BETWEEN CODE AND MESSAGE:
ARGENTINE CONCEPTUAL ART, 1966-1976

by

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Abstract

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This dissertation historicizes and theorizes the emergence and refinement of conceptual art in Argentina between the years 1966 and 1976. The conceptual turn, commonly understood as the shift from painting and sculpture to multimedia event- and language-based artistic practices in the 1960s and 1970s, took on an activist dimension in this context. A group of artists in Argentina collaboratively developed an educational role for art in the face of the dictatorship's control over a relatively new and increasingly powerful mass media. Argentine conceptual art as it is understood here can be traced back to one figure in particular, Oscar Masotta, a cultural theorist, pedagogue, and occasional artist who argued that artists such as Andy Warhol were engaged in a semiotic project of stripping away the content, or message, of the popular image to reveal the code, or underlying structure, that allowed the message to be delivered. Masotta and a circle of artists with whom he was working expanded this technique to include other systems that could be similarly analyzed: genres of art such as the happening, exhibition space, the art institution, the mass media, and the state. This process of extricating code and message has a crucial consequence: once analyzed, the system at hand can no longer deliver its message, either because its code has become too conspicuous or because it has

been dissembled into parts. In 1968, Masotta's techniques were incorporated into a larger collaborative project titled *Tucumán Arde*, which staged protest exhibitions against the dictatorship's economic policies at union halls. For the artists involved in this project, it was not enough to merely analyze codes. A replacement message had to be substituted for the one that had been undermined. This dissertation traces the shared development of these conceptual strategies up to and after 1968, and the abandonment of art by most of the artists involved in *Tucumán Arde*. With worsening political conditions in Argentina in the 1970s, the conceptual strategies utilized by Masotta and *Tucumán Arde* were altered and at times inverted to address political oppression from an increasingly powerless position.

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Between Code and Message: Argentine Conceptual Art, 1966-1976
Daniel R. Quiles

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Introduction

This dissertation historicizes and theorizes the emergence and refinement of conceptual art in Argentina between the years 1966 and 1976.

To examine conceptualism in this period and in this region of the world is to confront larger questions about the role of art in the face of political repression. 1966 and 1976 mark the dates of two different military coups in Argentina, the second of which resulted in the deaths of more than 30,000 people, and the art produced during this ten-year span invariably addressed ongoing states of political crisis. The conceptual turn, commonly understood as the shift from painting and sculpture to multimedia event- and language-based artistic practices in the 1960s and 1970s, took on an activist dimension in this context.[1] A group of artists in Argentina developed an educational role for art in the face of the dictatorship's control over a relatively new and increasingly powerful mass media. Art could prepare viewers to question, to analyze, to diagnose, and to organize against an exploitative and oppressive regime. The concept was not of interest for its own sake, but for how it could be put to social and political ends.

Conceptual art in Argentina was an expressly collective endeavor undertaken in a close-knit and interdisciplinary intellectual climate. Argentine conceptualists were constantly in dialogue with one another through reading groups and the social milieus of their chief cities of artistic production, Buenos Aires and Rosario. Artists exhibited

[1] It should be noted that, similar to their North American, European, and Latin American counterparts, Argentine artists did not immediately identify as "conceptual" when the practices at hand first began to appear in 1966. This dissertation will be treating the category in the manner of the landmark 1999 *Global Conceptualism* exhibition: a worldwide shift from object to idea that "coincided with broadly destabilizing sociological and technological trends propelled by large historical forces..." See Luis Camnitzer, Jane Farver, Rachel Weiss, eds., *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin, 1950s-1980s* (New York: Queens Museum of Art, 1999), p. vii.

together in showcases sponsored by industrialist-funded institutions such as the Instituto Torcuato di Tella, plotted protests against those same institutions for their uncritical stances toward the dictatorship, and traveled abroad in groups to survey the latest trends or establish themselves in Europe or the United States. The present study therefore surveys the work of many different artists while focusing upon certain individuals, among them Alberto Greco, León Ferrari, Marta Minujín, Oscar Masotta, Roberto Jacoby, David Lamelas, and Jorge Glusberg, who either produced exemplary works or were instrumental in theorizing artistic practice and disseminating ideas and strategies to other artists.

Between Code and Message: Argentine Conceptual Art, 1966-1976 argues that the Argentine conceptual art can be traced back to one figure in particular: Oscar Masotta. A cultural theorist, pedagogue, and occasional artist, he produced an idiosyncratic yet brilliant reading of North American Pop art in 1965 that treated the genre not in terms of its specific references to products, celebrities, or the like but as a set of semiotic investigations into the mass media itself. He contended that artists such as Andy Warhol were really stripping away the content, or message, of the popular image, to reveal the code, or underlying structure, that allowed that message to be delivered. As Masotta and a circle of artists with whom he was working closely undertook their own projects, they expanded this technique to include other systems that could be analyzed in a similar way: genres of art such as the happening, exhibition space, the art institution, the mass media, and the state. This process of extricating code and message has a crucial consequence: once analyzed, the system at hand can no longer deliver its message, either because its code has become too conspicuous or because it has been dissembled into

parts. In 1968, many of Masotta's techniques were incorporated into a larger collaborative project titled *Tucumán Arde*, which staged protest exhibitions against the dictatorship's economic policies at union halls. For the artists involved in this project, it was not enough to merely analyze codes. A replacement message had to be substituted for the one that had been undermined. Not long after the censorship of this project in November 1968, the majority of the artists associated with it took a mass hiatus from artistic production, an unprecedented renunciation for such a virbrant and emerging community.

A close examination of Argentine conceptual art is relevant because previous studies have reviewed the institutional history and the relationship between art and politics in the region in this period but none have as of yet approached the work in terms of form. This dissertation proposes a different reading than the two major texts from the beginning of this past decade that historicize the artistic production of the 1960s in Argentina: Andrea Giunta's institutional history of the postwar period and Ana Longoni and Mariano Mestman's exhaustive study of politically oriented art circa 1968.[2] The former organizes the art it surveys through the projects and ambitions of cultural institutions in the wake of President Juan Domingo Perón's overthrow in 1956. Giunta argues that the gambit to advance Argentine art on the world stage was a failure, in part because of limited resources within the country and in part because of the rift between artists and institutions in 1968 that effectively deprived the latter of a generation of talent. Longoni and Mestman's study is more teleological, viewing the events of 1968 as an

[2] See Andrea Giunta, *Vanguardia, internacionalismo y política: Arte argentine en los años sesenta* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2001), later translated as *Avant-Garde, Internationalism, and Politics: Argentine Art in the Sixties*, trans. Peter Kahn (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), and Ana Longoni and Mariano Mestman, *Del Di Tella a "Tucumán Arde": Vanguardia artística y política en el '68 argentino* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones El Cielo por Asalto, 2000).

inevitable trajectory beginning with the first avant-garde gestures of the 1960s. They characterize what they call the "Itinerary of '68" through a rupture with institutions and the infusion of art with "political violence."[3] They additionally contend that the cessation of art after 1968 was "in continuity with the same process of artistic radicalization that [artists] were taking up as avant-garde."[4]

Giunta and Longoni and Mestman's texts, along with more strictly archival projects such as Alberto Giudici's survey exhibition of art and politics in the 1960s and Inés Katzenstein's compilation of source texts, are invaluable as compendia of names, events, and archival research.[5] They clear the way for a close reading of the formal characteristics and innovations of Argentine conceptual art. Masotta's writings have yet to be exhaustively connected with the production of the artists in his inner circle and other artists who were aware of him. What is proposed is an aesthetic theory that unites this prolific production, one that continued to develop into the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, both within and outside of the country. This project will also be the first to consider developments in 1970s Argentine art as responses to the prevailing practices of the 1960s. Longoni's doctoral dissertation continues to follow art into the 1970s, but her account remains focused on institutional controversies and instances of censorship as opposed to formal affinities with the previous decade.[6]

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[3] Ana Longoni and Mariano Mestman, *Del Di Tella a "Tucumán Arde,"* pp. 254-266.
[4] Ibid, p. 266.
[5] See Alberto Giudici, *Arte y política en los '60*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Salas Nacionales de Cultura, 2001), and Inés Katzenstein, ed., *Listen, Here, Now! Argentine Art of the 1960s: Writings of the Avant-Garde* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2004), p. 215. Hereafter this compendium of artist and critical source texts is referred to as *LHN*. *LHN* is published in Spanish as *Escritos de vanguardia: Arte Argentino de los años '60* (Buenos Aires: Fundación Espigas, 2007).
[6] Ana Longoni, *Vanguardia y revolución: Ideas y prácticas artístico-políticas en Argentina de los años '60/'70*, doctoral dissertation, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 2004.

This dissertation takes as its starting point seminal articles by Mari Carmen Ramírez and Alexander Alberro that isolate unifying themes of media and politics, respectively, in Latin American conceptual art.[7] Both authors combine the production of different countries to support their arguments. Ramírez discusses some of the artists engaged here as part of the first of three historical periods of conceptualism in the region, which she sees as characterized by three features: "the strong ideological and ethical profile of its body of production," "a significant questioning of the object's visual semiotic functions in order to produce meanings related to its structural position within a larger social circuit or context," and "use of communication and information theories to investigate the mechanisms through which meanings are conveyed to audiences."[8] Alberro, isolating practices of media critique, argues that the demystifying tendency in Latin American conceptualism distinguishes it from its European and North American counterparts: "Whereas the latter posited that language performed the fundamental role in the construction of the artwork… Latin American Conceptualism, by contrast, predicated that extra-linguistic, all-encompassing mythical structures of ideology played that role."[9]

Placing this body of work alongside its counterparts in North and South America and Europe entails the recognition of the unique or exceptional status of the Argentine context. For the figures such as Masotta, art was not a lifelong pursuit but a momentary

[7] See Alexander Alberro, "A Media Art: Conceptualism in Latin America in the 1960s," in *Rewriting Conceptual Art*, eds. Michael Newman and Jon Bird (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), pp. 140-151, and Mari Carmen Ramírez, "Tactics for Thriving on Adversity: Conceptualism in Latin America, 1960-1980," in *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin*, exh. cat., ed. Jane Farver (New York: Queens Museum of Art, 1999) pp. 53-71 as well as in *Inverted Utopias: Avant-Garde Art in Latin America*, eds. Ramírez and Héctor Olea, exh. cat. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 425-439. There has been another recent attempt to generalize about Latin American conceptual art by the artist Luis Camnitzer, but it will not receive consideration here because of its confessedly unscholarly methodology and severe argument (Camnitzer regards the Uruguayan revolutionary group Los Tupumaros as the only legitimate example of art being fully synthesized into "praxis" in this period). See Luis Camnitzer, *Conceptualism in Latin American Art: Didactics of Liberation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), pp. 5 & 12-13.

[8] Ramírez, "Tactics for Thriving on Adversity," pp. 427-429.

[9] Alberro, "A Media Art," p. 140.

diversion from another specialty or profession. In addition, unlike New York, Amsterdam, or other centers of conceptualism in democratic countries, Buenos Aires and Rosario were not sustainable sites of production for artists with left-leaning sympathies and radical aspirations; a combination of personal choice and censorship served to drastically limit the durations of these milieus and their collaborative activity. Their respective innovations, however, were important both in their moment and for future art. As artists traveled abroad and critics such as Lucy Lippard visited Argentina, the fruits of the tension between Masotta's analytic model and *Tucumán Arde*'s political ambitions made their way into the international context. While it is difficult to trace the effects that this information might have had in the late 1960s and 1970s, there is a sense in which Argentine conceptual art, properly historicized, provides much-needed insights for the art of the present. The participatory practices of the 1990s and 2000s that are now being canonized offer a dilemma similar to the one that Masotta faced when first addressing Pop in 1965: how to look past immediate content to get at underlying codes and their ideological implications.[10] Argentine conceptualism proposed a mode of participation that still has value, an attainment of consciousness that is simultaneously an act of political conscience.

[10] This process of canonization arguably began with the assessment of early-1990s "relational aesthetics" practices in Nicolas Bourriaud's *L'esthétique relationnelle* in 1998 and Claire Bishop's salient critique of this body of work in 2004. Bourriaud argued that the minute social encounters facilitated by artists such as Liam Gillick and Rirkrit Tirivanija facilitated "micro-utopias" that modestly recuperated the grand aims of 1960s leftism, while Bishop praised more "antagonistic" artists such as Santiago Sierra, who used audience participation as an opportunity to highlight social divisions and oppression. See Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October* 110, (Fall 2004), pp. 51–79, and Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Paris: Les presses du réel, 2002). It has continued into the present moment with a series of New York-based exhibitions that have historicized the 1990s (*Theanyspacewhatever*, 2008) and given retrospectives to its stars, such as Tino Sehgal. In the latter case, the artist forbid the use of photographic documentation to preserve the sanctity of the interpersonal interactions taking place within the museum—a privileging of the immediacy of participation at the expense of analysis or scrutiny. See Francesco Bonami et al, *Theanyspacewhatever*, exh. cat. (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2008), and Holland Cotter, "In the Naked Museum: Talking, Thinking, Encountering," *The New York Times*, February 1, 2010, p. C1.

The chapters of this dissertation correspond chronologically to four phases of Argentine conceptual art. The first, "Living Fingers: Precursors, 1962-1965," looks at work by Alberto Greco, León Ferrari, and Marta Minujín. These artists all traveled to Europe at the start of the 1960s and were introduced to trends such as event-based art and quasi-linguistic abstraction that they embraced but also sought paths beyond. The section on Greco isolates certain tendencies of his heterogeneous production, which comprised poetry, painting, sculpture, works on paper, gallery interventions and street-based actions that foreshadow Masotta's interest in isolating and analyzing the structures of systems. Minujín instead anticipated the architectural concerns of Argentine conceptualism in her happenings and environments, demonstrating an early awareness of the implications of the viewer's physical presence in an event or space. Ferrari's meticulous works on paper in this moment used subtle contradictions to question and short-circuit reigning artistic conventions such as gestural abstraction. Works such as the *Cuadros escritos* (*Written Paintings*) are positioned between abstraction and legible language so as to reveal the mechanics of each.

The second chapter, "Disarm Machines: Oscar Masotta's Conceptualism, 1965-1967," considers the impact of Masotta's aesthetics, first reviewing the intellectual trajectory that led to his seminal texts on Pop art, happenings, and media art. Attention is paid to his rejection of Sartrean existentialist politics in favor of structuralism, cybernetics and media theory, which lend Masotta's thought its uniquely heterogeneous flavor. All of the four artworks that Masotta produced are considered in detail and in tandem with his writings; this dissertation considers his writing, pedagogy, and art as mutually explicative of one another. Likewise, the projects of 1966 and 1967 produced

by artists in his reading groups such as Eduardo Costa, Jacoby, and Minujín are examined in detail; they are compared for their subtle deviations from one another and from Masotta's preoccupations.

Chapter 3, "Interruptions: Space and Speech, 1968," positions *Tucumán Arde* at the crux of two debates over artistic practice in the period between 1966 and 1968 in two cities, Buenos Aires and Rosario.[11] Considering institutional space on the one hand and speech, or direct communication, on the other, both problematics bore Masotta's influence. Using environmental works that examine the effects of sculpture, David Lamelas, Margarita Paksa, and others sought, in the manner of the media artists, to break institutional space down so that it could be understood, but also so that it could cease to function invisibly. Once rendered conspicuous, however, the gallery site began to look like a trap or a prison holding art back from any contact with the world outside. A series of works and protest actions in 1968 by artists such as Jacoby, Juan Pablo Renzi, Graciela Carnevale, and Oscar Bony dramatized escapes from the gallery and into imagined spheres of social or political action, often concretely embodied by the street. Many of these same artists also introduced modes political speech in the space of the institution, either through interruptions of official events to recite their own texts or through attempts to represent proletarian subjects through art. A problematic emerged in which analysis reached its limit; if the institution was to be made the object of critique and shut down, a new formation, and message, had to be put in its place. The chapter concludes by

[11] Although the groups of artists from both of these cities were at times at odds over the category of the aesthetic in the collaborative actions and exhibitions from May 1968 to that fall, the chapter will treat their efforts as parts of a larger whole, for each group was consistently aware of the exhibitions and aesthetic developments of the other from late 1966 forward to the point at which they began collaborating on *Tucumán Arde*.

considering *Tucumán Arde* as an attempt to reconcile this quandary of an activist art that could have a transformative effect on the viewer.

The fourth chapter, "This Art Is A Jail: Counterpublics and Containers, 1968-1976," follows two threads of aftermaths of 1968: what happened as Argentine conceptual artists ventured abroad and the appearance of a new institution dedicated to conceptual art within the country, the Centro de Arte y Comunicación, or CAYC. Lamelas and Minujín are treated as test cases of how the code-minded, analytic strain of Argentine conceptualism was applied to the networking structures conditioning the international reception of Latin American artists (both frequently made light of their roles as interlopers in international art networks). CAYC is first explored in its guise as a promotional machine that furthered its founder Jorge Glusberg's vision for an internationally renowned Argentine conceptual art. Yet the version of conceptual art at CAYC inverted Masotta's vision of a set of critical tools, favoring instead the construction of new and fully functioning systems, often drawing on the methods and imagery of scientific experimentation and architecture. Three of CAYC's most prominent artists—Luis Benedit, Víctor Grippo, and Horacio Zabala—are examined in closer detail in terms of their shared interests in the metaphorical possibilities of this mode of conceptualism.

"Languages for the Unspeakable," the concluding section, compares Ferrari's graphic work of the late 1970s, produced in exile in Brazil, with the *Siluetazo* collaboration between artists and the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo, arguing that they represent end points for the two key lineages of Argentine conceptual art in this period. The former responded to the horror of the 1976 coup and its aftermath through

architectural blueprints that are overloaded with information, while the *Siluetazo*, consisting of collective interdisciplinary actions carried out in public space in open defiance of the dictatorship, continued *Tucumán Arde*'s bid for politically efficacious art. The *Siluetazo*, however, was focused on the recent traumatic past, and not a revolution to come.

Chapter 1
Living Fingers: Precursors, 1962-1965

The artist will no longer show with the picture, but with the finger.[1]
-Alberto Greco

Babelism: to make something without unity, with different sensibilities […] or to make something between several people. To make a tower of Babel and add things made by others […] all mixed, all babelish, babelism.[2]
-León Ferrari

For the *Primera exposición de arte vivo* [*First Exhibition of Living Art*] on March 12, 1962, Alberto Greco circled and signed objects and passersby in the street in Paris [Figure 1].[3] The artist later identified these actions as the first of his *Vivo-Dito* series, which he would continue to produce in different variations until his suicide in 1965. One of the *Vivo-Ditos* consists of an empty circle, simply drawn and signed on the pavement [Figure 2]. The implication of this signaled void is its unlimited applicability—anything can delimited and identified as art. At first, this seems to reprise emblematic historical avant-garde works such as Duchamp's *Glider Containing a Water Mill in Neighboring Metals* (1913-15), with its semicircular pane of glass that swivels out from the wall and frames the open gallery space visible beyond it [Figure 3]. But the fact that the work exists in photographs must be taken into account, in particular the image in which Greco is crouching, his right arm reaching down to the ground in the act of drawing a circle, possibly around the policeman who stands behind him [Figure 4]. He is looking up and smiling at the camera, posing for the picture. It is as though a proof of the signatory's physical presence is necessary to back up the signature; through photography, the artist

[1] Alberto Greco, "Gran manifiesto antimanifiesto rollo Vivo Dito (Extractos)," in Francisco Rivas, *Alberto Greco*, Exh. Cat., IVAM Centre Julio Gonzalez (Valencia: Fundación Cultural Mapfre Vida, 1991), p. 308. The original text is dated 1963. This phrase was reproduced in poster form and plastered throughout streets in Genoa in 1962. See Inés Katzenstein, "Alberto Greco," in *LHN*, p. 38.
[2] León Ferrari, artist's notebooks, January 1, 1964, c2, 15-6, in *Leon Ferrari: Una Retrospectiva*, p. 367.
[3] Jorge López Anaya, "Alberto Greco: The Legend of an Artist and the Poetics of Chaos," *Art Nexus* [Bogotá] *ArtNexus*, (Nov. 2002), p. 70.

signals not only the circled object but also the act of signaling itself. The *Vivo-Dito* is a doubly authorial gesture: the signature of the artist claims both the object that has been circled and that act of circling. Yet this excessive self-reflexivity paradoxically calls into question one's ability to take credit for converting anything in the world into art. One need merely sign to claim something—why show that one is signing, as well? Instead of legitimacy, the redundant proof yields suspicion—the thought that perhaps this artwork has already been produced by someone else.

Greco's preoccupations are those of the neo-avant-garde, which arose in the second half of the 1950s with Robert Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns in North America and Yves Klein, Piero Manzoni, and the Nouveaux Réalistes in Europe.[4] These artists reenacted historical avant-garde moves such as the monochrome as a limit-point for abstract painting; collage to include everyday detritus into the work; and performative practices in which everyday actions were converted into art. As detailed above, the framed frame was Greco's response to his relatively late membership in the neo-avant-garde. By adding an additional layer of scrutiny, he dramatized his position as an outsider in Europe, even as he moved between its cities and celebrated artists. His introduction of a technique by which a system such as the frame or signature is studied and simultaneously short-circuited positions Greco as an important precursor of Argentine conceptual art in the later 1960s. This chapter details his short career in light of this practice, and looks at two other such figures, Marta Minujín and León Ferrari, whose

[4] With this term I refer to the critical discourse initiated by Peter Bürger in his 1974 book *The Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984) taken up again most famously by Benjamin Buchloh in different articles about postwar European art, most significantly in his discussion of Klein, "The Primary Colors a Second Time: A Paradigm Repetition of the Neo-Avant-Garde," *October* 37 (Summer 1986), pp. 43-55 and most recently revised by Hal Foster in *Return of the Real* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1996), pp. 1-33 and David Joselit, *Feedback: Television Against Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007), in particular pp. xi-xiii & 175.

stories are continued in later chapters. In becoming the face of participatory art in Argentina, Minujín turned her attention to the status of the viewer, crafting increasingly complex and spectacular enclosures to engage his or her senses in the country's new art institutions. In the earliest phase of his career, Ferrari developed a practice of combining traditional representational systems such as drawing and writing so that each elucidates the other but neither can function as before. All three artists created the first examples of their new approaches while living in Europe. The strategies they developed in response to the neo-avant-garde circa 1960 came to define the Argentine art of the next decade.

