contributing to the formation of unlikely community alliances. Some of these activities would be specific, like a series of events called "infotainment" that were a combination of conference, workshop, and festival.⁹ Others would be ongoing and take place every day in a container that the group had set up in the lot. There, a series of objects and documents associated with the project (archives and communication media) were housed. A third set of activities involved the tour and exhibition of the project (in the Vienna Kunstverein in 1999 and in Documenta11 in the summer of 2002). Here, the documentation related to the project was shown in an installation, designed by architect Günther Greis, that evoked the constructivist language of the Soviet avant-garde. Lastly, at the time when the park was built, a meeting of collectives from all over the world called "Unlikely Encounters in the Urban Space" was organized in Hamburg. On this occasion, several groups of artists, including Ala Plástica from Argentina and Sarai, visited Hamburg for a series of presentations that took place over several days.

All of the aforementioned cases involve the construction of environments where artists and non-artists come together to produce representations and communities. For these artists, the idea is to avoid the temptation that characterized many earlier community projects, the desire to become part of the "community" where the project takes place, so as to break away from the sacrificial figure of altruism. They see themselves belonging to a genealogy that includes figures such as Hélio Oiticica, Gordon Matta-Clark and Robert Smithson. Those artists did not materialize an a priori plan in their work but rather developed the ability to respond to the openness and unpredictability of everyday life situations. But Matta-Clark, Smithson, and Oiticica operated within the mobile and contingent world of concepts and practices to which they belonged, and as such they responded to problems different from those imposed on artists such as van Heeswijk and Hirschhorn.¹⁰ Therefore, these younger artists have an ambivalent relationship to this modern tradition and particularly to one of its elements: the radical desire to produce a space "outside" institutions and their conventions. Unlike the preceding generation, they utilize the spaces and institutions of art as channels for producing and broadcasting their work. These projects aspire to expose the practice of contemporary art as we know it to spaces and situations where it is not usually found, so as to test to what degree it is alive and can still elicit forms of interrogation, while including those spaces in the economies of the art institutions. By presenting their work in these spaces, these collectivities can take distance from themselves and maintain an openness

that allows them to avoid hardening into rigid identities. At the same time, art spaces are also part of a circuit of communication media that allow these artists to expand into other networks.

Claire Bishop, in a recent article, suggests that a serious limitation of many (if not most) of the discourses held on recent projects of collaborative art is the propensity among the theorists, critics, and artists that hold them to celebrate a “self-sacrificial” figure of the artist and to fail to offer an aesthetic evaluation of the projects they address. This limits them to basing their evaluations on ethical judgments of the intentions of the artists involved. She suggests that this indifference to the specifically artistic dimension is the result of a miscomprehension of the way the social and the aesthetic have been linked in the modern culture of the arts. She sees this, following the writings of Jacques Rancière, as characterized by the attempt to articulate “faith in art’s autonomy and belief in art as inextricably bound to the promise of a better world to come.”¹¹ Bishop is right to suggest that the critics that address projects like these from an exclusively ethical point of view simplify both the specific projects and the potentialities of artistic practice. But it is also true that some of the most interesting of these projects can’t be read as belonging completely to the domain of art. Inasmuch as projects like Sarai’s, Van Heeswijk’s and Potrc’s attempt at the same time to modify the local conditions of the sites where they operate, to build anomalous forms of association among diverse groups of actors, and to produce things that can be circulated and are susceptible to being judged in terms of their semantic and formal properties (as artworks), they result in hybrid entities that bridge and recombine the traditional domains of art, activism, urban planning, literature, etc. (the list is always open) as we know them. In this way, they demand complex forms of judgment (both aesthetic and ethical, political and practical) and schemes of evaluation that go beyond the disciplinary framework that even a sophisticated elaboration such as Rancière’s still preserves.¹²