~~Long Live Modern Art~~: Alberto Greco

In 1960, Greco plastered the commercial center of Buenos Aires with posters reading "¡Greco, el pintor informalista más importante de America!" [Greco, the most important Informalist painter in America!] and "¡Greco, qué grande sos!" [Greco, how great you are!].[5] This latter statement has a tautological dimension. The verifier of Greco's "greatness" is Greco himself. The certainty of artistic "genius" is undermined

[5] In the most extensive compendium of archive materials and oral accounts of the artist to date, Francisco Rivas claims that it was 1960, which differs with María José Herrera, who contends that it was 1961, just prior to the artist's return to Paris. See María José Herrera, "En Medio de los Medios: La experimentación con los medios masivos de comunicación en la Argentina de la década del '60," in *Arte Argentino del Siglo XX* (Buenos Aires: FIAR, 1997), p. 83, and Francisco Rivas, *Alberto Greco*, Exh. Cat., IVAM Centre Julio Gonzalez (Valencia: Fundación Cultural Mapfre Vida, 1991), p. 263. The painter Luis Felipe Noé, a close friend of Greco, recalls that there were two occasions on which Greco displayed posters: "…his enormous poster covered the streets: 'Greco, How Great You Are!' He repeated this action, during his stay in Buenos Aires, between his second return from Europe and his trip to the United States, with a poster giving his greetings for Christmas and the New Year 'to all my supporters.' Another poster said, 'Greco, America's Greatest Informalist Painter.'" Noé does not supply years, however, so by his account Greco's second deployment of posters would have been in either 1963 or 1964, prior to his departure for New York, which places them in the moment of *Mi Madrid querido*. Noé, "Alberto Greco: Five Years after His Death," in Ines Katzenstein, ed., *Listen Here Now! Argentine Art of the 1960s: Writings of the Avant-Garde* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2004), pp. 45-55. These inconsistencies constitute a good example of the hagiographic, mythical nature of much of the existing scholarship on this artist, a result of his quite determined extra-institutional existence.

when the process of achieving it is exposed as self-promotional advertising. Yet the possibility is left open that the statement is entirely sincere, for greatness is only achieved through appearance in public, before a public. In this sense, this work or gesture is a would-be "speech-act," in J.L. Austin's sense: that which aims to do what it says, a declaration legitimized by the speaker (that in this case legitimizes the speaker in turn).[6]

The message of this gesture is that in declaring greatness, Greco is great. As sketched above, however, it is impossible to purge such a statement of doubt, and this is the source of its provocative or humorous quality. Surely the artist cannot be serious. Greco here conjures the paradox of potentiality as understood by Giorgio Agamben who, following Aristotle, observes that the potential to act or become must always involve a passage through or acknowledgment of the equal potential to not do so, via refusal or failure:

> The potentiality that interests [Aristotle] is the one that belongs to someone who, for example, has knowledge or an ability. In this sense, we say of the architect that he or she has the *potential* to build, of the poet that he or she has the *potential* to write poems. …Whoever already possesses knowledge… is… potential, Aristotle says, thanks to a *hexis*, a "having," on the basis of which he can also *not* bring his knowledge into actuality… by *not* making a work, for example. Thus the architect is potential insofar as he has the potential not-to-build, the poet the potential to not-write poems.[7]

Greco's potentiality as a major artist must pass through the potential that he will not be a major artist, that the twin baggage of his Argentine identity and relative lateness to the monochrome and nominal practices of the European neo-avant-garde would preclude greatness. His posters appeared in the year of the 250th anniversary of Argentine

[6] J.L. Austin, *How To Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), pp. 4-11.
[7] Giorgio Agamben, "On Potentiality," in *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 179.

independence, which featured two major survey exhibitions of Argentine modernism from which he had been excluded: the inauguration of the new building for the Museo de Arte Moderno and the first Premio Nacional at the Instituto Torcuato di Tella.[8] The posters represent a declaration of independence and self-fashioning, however absurd, in the face of a surge of institutional development in Argentina.

The art and cultural institutions that supported much of the Argentine art of the 1960s began to appear soon after President Juan Domingo Perón's defeat in 1956.[9] Perón's populist authoritarianism had tolerated while not encouraging the development of modern art; the ideology of *desarrollismo*, or developmentalism, that ensued following democratic elections in 1958 provided heretofore unavailable funding for progressive art that was seen as a hallmark of an advanced society.[10] Institutions appeared primarily in Buenos Aires, the cultural center of the country, although the cities of La Plata, Córdoba,

[8] Giunta, *Vanguardia, internacionalismo y política*, p. 140.

[9] May 1958 saw the election of Arturo Frondizi, an advocate of *desarrollismo*, or developmentalism, who initiated the reopening of the CGT union and the privatization of the country's oil industry and educational institutions. See Marcelo Cavarozzi, "Political Cycles in Argentina since 1955," in *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Latin America*, ed. Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), Robert D. Crassweller, *Peron and the Enigmas of Argentina*, pp. 283-339, Daniel James, *Resistance and Integration: Peronism and the Argentine Working Class, 1946-1976* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), Guillermo O'Donnell, "Permanent Crisis and the Failure to Create a Democratic Regime: Argentina, 1955-66," in *The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes: Latin America*, eds. Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), pp. 138-177, Laura Podalsky, *Specular City: Transforming Culture, Consumption, and Space in Buenos Aires, 1955-1973* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), p. 29, and Luis Alberto Romero, *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*, trans. James P. Brennan (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania University Press, 2002), p. 130-136.

[10] Throughout his ten-year reign, Perón had not been sympathetic to avant-gardism, but did not target abstract painters as much as, for example, university academics. For a discussion of culture in the Peron era, see Adriana Puiggros, ed., *Peronismo: cultural política y educación (1945-1955)* (Buenos Aires: Galerna, 1993). For the avant-gardes of the period see Marcelo Pacheco, ed., *Arte Abstracto Argentino*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Fundación Proa, 2002). For literature and culture, see Nancy Calomarde, *Políticas y ficciones en Sur, 1945-1955: las operaciones culturales en los contextos de "peronización"* (Córdoba: Facultad de Filosofía y Humanidades, Univ. Nacional de Córdoba, 2004), and Laura Malosetti Costa and Andrea Giunta, eds., *Arte de posguerra: Jorge Romero Brest y la revista* Ver y Estimar (Buenos Aires: Paídos, 2005).

and Rosario also developed art institutions and prizes.[11] The University of Buenos Aires (UBA) was modernized in 1955, with José Luis Romero named president, and in 1956 the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes was renovated (with its official reopening in June 1957) and the Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires opened under the direction of Rafael Squirru, who modeled his museum after the Museum of Modern Art in New York.[12] Squirru tried to anticipate the critical responses of those who had little or no exposure to Argentinean art in the prefaces to traveling exhibitions. Squirru "characterized Argentinean art not within a national style (which he suggests is the reason why Argentinean art was unrecognized—both unidentifiable and without acclaim—abroad), but instead as individualistic production linked only by its high quality and refusal to submit to any one mode of expression."[13] This understanding of foreign cultural centers as barometers of Argentina's cultural progress was nothing new—since the nineteenth century Argentine writers and artists had journeyed abroad, primarily to Europe, to stay abreast of the latest developments.[14] In 1958, both the UBA university press and the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella (ITDT), brainchild of the industrialist Guido Di Tella, were founded. The ITDT was designed as a multidisciplinary cultural center that would service a wide range of intellectual production, including economics, music, theater, and the visual arts. Jorge Romero Brest, formerly editor of the journal *Ver y Estimar* (1948-55) and director of the Museo Nacional de Buenos Aires (1955-63), had resigned his earlier post in protest of constraints against holding exhibitions of advanced

[11] Andrea Giunta, "La sociedad de los artistas de Rosario," in *Arte Argentino Contemporaneo: Rosario* (Rosario: Macro, 2004), pp. 23-73, and Longoni and Mestman, *Del Di Tella a "Tucumán Arde,"* pp. 53-4.
[12] *Vanguardia, internacionalismo y política*, p. 100.
[13] "*Calidad de Exportación*," p. 713. For more on Squirru, see *Vanguardia, internacionalismo y política*, pp. 153-156, and Rafael Squirru, *MAM, 10 años*, Exh. Cat. (Buenos Aires: Museo de Arte Moderno, 1967).
[14] See John King, *Sur: A study of the Argentine literary journal and its role in the development of a culture, 1931-1970* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986). See also *Argentina, 1920-1994* and *Inverted Utopias* for discussions of prewar Argentine modernism.

contemporary art, was appointed director of the ITDT's Centro de Artes Visuales [Figure 5], and ran it until its closure by the Onganía regime in 1970.[15] Its brightly lit, modernist galleries were set directly on Avenida Florida, which was also home to many of the major art galleries in the city [Figure 6].

The developmentalist moment in Argentina coincided with the transition away from geometric abstraction, which had taken hold between 1945 and 1947. The shift officially began in the summer of 1944 with the publication of the only issue of *Arturo* magazine, which collected artwork and writings by many of the major figures of the trend: Uruguayans Joaquín Torres-García, a painter of abstract symbols whose theories were widely influential in the Southern Cone, and Carmelo Ardén Quin, and Argentines Tomás Maldonado, Gyula Kosice, and Rhod Rothfuss. *Arturo* also introduced the central principles of the shaped or "cut-out" frame and the less prescriptive principle of "invention" which would be claimed by all the artists even as they split into different movements [Figure 7]. In November 1945, Maldonado, claiming to be continuing the project of purist abstraction of Theo van Doesburg and later Max Bill, organized a group of artists, among them Alfredo Hlito and Raúl Lozza (who would go on to form Perceptismo in 1947) into the Asociación Arte Concreto-Invención. During his time in Buenos Aires, Lucio Fontana interacted with Maldonado's circle, engaging in debates with the Asociación.[16] Madí, formed by Quin, Rothfuss and Kosice in 1946, also

[15] Jorge Romero Brest correspondence file, MAM archives, Buenos Aires.

[16] As early as 1946 Fontana, who resided in Argentina between 1940 and 1947, anticipated the break that Greco would later make with the austerity and control of geometric abstraction. Accompanied by several of his students from the Altamira Academy that he founded that year with Jorge Larco and Jorge Romero Brest, he staged an "art event" in an abandoned building at the corner of Avenida Córdoba and Calle Florida. Fontana's student Jorge Roccamonte reports, "[W]e decided to organize a collective exhibition, to come out in the open, as a group. [… W]e had chosen a demolished house… We painted the walls, attached colorful pieces of cloth: with drums full of paint and tar we managed to soil and mark the walls. We also hung up a few sculptures by their feet. [...T]he police turned up and moved us on." Anthony White, "Lucio

produced geometric abstractions and neo-constructivist sculptures, even as it espoused a grand synthesis of the arts that incorporated composers, dancers, writers, and architects into the group and its events.

Greco's 1960 posters mark the beginning of his shift away from Informalist painting, a movement that he helped to define in the Argentina of the late 1950s. He was born in Buenos Aires in 1931. He emerged in the early 1950s as a poet (as did other Argentine conceptualists Edgardo Vigo and Ricardo Carreira), and was also involved in theater. He began to paint on his first trip to Paris, in 1954 [Figure 8], adopting the "tachist" idiom promulgated by Georges Mathieu and others, which marked a departure from the geometric abstraction of the Perón period practiced by, among many others, Greco's teacher Maldonado.[17] His first show was at La Roue Gallery in Paris in 1955, followed by his first Buenos Aires solo exhibition in 1956 at Galería Antígona. From Paris onwards, Greco remained insistently peripatetic, changing countries once a year or

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Fontana: Between Utopia and Kitsch," *Grey Room* 5, Fall 2001, pp. 60 & 74. Also reported in Jorge Roccamonte, "On Fontana and the Manifesto Blanco in Buenos Aires (1973)," in *Lucio Fontana*, exh. cat. (Barcelona: Fundació Caixa de Pensions, 1988), pp. 102-107.

[17] See Giunta, *Vanguardia, internacionalismo y política*, pp. 129-161, and Adriana Lauria, "Abstract Art in Argentina. Intermission and Instauration," in *Arte abstracto argentino* exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Fundación Proa, 2002), p. 17. For more on Madí, see *Arte Madí*, exh. cat. (Madrid: National Museum, Reina Sofía Art Center, 1997), and Gabriel Pérez-Barreiro, "The Negation of All Melancholy: Arte Madí/Concreto-Invención 1944-1950," in David Elliott, ed., *Argentina, 1920-1994: Art from Argentina*, exh. cat., (Oxford: Museum of Modern Art, 1994), pp. 54-65. Fontana, too, called for art to "transcend painting, sculpture, poetry, and music" in his "White Manifesto" of 1946 (penned by Fontana and his students), in Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, eds., *Art in Theory, 1900-1990: An Anthology of Changing Ideas* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), pp. 642-47. For further reading on Perceptismo, see Abraham Haber, *Raul Lozza y El Perceptismo: La evolución de la pintura concreta* (Buenos Aires: Editorial "Diagolo," 1948), and Marcelo Pacheco, ed., *Arte abstracto argentino*, pp. 12-13 & 26-30. For further reading on Maldonado, see *Abstract Art from the Rio de la Plata: Buenos Aires and Montevideo 1933/53* (New York: The Americas Society, 2001), and Carlos A. Méndez Mosquera and Nelly Perazzo, eds., *Tomás Maldonado: Escritos Preulmianos* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Infinito, 1997). For further information on Torres-García, see Mari Carmen Ramírez, "Inversions: The School of the South," in *Inverted Utopias: Avant-Garde Art of Latin America*, exh. cat., Houston Museum of Fine Arts (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 73-83, and *El Taller Torres-García: the School of the South and its legacy*, exh. cat. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992). Many of the major manifestoes of Argentine modernism are reprinted in Rafael Cippolini, ed., *Manifiestos argentinos: Políticas de lo visual 1900-2000* (Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo editora, 2003), pp. 183-277. See also *Arturo*, no. 1 (Spring 1944).

more despite periodically meager means. At his productive peak, between 1957 and his death in 1965, he lived and worked in, among other places, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Buenos Aires, Paris, Rome, Madrid, and New York. Accounts of Greco, often based on his personal writings and letters, note his charisma and tireless energy, which allowed him to associate with large groups of artists in a variety of different cities in short shrift—a personal intellectual network that likely conditioned his transition from object production to actions in the early 1960s.[18] While in Paris Greco adopted the gestural, tactile painting of *art informel* [Figure 9]. In 1957 and 1958 Greco worked in Brazil, where the art press labeled him a "tachista."[19] He was given a solo exhibition at the Museo de Arte Moderno in São Paulo, and organized a group show of Brazilian work at Antígona when back in Buenos Aires.

At this moment in Argentina, different approaches to abstraction were being successively taken up and promoted by new art institutions eager to host the newest developments from Europe and North America. The advancement of culture for the improvement of international stature was one of *desarrollismo*'s primary goals.[20] As

[18] The IVAM catalogue, the most exhaustive source of information on Greco, quite deliberately uses hearsay about his actions in the many places in which he lived, quoting constantly from artists' recollections of decades earlier. A telling example is the section titled "Happening en el atelier de Lea Lublin," which offers a hearsay account of a "happening" Greco performed in which he painted his own body naked in her studio in 1960. However true this account is, however, it is highly unlikely that Greco himself would have described it as a formal "happening"—a term that Minujín would employ to great success in the Buenos Aires art scene four years later. At that time such outrageous actions were consistent with his everyday social activity.

[19] The conflation of *tachisme* and *art informel* in countries such as Brazil is evidence of the rapidity with which different styles were being assimilated and grouped together in the Latin American context, in which they became more or less synonymous with clear moves away from geometric abstraction and *arte concreto*.

[20] See *Listen, Here, Now!*, pp. 16-27 & 78-92, John King, *El Di Tella y el desarrollo cultural argentino en la decada del sesenta* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de Arte Gaglianone, 1985), pp. 9-100, and Andrea Giunta, *Vanguardia, internacionalismo y política: Arte argentine en los años sesenta* (Buenos Aires: Paídos, 2001), pp. 21-303. For developments in literature, see Hellén Ferro, *La rebelión de los poetas jóvenes (1960-1980) y otras memorias: Lugones, Martínez Estrada, Molinari, Borges, Marechal, Molina, Sábato* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Margus, 2005). For innovations in film, see Podalsky, *Specular City*, pp. 48-99, and John King, *Magical Reels: A History of Cinema in Latin America* (New York: Verso, 1990, pp. 79-103.

Andrea Giunta argues in her exhaustive study of the period, the endeavor to win international recognition for Argentine art was imbricated with the country's opening up to democracy and global capitalism.

> It is at this moment, tinged with an aura of an inaugural time and marked by the urgent necessity to establish a foundational *tabula rasa*, that… institutions played a quite central role in the process of modernization that we might call an artistic field whose structure would radically transform the base of the project of cultural renovation and modernization.[21]

The internationalization of Argentine art necessitated its recognizable similarity to other international art. "The 'international phase' of culture," writes Beverly Adams, "was simply one moment in every particular area's cultural evolution toward 'universality.'"[22] Thus there were calls by critics such as Romero Brest for Argentine artists to be simultaneously nationalistically unique and internationally marketable. Greco reportedly damaged his standing in Buenos Aires by organizing protests against Romero Brest's 1958 statement that there were no "young artists" in Argentina, which was not a dismissal but an encouragement for younger artists to produce challenging and novel work that could be promoted and exported.[23]

In 1959, "Informalism" appeared in Argentina with three near-simultaneous shows: *Movimiento Informal* at Galería Van Riel, *Informalismo* at Galería Pizarro and *Movimiento Informalista Argentino* at the Museo de Arte Moderno in conjunction with

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[21] *Vanguardia, internacionalismo y política*, p. 33. My translation.
[22] Beverly Adams, "*Calidad de Exportación*: Institutions and the Internationalization of Argentinean Art, 1956-65," in *Patrocinio, colección y circulación de las artes. XX Coloquio Internacional de Historia del Arte*, ed. Gustavo Curiel (Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas-UNAM, 1997), p. 721.
[23] IVAM retrospective, pp. 276, 281-82. Rivas reports a "systematic marginalization" of Greco's work in the prizes of that moment: the ITDT, De Ridder, and Ver y Estimar prizes that quickly embittered the artist, quoting a letter in which Greco sardonically complained, "I am an AVANT-GARDE painter. (Ah! Yes, I'm sorry, I forgot). In the Di Tella I was unanimously rejected (Yes, yes yes!) (Ay, ay!)," p. 282. My translation.

Museo Municipal Eduardo Sivori.[24] Greco was grouped with a "Movimiento Informalista" that included Kenneth Kemble, Luis Wells, Kasuya Sakai, Jorge López Anaya, Mario Pucciarelli, and others: a definitive break with geometric abstraction and a return to the clear trace of the artist's hand that was discussed by critics in existentialist terms as expressive of a universal suffering.[25] What in France was *art informel* and in Italy *arte informale*, however, was an "ism" in Brazil and Argentina—a recognizable practice (though this did not preclude avant-garde shock, as Greco had difficulty showing his black monochrome collage paintings, and his series of *Monjas* [*Nuns*] caused such a scandal that he left the country again). The phrase "*America's* greatest Informalist" marks via absence European Informalists who were perhaps equally "great," or better. In notes at this moment Greco expressed his exasperation with the academic quality of much of the movement's production.[26]

In the Informalist manner of incorporating everyday materials into the canvases, Greco repeatedly used rags which were then overlaid with black paint in gestural brushstrokes [Figure 10]. The result was both abstract and multiply referential, evoking

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[24] See Jorge López Anaya, *Vanguardia informalista : Buenos Aires 1957-1965 : informalismo, arte destructivo, arte cosa* (Buenos Aires: A. Sendrós, 2003), and *Una vision argentina contemporánea 1940-1990, Arte Argentino entre humanismo y tardomodernidad*, Exh. Cat. (Buenos Aires: Patio Bullrich Shopping Center, n.d.).

[25] A good example of this is Romero Brest's essay "What is Informal Painting?" (1961), in which he writes, "the only way forward is *art without a flag*… events and painting have a *common root* in considering *experience* as the raw material of any form of life and culture." Jorge Romero Brest, "What is Informal Painting?" in Inés Katzenstein, ed., *Listen, Here, Now! Argentine Art of the 1960s: Writings of the Avant-Garde* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2004), p. 97 (henceforth *LHN*). See also Laura Buccelato, "Alberto Greco," in *Ver y Estimar: Previo di Tella*, p. 39.

[26] Greco's attitude parallels that of French and Italian painters at this time, who also lost faith with this mode of gestural abstraction. In his one-man show at Galería Pizarro, which had also staged *Informalismo*, one of the first Informalist group shows in 1959 (with Greco, Pucciarelli, Méndez Casariego and Estela Newberry), and later the controversial *Las Monjas*, the negative press reaction of which was one of Greco's inspirations for returning to Europe. Remarking on his disgust with Informalism, in 1960 Greco famously observed, "When I got to Brazil, my dream was to create an Informalist, terrible, strong, aggressive movement against good customs and formalities. The worst of informalism prevailed: the decorative, the facile, that which cannot stand to be seen twice." Anaya, "Alberto Greco," p. 70.

the absent bodies to which the clothes would have belonged as well as the impoverished condition of much of Buenos Aires. Read through the later *Vivo-Ditos*, his practice here might be described as marking or signaling the readymade rags with his own bodily gesture (he is also rumored to have urinated on certain of his canvases).[27] At one point he displayed a burnt tree trunk, a trace of the real detritus of the city, that he displayed alongside his paintings at his 1960 Galería Pizarro show.[28] This, too, constituted an element from the street that had then been altered in some way; not a readymade in Duchamp's sense of an industrially produced object, but nonetheless a found sculpture that reflected the readily available materials in Buenos Aires streets.[29] This approach culminated in 1961 with the show *Las monjas* [*Nuns*]. Each of Greco's paintings represented a nun, as in *Monja asesinada* [*Assassinated Nun*], in which painted rags were loosely draped on an exposed wooden support. In a country as staunchly Catholic as Argentina, this was a clear provocation, although it is also consistent with an interest in debasement and abjection that the artist maintained throughout his career.[30] The show caused a scandal so severe that he returned to France.

In Paris, a month before his first *Vivo-Dito*, Greco participated in a group exhibition called *Curatela Manés y 30 Argentinos de la nueva generación* at the Creuze-

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[27] Claudia Laudanno discusses Greco's interest in the "festering sign" in "Alberto Greco o las razones del cuerpo," in *Nuevos Ensayos de Arte Sobre Arte Argentino Del Siglo XX* (Buenos Aires: Fundación Federico Jorge Klemm Editora, 1997), pp. 25-48.

[28] IVAM retrospective, p. 278.

[29] This approach would also be reflected in the work of two other major Argentine artists from this period, Kenneth Kemble and Antonio Berni, who both collaged junk materials from the *villas miserias*, or slums, onto their canvases.

[30] This debasement went beyond representation and often had an autobiographical dimension, as in his writings (some of which made their way into his paintings and works on paper) in which Greco described his homosexual experiences as part of his artistic transgressions. While the biographical dimension of Greco's life and work was clearly a priority for the artist and many of those who first experienced his work, I am bracketing such concerns here to observe the underlying mechanisms that produced the *Vivo-Ditos*. I am effectively arguing that the artist's personal anxieties were addressed in artistic practice, yielding strategies that could be used by other artists and transcending the specific and biographical.

Messine Galerie.[31] His contribution was a glass vitrine filled with thirty live mice, titled *30 ratas de la nueva generación*. Like his posters, the implications of this gesture cut both ways. Formally, the mice suggested optimism about new aesthetic possibilities: they were part of a new, literally living art. At the same time, they offered a harsh metaphor for foreign artists grouped together by national identity, a reference to the token inclusion of outsiders in the European context (a process of labeling with obvious commercial utility). Greco would later release mice into the Argentine Pavilion of the 1962 Venice Biennial.[32]

In contrast to this recognizably avant-garde provocation against the very institutional forces that were providing him with a venue in which to be seen, the *Primera exposición de Arte Vivo* is a far more subtle and profound gesture that is connected to the many photographs of the artist himself from the event [Figure 11]. The title *Vivo-Dito* combines two languages: *vivo* means "live" or "living" in Spanish, and *dito* is "finger" in Italian. In Spanish, the suffix "-ito" is sometimes used for past participles; "dito" suggests the conversion of the noun *dedo*, into a verbal or active register, as in "fingered"—revealed or pointed out. The *Vivo-Dito* is this deictic operation: it points and signals via the mobile frame of the drawn circle and signature. What is circled and signed is found in the living world, beyond the sphere of art. This living thing no longer lampoons the desperate condition of the artist; the artist has fingered it, pointed it out, and folded it back into the frame. Now art, the representative of "life" is rendered a represented object. Yet the artist, too, the pointer, is also signaled and exposed; he also becomes an object. It is not enough for him to sign—the act must be documented. Yet once it is, it is no longer

[31] IVAM retrospective, p. 284.
[32] Ibid, p. 292.

the same act. The act of fingering has itself been fingered. Greco is at once the artist who names the world as art, and that artist who, framed in the act of framing, cannot be that artist who gets to do so. His potential to be an artist is enacted through his freezing, dissecting, and dismantling of the authorial system.

On the day after the *Primera exposición de Arte Vivo*, Greco appeared at a group show at the Musée d'Arte Moderne de la Ville de Paris in which his work had not been included, dressed as a sandwich-man with a sign reading "Alberto Greco, work of art not in the catalogue."[33] As with the street posters, which appropriated critical speech to argue for his own greatness, Greco was taking up the institutional speech act of including or excluding a given artist from a show. He was including himself in the exhibition by making light of his official exclusion—not an outright refusal of the exclusion, but a framing thereof. It was not the first nor the last time that Greco co-opted institutional speech and/or authority. In 1961, he had founded La Orden de Greco, an honor that he would bestow on a select few *porteños* that admitted them into an occult-like secret society [Figure 12], and in 1963, he founded a short-lived, artist-run exhibition space in Madrid that he called La Galería Privada—"an art gallery closed to the public and a domicile open to the whole world"—in which artists could work on idiosyncratic projects untenable in commercial galleries.[34] As in Greco's turn in 1962 to performances that engaged the street and not the indoor space of the art gallery, these endeavors may be read as linguistic and spatial gestures of independence from art institutions.

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[33] Ibid, p. 290.

[34] Ibid, pp. 199 & 316. La Orden de Greco was a riff on the "Orden del Tornillo" [Order of the Screw] instituted by the La Boca painter Benito Quinquela Martín and given to various bohemians, as well as the Argentine Surrealist Julio Llinás's "Orden de los Sátrapas de la Escuela de Patafísica," [Order of the Rulers of the Pataphysical School]. Greco's prize was for those who engaged in effectively in "irrational" or unconventional art.

Yves Klein was present at the Musée d'Arte Moderne de la Ville de Paris exhibition, and signed the placard that Greco was wearing in his sandwich-man guise—effectively signing Greco himself. It was the only occasion on which the two artists met. When Greco returned to Paris at the end of 1961, he befriended several Nouveaux Réalistes, including Christo and Arman, who ultimately introduced him to Klein. Soon after his first *Vivo-Ditos*, Greco wrote, "Painting will disappear. […]That's why I say with all certainty that painting finished its cycle with Yves Klein's blue picture."[35] By the early 1960s Klein was widely known, his artistic practice having alternated between series of near-identical monochromes that, he argued, offered transcendental viewing experiences regardless of how many were produced or hung in a gallery together, and performances, sometimes in public space, that focused on the commodity status of the work of art and were calculated to attract publicity. In the performances that created his *Anthropometries*, for example, in which naked models were used to paint canvases, there is a precedent for the *Vivo-Ditos*' incorporation of people and their bodies into the work [Figure 13]. In Greco's later *Vivo-Ditos*, in Spain in 1963, he painted silhouettes on canvases behind live subjects, leaving a similarly indexical trace. Klein was one of several Europeans at this moment who took up contradictory positions simultaneously: both heroic modern artist expressing his innermost being in the hopes of saving the world, and neo-Dada trickster conscious of the absurdity and outmodedness of the former.[36] Another of these was the Italian artist Piero Manzoni, who in works such as *Fiato d'artista* [*Artist's Breath*] (1960) and *Merda d'artista* [*Artist's Shit*] (1961) played

[35] Anaya, "The Legend of an Artist and the Poetics of Chaos," p. 70 (the original quote is in a letter to Lila Mora y Araujo, April 1963).
[36] Nan Rosenthal, "Assisted Levitation: The Art of Yves Klein," in *Yves Klein: A Retrospective*, Exh. Cat. (Houston: IFA, 1982), pp. 91-135.

a similar game in which the biological products of his body were figured simultaneously as sacred objects and jokes on the overvaluation of art. In 1961 he preceded Greco in signing people as works of art, though he actually signed their bodies [Figure 14].[37] The distance between Greco and these European neo-avant-garde figures can be measured in terms of contact with, or even respect for, the live subject. Klein and Manzoni felt free to use bodies to mark or to mark bodies, while Greco circled or painted around, signaling a body's presence without violating personal space.

What are the implications of Klein's signing of Greco? On the one hand, this could be seen as a conferral of approval on another artist's performative activity. On the other, Klein was taking credit for Greco's idea by signing him. Considering that Klein had even trademarked his own color of blue paint, in 1959, this latter signification is unavoidable. Once again Greco's originality or worthiness of being exhibited was being figured precisely through the possibility that he was merely derivative; it would be his very self-consciousness of this quandary that would lay the ground for his claim as an artist of interest. Greco secured signatures from other artists as well. Fluxus-affiliated Ben Vautier was obliged to sign the title of the "number 6 follower of Vivo-Dito art in the world" [Figure 15], opting for a deliberately subordinate position (the two maintained an operatically fraught correspondence throughout the early 1960s in which each accused

[37] Germano Celant, *Piero Manzoni* (London: Serpentine Gallery, 1998), p. 32. Briony Fer writes, "Manzoni made his claims with the bravura of one certain of the neo-avant-garde imperative to differentiate himself from everything that had gone before, to make as if it were an entirely new way of thinking, in the full face of repetition. Cavalier is the word for it, and maybe what the moment required" Fer, *The Infinite Line*, pp. 27-8. Manzoni's project is thus "a different mode of repetition, in which difference could play *within* repetition." Ibid, p. 33. Greco could be said to attempt this as well, with geography as one of the catalysts of such "difference within repetition," and his doubled frame another.

the other of plagiarizing his work).[38] During Greco's only trip to New York at the end of 1964, Marcel Duchamp, a representative of the historical avant-garde, signed the statement "Vive Greco."[39] Greco's "long life" as an artist, if legitimate, would mean that art itself was still legitimate, that avant-garde claims could still be made by new authors, despite the seeming proximity of their gestures to earlier ones.

In an essay about Vautier, Ina Blom discusses the importance of the signature at this particular juncture in European art. "The New Realists," she writes, "see the world as a picture, a big fundamental *work* in which each artist appropriates his own specific part. …The signature has moved into every available corner of the world."[40] She notes, however, that for artists in the wake of Klein, this seeming triumph is also fraught with great historical anxiety. Not only Dada but also Neo-Dada has already nominated the entire world, part and whole, as art. To do so yet again is to repeat a repetition. Blom's words, which address Vautier, also shed light on Greco's constant signing of objects, people and situations in his early *Vivo-Ditos*. "His signatures become obsessive," she writes, "because there is no way he can *stop* signing the identity of the avant-garde that has produced him. The only possibility left is to continue to repeat the signature."[41] This *mise en abyme* of the signature renders it a figure for potentiality: one signs to assert historical uniqueness, but in signing repeats the gesture of someone else—but perhaps if it is repeated enough, its very redundancy might provoke new forms, yielding the very originality that seemed impossible. As Briony Fer has suggested, "If the new is a *form* of

[38] IVAM retrospective, p. 225. On the note with Vautier's signature, also appears to be a reference to the Argentine sculptor Alberto Heredia, who was known for his *Cajas de camembert* (1961): cheese boxes displayed as readymades.
[39] Ibid, p. 245.
[40] Ina Blom, "Ben Vautier's signature acts and the historiography of the avant-garde," *Visible Language* 39, vol. 3, pp. 278-309.
[41] Ibid, p. 296.

repetition, then could we imagine repetition as invoking not only the always already-made of memory but also, in almost the same breath, the possibility of making the new?"[42]

In the middle of 1962, Greco traveled to Genoa, where he penned his "Manifesto *Vivo-Dito*." "*Vivo-Dito* art," he writes, "is the adventure of the real, the urgent document, the direct and total contact with things, places, and people, creating situations, creating the unexpected."[43] Greco's use of the word "situations" is noteworthy in relation to the Situationist International. He links the "situation," that movement beyond the static art object, with the notion of an "urgent document"—a focusing of attention on something true. The essay later declares, "The artist will no longer show with the picture, but with the finger." This speaks to the deictic nature of the *Vivo-Dito*, its signaling capacity. Like a finger pointing, this mode of work diverts attention to elements from the undifferentiated stream of life. It is this nominal operation represented by the circle in the first *Vivo-Ditos*, this temporary framing and designation of representatives of life as art, that Greco infused with his interest in potentiality, represented by the signature. It was here that he staked his claim to being "great" and employing avant-garde acts even as he admitted their fragility and possible fraudulence, drawing attention to the qualities of those acts themselves. An interplay between signaling, potentiality, and participation would mark his future actions as he traveled throughout Europe, back to Latin America, and briefly to the United States prior to his suicide in 1965.

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[42] Briony Fer, *The Infinite Line: Remaking Art After Modernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 4. Fer's approach in this text is paralleled in several recent approaches to the neo-avant-garde that derive from the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari to suggest that the repetitions of the neo-avant-garde were in fact generative of deviations and new strategies. See in particular Gilles Deleuze *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1994) and Branden W. Joseph, *Random Order: Robert Rauschenberg and the Neo-Avant-Garde* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003).

[43] *LHN*, p. 38.

After a brief return to Paris after Genoa, Greco moved to Rome. Amidst the celebrations surrounding the Second Ecumenical Council, Greco walked around Vatican City dressed as a nun named Albertus Grecus XXIII [Figure 16].[44] A series of photographs of the character demonstrates that the Catholic Church is not his only reference; there is an obvious debt to Duchamp's alter ego Rrose Sélavy, in particular the photograph *Rrose Sélavy* (1920-21) [Figures 17 and 18]. Unlike the earlier artist, Greco's masquerade seems deliberately inadequate. His beard prevents a full illusion of gender-crossing from taking hold; it insists on a remainder of masculinity. Humor is created precisely in the insufficient re-staging of the earlier photo-performance. Where Duchamp has signed "Rrose Sélavy" in cursive, Greco has merely scrawled "Greco Roma 62" in inelegant handwriting.

In Rome, Greco reportedly graffitied "painting is finished—long live Vivo-Dito art" in the streets, and mailed the statement to, among others, Hugo Parpagnoli of the Museo de Arte Moderno in Buenos Aires, suggesting a resolve to abandon painting in favor of actions.[45] In January of 1963 Greco was forced to leave Italy by the authorities following his arrest for the performance *Arte Vivo Cristo 63: Homage to James Joyce*, executed in El Laboratorio, a theater in a garage not far from the Vatican. Actors—including Greco as Christ, naked from the waist down—recited a parody of the Passion, improvising lines and interspersing sections of the second chapter of James Joyce's *Ulysses* [Figure 19]. The piece ended with Greco repeating that "the text" still had yet to be written.[46] This explicitly "open" work introduces the dense content (alternating

[44] IVAM Retrospective, p. 263.
[45] Ibid, p. 292.
[46] "The Legend of an Artist and the Poetics of Chaos," p. 71.

between text[s] and performance) of the later *Vivo-Ditos*.[47] The combination of different texts into a hybrid script parallels Ferrari's contemporaneous practice of combining different media (drawing and writing, drawing and sculpture) and his interest in "babelism," or the use of different authorial voices in a single work, though it is noteworthy that Ferrari sought to do so with his artist peers, while for Greco it involved the texts of earlier authors and in particular modernist figures such as Joyce.

Greco produced a number of *Vivo-Ditos* in his next country, Spain, introducing new elements and producing variations. Several involved what he called the "incorporación de gente a la tela" ["incorporation of people into the canvas"]: the tracing and painting of their silhouettes to create a series of works [Figure 20].[48] This indexical marking of the outline of a participant recalls Klein's *Anthropométries* (1958-60), in which naked women were used as paintbrushes on giant canvases. While Klein used a Pollock-like horizontal method of painting with the bodies of others, Greco created an explicitly vertical tracing of his subject, which suggests an elevation of the body (or the body's absence) into the field of art (as opposed to Klein's debasement of his models into tools). As in Klein, the action in which Greco created the silhouette was as much a part of the work as the resultant image. Using their absence, their negative space, to create a record of their participation in the work of art, Greco positioned painting in the role of drawing in the earlier *Vivo-Ditos*—that of highlighting, marking, or pointing out. In some cases, it is class that is signaled. The subjects of his *tableaux vivant* tended to be

[47] See Umberto Eco, *The Open Work*, trans. Anna Cancogni (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), in particular "The Open Work in the Visual Arts," pp. 84-104. Eco explicitly mentions the ambiguous forms of *art informel* as emblematic of the open work that the viewer must actively complete.
[48] IVAM retrospective, p. 310.

working people brought into the gallery from the street: a woman selling sunflower seeds or a blind man selling lottery tickets.[49]

In the middle of 1963, Greco wrapped the small country town of Piedralaves in two massive rolls of paper containing the *Gran Manifiesto Antimanifiesto Rollo Vivo-Dito*, which narrated, in drawings, news clippings photographs, and text, his life and career up to that point [Figure 21]. Its title encapsulates contradictory desires for an avant-garde manifesto and the notion of a counter-position, the "anti-manifesto." The text narrates Greco's artistic development as a series of mythic acts: "1954: I signed walls, objects, streets and bathrooms in Paris in the company of Penalva Lerchundi," "1961: I sign the city of Buenos Aires."[50] The latter boast is seemingly confirmed in Greco's parallel gesture of circling and signing Piedralaves, as though a continuation of a previous activity. Were the claim about signing quotidian objects and sites in 1954 legitimate, it would mean not only that the first *Vivo-Dito* was executed long before 1962 but also that the artist took an eight-year hiatus from *Vivo-Ditos*. This may be an echo of Klein's sometimes fictional self-historicization, as when he claimed to have devised monochromes long before he actually did.[51] Greco wrote enthusiastically to friends of Piedralaves as a neutral territory in which he could truly realize his art, calling it "Villa Grequíssimo," "el capital mundial del 'grequísimo-vivant.'"[52] "Grequísimo" takes more liberties with language, converting his name, into an adjective (as one does with "great" authors or artists, i.e. "Picassoid") and adding "ísimo," i.e. "super-Grequist." He wore a

[49] Anaya, "Alberto Greco," p. 72. This participatory inclusion of individuals from what might be termed "extra-art classes" would be echoed in Masotta's use of working-class participants in *Para inducir al espiritu de la imagen*, at Romero Brest's *Experiencias '68* exhibition by Oscar Bony, where he placed an actual working-class family on a pedestal for the duration of the opening, and in the extensive participation of workers in Tucumán in *Tucumán Arde*, discussed in Chapters 2 and 3.
[50] Ibid, p. 308.
[51] Rosenthal, "Assisted Levitation," p. 125.
[52] IVAM retrospective, p. 304.

straw hat for the occasion, a sign of rural identity that does not amount to a full costume, akin to his failed drag in the *Albertus Grecus XXIII* photographs. In some images, it appears that Greco may have received ashes on his forehead [Figure 22]. This hint of ritual infused into the avant-garde gesture reprised Greco's mockery of the Church, positioning him as a priest who sacralizes the people, animals and objects of the town with his signature.[53] He holds a sign with what appears to be stenciled lettering that reads, "Greco, ___co, le meilleur de tous," as though a second "Greco" has been partially erased to leave only the last two letters, "co," like the English abbreviation for company. Greco is the best of all, but when his name is stamped repeatedly on places and things it becomes a brand name.[54]

The Piedralaves *Vivo-Dito* uses a traditional medium, the work on paper, as a framing device in an action-based work. The scroll containing the artist's self-narrative is converted into an object that can act upon a site when it is turned on its side and rendered line—a possibility of the scroll, with its seeming unlimited length, versus the sheet of paper. The endless, open-ended script (in an echo of *Christo '63*), work-on-paper, or narrated artistic career is utilized as a device of circumscription, like a roll of tape that can stretch to encompass whatever area. The narrative is thereby unrolled and deployed in real space and in Piedralaves, a location free of the art world and outside of all institutions. In this way the artist's biography itself becomes a redundant signal, marking the moment of its subsumption of a new artistic act via the literal encircling of a new site. In *The Red Agenda*, written at this moment, he writes, "DITO: to [signal or indicate]…

[53] IVAM retrospective, p. 302-308. There are no sources which specify the exact date of the Piedralaves *Vivo-Ditos*, but it was in April 1963, and thus could have taken place on Ash Wednesday (such an incursion into a religious occasion would have been typical of the artist).
[54] In 1964 Greco made this connection clear in a series of collages in which he cut his own name out and placed it in different magazine advertisements.