This is the case with a project started by a group of individuals in Argentina associated with the artist Roberto Jacoby, who has been active in the Argentinean art scenes since the late sixties. In 1999, at a time of severe economic and political crisis in the country, Jacoby invited several dozen people to develop a fictitious market. The means of exchange in this market would be a specific currency, which he called “Venus” (this is why the project was given the name of “Proyecto Venus.”)¹³ Each member received a set number of Venuses and was invited to announce services and goods that he or she would be willing to offer on the project’s Web site. The services and goods were bought and sold using the new currency. A multitude of offerings were immediately produced, from the most trivial (classes in painting or English, woodcutting services) to the most idiosyncratic (the preparation of unusual banquets and other anomalous social gatherings). The Web site became a magnifying glass that allowed both its members and the anonymous visitor to observe the state of the imagination and desire in an area of the arts community of Buenos Aires, while also stimulating the production and circulation of other images and desires. But it was also a tool that allowed events to be organized, public discussions to be held, and personal relations to be formed.

The project sets out to be a place where processes of cross-fertilization could occur by means of a device that could interrogate the actual forms of sociability while, at the same time, offering the possibility of creating new forms. Furthermore, the processes of fertilization took place in public space: not only on the project’s Web site, but also in a series of presentations

in galleries and cultural centres in Buenos Aires. The project amounted to the construction of a site where the development of a vast network could be observed, through countless actions that ranged from the most private (meeting new people) to the most public (performances, shows, conferences, and festivals).

While projects like the Proyecto Venus obviously belong to the tradition of engaged or political artistic practice, they intersect it in a newly defined fashion. The preferred politics of the historical avant-garde was revolutionary transformation, while the political use of arts more frequent in art institutions is the continuation of the status quo, with minor tinkering. Instead, the politics of the artists that we have mentioned is analogous to what Brazilian political theorist Roberto Mangabeira Unger calls, in several recent publications, “revolutionary reformism.” Revolutionary reformism, says Unger, “is the counterpart to the most advanced and experimentalist forms of economic activity: those that turn production into collective learning and permanent innovation, breaking down the rigid contrasts between cooperation and competition, as well as those between supervision and execution. In this form of production, people redefine their tasks in the course of executing them, and treat the idea of the next step as a permanent style of action.”¹⁴

The objective of projects like these is to develop a form of association where—to borrow terms from Arjun Appadurai—“internal criticism and debate, horizontal exchange and learning, and vertical collaborations and partnerships with more powerful persons and organizations together form a mutually sustaining cycle of processes.”¹⁵ And for this reason they are a constituent part of a certain universe in the making, one characterized by the emergence of initiatives as the open source movement and the establishment of social networks and alternative systems of microcredit, and local empowerment through global connection and the communal reappropriation of expert knowledge. These effect a “globalization from below,” in words borrowed from Appadurai.

We call “experimental communities” those that are constituted in the universe of the arts (while linking this universe with other regions of human life) to explore forms of articulating competition and cooperation, collective learning and radical innovation, design and execution, direction and realization, in such a way that the archives of this exploration can travel and be exhibited. The communities gathered around the projects of Sarai, Park Fiction, Jacoby or Van Heeswijk participate in new modes of organization under conditions of globalization that are the defining feature of our current condition. How can very diverse local intentions be brought together in unified actions and shared values? How can divergent positions be distributed and enumerated in conversation? These problems have become central. Is it possible for the arts to intervene in this new conjunction, which so fundamentally determines the constitution of contemporary society? It is to these questions that the projects described provide a number of provisional, but nonetheless eloquent, answers.

ENDNOTES

1 The Caracas Urban Think Tank is a Venezuelan organization directed by two architects, Hubert Klumpner and Alfredo Brillembourg. The specific project in which Potrc participated was financed by the German Cultural Foundation. Potrc's project received financial aid from the Venezuelan Department for the Environment (Ministerio del Medio Ambiente) toward the construction of two dry toilets. For more basic information about the project, see <http://www.u-tt.com>.