VIVO—living side—to [register or record] a living moment."[55] These two meanings of the verb *registrar* are both significant, as they expand the notion of signaling put forth by the earlier *Vivo-Ditos*. On the one hand, the viewer "registers," or receives, the artist's "signal," playing a role in the completion of the work (this is the central theme of Greco's "Vivo-Dito Manifesto" of a year earlier). On the other, the artist records his own ephemeral activities—as in the scroll—to enlarge his potential audience; he creates his own narration, documentation, and publicity.[56]

Greco's final work during this stay in Spain was *Un momento de Vivo Dito: viaje de pie en metro de Sol a Lavapiés* [*Journey on Foot on the Metro from Sol to Lavapiés*], in October 1963 [Figure 23]. This was an action for a selected and specially invited audience, a private gathering in public space. The event was introduced above-ground by the actor Juan Luis Galiardo, who introduced the event as a "live act of painting, art in the instant, burned and purified."[57] Greco appeared with a cube of green plastic on his head, along with a shirt and knife that he had purchased from a local butcher, and distributed bottles of paint to the participants. He then led the sizable and reportedly excitable group through the Madrid subway, unrolling a large stretch of canvas that was painted, signed, and trampled upon by the participants and ultimately used for a bonfire that served as the backdrop for frenzied collective dancing. Greco provoked the group as the trip went on, at times goading them into chasing him; the performance's destructive *dénouement* released aggressive tensions that risen throughout. The police ultimately

[55] Alberto Greco, "La agenda roja," IVAM exh. cat., pp. 222-23. English translation in Sabine Breitwieser, *Vivencias* (Vienna: Generali Foundation, 2000), pp. 14-33 & 162-66.
[56] Greco began to use newspapers at this time to advertise for participants. Anaya, "Alberto Greco," p. 72, reports that for his April 1964 show of works on paper at the Juana Mordó Gallery in Madrid, the artist created chaos by inviting, via newspaper ad, "boys and girls between the ages of 3 and 9." Greco's appreciated the value of publicized scandals and the newspaper as a conduit for reportage on his work, and in 1964 produced a number of Pop collages in which his name was inserted into magazine advertisements.
[57] IVAM retrospective, p. 310, Anaya, "Alberto Greco," pp. 71-2.

intervened, but Greco had planned for this eventuality: "If sent to jail, I will sign policemen."[58]

In this and a subsequent *Vivo-Dito* in Buenos Aires, Greco led participants through a trajectory in urban space while undertaking absurd and ritualistic actions. If there is a causal relation in this work it is in the fate of the canvas, a trace of the practice of painting literally removed from the stretcher and deployed—and debased—in time and space. Its destruction at the conclusion of the event recalls the artist's "painting is dead" creed, but if thought in relation to the role of the unfurling scroll in the Piedralaves work, it might also be seen as a synecdoche for the artist himself, also outmoded in the context of participatory art. As the canvas was burning Greco took a remaining scrap and scrawled on it "El Vivo-Dito son Ustedes" ["You all are Vivo-Dito"]; the artist remarked to the press that "For now the only exhibitions that interest me are exhibitions of people."[59] Greco's provocation of participants and directing of their energies against him amounted to taking the open work, the surrender of control to the viewer, to an almost dangerous limit. Carried out in Greco's 33rd year, the performance positioned the artist as a Christlike sacrificial object set upon by his very admirers; as Rivas writes, "there are moments in which Greco appears to succumb to the hands of the multitude."[60]

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[58] IVAM, p. 310. My translation.
[59] Ibid. My translation.
[60] Ibid. My translation. Greco wrote to Lourdes Castro and René Bartholo in 1964, describing the burning canvas as a "cadaver" and noting, "...[I]n the end they wanted to tie me up also to the cadaver's bonfire" (Ibid & p. 322, my translation). These echoes of Christ are reinforced by his signing of a lamb head during the event and his claim, in the Piedralaves scroll, that he had once signed 32 lamb heads in a Paris market. This insinuation would be literalized when Greco committed suicide in 1965, writing "Fin" on each of his palms, like stigmata. There is another contradiction in the record here. Anaya, "Alberto Greco," p. 73, claims that it was both hands. The Rivas retrospective, p. 264, says it was only his left. This destructive fantasy may be alluded to in Greco's handwritten text on an announcement for the Madrid event sent to Hugo Parpagnoli, then-director of the Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires, a reference to the parable of the turtle and the scorpion, in which a turtle's kindness in carrying a scorpion across a river is rewarded with an absurd, mutually destructive sting. The parable might be read as corresponding to modernist problem of the alienated artist's relation to his viewer, who may or may not endorse or derive

Destruction, as discussed below in the case of Minujín's *La destrucción*, which preceded *Un momento*, is both an embrace of the potential not-to-be and of the possibility that something new will result. In his metaphorical ritual burning and anointment of the participant as the artist, Greco pointed to a path beyond his neo-avant-garde quandary, beyond the burden of the lone creator. The twin innovations of action and audience participation destroy painting and author alike. While Greco handed this power to the audience itself, however, Minujín allowed her works to be destroyed and reconstituted by a select group of other artists.

Both the Piedralaves and Madrid *Vivo-Ditos* made a point of mapping urban space and containing discreet actions within a larger gesture of mapping, whether an entire town or a trajectory through a part of a city. The theme of ludic exploration of the city recalls the *dérives* of the Lettrist and Situationist Internationals, while the motif of the street as a metaphor for a more real world beyond the gallery links Greco to several other coordinates of the Argentine avant-garde circa 1961: *Arte destructivo* and GRAV. The former, a show in November at Galería Lirolay, featured a variety of objects bearing the evidence of their own destruction by a group of post-informalists. Organized by Kemble and including Enrique Barilari, Jorge Roiger, Antonio Seguí, Silvia Torras, Luis Wells, and future critic and historian Jorge López Anaya, the artists had collaborated for a year on the theme of destruction in art, but the subsequent show featured desiccated objects that had clearly been extracted from urban space [Figure 24]. An emblematic work is an old chair, its seat split and stuffing exposed, which is quite close in appearance to the painted sculpture hewn from flea market chairs that Greco and Manolo Millares exhibited

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transcendence from his work. Handwritten text on an announcement for *Un Momento de Vivo Dito: Viaje de Pie en Metro de Sol a Lavapiés* sent by Alberto Greco to Hugo Parpagnoli, 1963. Alberto Greco artist file, Museo de Arte Moderno archives, Folio 8.

at the Galería Privada.[61] Also in 1961, in Paris, the Groupe de Recherche d'Art Visuel (GRAV) was formed by the Argentine Julio Le Parc. In addition to trying to develop kinetic art and utilize technology in a continuation of earlier modernist projects that privileged technology and science for art, GRAV also staged *Jornadas en la calle* [*Days in the Street*], which, similar to Fluxus at this time, privileged quotidian actions and everyday gestures [Figure 25].[62]

Another important touchstone for Greco's work at this moment is Rubén Santantonín, who in 1961 first exhibited a series of sculptural works titled *Cosas* [*Things*], composed of cardboard, rags, wire, wood, plaster, and other materials [Figure 26].[63] The artist called them "things" to differentiate them from both painting and sculpture, instead describing their essence as "method, system, mediation." Like Manzoni's *Achromes* or Lee Bontecou's contemporaneous constructions, the *Cosas* combine industrial and organic forms. Yet Santantonín's principal interest was the viewer and his or her relation to the ambiguous "thing": "The intent, to the extent possible, is that man no longer CONTEMPLATES things but he immerses himself in them with his pleasure, with his distress, with his imagination. That he does not feel transcended, but

[61] In Spain, Greco had befriended a new group of figurative expressionist painters in Madrid that included Manolo Millares and Antonio Saura, with whom Greco would collaborate on a series of works on paper related to the Kennedy assassination in 1964 (also exhibited at the Galería Privada). Greco lobbied for Saura and others to be exhibited in Argentina in his correspondence with Hugo Parpagnoli. See Alberto Greco artist file, MAM archives, Buenos Aires.

[62] See Julio Le Parc, "No More Mystifications!" (1961) in *Listen, Here, Now!* pp. 56-8, Gabriela Salgado, "Julio Le Parc: The Low-Tech, High-Magic of Light Works," *ArtNexus*, No. 58 (Nov. 2005), pp. 102-5, and Saúl Yurkiévich, "Julio Le Parc, Promoter of Technological Art," in *Inverted Utopias*, pp. 323-25.

[63] See Laura Buccellato, "Rubén Santantonín," in *Greco-Santantonín*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Fundación San Telmo, 1987). The Neo-Dada objects of *Arte Destructivo* and Santantonín were not, in fact, the first of their kind in Argentina. The artist Edgardo Vigo produced the first of his *Máquinas Inútiles* [*Useless Machines*] (which resembled Surrealist objects in unexpectedly combining mundane things) in La Plata in 1954, and in 1957 the exhibition *Qué cosa es el coso*, featuring sculpture incorporating degraded materials by Nicolás Rubió, Anaya, Jorge Martín, Mario Valencia and Vera Zilzer, opened at the Asociación Estímulo de Bellas Artes (Giunta, *Vanguardia, internacionalismo, y política*, p. 122).

rather affected, complicated, commingled."[64] While Santantonín primarily produced objects and not actions, his interest in the viewer's experience as the focal point of the work paralleled Greco's openness to participation.[65]

Greco returned to Buenos Aires and on December 9, 1964 staged *Mi Madrid querido* [*My Beloved Madrid*]. A reference to the tango "Mi Buenos Aires querido" by Carlos Gardel and Alfredo Le Pera, the event reprised many of the strategies Greco had developed in Europe. Organized by Romero Brest, the multipart event began in Galería Bonino, which had that April opened a branch in New York City.[66] Odalisques by a different painter were hung in the gallery above signs that identified them as Greco's aunts. Two shoeshine boys were brought into the gallery from the street and seated in front of canvases with shoe polishes, inks and brushes, positioning them as both artists and workers. Greco arrived dressed as an admiral [Figure 27]. He threw carnations to the audience and handed out pennants with the face of the popular singer Palito Ortega.[67] The artist led the audience, which overflowed the gallery, into the street to the Plaza San Martín, and read a long and reportedly lascivious text in front of the monument to Don

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[64] Rubén Santantonín, "Why I Call These Objects 'THINGS,'" trans. Mark Schafer, in *Listen, Here, Now!* pp. 36-7. Original Spanish text is "Por qué nombro 'Cosas' a estos objetos," in *Cosas*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Galería Lirolay, 1964).

[65] *Vanguardia, internacionalismo y política*, p. 168. Santantonín also engaged in a variation on the automatic writing process to sketch out his works before executing them, a fascination with writing that he shared with León Ferrari, and a practice (that of focus on a preparatory stage of equal importance as the final work) that would later be systematized in the "preparatory drawings" of the CAYC artists. Santantonín had also proposed a plan to the ITDT for a traveling participatory work called the *Arte-cosa rodante* [*Traveling Art-Thing*], which would have transported a ludic environment to different areas in the Argentine countryside. Giunta, *Avant-Garde, Internationalism, and Politics,* pp. 159-160.

[66] Anaya, "Alberto Greco," p. 72. Thus it may not be coincidental that Greco left for New York almost immediately afterward. For more about the significance of the Galería Bonino in the 1950s and 1960s, see Andrea Giunta, "Hacia las 'nuevas fronteras': Bonino entre Buenos Aires, Río de Janeiro y Nueva York," in *El Arte Entre Lo Publico y Lo Privado: VI Jornadas de Teoría e Historia de las Artes* (Buenos Aires: Centro Argentino de Investigadores de Artes, 1995), pp. 277-284.

[67] Jorge López Anaya, "Significance and Content," *Lápiz*, no. 60 (Summer 1989), pp. 93-4. Anaya contends that it was "the dancer" who was "disguised as an admiral who delivered incomprehensible speeches," but other accounts, including photographs in the IVAM catalogue, show Greco dressed as an admiral and reading texts.

Jose de San Martín, nineteenth-century liberator of Argentina [Figure 28]. Antonio Gades danced a fandango to guitar accompaniment, and Greco traced his silhouette on a canvas and signed it. Finally, he wrote "long live modern art" and crossed it out [Figure 29]. Ludic as it was, Greco's military garb hints at a more serious signification: a "liberation" of European avant-garde strategies—mixtures of high and low, painting and performance, gallery and street, etc.—for use in Argentina. His movement out of the gallery and through urban space to the nationalist monument analogized a movement away from the "beloved" yet exhausted neo-avant-garde of Europe to mark a new, independent time for Argentine art—a revivifying shift in context that amounted to the simultaneous death and "long life" of modernism.[68] Yet it is also worth considering Greco's reference to the demagogue, seeing as the country had only recently emerged from the dictatorship of Juan Domingo Perón (who during his rule had frequently likened himself to San Martín) and military rule (the military had overthrown Frondizi in 1962, and had restored elections that year). Greco's ambivalence thus persisted via this nod to political parallels of the "great" modern artist's relentless drive for power.

Later that year, Greco traveled to New York. He held *Rifa Vivo-Dito in Central Station* with the participation of Christo, Allan Kaprow, Roy Lichtenstein and Claes Oldenburg, in which some eighty works were placed in lockers, the keys of which were then sold at the Chelsea Hotel.[69] Greco's few New York actions anticipate works by

[68] Of course, it could be argued that Greco was ambivalent about the space of the gallery, which had been used to gather a public and then only symbolically discarded. Minujín won the Di Tella Premio Nacional that year largely thanks to Romero Brest, whose involvement in *Mi Madrid querido* was a sign of a potential institutional acceptance in Argentina that the artist never realized because of his subsequent travel and death.

[69] Anaya, "Alberto Greco," p. 72-3, IVAM retrospective, p. 245-7. Greco also threw a party at the studio of the painters Fernández Muro and Sarah Grilo that some consider a performance (indeed, Greco did not separate his outrageous socialite stunts from his other artistic work), to which a wealth of collectors and gallery owners were invited.

Minujín and David Lamelas, discussed in the third and fourth chapters, that foreground the use, for the artist abroad, of involving other and better-known artists in their works (for Minujín New York figures such as Andy Warhol and Charlotte Moorman, for Lamelas conceptualists such as Daniel Buren and Marcel Broodthaers)—joining the artistic network or milieu to the artwork itself. He returned briefly to Spain before killing himself in 1965, participating in exhibitions with the Madrid-based, Fluxus-affiliated ZAJ Group with anti-Franco paintings, a rare instance of overtly political content in his work.[70]

Greco's legacy after 1965 took the form of a mythology fed by artist friends and critics alike, who celebrated his hedonistic lifestyle and outrageous behavior as integral to his contributions to future art.[71] Yet it is likely that when Oscar Masotta illustrated his publication of his *Pop-art* lectures in 1967 with three images of *Vivo-Ditos*, it was for their aesthetic lessons and not their author's biography [Figure 30].[72] In the book they are presented as a series of three photographs beneath another photograph, with the artist's notes on a piece of paper on the right. As such, the *Vivo-Dito* is anything but spontaneous or unique—it is premeditated, repeatable, and wholly dependent upon mechanically reproduced documentation. Greco's choice to circle and sign preserved only a few fundamental elements of the art of the past: drawn line, frame, and signature. The conceptual practices devised by Masotta between 1965 and 1967 preserved this original kernel of the *Vivo-Dito*, isolating the signal as art's primary focus, and discarded its

[70] Ibid, p. 73.
[71] See Luis Felipe Noé, "Alberto Greco: a cinco años de su muerte," in *Alberto Greco*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Galería Carmen Waugh, 1970), as an example of the hagiographical myth that formed around Greco following his suicide. Noé suggests that Greco's entire life was a farcical or "trickster" performance, the ultimate chapter of which was his death.
[72] Oscar Masotta, *El "pop-art"* (Buenos Aires: Columba, 1967), p. 39.

authorial baggage. Greco had originally signaled the signal to create sociological distance from his obligation to be a heroic artist—to escape the impossible neo-avant-garde demand for originality. The next generation of Argentine artists would collectively apply this operation to communicative systems far removed from the scope of art, bypassing the aporia entirely.

Events and Enclosures: Marta Minujín

As a teenager Minujín was close friends with Greco, who was ten years her senior. By the age of 24, she was his antithesis within the Argentine art world: a notorious yet celebrated symbol of its most powerful contemporary art institution, the Instituto Torcuato di Tella.[73] Minujín followed Greco's move away from the art object and his emphasis on viewer participation but soon dispensed with his fixations on authorship, repetition, and independence from institutions. Her focus instead came to be the architectural space of exhibition. This interest is intimated in her earliest works, in which readymades are fashioned into inhabitable structures, and it continued in her happenings and environments, which require a space of exhibition to exist. In works such as *La menesunda*, the architectural dimension of the gallery is doubled so that viewers are directed through a series of sensorial experiences. While Greco's actions figured public space as an alternative to the traditional indoor site of art, Minujín embraced and amplified the effects of institutional enclosure even as she converted such space into spectacle.

[73] This fact did not, however, preclude their friendship; as late as 1964, during his final stay in Buenos Aires, Greco participated in *La feria de las ferias* with Minujín and Romero Brest, whose presence in this collaboration as well as *Mi Madrid querido* suggests that had Greco lived and remained in Buenos Aires, he might have been able to benefit from the ITDT's newfound focus on post-object art.

Minujín was born in 1941 in Buenos Aires, training as a painter and sculptor at the Manuel Belgrano, Prilidiano Pueyrredón and Ernesto de la Cárcova National Art Schools. She had her first solo show in 1959, and moved to Paris in 1960 on a National Foundation for the Arts grant from the French government, alternating between there and Argentina until 1963.[74] Like Greco, Minujín's work in Paris followed *Nouveaux Réalistes* such as Arman in using trash to stand in for "life" and to play with the distinction between "high" and "low" sculpture). Minujín, who saw Nouveau Réalisme as "the advent of a new, brutal, and realist period," began incorporating discarded vernacular materials into her sculpture.[75] She painted with car enamel on large cardboard reliefs, and constructed her series of *Colchones* [*Mattresses*] from mattresses that she salvaged from hospital dumps and painted bright colors [Figure 31].[76] These mattresses eventually served as the materials for *Casa de colchones* (1963), her first environment, a three square-meter "house" made of wood and numerous mattresses that the viewer was to enter [Figure 32].[77] Where Greco had gradually transitioned from painting, Minujín moved towards performance as a sculptor.[78] She learned about happenings not through their inventor, the American Allan Kaprow, but through their French proponent, Jean-Jacques Lebel, with whom she collaborated on the happening *Le Coq* at the Raymond

[74] For background on Minujín, see Sabine Breitwieser, ed., *Vivencias*, Exh. Cat. (Vienna: Generali Foundation, 2000), pp. 230-238, Jorge Romero Brest, *Marta Minujín por Romero Romero Brest* (Buenos Aires: Edgardo Gimenez Editora, 2005), Jorge Glusberg, *Marta Minujín en el Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes*, Exh. Cat. (Buenos Aires: Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, 1999), Inés Katzenstein, ed., *Listen Here Now!*, pp. 59-61, 107-110, & 237-241, John King, *El Di Tella y el desarrollo cultural argentine en la década del sesenta* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de Arte Gaglianone, 1985), pp. 137-156 & 244-246 and *El Di Tella* (Buenos Aires: Asunto Impreso, 2007). Accounts of her early works herein are assembled from these texts as well as the artist's online archive, http://www.martaminujin.com/.
[75] *Listen, Here, Now!* p. 59.
[76] Ibid.
[77] *Marta Minujín en el Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes*, p. 15.
[78] Like Greco, Minujín continued to produce art objects that could be sold even as she experimented with performance and installation. She showed this sellable work through Galería Lirolay in Buenos Aires (in 1961, 1962, and 1964).

Cordier Gallery in 1963.[79] Greco, who was also in Paris at this moment, also influenced this experimentation (he would later refer to her as "more Grequist than Greco"). "Yes, perhaps [Greco and his *Vivo-Dito*] was a major influence," Minujín recently conceded. "I did not use his ideas, but his concept of life."[80]

In 1963, before leaving Paris, Minujín organized the happening *La destrucción* [*Destruction*] [Figure 33]. It began with a joint exhibition, held in Minujín's apartment, with Portuguese artist Lourdes Castro and Venezuelan artist Miguel Otero, who also produced assemblages. Minujín exhibited sculptures that she had produced while in Paris, including her "first environment. It was a kind of mattress-house, a construction of about three square meters of wood covered with overlapping, twisted-up, embracing mattresses, their stripes painted with bright florescent colors…"[81] After several days of showing the works, on June 8 at 6 p.m., Minujín brought a group of artists that included Christo and Lebel to a nearby lot in the Impasse Ronsin. The artists first deconstructed the works and reassembled them into new ones. As Minujín puts it, "they had to implant their images on mine, delete, erase, modify my works. Create in order to destroy; burn out my identity."[82] Minujín then set the objects on fire as scores of birds and rabbits were released.

The impulse to destroy has an important precedent in Argentine art in the *Arte Destructivo* show at Galería Lirolay in 1961 staged by Kenneth Kemble and others.[83] Yet

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[79] Jean-Jacques Lebel, *Happening* (Paris: Denoe, 1966). According to Lebel, in *Le Coq* the actor Daniel Pomerelle crowed and "plucked" Minujín while she was lying in a bed.
[80] Sabine Breitwieser, ed., *Vivências*, exh. cat. (Vienna: Generali Foundation, 2000), p. 233.
[81] Marta Minujín, "Destrucción de mis obras en el Impasse Ronsin, Paris," p. 61.
[82] Ibid, 61.
[83] *Arte Destructivo* began with a year-long collaboration by Kemble, Enrique Barilari, Jorge Roiger, Antonio Seguí, Silvia Torras, Luis Wells, and future critic and historian Jorge López Anaya on how to utilize destruction in art. See Andrea Giunta, "Destrucción-creación en la vanguardia artística del sesenta: entre *Arte Destructivo* y *Ezeiza es Trelew*," in *Arte y violencia* (Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas—UNAM, 1995), 59-81, and Marcelo E. Pacheco, ed., *Kenneth Kemble: The Great Breakthrough, 1956-1963* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Julieta Kemble, 2000). Giunta's text traces a thread of destruction in

this show, which displayed a variety of violently manipulated readymades, had not emphasized the act of destruction, as Minujín did, and certainly not her theatrical flair. Photographs from the performance depicted the artist in tattered clothes splattered with paint, an anguished expression on her face as the sculptures burn behind her. This image contrasts with later pictures of the artist in the midst of her Buenos Aires-based happenings and environments, in which she is typically expressionless or bemused, clad in fashionable clothes, an unflappable urbanite seemingly in control of chaotic events. The more expressionist guise of *La destrucción* might be discussed in the terms of potentiality applied to Greco's work above. *La destrucción* foregrounds a refusal to sculpt, the possibility of not sculpting, literalized in the destruction of the object. But it was not only her sculptures that were obliterated. Diffused into the activity of other artists, her very identity as an individual artist was "burnt out," undone through collectivity—and simultaneously generative of a new, participatory, action-based practice. The liberatory dimension of this gesture was symbolized through the live animals, a direct quotation of Greco, who in turn echoed this work in the bonfire in his Madrid *Vivo-Dito*.

Upon her return to Buenos Aires, Minujín rose to prominence almost immediately, winning the ITDT 1964 National Prize for *¡Revuélquese y viva!* [*Wallow Around and Live!*], another inhabitable mattress sculpture [Figure 34].[84] As Giunta

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Argentine art in the 1960s, leading from *Arte Destructivo* to artists' destruction of their works in the *Experiencias '68* show (discussed in Chapter 3) to political violence in the early 1970s. This dissertation is not concerned with a more expressionist lineage of destruction—in which some measure of violence is implied or enacted—so much as the more cerebral methods of analysis and dismantling devised by Masotta and his followers; that is, with "destruction" as an intellectual practice, and not mere desublimation.

[84] "Marta Minujín ganó el Premio Di Tella para argentinos," *La Nación*, October 9, 1964. See also Minujin's letters to the critic and head of MAM Hugo Parpagnoli of 1963, in the MAM archives, Buenos Aires, in which she predicts her ascendance to stardom even before returning to Argentina, noting that he, Romero Brest and Squirru becoming the heads of important art institutions will insure the success of young

reports, Romero Brest had been caught between the diametrically opposed positions of the other two judges, Pierre Restany and Clement Greenberg. Romero Brest followed Restany's support of Argentine Pop in Minujín, definitively breaking with his earlier support for abstraction.[85] In her photograph in the exhibition catalogue, she is costumed as a knight, or perhaps a conquistador—paralleling Greco's donning of military apparel in *Mi Madrid querido*, the implication is that she has conquered the art world.[86] In her numerous happenings and environments that followed, many of which were sponsored by and staged in the ITDT, among them *La cabalgata*, *El batacazo*, *Suceso plástico* (staged in a soccer stadium in Montevideo, Uruguay) and *La menesunda* (all 1965), her work would become increasingly festive, emphasizing viewer participation and spectacle at the expense of the darker and more personal implications of early works such as *La destrucción*. "I changed my existentialist feelings," she recalls, "because they made me feel like I wanted to commit suicide and I was crying as I worked. It was like torture art. I

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artists such as herself. A new set of art prizes emerged in Argentina after the Revolución Libertadora that facilitated travel by artists and encouraged innovation, among them Romero Brest's Ver y Estimar Honor Prize (coordinated yearly from 1960 to 1968 by Romero Brest's close assistants Samuel Paz and Francisco Diaz Hermelo), the Di Tella's national and international prizes (given from 1960 to 1966 [held at the MNBA from 1960 to 1963], after which Romero Brest changed the event to his more open-ended *Experiencias* shows), the Braque Prize (given by the French Embassy from 1963 on), and the Bienal Americana de Arte (given by Industrias Kaiser in Córdoba in 1962, 1964 and 1966). A significant critical apparatus came into place to support this art public, and some of the most influential writers were also curators, such as Squirru, Romero Brest, and Hugo Parpagnoli, who wrote for the magazines *Sur* and *La Prensa* while also organizing exhibitions at MAM. Aldo Pellegrini was also an important critical advocate for Informalism, penning a massive overview of the entire contemporary period through the lens of Informalism in his *New Tendencies in Art* of 1966 (although, unlike many of his Argentine compatriots, Pellegrini does not overemphasize contemporary Argentine artists in this text). Artists such as Kenneth Kemble and Luis Felipe Noé also wrote criticism (sometimes about themselves). This explosion of critical writing was supported by an expansion of magazine culture in Argentina, most prominently with *Primera Plana*, which began in 1962 as a middlebrow magazine and quickly became a dominant voice. See Podalsky, *Specular City*, pp. 148-175.

[85] Ibid, p. 83.

[86] *Premio Internacional Di Tella*, exhibition catalogues, Instituto Torcuato Di Tella archives, Di Tella University Library, Buenos Aires. Both Greco and Minujín had themselves photographed at every opportunity, embracing the linking of their visages and bodies to their works; as is the case with so much ephemeral art, the photographic documentation of the work was an essential instrument of dissemination, of both the artist's ideas and increasingly recognizable celebrity visage.

exchanged torture art for fun art…"[87] Minujín's close proximity to the ITDT speaks to the role of the institution in occluding or denying the negative aspect of potentiality; indeed, institutional ideology could be said to always contend that potentiality has been realized (the very message Greco ridiculed with his 1960 posters). Yet a performance from just after her arrival to Argentina suggests an awareness of the machinations of publicity around her. For *Leyendo las noticias en el Río de la Plata* [*Reading the News in the Río de la Plata*] (1963), Minujín began by reading newspapers, then swaddled herself in them and was submerged in the Río de la Plata until they dissolved [Figure 35].[88] The artist is figuratively drowned by the very instrument, or medium, of the mass media through which she appears publicly. To achieve potential is indeed the end of the subject, as it portends a loss of will (one's ability to refuse potential). It is to become an object, figured by exterior forces of mediation and representation.

Minujín's rise paralleled that of the Centro de Artes Visuales at the ITDT, which had opened its own space on Calle Florida in August 1963.[89] It was situated in what became known as the *manzana loca* [crazy block], a two-block radius in the Retiro neighborhood with galleries (Bonino, Piroska, Velazquez, del Sol), artist bars (Moderno, Florida, Ruíz), and as much 1960s counterculture as the government would allow. As Laura Podalsky writes in her book *Specular City*, in such a highly conservative culture, the Di Tella was "at once a symbol of artistic freedom and a tightly quarantined zone," a

[87] Breitwieser, "An Interview with Marta Minujín," *Vivencias*, 231.
[88] Marta Minujin archives, Buenos Aires.
[89] The CAV was followed by the Centro de Experimentación Audiovisual [Center for Audiovisual Experimentation] (CEA) in 1965 and the Centro Latinoamericano de Altos Estudios Musicales [Latinamerican Center for Advanced Music Studies] (CLAEM) in 1967, yielded an unprecedented institutional apparatus for experimental culture that would host the majority of Argentine conceptual art projects. *El Di Tella y el desarrollo cultural argentino en la decada del sesenta*, pp. 49-100.

haven for intellectual and fashionable bourgeoisie.[90] Giunta notes that Romero Brest's obsession with the search for a distinct yet universal, Argentine art, which dates back to the philosophy of his journal *Ver y Estimar* during the Perón years, led him to champion several different *arte nuevo* or "new art" movements in rapid succession.[91] While in the early 1950s Romero Brest had seen geometric abstraction as the future, in the early 1960s he rallied behind Informalist painting, hailing it as "negation *itself*… but this is not something to fear… because all negation generates its corresponding affirmation."[92] Discussing the work of Tapiés, Burri and Fautrier, the critic began to employ the term "experience," a term that he would apply to the participatory quality of Minujín's happenings and environments as well as the conceptualism that followed after 1966. "[…I]t is one thing to have experience of *realities*, as in the past artworks were the fruit of experience, and quite another to have an experience of *the real*, as we do now that artworks are, in themselves, irrefutably *experience*."[93] Informalist painting was the centerpiece of his international showcase of Argentine work, *Art from Argentina*, at the Walker Art Center, in 1963. The dispute between Restany and Greenberg in 1964, however, indicated that post-object approaches were in the ascendant. In truth Minujín encapsulated both old and new, in using the assisted readymade (the painted mattresses) on the one hand and "experience" (the viewer "wallows around" and "lives" in the mattress-structure) on the other. *Experiencia* has an additional connotation in Spanish, that of the "experiment," and as the 1960s wore on this dimension of the term would take

[90] Podalsky, *Specular City*, p. 142.
[91] Andrea Giunta, "Rewriting Modernism: Jorge Romero Brest and the Legitimation of Argentine Art," in *Listen, Here, Now!*, p. 82-86. See also Giunta, ed., *Jorge Romero Brest: Escritos I (1928-1939)* (Buenos Aires: Facultad de Filosofía y Letras Universidad de Buenos Aires, 2004).
[92] Jorge Romero Brest, "Informal Art and the Art of Today: A Very Updated Article and New Reflections," in *LHN*, p. 99.
[93] Ibid, p. 100. See also Jorge Romero Brest, *El arte en la Argentina: Últimas décadas* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1969).

precedence at the ITDT, particularly in the *Experiencias visuales '67* and *Experiencias '68* shows (see Chapter 3).

Despite her emphasis on happenings, Minujín was associated with a group of young Pop artists that Romero Brest promoted through the CAV from 1964 on that also included Edgardo Giménez, Dalila Puzzovio (who, along with Minujín, was quite close to Greco), Delia Cancela and Pablo Mesejean (who often worked together), Susana Salgado, Juan Stoppani, Carlos Squirru. The art of the Argentine Pop artists ranged from paintings and sculpture to actions and theater.[94] They also executed happenings, many of which were funded by the Di Tella.[95] Members of the group were repeatedly included in the Premio Di Tella and Ver y Estimar competitions.[96] A magazine photograph of

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[94] For a comprehensive new source on Argentine Pop, see Jorge Romero Brest, *La Cultura Como Provocación* (Buenos Aires: Gimenez Edgardo Miguel, 2006). See also Daniel Lange, "Arte Pop en la Argentina," in *Nuevos Ensayos de Arte Sobre Arte Argentino del Siglo XX: Premio de Ensayo de Arte para menores de 40 años* (Buenos Aires: Fundación Federico Jorge Klemm Editora, 1997, pp. 73-90.

[95] Some of these include *La Muerte*, in 1964 (with Puzzovio, Santantonín, Zulema Ciordia, Cancela, Mesejean, Squirru, Giménez, Berni [who did associate with the much younger Pop artists and even at one point staged a happening in relation to his Ramona character], and Miguel Angel Rondano, a composer) at Galería Lirolay, Juan Stoppani's *Destrucción de Obras*, also 1964, which, though obviously derivative of Minujín, is further evidence of the fascination with destruction at this moment, the *Microsucesos: La siempreviva* [*Microevents: The Ever-Alive*] series of 1965, at the Teatro del a Recova, which featured Puzzovio, Giménez, Squirru, dancer Marilú Marini, theater director Alfredo Rodriguez Arias, and Rondano, *Gordon y Tao* by Federico Peralta Ramos, who would figure largely in avant-garde events at the end of the decade, *Ver claro* [*To See Clearly*], by Lea Lublin, and *La esfera del tiempo* [*The Sphere of Time*]*, Se dan clases de tejido a mano y a máquina* [*Classes Given in Knitting by Hand and by Machine*], and *Jean Shrimpton: La Plus Belle Fille du Monde*, by Puzzovio with music by Rondano (all 1965). There were also a number of theater and dance projects organized by Arias and Marini, respectively. See the timeline of happenings in Rodrigo Alonso, "En Torno a la Acción," in *Arte de acción*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Museo de Arte Moderno, 1999), p. 29, and the discussion of various theater and dance-related happenings in Lange, "Arte Pop en La Argentina," pp. 86-89.

[96] While the Ver y Estimar rosters of the very early 1960s are filled with Informalists (including Greco), beginning in 1962 with the appearance of Cancela and Puzzovio among the participants (along with later CAYC member Luis Benedit, who was then producing paintings in a figurative, Pop-Surrealist idiom), the Pop artists returned again and again. The 1965 Di Tella Prizes featured Puzzovio and Squirru in the National competition and squared Minujín (with an exclusive interview included in the catalogue) against Jim Dine, Emilio Renart, James Rosenquist and Frank Stella in the International category. In the National Di Tella Prize of 1966, Cancela and Mesejean, Arias, Salgado, Puzzovio (who won the National Prize with a sculptural series of shoes), and Stoppani were featured. Jorge de la Vega, after going Pop following a Galería Bonino-sponsored trip to New York, was awarded his own show of his "infinitely rearrangeable" painted squares in 1967. See *Ver y Estimar: Previo di Tella* and Instituto Torcuato Di Tella archives, Di Tella University Library, Buenos Aires.

Romero Brest with the Pop artists in 1965 portrays him as a father figure or protector, his arms stretched across the group [Figure 36]. In 1965, Puzzovio, Gimenez, and Squirru posted a billboard in the popular shopping area of Calle Florida, featuring their likenesses set in a bizarre tableau with the text, *¿Por qué son tan geniales?* [*Why Are They Such Geniuses?*] [Figure 37]. The three figures (two of whom appear to be Puzzovio) smile in the gleeful manner of actors in an advertisement. Upon closer inspection, however, their accoutrements make no sense. The man or woman on the left holds a container of fluid that resembles an IV drip, while in the center Puzzovio's head is collaged onto a bouquet of plants over a body with a hole in it. This hole is motioned to by hands on either side that are too big for the head to which they correspond. Finally, on the right Squirru is pictured just in back of a creature that resembles a monster from a children's show, with a bird floating just above its head. A send-up of art promotion and advertising this reprised Greco's posters of 1960 with more sophisticated means. While Greco had done so as a rebuke to institutions that he felt were not paying him enough attention, however, these artists were publicizing, however sardonically, their own works at the ITDT. In this sense they were expanding the space of the gallery into that of the street as opposed to treating the street as an institution-free zone. The message seems to be that publicity can consist of complete nonsense and still function, as long as it includes a clear, optimistic message and smiling faces. As such, *¿Por qué son tan geniales?* may be a self-critical statement by artists of a young and uncertain genre that relied on publicity for its success.

Minujín's happenings were less Pop than inheritors of the earlier events staged by Allan Kaprow (with whom Minujín would stage a happening in 1966), Claes Oldenburg, and others from 1959 on. The emptied-out self-image that she unveiled in Buenos Aires,

however, which Luis Felipe Noé denigrated as "vendettismo" ["star-ism"][97] replaced the anguished neo-avant-gardiste of *La destrucción* with a cool celebrity. Following *Leyendo las noticias*, Minujín emptied her artistic persona of all biographical or expressive reference. Like the "happening," which, as Podalsky notes, is the ideal word for what was most prized at that moment in the Di Tella and throughout the Argentine art public in terms of promotion (the ever-new, that which was "happening right now"), the artist shifted from the anxiety of art about potentiality to one of realization, happening, a pure present or "new," embracing her identity as the face of the new generation of Argentina artists.[98] A photograph exists of Minujín and the much older Romero Brest in their collaborative environment work *La menesunda*, in which she is positioned so that a neon sculpture is directly over her head [Figure 38]. The sculpture suggests a halo above a presumed savior of Argentine art, but one who can only operate in the shadow of an institutional benefactor.[99]

Minujín's projects at the height of her popularity in Argentina (1964-1966) divide into happenings consisting of actions staged in given spaces and interactive environments erected in galleries for longer durations. In one of her first happenings, *Cabalgata*, or *Cavalcade*, of 1964, horses painted on mattresses with paintbrushes tied to their tails, while a group of athletes popped balloons and two rock musicians were wrapped in adhesive tape [Figure 39]. The event was broadcast on Argentina's Canal 7, which

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[97] Luis Felipe Noé, "Pintura Nacional S.A.," in *Ver y Estimar: Premio di Tella*, p. 33.
[98] Podalsky, *Specular City*, pp. 168-175. She argues for this as part of the ideology that *Primera Plana* and other relatively new sources of Argentine culture and advertising were purveying.
[99] This picture is worth comparing with the portrayals of other female artists in New York in this same moment, who were sexualized (Carolee Schneemann, Yayoi Kusama) or at very least problematically linked with their work because of their good looks (Bridget Riley, Eva Hesse). See Anna C. Chave, "Eva Hesse: A Girl Being a Sculpture," in *Eva Hesse: A Retrospective* (New Haven: Yale University Art Gallery, 1992), pp. 99-117, and Pamela M. Lee, "Bridget Riley's Eye/Body Problem," *October* 98 (Fall 2001), pp. 27-46.

expanded its audience beyond its immediate spatial context and reiterated her awareness of the potential of the mass media in *Leyendo las noticias*. She also participated in an artwork-as-bazaar that year at the Galería Lirolay, *La feria de las ferias* [*Fair of Fairs*], in which visitors could buy fragments of several artists' works, "portions of dances" by Marilu Marini, or fragments of critical writings by Romero Brest.[100] At the conclusion of the show, upon Greco's suggestion, the artists threw their works into the Rio de la Plata from the Costanera Sur.[101] As is evident in the appropriation of the flea market, the definition of what constitutes a happening opens onto preexisting or quotidian events or relations. *La feria de las ferias* expands upon *La destrucción*: works by different artists are fragmented and reassembled into the larger form of the happening, whereupon they can be discarded as merely part of its action. As in Greco's late *Vivo-Ditos*, the happening encompasses different artistic media—painting, sculpture, and performance—but also reveals a hierarchy of action over object.

Minujín's next happening, *Suceso plástico*, [*Plastic Event*] was held in 1965 in the Peñarol soccer stadium in Montevideo, Uruguay [Figure 40]. Two hundred audience members were assembled to watch lettuce, flour, and five hundred chickens released onto the playing field while fifteen police motorcycles drove about, fifteen overweight women chased fifteen athletes, young women went around kissing members of the audience, and other people wrapped themselves in paper.[102] Also that year, Minujín staged *El Obelisco Dulce*, a collaboration with Pablo Suaréz and Raúl Escari, who would both begin to make

[100] Marta Minujin archives, Buenos Aires.
[101] A recent text on Romero Brest and the ITDT contends that it was in fact Pierre Restany who sold fragments of his own texts (on abstract and surrealist art) and ran the kiosk for the entire show. Jorge Romero Brest, *La cultura como provocación*, pp. 48 & 408-411.
[102] *Marta Minujín en el Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes*, pp. 16-20. See also MAM archives, Minujín artist file.

their own (soon quite different) happenings; Minujín threw ice cream at the Plaza de República-based monument, and the other two artists licked it off.

Minujín's happenings ranged from astute reflections on publicity, the art market, and the mass media to more plainly provocative or ludic performances. Her most publicized events, *Cabalgata* and *Suceso plástico*, echo the first North American happenings such as Kaprow's *18 Happenings in 6 Parts* (1959), which Judith Rodenbeck describes as "a code without a message": a series of events that simply happen, "without arc or telos," that establish relationships between objects, be they things or people.[103] Consistent motifs in Minujín's events are animals and food on the one hand, and pop-cultural figures such as rock stars and athletes on the other—an opposition between nature and pop culture emblematized by horse-as-painter. Another reference seems to be the circus, with its animals, fat ladies, and strongmen; Minujín cites Fellini as an influence.[104] The ritualistic dimension of *La destrucción*, in which specific elements and activities correspond to specific meanings, and follow a narrative arc of sorts. The increasing abundance of materials and scale suggest that each project was laboring to outdo the last in terms of spectacle and subsequent publicity. In *Cabalgata*, the television broadcast speaks to what may be the overall referent of the happenings, with their heterogeneous and ever-changing arrays of diversions: spectacle itself, the perceptual conditions engendered by the mass media.

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[103] Judith Rodenbeck, "Madness and Method: Before Theatricality," *Grey Room* 13 (Fall 2003), p. 57. Rodenbeck is referencing and reversing Roland Barthes' comment that photography is a "message without a code," an imprint of reality without a conduit of transmission. Roland Barthes, "The Photographic Message," in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill & Wang, 1977), 15-31. See also Rodenbeck, *Crash: happenings (as) the black box of experience, 1958-1966*, (Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 2003).

[104] *Vivências*, p. 234.

"Spectacle," a term first theorized by Guy Debord in 1968, connotes the effect of mass entertainment on capitalist society and subjecthood as a whole, in which capital is "accumulated to the point where it becomes image."[105] Minujín, as with the other Pop artists at the ITDT, was staking an ambivalent position between celebrating and ridiculing the mass culture that had arrived with *desarrollismo*. Her happening did not need to be an event of exclusive immediacy for only those who were present. As evidenced by her interest in television and publicity, it was to be transmitted to a larger audience as a part of spectacle itself, and it took on spectacle's forms of amusement and rapid shifts in content. *Leyendo las noticias* dramatizes the conversion of individual into information that parallels spectacle's transformation of all reality into image. *Cabalgata* and *Suceso plástico* articulate a place for art, in the form of the happening, within mass culture, as nonsensical yet entertaining barrages of events. Her lack of dependence upon immediacy is essential here—her happenings are from the start media events.

Minujín's *ambientaciones* [environments] were designed for the viewer to walk through, comprising multiple rooms spread through entire galleries, each crammed with assemblages of quasi-surrealistic objects and activity. "I started to make the happening more stable…" Minujín said in a recent interview, "Like an installation."[106] *El batacazo* [*The Long Shot*], 1964, was installed at the Di Tella, featuring neon outlines of figures, glass containers with live bees inside, live rabbits in cages, and a giant head of the Italian actress Virna Lisi which emitted moaning noises when slid onto from a slide above it [Figure 41]. Masotta described the work as an "object-happening" because of its

[105] Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (New York: Zone Books, 1995), p. 24.
[106] *Vivências*, p. 233.

invitation for the viewer to interact with its space.[107] Her next environment, *La menesunda* [slang for drugs and disorder], an *ambientación* exhibited from May 26 to June 13, 1965 at the Di Tella, was credited as the joint creation of Romero Brest (here blurring the role between critic, curator and artist), Minujín, and Rubén Santantonín, with the collaboration of Pablo Suárez and David Lamelas, and assistance from Rodolfo Prayon, Floreal Amor, and Leopoldo Maler.[108] The environment comprised different rooms that corresponded to different sensations and experiences of materials and media. Visitors first walked through a hallway with neon lighting [Figure 42], through rooms of different temperatures, smells, spaces, and sights, including a naked "amorous" couple in bed [Figure 43], a room in the shape of a giant female head filled with cosmetics, television screens that projected their own pictures taken as they were walking through the exhibition [Figure 44], a room that one could only leave after entering the correct number on a giant telephone dial, and a final space in which confetti was whipped into the air by multiple fans [Figure 45].[109] The excess of these environments recalls the spectacles created by Salvador Dalí in the United States in the late 1930s, such as the

[107] *LHN*, p. 189. Originally published as "Tres Argentinos en Nueva York" in *Happenings* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Jorge Álvarez, 1967).

[108] Ana Longoni recently translated the title as *The Drug on the Market*. Longoni, "Action Art in Argentina from 1960: The Body (Ex)posed," in *Arte ≠ Vida: Actions by Artists of the Americas, 1960-2000*, ed. Deborah Cullen, exh. cat. (New York: Museo del Barrio, 2008), p. 87. The choice of a *lunfardo* word for a state of confusion bears an interesting similarity to Brazilian artist Hélio Oiticica's choice, in 1964, of the Rio slang word "paragolé," meaning sudden confusion or excitement, for one of his aesthetic principles as well as a series of wearable sculptures. Both artists at this moment selected words from their respective urban subcultures—with attendant traces of authenticity—to name works in which audience participation was paramount, associating the environment's immediacy and physical contact with "authenticity" as opposed to traditional contemplation. See Renato Rodrigues da Silva, "Hélio Oiticica's Parangolés or the Art of Transition," *Third Text*, Vol. 9, No. 3, May 2005, p. 220.