2 Stephen Turner, *Liberal Democracy 3.0*. (London: Sage, 2003), 133.

3 This point was noted by Miwon Kwon in her book *One Place After Another*, where she suggested a model of collaborative art that, in her perspective, would overcome the difficulties of projects like Culture in Action. The model in question is what she calls a "collective artistic praxis." She defines it as a "projective enterprise" which "involves a provisional group produced as a function of specific circumstances instigated by an artist and/or cultural institution, aware of the effects of these circumstances on the very conditions of interaction, performing its own coming together and coming apart as a necessarily incomplete modeling or working-out of a collective social process." Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site Specificity and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 154. The suggestion is interesting, but, unfortunately, remains insufficiently developed in Kwon's book.

4 Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Paris: Les Presses du réel, 2002).

5 Niklas Luhmann, *Art as a Social System* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 126.

6 Benjamin H.D. Buchloch, "An Interview with Thomas Hirschhorn," *October* No. 113 (Summer 2005): 86.

7 Shudda Sengupta, electronic communication with the authors, December 2003.

8 Ibid.

9 Describing an "infotainment" in an email to the authors, Christoph Schaefer wrote,

Everything came together with Park Fiction 4—one day desires will leave the house and take to the streets, a series of talks and lectures, an exhibition of works by neighbors and professional artists in all the shops surrounding the park, even in private flats and the priest's house, all related to parks or gardens or other issues connected with the park; a model by "kinderhaus am pinnsberg"—a place where children who cannot live at home for various reasons, runaways and street kids from the neighbourhood live together. The children made a one week workshop, built a complete model of the park in their spring holidays, did tours to parks in Hamburg, read inspiring books, and build a great model—that was the most effective propaganda item, when it was in all its beauty in a shop window, and made the thought of the park as a real possibility much more actual than other artists' works that were conceived specifically as propaganda. Some ideas from that model are still in the now existing plan. It was shown alongside works by renowned artists like Dan Graham—who send 4 photos of urban gardens in Hamburg—works by Annette Wehrmann, Claudia Pegel, Andreas Siekmann, Daniel Richter, Ingo Vetter and Annette Weisser. We produced the first brochure, developed by the group but especially by Katrin Bredemeier, then the designer of the group. Hans-Christian Dany and myself developed together a glamorous construction sign for the park that survived till 1998. For the opening we built a salad bar, shaped like an English garden. It was part of the Park Fiction-style to always combine content and comfort, to create a lounge, welcoming atmosphere and not just speak about utopia. Park Fiction 4 was so important, because it was the moment when 'art & politics made each other more clever' as Margit Czenki put it."

10 In an important recent book, Laurence Bertrand Dorléac shows the extent to which many of the practices of the fifties and sixties were based on a conception of the art event as the place that, in the context of an increasingly rationalized social world, offered itself as a space for nonproductive actions. These actions, which refused to be incorporated into the circuit of economic exchange, manifested an archaic desire which at the time was still denominated the "sacred." The art event would then take the

form of the anarchic manifestation that interrupted the deployment of regular social life. This might explain the insistence on the figure of the mythic in Oiticica or Matta-Clark, or the passion for the pre-historic in Smithson. Laurence Bertrand Dorléac, *L'ordre sauvage. Violence, dépense et sacré dans l'art des années 1950-1960* (Paris: Gallimard, 2004).

11 Claire Bishop, "The Social Turn: Collaboration and its Discontents," *Artforum* 44 (February 2006):183.

12 Rancière insists on the continuity between older and more recent forms of collaborative art, in as much as they belong to what he calls the "aesthetic regime." For a detailed comment and a critique of the way this position is developed in Rancière's work, see, Reinaldo Laddaga, *Estética de la emergencia. La formación de otra cultura de las artes* (Buenos Aires : Adriana Hidalgo, 2006).

13 The name has recently changed, for legal reasons, to Proyecto V. The Web site of the project is <http://www.proyectov.org>.

14 Roberto Mangabeira Unger, *False Necessity* (London:Verso, 2002), xxvi.

15 Arjun Appadurai, "Deep democracy: Urban Governmentality and the Horizon of Politics," *Public Culture* 14(1), 2002: 46. The case on which Appadurai bases his theorization is an alliance of groups mobilized to address the issue of housing for the poor in Mumbai, India.