[109] Giunta, "Rewriting Modernism," p. 84. Accounts of the organization of *La menesunda* differ. Giunta's own account in the English translation of her book claims that at the exit "there was a projector that had recorded the entire process of the spectators passing through the installation." Giunta, *Avant-Garde, Internationalism, and Politics*, p. 161. *Marta Minujín en el Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes*, p. 23, claims that the exit followed the room that one had to dial a phone number to leave. Longoni reports a room with a number of televisions with their volume controls turned all the way up. Longoni, p. 88.

Dream of Venus pavilion at the 1939 World's Fair in New York.[110] Dalí is one of the earliest artists to have self-consciously intermingled the high-art exhibition with the funhouse. In updating this formula with references to contemporary popular culture such as psychedelica, drugs, and free love, Minujín was proposing that the environment could synthesize not only different artistic media but also different temporalities of mass culture; both older and newer varieties of spectacle and media.

In his writings on *La menesunda* and others of the Pop events at the Di Tella, Romero Brest argued that critical judgment of such projects had to be suspended.[111] This lack of criticality was in some sense preordained, however, as he was effectively part of the work, and thus quite literally lacked critical distance. His term *experiencia* is used in the flyer distributed about *La menesunda* distributed at the Di Tella that is credited to Minujín, Santantonín, and Romero Brest, presenting the project as a vehicle for "INTENSIFYING EXPERIENCE/ beyond gods and ideas/ feelings/ mandates and desires…"[112] The term "experience" is conveniently elastic for critical purposes, as it could correspond to anything that a subject might experience, and not merely immediacy or authenticity. Thus the spectator's projected images, his or her conversion into spectacle within the environment itself, is within the field of the work.

Podalsky argues that "*Ambientaciones* and happenings… lacked a central comprehensive logic and resisted unitary readings. They forced their viewer-participants to forge their own highly subjective understandings of the experience."[113] Her dismissive

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[110] See Ingrid Schaffner, *Salvador Dali's Dream of Venus: The Surrealist Funhouse from the 1939 World's Fair* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 2002).
[111] Giunta, *Avant-Garde, Internationalism, and Politics*, pp. 161 & 338. The original text attributed is Romero Brest, "Arte 1965: Del objeto a la ambientación," June 11, 1965, Caja 1, Sobre 6, Jorge Romero Brest archives, University of Buenos Aires.
[112] Ibid, p. 107.
[113] Podalsky, *Specular City*, p. 140.

account parallels that of many in the mass media at that time that condemned the environment as base or devoid of substance.[114] Yet Santantonín, at least, did not view *La menesunda* as a series of merely random elements without coherent meaning; his objective was to provide the viewer with a series of distinct sensory experiences from room to room. He saw the project as a logical continuation of his *Cosas*, which he regarded as "thing protagonists" upon which a viewer could project his or her unique imagination and experience rather than discrete sculptural objects.[115] *La menesunda* is more accurately described as containing a tension between sensory experience—relations between viewer and work that result from actual physical and sensorial contact—and what might be called mediatic experience, in which one interfaces with high-tech communication devices that translate reality into image or information.[116]

In terms of its appeal to viewers' sensoria, *La menesunda* maximized the possibilities of institutional space three years after the first *Vivo-Ditos*. Audience participation, play, collaboration, sensory experience, and multimedia were to be the building blocks of the new, internationalist Argentine art public. While the late *Vivo-Ditos* guided viewers through urban space to map out micro-liberations from the institution, Minujín focused on the bodily experience of the viewer through an institutional space made ludic, and counted on publicity to multiply this architectural

[114] Giunta lists a series of articles that sought to stoke public rage against the project, p. 338, note 103.
[115] Ruben Santantonín, "Art Thing" [1961], in *Inverted Utopias*, p. 480.
[116] Giunta reports that the media frenzy created by *La menesunda* focused its attention on Minujín, not only resulting in less authorial credit for Santantonín but a paradoxical undoing of his intentions. For the more this installation functioned as a mediatized event widely diffused through images and reportage, the more its immediate and first-hand experience by the spectator was irrelevant. Giunta links Santantonín's exasperation over this state of affairs to his later destruction of all of his art in a bonfire. Giunta, *Vanguardia, internacionalismo y política*, pp. 210-15. This explanation is debatable, however, if the televisual dimension of the project was in fact as extensive as some scholars, including Giunta, report. If viewers were, within the work itself, being converted into televisual media, the very experience of the immediate being converted into spectacular image was addressed and contained within the parameters of the work.

effect. Where Greco's emphasis on the street positions his work spatially within the larger city, *La menesunda* is first and foremost architecturally bound, circumscribed within and sutured to the setting of the institution. A spatialized embodiment of the Di Tella's (and thus the dominant art public's) optimistic message, *La menesunda* articulated and directed its viewer through it. Minujín's *ambientaciones* were open works in that they required viewer participation to exist. Yet as much as their ideology was that of the open work that the viewer could complete as he or she wished, they also bore the controlling mark of the funhouse, which ensured a very consistent experience for each viewer via the series of different rooms. This is a common limitation of the open work at this time: participants were increasingly included in happenings and environments, only to be plugged into preexisting scripts that render them tools of the artist rather than collaborators. In this sense, as much as the ITDT would be derided by leftist artists in the latter 1960s, the very concept of *Tucumán Arde* as a container and edifier of the viewer owes a debt to Minujín's *ambientaciones*. Santantonín and Minujín's viewing subject emerges from the work having participated, with his or her body, and thereby having joined the Argentine art public, clued in to its contemporaneity and tacitly approving of its institutionally-sanctioned modes of new art. Yet it was this sensory, mobile bodily activity—the viewer's ambulation through the environment—that activated the other side of the dialectic, the technological or mediatic, and allowed that viewer to be captured as information. The viewer's very experience of the work, his or her presence in it, would serve to contain him within its media. This would initiate the rendering-spectacle of the work that would conclude with its inevitable publicity. From 1966 forward, Minujín made this dimension of her events and environments their self-critical subject matter.

Combination and Babelism: León Ferrari

Like Greco, in the early 1960s León Ferrari placed the basic artistic tools of drawing and cursive writing under close scrutiny. Greco left abstraction behind in favor of actions, but Ferrari continued to interrogate the genre meticulously and systematically in series of sculptures and works on paper, remaining within the idiom of object production. His approach is combinatory: different media are conflated or joined precisely at their points of similitude and contradiction. Abstraction's earlier association with mysticism or transcendence is exposed and undermined by its resemblance to syntactic units of language, while language's potential for communication is undone by its distortion back into drawn line. In 1965, the artist switched abruptly from the production of abstract sculptures and works on paper to openly political art, not returning to these investigations until he began drawing again in 1975. Of the artists in this chapter, it is Ferrari who struggled most visibly with the contradictory legacy of modernism: to, on the one hand, create complex work that is not limited to specific moments in history or politics, and, on the other, to directly comment upon and change the world in the here and now.

Ferrari shares with Greco and Minujín a stay in Europe at the beginning of his artistic career that shaped his interests and provided an understanding of recent trends. Born in Buenos Aires in 1920, he was originally trained as an engineer and began sculpting in the mid-1950s while living between Argentina and Italy, initially producing ceramic vessels. In 1959 he began to make sculptures, initially in the manner of earlier Argentine geometric abstraction. As he incorporated metal wire into the works, however,

their geometric coherence began to give way to a sense of chaotically drawn lines in three-dimensional space, as in *Paloma* (1961) [Figure 46]. He produced his first drawings, which resemble the sculptures, in 1962 while living in Milan [Figure 47]. But he soon began to organize the abstractions into horizontal bands. This becomes explicit in the *Music* series of that year, where the form of notational music—its syntax—is suggested [Figure 48]. He also began to write in this moment, listing various details of his daily routine, from experiments with different materials to mundane activities. His notebooks from this period contain lists of fictional words organized by non-semantic affinities such as rhyme [Figure 49].

At the end of 1962 Ferrari produced several series of untitled works on paper that he would refer to as *Escrituras deformadas* [*Deformed Writings*] and *Dibujos escritos* [*Written Drawings*], which, although they remain abstract, mimic the appearance of written language, and specifically the form of script, or cursive writing, in which calligraphic lines connect different characters [Figure 50].[117] They also make reference to what was by then a tradition of gestural abstraction, not just in drawing but in painting, such as the late works of Jackson Pollock that oscillate between gestural mark, figuration, and language [Figure 51], and the graffiti-inspired work of Cy Twombly, whose work Ferrari would have seen in Italy [Figure 52]. In the *Escrituras deformadas*, abstractions become signs or units linked to the next by line. If the expressive mark is turned into repeatable unit, however, it is no longer expressive, but linguistic; it becomes like a letter or a word. The modernist mark has been turned into a repeatable code. Another precursor of Ferrari's experimentation is the Belgian artist Henri Michaux, who drew and painted

[117] Andrea Giunta, ed., *Leon Ferrari: Retrospectiva. Obras 1954-2004*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Centro Cultural Recoleta), 2004, p. 366.

fictional letters and calligraphic glyphs [Figure 53]. Michaux's characters are discreet and separate, while Ferrari insists on connecting them, blurring the boundary between individual and syntactical units. This echo of cursive writing in the *Dibujos escritos* is a clue to Ferrari's treatment, in his early work, of different practices requiring the human hand: his approach is not comparative but combinatory. Writing is de-formed—its form is lost—by its conversion into drawing and gestural abstraction. Gestural abstraction, in turn, is organized into writing through the semblance of units and syntax. The artist presents the two practices at their points of contiguity—precisely where their specificities begin to break down. Despite his attachment to works on paper and sculpture, Ferrari shared with the other two critically influential Argentine proto-conceptualists the common aim of producing new approaches through the exposure of the obsolescence of earlier ones such as painting or sculpture.

Ferrari continued to produce *Dibujos escritos* up until his first overt mention of politics in 1963, in his *Carta a un general* [*Letter to a General*] series [Figure 54].[118] A brief coup d'etat in 1962 cut short Argentina's first experiment with democracy since the Perón years, making clear that the military was inclined to take over if the elected government ever leaned too far to the left. Ferrari, having returned to Argentina a year earlier, makes the simple gesture of altering the title of his work so that it is now identified as a "letter." Abstraction stands in for a political reality: the powerlessness of a given citizen to contest the actions of the military. The very indecipherability of this letter becomes the sign of the loss of democratic speech; there is no point in trying to communicate with a general. Alongside other politically-motivated artists of this moment, such as Antonio Segui and Antonio Berni, in which modernist style is blended

[118] Ibid, p. 367.

with local traditions of caricature [Figure 55], Ferrari is both insistently anti-figurative and anti-message; his message is that no message is possible.[119]

In 1964, he began to draw the legible texts that he called *cuadros escritos* [*written paintings*] [Figure 56]. In the best known of these, the relatively consistent horizontal organization of some of the *dibujos escritos* gives way to elegant, loping handwriting that varies the size and placement of words. Language takes on the qualities of gestural line, but not to the point of illegibility. Spaces now separate individual words, a sign that the artist has moved from a semblance of writing to writing itself. But what is also new is the mention of painting in the title. The text describes a painting—what the author would paint, if he could. It begins by mocking the myth that God imbues an artist with great talent:

> If I knew how to paint, if God in His haste and bewildered by mistaken confusion had touched me, I would clutch the sable hairs of at the tip of a branch of limber ash soaking wet submerged in bright red oil and just there I would begin a slim delicate line with the intention of covering it then working with transparency.[120]

Elsewhere, he likens this would-be painting to Klein's *Anthropometries* and Fontana's sliced canvases. He also cautions, cryptically, that it would not be:

> …fruit or stones or balls, who knows what, not Surrealist either, I would have to have the painting here to solve this under the sway of a fit of inspiration,

[119] For sources on Berni, see *Antonio Berni: obras graficas*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Museo de Arte Moderno, 1999), Mari Carmen Ramírez, *Cantos Paralelos: la parodia plástica en el arte argentino contemporáneo=visual parody in contemporary Argentinean art*, exh. cat. (Austin: Jack S. Blanton Museum of Art, The University of Texas at Austin, 1999), pp. 185-194, and Jorge Glusberg, *Antonio Berni*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, 1997) For sources on Segui, see Claude Schweisguth, *Antonio Segui: œuvres sur papier*, exh. cat. Museé Nacional d'Arte Moderne (Paris: Centre Pompidou, 2005), and author unkown, *Antonio Segui: obras gráficas*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Museo de Arte Moderno, 2001).

[120] León Ferrari, "Written Painting," trans. R. Kelly Washbourne, in Inés Katzenstein, ed., *Listen, Here, Now! Argentine Art of the 1960s: Writings of the Avant-Garde* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2004), pp. 276-77.

> something totally new unknown the hidden heart of the whole work: forty square centimeters deliberately concealed in the several meters of this composition so that none may hear the inaudible language…[121]

The disavowal of Surrealism is important, for the image resembles automatic writing, both in its digressive tone and its mention of "inaudible language," which suggests a mysterious or ambiguous meaning. At the same time, however, "inaudible language" might refer to that which is written—that which must be seen to be read. Because of its meandering, off-kilter script, there is a duration, an intervening beat between seeing and reading the text, between intuiting a drawing and recognizing what is drawn as spoken language or potential utterance. Drawing becomes a way for Ferrari to open up a space in which, for an instant, writing is free from the onus of being spoken. At the end, Ferrari declares, "God refused to touch me"; he cannot, does not, paint after all.[122] Thus a what-if scenario has been outlined in which four different practices are in play: drawing, writing, speaking, and painting. Both painting and speaking are conjured as ideas but remain refused in some way, painting perhaps because of its metaphysical baggage.[123] Speech, however, in which language is not tied to the ambiguity of drawing, was about to become central to Ferrari's art.

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[121] Ibid, p. 277.
[122] Ibid, p. 279.
[123] It is this dimension of Ferrari's graphic work between 1962 and 1964 that has led MoMA curator Luis Pérez-Oramas, in a recent catalogue essay, to argue that the artist, along with the Brazilian neo-concretist Mira Schendel, constitute uniquely Latin American alternatives to "conceptual art." Not seeking to expand the working definition of this historical category, Pérez-Oramas understands "conceptual art" as the North American and European introduction of language into the work of art as exemplified by artists such as Sol LeWitt. In this mini-history, Ferrari and Schendel are emblematic of a use of language in art that works from abstraction—from the material, mute dimension of language—in carrying out a sustained investigation of its "visual appearance." While his argument is problematic in likening two artists who have virtually no historical connection and in its omission of Ferrari's message-based art between 1965 and 1975, it stands as an intriguing attempt to chart alternative, geographically "Southern" narratives of the shift from modernism to postmodernism. See Luis Pérez-Oramas, "León Ferrari and Mira Schendel: Tangled Alphabets," in *Tangled Alphabets: León Ferrari and Mira Schendel*, exh. cat. (New York: MoMA, 2009), pp. 15-16, and Daniel Quiles, "*Tangled Alphabets: León Ferrari and Mira Schendel* at MoMA," *Artforum* (New York), Summer 2009.

In this same year, he was taking notes toward a collaborative project involving a number of the younger avant-garde artists in his circle in Buenos Aires, among them Minujín and Santantonín, to be called "babelism." The unrealized work, as Ferrari wrote in his notebook, was to yield "something without unity, with different sensibilities… As you can see, nothing that I have done up until now is babelish."[124] This proposal is significant, in that now, instead of different media, different authors would be inseparably combined, as in *La destrucción*, in which a group of artists dismantled and reconstituted a number of her works, after which they were burnt in a bonfire. For Ferrari, this undoing of unique authorship would take the form of the combination of different, perhaps irreconcilable, voices.

In 1965, Ferrari made an abrupt shift to work bearing overtly political messages, beginning with his controversial entry for the Premio Nacional at the ITDT. Romero Brest asked the artist to remove the most incendiary of his several Vietnam-themed sculptures, the two-meter-high *Civilización occidental y cristiana* [*Western Christian Civilization*], a statue of a crucified Christ mounted on a model of an American fighter jet [Figure 57].[125] He saw the work as relating to its developmentalist site of display, noting that he sought to situate it "in the place of those liberties that the U.S. bombers were

[124] *León Ferrari: Retrospectiva*, pp. 367-8.

[125] See Andrea Giunta, "Política del montaje: León Ferrari y la Civilización Occidental y Cristiana," in *Cultura y política en los años '60*, ed. Enrique Oteiza (Buenos Aires: CBC Publications Office, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1997). The title of this work is closely related to the ultra-specific title of another of Ferrari's sculptures, the lost work *La Civilización occidental y cristiana bombardea escuelas en Vietnam (Long Dien, Cauxé, Linn Phung, My Cay, An Tann, An Minh, an Hoa, Duc Hoa)* [*Western Christian Civilization Unleashes Bombs on Vietnam Schools…*], which featured a smaller model of *Western Christian Civilization* mounted in a frontal sculptural composition with numerous hands and arms reaching skyward. See Héctor Olea, "León Ferrari: From the Drawing of Texts to the Texture of Poetry," in *Inverted Utopias*, ed. Héctor Olea and Mari Carmen Ramírez, *Inverted utopias: avant-garde art in Latin America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), pp. 411-423.

proclaiming."[126] *Civilización occidental y cristiana* signals a sharp movement away from his earlier abstraction not only because it is representational; he has embraced the Surrealist juxtaposition of two unexpected objects that he had argued against in *Cuadro escrito*.[127] And yet unlike the Surrealist example, in which the two objects are meant to open up new associations and meanings for one another, this particular combination is directed toward a singular meaning: a condemnation of the war's legitimating ideology. Subtle fusions of media and style are absent; this is a sculpture for which three-dimensionality is unimportant. It is meant to exist only as image—it has the directness of speech and not the duration required by written language. If in the *Dibujos escritos* and *Cuadros escritos* it is the media themselves, and their juxtapositions, that are of central interest, here it is content—the message of the work.

With *Civilización occidental y cristiana*, Ferrari pinpointed a mode of speech that was outside the boundaries of decorum in the art world—the undiplomatic protest—that, in being censored, exposed the necessarily apolitical stance of the developmentalist art institution in Argentina. By 1965 Minujín had crafted an art that explored the effects and possibilities afforded by institutional space, while Ferrari had begun to locate the discursive limits of that same site: exactly how much political content could be included for a work to still be exhibitable. Inspired by outrage over a conflict taking place halfway across the world, he was uncovering the terms of what could be said and what could not be said in the official space of art in Argentina, a year before another military coup would restrict those terms all the more. This dialectic between the institution's physical

[126] Giunta, *Leon Ferrari: Retrospectiva*, p. 371.
[127] I refer in particular to the sculptural practice of the "Surrealist object" undertaken by Salvador Dalí, Joan Miró, and others in the *Exhibition of Surrealist Objects* show of 1936 at Galerie Charles Ratton in Paris. See Briony Fer, "Objects of desire," in *Realism, Rationalism, Surrealism: Art between the Wars* (New Haven: Yale University Press in association with The Open University, 1993), pp. 221-231.

conditions and enclosure on the one hand and its communicative situation or boundaries on the other persisted throughout the emergence and transformations of Argentine conceptual art from the 1960s into the 1970s.

Self-Reflective Rupture

All three of the artists discussed in this chapter generated new forms by working through the exhaustion of older ones. Greco reduced drawing and painting to their basic operations—the delimitation of space and the indexed gesture—to build the foundation of the *Vivo-Dito* and shift the emphasis from the art object to the artist's and viewer's actions. Minujín turned assisted readymades into mini-environments, and her destruction of these sculptures resulted in collaborative, action-based practice. Ferrari illustrated the limits of drawing and painting as media through their juxtaposition and combination with writing, producing hybrids. Their three quite distinct trajectories in this period are united by a high level of self-awareness that translated, in Greco and Ferrari's case, to the work's form, and in Minujín's case to subtle gestures interspersed throughout the density of her happenings and environments.

In Greco's early *Vivo-Ditos* and Ferrari's *Dibujos escritos* the result is quite similar: systems are exposed and disabled. They come into view, and as a result can no longer function inconspicuously. Greco re-signals an initial act of signaling, undermining the nominal act at the very moment that he takes it up. While his specific reasons for doing so are made clear above, it is this structural model that would persist in the work of conceptualists in the second half of the decade. His declarations of greatness and would-be triumphant actions were always undercut with doubt or an impulse toward self-

destruction, but his impulse to signal the signal, to frame the act of framing, constitutes a sound strategy for undermining any given artistic convention. It is no coincidence that Greco devised this approach. To add a layer of self-reflection is to actively appropriate a peripheral position, to assume a gaze from afar. For Ferrari, combination emerged as part of a methodical production of works on paper, and not as one of many dramatizations of the anxiety of influence. He quickly reached a limit, however, to what could be achieved by subverting one medium through another; already in *Cuadro escrito*, writing is fully operational. With *Civilización occidental y cristiana* his focus shifted entirely from media that were being combined to messages that were being juxtaposed. Violent events in his home country and abroad inspired him to abandon his formalist trajectory in favor of what he would later call *el arte de los significados*, or "art of meanings."

Minujín, who effectively institutionalized Greco's extra-institutional activity to such success that she was able to move to New York for the second half of the decade, nonetheless repeatedly acknowledged the viewer's position in her works. In *Cabalgata* she created a second-order viewer who would watch the participants on television. In *La menesunda*, she and Santantonín included television feedback of visitors' progression through the environment, alienating sensorial experience in the midst of its conjuration. The overabundance of these works, however, obscured this self-critical dimension in favor of play and absurdity. The happening and environment, which enhance the spatial experience of the gallery, were ideal forms through which the ITDT promoted itself to an emergent audience in the 1960s and became the center of a contemporary art public in Buenos Aires. Even when works by Minujín or others of Romero Brest's group appeared outside of the gallery, as in *Suceso plástico*, it was as though the institution was mapping

itself onto that public space through publicity. If Greco's bid to escape had failed and public space was now institutional space, critique could now only come from within—something that Minujín would herself attempt in several works from 1966 forward. With *Civilización occidental y cristiana*, Ferrari perhaps unintentionally located a discursive limit in institutional space: the quotient of political outrage that would be required to get a given work censored. In doing so, he repositioned the artist as an actor who negotiates or transgresses the border between what may and may not be said in official spaces of exhibition. He and Minujín embody the twin preoccupations—communication and exhibition site—of the art that was to come.

Chapter 2
Disarm Machines: Oscar Masotta's Conceptualism, 1965-1967

Language will always be before the world, before objects, except when it transforms object into language, that is to say, disarms a machine and transforms it into language.[1]

-Ricardo Carreira

[...I]n short, move inside these groups with the strategy of robbing the group of its dynamic, freezing it.[2]

-Roberto Jacoby

A television camera records a teletype machine sending a message. This message, along with the footage of the transmission, is relayed to a television set and another teletype machine in a different location, perhaps a different city. Roberto Jacoby's *Circuitos informacionales cerrados* [*Closed Information Circuits*] [Figure 58], a work that was conceived but not executed beyond this sketch of 1967, proposed a situation in which recording devices would record one another, converting each other into information.[3] This tautological process unveils its own structure, its code: it is a closed circuit of self-reportage. By directing the recording devices at themselves, Jacoby converts them into feedback mechanisms that report on their own function. The relay of an event in real time as it happens is doubled back upon itself; the information recorded is the act, and duration, of recording itself. The circuit is "closed"; nothing is added to the system from without. Yet the viewer, a consciousness, is positioned outside the circuit, able to read it and see how it works. The closed circuit of media transmission is laid out for analysis. In the process, it is broken, for all that has been transmitted—its message—is its own code. In exposing its code, message fails.

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[1] "El lenguaje siempre estará frente al mundo, frente a los objetos, salvo cuando se transforma al objeto en lenguaje, es decir, desarma una máquina y la transforma en lenguaje." Ricardo Carreira, *El error y otros textos* (Buenos Aires: Amadeo Mandarino, 2000), p. 20. My translation.

[2] Roberto Jacoby, "Against the Happening (1966)," trans. Eileen Brockbank, *LHN*, p. 230.

[3] Roberto Jacoby, "Closed Information Circuits (1967)," trans. Eileen Brockbank, in Inés Katzenstein, ed., *Listen, Here, Now! Argentine Art of the 1960s: Writings of the Avant-Garde* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2004), p. 251.

Circuitos informacionales cerrados aims to reveals this structure, or code, by directing media against their normative uses. The works considered in this chapter repeatedly employ the analytical operation of Argentine conceptual art: to break apart a system so that it is understood, and to understand a system so that it is broken. The contention of the previous chapter is that in the early 1960s Alberto Greco and León Ferrari were among the first to experiment with this impulse, turning it upon traditional or basic artistic acts such as signaling, signing, or drawing. With the added weight of terms derived from philosophy and communication theory—redundancy, discontinuity, apperception—analysis in art was given a more formal prescription by the cultural critic, pedagogue, and occasional artist Oscar Masotta between 1965 and 1967. At one point he labeled these practices *desmaterialización*, or "dematerialization": a reference to an abandonment of the art object on the one hand, but also the tendency to break down, to dismantle and decompose systems, that is evident in so many of the works he and the artists close to him produced. In 1966, Jacoby was a member of an exclusive reading group led by Masotta that included artists Eduardo Costa, Raúl Escari, and Juan Risuleo and sociologist Eliseo Verón, in which these ideas were developed collaboratively. Meeting weekly and ultimately producing manifestos and documentation of their projects, Masotta's group applied his analytical approach to artistic and social systems: everyday conversation, social and class relations, the genre of the happening, art-world publicity, mass media technologies, the "mass media" as a larger entity, urban space, and others.[4] Their strategies were quickly taken up by Marta Minujín, who participated in some of the reading groups and turned some of their ideas to her own ends.[5]

[4] As detailed below, El Grupo de los Artes de los Medios Masivos lasted for a single work, the *Primera obra de arte de los medios* [*First Work of Media Art*] or *Happening para un jabalí difunto* [*Happening for*

To Induce the Spirit of the Happening

This section reviews the intellectual trajectory that led Oscar Masotta to the art world of Buenos Aires, where he promoted strategies for dissembling codes for analysis by a viewer that would guide the production of Argentine conceptual artists from 1966 to 1968.[6] Masotta's conceptualism was derived from an amalgam of structuralist thinkers—Lacan, Lévi-Strauss, and Barthes among them—and advocated sociological explorations of cultural phenomena. The art forms that Masotta dissected in his lectures, writings, and artworks were Pop art, the happening, and the comic strip.[7] Masotta's discussion of Pop art remained at the level of a critical assessment, but he chose to address the happening through his own works of art in addition to writing and lectures. Developed collaboratively, Masotta's ideas are found contemporaneously in the works of his artist colleagues, some of which are discussed in later sections.

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a Dead Boar], but their practice was folded into Masotta's designation of "media art" as a new genre in a lecture about "dematerialization" delivered at the ITDT on July 21, 1967. See Oscar Masotta, "Después del Pop: Nosotros desmaterializamos," in *Conciencia y estructura* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Jorge Alvarez, 1968), pp. 218-244.
[5]

[6] Masotta is a relatively new name in the United States, but in Latin America and Spanish letters he has been widely discussed. A popular methodology in books about Masotta is the assembly of various different colleagues and friends, who all provide short recollections. See Alicia Alonso, ed., *Oscar Masotta: lecturas críticas* (Buenos Aires: Atuel-Anáfora, 2000) and Marcelo Izaguirre, ed., *Oscar Masotta: El revés de la trama* (Buenos Aires: Atuel-Anáfora, 1999). Other close associates, such as Germán García and Carlos Correas, have written personal accounts of Masotta; García writes about Masotta's influence as an "echo" throughout his own work, while Correas critiques Masotta for betraying orthodox Marxism. See Carlos Correas, *La Operación Masotta* (Buenos Aires: Interzona, 2007) and Germán García, *Oscar Masotta: Los ecos de un nombre* (Barcelona: Edición Eolia, 1992).

[7] I do not engage Masotta's essays on comic strips here, but they are likewise premised on Masotta's interest in parsing message and code: in looking past the jokes and content of the strips to see their basic structure as a series of discrete still images. They consist of a prologue to a volume about comics published in 1966 by the Escuela Panamericana de Arte and a lecture at the Di Tella in October 1967. See Oscar Masotta, "El 'esquematismo' contemporáneo y la historieta," in *Conciencia y estructura*, pp. 210-217, and "Reflexiones presemiológicas sobre la historieta: El esquematismo," in *Lenguaje y comunicación social*, ed. Eliseo Verón (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Nueva Visión, 1971), pp. 192-228.

This chapter is positioned against Philip Derbyshire's recent account of Masotta as a "beacon-author" who took it upon himself to explain Lacan and other continental thinkers to a peripheral public. Derbyshire reviews Masotta's writings about literature and psychoanalysis but completely ignores his textual and artistic production between 1965 and 1968, in the process neglecting Masotta's focus on aesthetics and fusion of different methodologies and disciplines in the formation of his own aesthetic in this moment.[8] In what follows it is essential that Masotta be understood as freely mixing structuralism and cybernetic models of communication, playing with their different lexicons and introducing new terms when he sees fit; it is precisely this deviation from European theory that played into the formation of a uniquely Argentine approach to conceptualism. In addition, Masotta's artistic projects must be placed on equal footing with his writings so that the two are read in tandem. To take a truly interdisciplinary practitioner seriously, the entire range of his or her production, regardless of media or school of thought, must be engaged as a totality and on its own terms.

Born in 1930, Masotta initially studied philosophy at the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras at UBA. He did not finish the degree, and remained an autodidact for the rest of his career. He began to write in the 1950s, initially for the *Revista de la Universidad de Buenos Aires* and *Centro* (the student journal of the Facultad), as well as the existentialist-Leftist journal *Contorno* from 1953 to 1959, and other publications.[9] His early writings addressed varied topics, ranging from a critique of the Borges-associated literary journal *Sur* (Masotta dubbed it "colonialist anti-Peronism") to discussions of

[8] Philip Derbyshire, "Who was Oscar Masotta?" *Radical Philosophy* 158 (Nov.-Dec. 2009), pp. 11-23.
[9] Masotta also published essays in the newspaper *Democracia* (1957), the Jewish-Argentine journal *Comentario* (1958), *Revista Centro* (1959), the Uruguayan weekly *Marcha* (1960), the newspaper *Discusión* (1963), and many others. Historian Oscar Terán's work has focused on the importance of *Contorno*, edited by David and Ismael Viñas, as a rebuke to the elitism of Victoria Ocampo's *Sur*.

Sartre and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology to assessments of contemporary Argentine writers such as Daniel Lagache and Roberto Arlt.[10] Masotta also wrote briefly for the newspaper *Clase obrera* [*Working Class*], situating himself between activist and more traditionally analytical intellectual activity.[11]

A shift in philosophical orientation took root following a nervous breakdown brought on by the death of his father in 1960. Masotta underwent intensive psychotherapy with Enrique Pichón Rivière, a founding member of the Argentine Psychoanalytic Association, who introduced him to the writings of Jacques Lacan.[12] On March 12, 1964 he presented a paper at El Instituto Pichón Rivière's Escuela de Psiquiatría Social, "Jacques Lacan y el inconsiente en los fundamentos de la filosofía" ["Jacques Lacan and the Unconscious in the Foundations of Philosophy"], one of the first mentions of Lacan in Spanish-language scholarship.[13] The essay is framed as an introduction to the thinker and an argument for his importance, concurring with Lacan that psychoanalysis must

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[10] For a discussion of the multifaceted writing of Masotta and David Viñas, another writer who alternated between literary and social criticsm, see Nicolás Rosa, ed., *David Viñas y Oscar Masotta: ensayo literario y critica sociologica* (Rosario: Ediciones Paradoxa, Universidad Nacional de Rosario, Dirección de Publicaciones, 1989).

[11] See Ana Longoni, "Estudio preliminar: Vanguardia y revolución en los sesenta," in *Revolución en el arte: Pop-art, happenings y arte de los medios en la década del sesenta* (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2004), pp. 9-105, and Longoni and Mariano Mestman, "After Pop, We Dematerialize: Oscar Masotta, Happenings, and Media Art at the Beginnings of Conceptualism," trans. Linda Phillips, in *LHN*, p. 156. For overviews of the postwar intellectual landscape in Argentina, see Carlos Altamirano and Beatríz Sarlo, *La batalla de las ideas (1943-1973)* (Buenos Aires: Ariel, 2001), Silvia Sigal, *Intelectuales y poder en la decáda del sesenta* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno de Argentina, 2002), and Oscar Terán, *Rasgos de la cultural intelectual argentina, 1956-1966: Latin American Studies Center Series No. 2* (College Park, MD: Oscar Terán, 1991), and *Nuestras años sesentas: La formación de la nueva izquierda intelectual en la Argentina 1956-1966* (Buenos Aires: Puntosur, 1991).

[12] Masotta's entry into psychoanalysis resulted from a depression brought on by the death of his father. For more on Masotta's relationship with psychoanalysis, see Germán Leopoldo Garcia, *Oscar Masotta y el psicoanálisis del castellano* (Barcelona: Editorial Argonauta, 1980), Mariano ben Plotkin, *Freud in the Pampas: The Emergence and Development of a Psychoanalytic Culture in Argentina* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 185-190, and Hernán Scholten, *Oscar Masotta y la fenomenología: un problema en la historia del psicoanálisis* (Buenos Aires: Anáfora, 2001).

[13] Oscar Masotta, "Jacques Lacan, o El inconsciente en los fundamentos de la filosofía," *Pasado y Presente* [Córdoba] vol. 3, no. 9 (Apr.-Sept. 1965), pp. 1-15. Reprinted in *Conciencia y estructura*, pp. 69-93. See also Plotkin, p. 187.

progress by reconstituting itself as philosophy. Masotta also commences his discussion of code and message, initially as part of Lacan's terminology.

> The subject of psychoanalysis wanders for Lacan between the *code*, or that which he calls the "place of the other"... and the *message*; between the chain of the signifier—where the subject that speaks in him and indeed remains obscure to himself captures and structures itself—and the "circle of discourse," constituted from unities of signification and where the subject makes himself announce the sense and the truth of the words that he himself pronounces...by the relation (to the other, imaginary) that unites him to the analyst.[14]

In the essay "Roberto Arlt, yo mísmo," of the following year, Masotta confesses his shift in allegiance from 1957 to 1965 to Levi-Strauss and Lacan from Sartre and Merleau-Ponty—a reflection of a larger shift among European and Latin American intellectuals at this moment. Masotta now regards inquiry into unconscious structures as a component of a necessary revision of Marxism.[15] "I have just begun to understand," Masotta writes, "that Marxism is not, in absolute, a philosophy of consciousness/conscience [...] The philosophy of Marxism has to be reencountered and made precise in modern doctrines (or "sciences") of languages, of structures and of the unconscious..."[16] Masotta would later title his compilation of essays *Conciencia y estructura* [*Conscience and Structure*] (1968) in reference to this passage.[17] The two terms serve as poles for the hybrid cultural criticism that Masotta crafted over the course of the decade. *Conciencia*, which means

[14] *Conciencia y estructura*, p. 78. My translation.
[15] Masotta, "Roberto Arlt, yo mismo," in *Conciencia y estructura*, pp. 177-192. The essay was originally a talk given in the "Artes y Ciencias" salon of February 12, 1965, in a presentation introduction the publication of Masotta's book *Sexo y traición en Roberto Arlt* (Buenos Aires: J. Alvarez, 1965), which had originally been written in 1957. "Roberto Arlt, yo mismo," then, is Masotta's accounting for his personal and intellectual transformation during this interim. He eschews a discussion of Arlt or his work in favor of a discussion of his own experience during his mental breakdown in the early 1960s.
[16] Ibid, pp. 188-189. My translation.
[17] A curriculum vitae for Masotta that accompanied a 1967 Guggenheim Fellowship application, suggests that it was set to be published in April 1967, which suggests that Masotta's ultimate statement on avant-gardism and media art, "Después de Pop: nosotros desmaterializamos," among several other 1967 essays, were late additions. Oscar Masotta, "Curriculum Perteneciente a Oscar Masotta," ITDT archives, Di Tella University.

both "conscience" and "consciousness," condenses Marxism and psychoanalysis.[18] *Estructura*, on the other hand, refers to the structuralism of Lévi-Strauss, Barthes, and Lacan, which supplanted Sartrean existentialism as dominant modes of inquiry in Argentine intellectual circles in the early 1960s.[19]

On first glance, these two terms might be seen as constituting a dialectic or dyad not only in Masotta's thinking but also in terms of these competing intellectual trends. For there to be either "consciousness" or "conscience" posits the existence of a subject with agency; one who either becomes aware or acts responsibly in light of that awareness (of, for example, economic or political inequality). "Structure," however, refers to the implications of the work of structuralism's anthropological, semiotic and psychoanalytic dimensions: that the subject as previously thought does not exist, but is in fact constituted by structures of the psyche, language, and social mandate. That is, investigations into structure would encompass precisely those structures which act upon and constitute subjects and insodoing comprise the social order against which consciousness or conscience sets itself. In the combination of these two terms in the title, then, the author implies that the discovery and scrutiny of structure in fact constitutes an act of *conciencia*. Analysis is presented as a committed practice; a claim is staked for the social value of essentially academic inquiry. Masotta's subsequent investigations of political,

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[18] This resonance of the dual meaning of *conciencia* is paralleled in Brazil in the mid-1960s in *conscientização*—"learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions"—a key component of the pedagogical philosophy of Paolo Freire. For both Freire and Masotta it is consciousness of ideological structures that presumably leads to conscience, or the impulse to take action against those forces. See Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York: The Seabury Press, 1973). Freire's lifelong project to educate rural workers recalls the proletarian advocacy of *Tucumán Arde*, and is discussed in Chapter 3.

[19] Longoni, "Oscar Masotta: Vanguardia y revolución en los sesenta," pp. 31-5. Longoni views Masotta as the ultimate liminal intellectual, who made the very problematicization of such debates the subject matter of much of his work and theory. See also Sigal, Terán, and others for an overview of intellectual history in Argentina in the 1960s.

cultural, and psychological codes through art and criticism would earn him the ire of some of his more orthodox Marxist peers, who felt that his path from analysis to action was not schematic enough.[20]

Masotta's involvement with art began when he and architect César Jannello founded the Centro de Estudios Superiores de Arte de la Universidad de Buenos Aires in 1964. In 1965 Masotta was given a research position in the Facultad de Arquitectura, which he would hold until 1967 (amidst the wave of firings instigated by the Onganía regime).[21] In September 1965 he hosted a series of lectures at the ITDT on Pop Art that were later published in the book *El "pop-art"* in 1967.[22] One of the contentions of *El "pop-art"* is that Pop's achievement is its artists' separation of code and message in engaging pop-cultural systems of meaning. The book discusses both American artists— Andy Warhol, Allan D'Arcangelo, Roy Lichtenstein, Jim Dine, George Segal, and Marisol— that Masotta had only seen in reproduction (he did not see New York Pop firsthand until his trip to New York from January to April 1966).

El "pop-art" begins with a "prologue" in which Masotta posits a distinction between Surrealism, which he associates with *metáfora* [metaphor], and Pop art, which he sees as fundamentally characterized by *redundancia* [redundancy].

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[20] Correas's book *Operación Masotta* in particular condemns his late friend for an ambiguous commitment to Marxism throughout the 1960s, particularly in Masotta's association with the Di Tella, which was seen as an extension of capitalism and Western imperialism because of its embrace of the non-agit-prop artwork. Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino's seminal leftist film *La hora de los hornos* [*Hour of the Furnaces*] (1968) reserved a special section of the film for a condemnation of the Di Tella. Likewise, the critic Marta Traba, who emerged as the central critic of Latin American art in the 1970s, lambasted the Di Tella's conceptualism as slavishly imitating North American and European trends and not sufficiently representing a Latin American political position.

[21] Ana Longoni, "Oscar Masotta: Vanguardia y revolución en los sesenta," in *Oscar Masotta: Revolución en el arte*, ed. Ana Longoni, p. 16. An application for a Guggenheim grant from the ITDT archives details Masotta's activities at UBA, among them a co-authored text on architecture with Jannello titled "Trabajo Realizado," undated, ITDT Archives, Di Tella University.

[22] Oscar Masotta, *El "pop-art"* (Buenos Aires: Columba, 1967).

> Redundancy… measures a continuity, the bridge that reaches from code to message, where the possibility is generated to communicate sense. We could say, in line with information theorists, that redundancy is an operation whose end is to constitute the signified, that is, an operation in the service and in the "care" of the transmission of the message[… T]his difference in levels, to maintain itself, serves to obscure the concurrence of its functions, and would additionally have to exacerbate the distinction between information and communication: redundancy thus pertains to the order of quantitative measurements of information, and metaphor to the qualitative order of sense to the "contents" of communication…[23]

Masotta's terms are echoed in the work of a number of the major theorists of communication at this moment. Redundancy, message, and code are important terms in the anthropologically-inflected communication theory of Gregory Bateson, who was a key source for the work of Eliseo Verón, a sociologist and close associate of Masotta's who would contribute to *Happenings* and include Masotta in compilations of his own.[24] Masotta himself mentioned Bateson alongside "Sartre (although today less so), Levi-Strauss, Barthes[…] and finally, Freud and Jacques Lacan" as one of his "masters" in response to a magazine questionnaire in 1966, though Bateson is not included in the bibliography appended to *El "pop-art."*[25] Nonetheless, "message," "code," and "redundancy" are all key concepts in Bateson's thought, which was derived in part from communication theorists such as Norbert Wiener and Claude Shannon.[26] "The message

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[23] *El "pop-art"*, p. 10-11. My translation.

[24] Verón cites Bateson in a number of his sociological and communication theory-related texts of the early 1960s. See Eliseo Verón, "El análisis estructural en ciencias sociales (1963)," "Comunicación y neurosis: el aprendizaje de estructuras (1964)," and "El sentido de la acción social (1965, 1967)," in *Conducta, estructura y comunicación: Escritos teóricos 1959-1973* (Buenos Aires: Amorrortu editores, 1995), pp. 27-120 & 151-196. He included Masotta in the panel that led to the *Lenguaje y comunicación social* volume, op. cit.

[25] The comments were in response to a survey by the magazine *Ensayo cultural* in 1966. Oscar Masotta, "La literatura y el 'hombre corriente,'" in *Conciencia y estructura*, p. 195. See Gregory Bateson, "Redundancy and Coding," in *Steps To an Ecology of Mind: The new information sciences can lead to a new understanding of man* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1972).

[26] See Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1949), and Norbert Weiner, *Cybernetics: Or the Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1948). Shannon and Weaver are particularly interesting to consider in light of Masotta and his circle's interest in media and communication; the former

material," Bateson writes, "is said to contain 'redundancy' if, when the sequence is received with some items missing, the receiver is able to guess at the missing items with better than random success. [...T]he term redundancy so used becomes a synonym for 'patterning.'"[27] Redundancy involves the reinforcement, via repetition or patterning, of familiar terms. In Masotta's aesthetic thought this term would come to stand for an entire practice of a given system revealing itself as pattern—reflecting on itself, making its message redundant so that a larger code, or pattern, could be grasped. As in Jacoby's work above, media can be turned upon other media. Redundancy here means closed circuits that feed back or report on themselves and thereby expose themselves as systems. For a pattern to become apparent, however, the work must be made legible—redundantly so—only then is the viewer repositioned as a reader of systems.

Cited in the bibliography of *El "pop-art,"* Lawrence Alloway's 1958 essay "The Arts and the Mass Media," in which the term "Pop art" was first introduced, argues:

> An important factor in communication in the mass arts is high redundancy… The repetitive and overlapping structure of modern enterntainment works in two ways: (1) it permits marginal attention to suffice for those spectators who like to talk, neck, parade; (2) it satisfies, for the absorbed spectator, the desire for intense participation which leads to a careful discrimination of nuances in the action.[28]

Masotta's theory builds on the second of Alloway's contentions: that redundancy provokes a "desire for intense participation" that brings out "nuances" in the work of

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argue that no communication is possible without "noise," whether generated by mediating technologies or the tasks of interpretation themselves. In Ferrari's manifesto for a political "art of meanings" he frets that if works are too abstract—such as his own earlier drawings—that its meaning will be "deformed" at the hands of the interpretive viewer. At different moments the possibilities and risks of "noise" were embraced or rejected by the early Argentine conceptualists.

[27] Gregory Bateson, "Redundancy and Coding," in *Steps To an Ecology of Mind*, pp. 413-414.

[28] Lawrence Alloway, "The Arts and the Mass Media," in *Pop Art: A Critical History*, ed. Steven Henry Madoff (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 8. Originally published as Lawrence Alloway, "The Arts and the Mass Media," *Architectural Design & Construction* (February 1958), pp. 84-85.

mass-mediatic art. Masotta turns this seemingly accidental effect of redundancy in popular culture, originally instituted because of its convenience for an inattentive spectator, into a strategy for increased viewer participation through analysis.

Masotta concedes in the introduction to *El "pop-art"* that he did not see examples of North American Pop in person until after he had delivered the ITDT lectures. His knowledge of the work was limited to essays on Pop such as Alloway's, which generally featured black-and-white photographic reproductions of the works.[29] "I must confess that on one level at least, the 'fantasies' I had about the works before making any direct contact with them proved to be quite similar to what I was able to perceive in the face of the works themselves."[30] The implication of the term "fantasies" here, an ironic trace of the author's psychoanalytic training, is unclear. It could refer to fantasies about that information that the reproductions do not provide, such as color, texture, three-dimensionality, and scale. Masotta first experienced Pop in its already-mediated, mass-circulated form, a set of images stripped of color so that all attention was drawn to line: that which composes and delimits the image. It was, from the start, this quality of being already situated in the mass media that provided an initial example of how to separate aspects of the work that were normally fused. Pop was from the outset to be a foreign art, a kind of anthropological object to be studied and picked apart. Masotta's later titling of the book stages this redundant signal—the genre "pop-art" is put in quotes, as though an additional layer of distancing and attention were required.

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[29] Exemplifying Masotta's exhaustive research methods, the sources that Masotta included in the bibliography for *El "pop-art"* sampled such internationally diverse art magazines as *Art and Literature* (Paris), *Art in America* and *Artforum* (New York), *Studio International* and *The London Magazine* (London), among others, as well as citing other articles by Alloway such as "Notes on Five New York Painters," an essay for the Fall 1963 *Albright Knox Art Gallery Notes* discussing Jim Dine, Gary Indiana, Jasper Johns, Tom Wesselman, and Idelle Weber, and "Pop Art," an catalogue essay published in 1966 (after the ITDT lectures).

[30] Oscar Masotta, "Prologue to *Pop Art*," in *LHN*, p. 174.

Redundancy links Greco and Masotta and provides the key to the latter's theorization of an analytical art. The *Vivo-Dito*, both in its photographic form as the signaling of an act of signaling and in its relentless repetition of the artist's signature, is a way of undoing the smooth function of the signal—the identification of someting as art—and the signature—the act of taking credit for such an act of identification—as basic apparatuses of art. It is the excessive or conspicuous repetition of the signal that turns it, for Bateson, into a pattern. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Greco's *Vivo-Ditos* in *El "pop-art,"* shown as a series of three photographs beneath another photograph, with the artist's notes on a piece of paper on the right; they are presented as both repeated and photographic in nature.[31] Argentine conceptualism in its initial phase, between 1966 and 1967, will feature, time and time again, signals about signals, media about media. As an unavoidable pattern that insists on being read, the first-order signal—the original system that is redundantly signaled—cannot function normally. It is interrupted; its status as a signal as such is instead in question. Greco used redundancy in answer to the authorial aporias of the neo-avant-garde. It was a way of getting beyond the problem of taking credit for new things: to simply bring into question the very system by which one took credit for an "original" act, which in turn undoes the very necessity of a system by which original acts and actors are established. Masotta initially found this technique at work in the Pop artists in relation to mass media information, and later applied it to the genre of the happening and to the mass media as a whole. Toward the end of his brief period of

[31] *El "pop-art"*, p. 39.

interest in the Argentine art world, as detailed below, he may also have begun to consider the system of dictatorial propaganda as a viable subject for redundancy and exposure.[32]

El "pop-art" initially considers a group of Argentine artists—Rubén Santantonín, Emilio Renart, Juan Stoppani, Carlos Squirru, Luis Alberto Wells, and Minujín—whose styles are quite disparate but are grouped together as "Los imagineros argentinos." Masotta eschews a strict definition of the "imagineros," noting the "plurality of signifieds" in their work and that of U.S. Pop.[33] The term has been translated as "image-makers" but might also be taken to mean "imaginers" (*imaginar* means both to picture and to imagine).[34] Masotta credits Squirru, a contemporary of Minujín's from the ITDT, for helping him to understand U.S. Pop. Squirru's illustration of a pun exemplifies a "use of vulgar materials and broad, 'low' manners of signifying[...] These characteristic forms of conveying a message deliberately repeat the characteristic forms of mass communication. [...A]ll of this pointed to a complementary relationship between visual image and verbal language."[35]

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[32] After 1967, Masotta stopped making and writing about art, with the exception of several texts on comic strips.

[33] Masotta, "The Argentine Image-Makers," *LHN*, p. 175.

[34] Brian Holmes, in *LHN*, p. 175, translates the title as "The Argentine Image-Makers." Masotta's use of the term is interesting, as several of the artists to whom he speaks were not strictly image producers. Rubén Santantonín, discussed in the beginning, worked purely with the medium of sculpture. Masotta's interest with the "image-makers" is not in autonomous imagery, but relations created between image and language; Masotta writes of Squirru: "[A]ll of this pointed to a complementary relationship between visual image and verbal language. This relation *constitutes* the visual as incomplete, i.e., it constitutes the visual, in a stubbornly and perversely deliberate way, as something contrary to what one expects from any work of art: that it be sufficient unto itself..." This is the connection Masotta sees with U.S. Pop, which also used images linguistically. In the Argentine artists Masotta selects, however, the Pop techniques of repetition or what Masotta calls "redundancy" is not central. It is this technique, in artists such as Warhol, that for Masotta gives his images linguistic characteristics; they become units, a language of advertising or popular culture.

[35] *LHN*, pp. 176-78. In the work in question, Squirru painted a liver on a silhouette of a head, illustrating the Argentine phrase for a drunk person, "subírsele a uno el hígado a la cabeza," or "his liver has gone to his head." Masotta's interest lies in the fact that the viewer must resort to known linguistic knowledge to comprehend the image, which is then unveiled as insufficient on its own. For Masotta, this may have constituted a critique to the Argentine painterly practices of the recent past, such as Informalism's gestural abstraction and Nueva Figuración's faith in expressionist collage techniques.

Masotta's consideration of Warhol in *El "pop-art"* identifies what were to become the central preoccupations of Argentine conceptual art. He begins by declaring that Warhol can only be understood if one is well versed in semiotics, and reviews terms such as signifier, signified, code, and message, drawing from, among others, Ferdinand de Saussure, Roman Jakobson, Barthes and Lacan, from whom he adapts the "bar" schema originally presented in "The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious" [Figure 59]. The schema explains the pliability of signifiers in relation to the potential signifieds that they generate. The schema is used in *El "pop-art"* to illustrate a joke that explicates the capability of the signifier to generate multiple signifieds. Two friends want to try their luck at the casino, but only have enough money to pay for one of them to enter and gamble. They decide that one will wait outside the casino while the other gambles. The one waiting outside, as time passes, grows anxious; is his friend winning or losing? Finally the gambling friend appears in a window and draws a message on a piece of paper, letting it fall to his compatriot: he has drawn a fat person and a thin person and written "I" with an arrow pointing to the fat person. This is taken as a sign that his friend inside has won and they will both be rich, but when they are able to speak later, it is revealed that he had in fact gambled until he lost all of his money and that the drawing merely suggested that he had been "filled with illusions." It is from the code, Masotta indicates, that signs are capable of generating more than one possible interpretation.

> [...T]he same code operates in both cases. And effectively: a code was exactly what was on the paper: that is to say, a system of relations and correlations between signals (in our story, the drawings) and their signifieds. Thus we are able to say that our friend took a message for what was only a code, committing an

> error inverse to classical theories of language, which affirmed that the signified of a sign depends solely on context.[36]

This multiplicity of message in relation to code would be revisited in Masotta's writing on art, and would be shared in the work of a number of Argentine conceptualists who incorporated open signs into their works as cues for the viewer to engage in different interpretations. "What is a code?" Masotta continues.

> It is a structure and/or a phenomenon of double structuring [*estructuración*]. If we understand by structure the division of a sum of its parts in such a way that each one depends on its relation with the others, we will say that every one of the areas in which every level divides itself from our first scheme, and which we are able to call *subfields*, extracts its "value" from its relation with the other *subfield* and with the whole field that forms with that *subfield*.[37]

Codes are composed of discreet parts that are structured in relation to one another and the entirety of the system.

Masotta argues that Warhol shifts from the register of the image to that of the sign, from message to code, through his *multiplicaciones* [multiplications], which yield the signified *no-sentido* [nonsense] as opposed to unity or coherence. This nonsense in turn provokes an *apercepción* [apperception] of code, because any specific message has

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[36] *El revolución en el arte*, pp. 143-144. My translation. Although Barthes' *Mythologies* is not listed in the bibliography that Masotta appends to *El "pop-art"*, the objective of that 1957 text, and particularly its discussion of how ideology is transmitted via the popular photograph and caption in the section "Myth Today," is paralleled in Masotta's arguments about Pop. Barthes describes "*a second order semiological system*": a signifier that is a "global sign," already imbued with a signified, that takes on another signified to produce the mythological sign, and Masotta defines "code" as having a "double structuration." While Masotta's chief concern in *El "pop-art"* is the malleability of significations generated by code, this notion of compound signs is shared by both theorists. See Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), p. 114-115. Lacan uses the bar schema to show the close relation between signifier and signified. Jacques Lacan, *Écrits: A Selection*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002), pp. 142-143.

[37] *El revolución en el arte*, p. 145. My translation.

been undone by the repetition of images.[38] Because the work has been multiplied or broken apart, however, apperception is far from instantaneous—awareness of code comes about precisely from techniques that slow down the ordinarily instantaneous effects of images. Attention is instead drawn to the media that would carry these messages, which has been rendered conspicuously redundant—the mass media image is repeated until we cannot miss its "elemental code" of reproducibility. Masotta positions this mode of spectatorship against the *artes gestálticas* [Gestalt arts]:[39]

> Warhol obviously aims to convert multiplication into sign; that is to say, to make us feel its lateral relation with the idea of unity and/or of identity as gatekeepers of sense. His multiplications do not pretend to *express*, but, I would say, to *signify*... that is *that they want to make us feel the presence of the code*. ...In Warhol... intention opens onto a field of logical relations, that is to say: onto a code; or indeed, and that called a *structure*, which is itself a modern language that has little to do with Gestalt psychology.[40]

Instead of the holistic gestalt, Masotta argues, Warhol employs repetition to generate *discontinuidad* [discontinuity]: subtle differences or discrepancies (in Warhol's case, between the repeated images, which are both alike and different) that break up the smooth transmission of the message.[41] When the message or content of images is interrupted, it is their code, their underlying structure, which becomes visible, and vice versa—once the code is intuited, it can no longer transmit a message unseen.

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[38] "Apperception" as a philosophical and pedagogical concept goes back at least as far as Kant, who differentiated between "empirical" (corresponding to changing states in the present) and "transcendental" (corresponding to "experience" as an *a priori* category) modes of apperception. Read through Masotta's interest in Lacan, Kant's "self-consciousness" would need to pass through the linguistic structures that constitute the decentered self. Hence the use of the term "apperception": self-knowledge here is manifested through recognition of the codes that structure the surrounding, subject-constituting linguistic field.

[39] *Revolución en el arte*, p. 153. Masotta credits the term *artes gestálticas* to "Argan," who is likely the Italian theorist Giulio Carlo Argan, but he does not cite a further source.

[40] Ibid, pp. 152-153.

[41] This might be compared to the model of generative repetition outlined by Briony Fer in *The Infinite Line*, in which difference emerges from repetition amidst the effort to escape the neo-avant-garde bind. For Masotta, repetition is strictly of use for its benefit to the viewer; in creating discrepancies or points of curiosity, it catalyzes the analytic process.

> [Apperception] refers always, in spite of differences in context, to the idea of a reflexive, highly intellective principle proper to certain mental operations. And it appears also in the psychology of art to design a certain type of acts of [conciencia] consciousness that are distinguished from perception and imagination, and would realize themselves not so much through a lone act of consciousness but placed in relation to various successive valuated acts. ...[T]he manner in which Warhol elects to "flee" from the image consists in obligating the spectator to undertake different acts of consciousness to capture a single image. ...[W]arhol commits himself to the *discontinuous*, which institutes a principle of discontinuity at the point at which the consciousness of the spectator waits to catch the aesthetic object through a unique, continuous, totalizing act of consciousness. The consciousness of the spectator, thus returned to discontinuity from acts that must follow one another in time, remains disposed, prepared, predisposed a certain type of stimulation [*excitación*], which at this level has little to do with imagination.[42]

Discontinuity and apperception can be mutually causal. Apperception results from a series of acts of intuition that the mind can be trained to produce through the reception of the discontinuous work. Masotta even implies, through the Spanish verb *excitar*, which can connote sexual stimulation, that there is a pleasure in this interruption of the reception of an aesthetic whole that results in comprehension of structure.

"Discontinuity" is a principle engaged by both Barthes and Lévi-Strauss; the embrace of these structuralists in Argentina from the early 1960s forward has been well documented.[43] In Lévi-Strauss's "Structural Analysis in Linguistics and Anthropology" (1945), the anthropologist writes of the kinship system, "Each detail of terminology and each special marriage rule is associated with a specific custom as either its consequence or its survival. We thus meet with a chaos of discontinuity."[44] Here discontinuity (he also

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[42] Ibid, p. 162-3. Throughout I translate *conciencia* as "consciousness," though it also implies "conscience" in Spanish. The last sentence may be a reference to Masotta's reference to imagining in his titling of the Argentines "imagineros," suggesting that he saw U.S. Pop as more effective.

[43] Claudio Guerri and Mary Del Valle Ledesma, "Influencia del estructuralismo en la Argentina," *Artinf* [Buenos Aires], No. 84, Year 17 (Autumn 1993), pp. 41-42.

[44] Claude Lévi-Strauss, "Structural Analysis in Linguistics and Anthropology," in *Structural Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1963), p. 35. Masotta also reproduces masks from *Structural Anthropology* in *El*

uses "disequilibrium") has a dramatically temporal character—it arises in incest taboos as the "unit of kinship" shifts from one generation to the next.[45] In Barthes the term is applied to aesthetic inquiry. In "Literature and Discontinuity" (1962), he finds discontinuity in Michel Butor's book *Mobile: Study for a Representation of the United States*, a travelogue composed of fragments that undermines the book's traditional aim of a continuous flow of narrative. "[T]o attack the material regularity of the work," Barthes writes, "is to attack the very idea of literature."[46] Barthes sees this technique as inherently self-analytical; allied, that is, with the classificatory aims of structuralist criticism. "[T]o divide is to dissect, to destroy, to profane the Book's 'mystery,' i.e., its continuity."[47] As in any classifying study, different elements in Butor's text were "not 'varied,'... but merely repeated."[48] This repetition, which empties meaning to reveal the code, is what Masotta attributes to Warhol. Barthes notes that discontinuity is the very figure-ground relationship that allows something to be intuited at all: "[D]iscontinuity is the fundamental status of all communication: signs never exist unless they are discreet."[49]

For Masotta, redundancy and discontinuity portend something further.

> But what, then, is Warhol's aesthetic "message?" What is it that Warhol wants, definitively, to communicate to us? [...T]o induce us, through the medium of signs (signifier: multiplication; signified: nonsense), to think the very conditions without which there is no sense. And know: that which constitutes the very possibility of sense is the existence of regimented relations between signs; that is

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"pop-art" when he discusses George Segal's work as "masks in reverse." *El "pop-art"*, pp. 105-106. A structuralist chart is devised that compares "Segal" to "Mask"—the latter simply being a general category derived from Levi-Strauss's ideas.

[45] Ibid, p. 46.

[46] Roland Barthes, "Literature and Discontinuity," in *Critical Essays*, trans. Richard Howard, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1972), p. 173.

[47] Ibid, p. 174.

[48] Ibid, p. 180.

[49] Ibid, p. 181.

> to say, the existence of codes. Thus you have in Warhol, in spite of appearances, something like an optimistic message.[50]

Masotta reads Warhol as a structuralist investigator of the "elemental code in a minimal and rudimentary system between signs."[51] Pop is "optimistic" in the sense that the viewer is entreated to make sense not of cultural messages but the codes through which these messages are disseminated. "Pop, in our understanding, is only constituted from an intention referred less to social content than the structures of transmission of this content."[52]

The key proposal in *El "pop-art"*—that Pop allows the viewer to see normally invisible cultural codes—would be put to the test in Masotta's own experiments with art. He has rarely been discussed as an artist, perhaps because his career throws that very professional category into question.[53] A "cultural theorist" *avant la lettre*, he is exemplary of this navigation between different disciplines that structuralists had promised in turning to language as a unifying material between all fields. These works—*Para inducir al espíritu de la imagen*, *El helicóptero*, *El mensaje fantasma*, and *A cerca de happenings*, all 1966—are intertwined with his contemporaneous writings, lectures and teaching, whether or not he is defined as an "artist" in the traditional sense. The relationship between Masotta's texts and artworks is best described as symbiotic; neither is illustrative of the other, but they work in tandem to advance his ideas.

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[50] *Revolución en el arte*, pp. 163-164. My translation.
[51] Ibid, p. 160. My translation.
[52] Ibid, p. 154. Obviously, this is a disavowal of the specific references to American culture in Pop, and a bid to make the genre universally applicable.
[53] This scholarly omission is in the midst of correction. In January 2008 the late artist and writer Olivier Debroise presented a paper on Masotta's *El Helicoptero* at the Getty Research Institute that will ultimately be published.

Masotta's association with the ITDT acquainted him with several younger artists in Buenos Aires in this moment who had themselves come from scholarly backgrounds instead of traditional artistic training. Masotta formed a reading group with these new students, among them Roberto Jacoby, Eduardo Costa, and Raúl Escari, in which structuralist texts (Masotta's favorite authors such as Barthes, Lacan, etc.) were read with an eye toward devising new artistic strategies.[54] The group visited New York from January to March 1966, where Masotta saw a number of downtown happenings by, among others, Michael Kirby and La Monte Young.[55]

An early example of Masotta's interest in the genre can be found in his essay "Tres argentinos en Nueva York," dated February 10, 1966 and published in *Happenings*—a compilation that chronicled the artistic efforts of Masotta and his group over the course of that year.[56] *El batacazo*, the Minujín environment originally of 1964, was reinstalled in the Bianchini Gallery in New York from February 8 to 18, 1966. After previously labeling her an *imaginera*, *El batacazo* is considered as the work of a practitioner of "'intermedia'; that is, an area in which areas of distinct operations and

[54] The curriculum vitae for Masotta in the ITDT archives claims that he taught a seminar at the ITDT on "Artes plásticas y los medios masivos de comunicación" in 1966; this may have been where the private study groups originated. There is no mention of the private courses in the Di Tella documents, but they have been recounted by different members of the Media Art Group. Costa and Masotta, in "Reflexiones y relatos," discuss the formation of a group devoted to happenings that formed *after* the New York trip: "We thus formed a group: Roberto Jacoby, Eduardo Costa, Miguel Ángel Telechea, Oscar Bony and Leopoldo Maler. Masotta would also collaborate with us." *Revolución en el arte*, p. 253, my translation. Telechea was involved in theater and the CEA at the ITDT, and would participate in *El helicóptero*. Bony was at this time making both sculpture and short films. See *Oscar Bony: el mago: obras 1965-2001*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires, Argentina: MALBA- Fundación Costantini, 2007). Maler had contributed to *La menesunda*, and would later be associated with CAYC.

[55] "I Committed a Happening," *LHN*, p. 193. Masotta additionally met with Kaprow, Dick Higgins, Al Hansen, Carolee Schneemann, and Wolf Vostell. Masotta's trip was funded by the ITDT. Giunta, *Avant-Garde, Internationalism, and Politics*, pp. 183 & 343.

[56] Oscar Masotta, ed., *Happenings* (Buenos Aires: Jorge Alvarez, 1967), pp. 99-110. A collection of essays and recollections that reported and evaluated a series of art projects or experiments (as Masotta made clear, it would not be accurate to describe these projects or works as strictly "happenings") carried out in 1966 by Masotta and a group of artists and writers who formed a close circle, was published along with *El "pop-art"* in 1967. A third volume, *Consciencia y Estructura*, published in 1969, collected Masotta writings published in different venues from 1956 through 1967.

discoveries are juxtaposed and/or confused."[57] The environment's enclosure renders the work an event equivalent to a happening.

> It is an object-happening, then, where the viewer is at times a viewer, i.e., a *subject* exterior to an object, and at times an *object*, a "thing" susceptible of being objectified by others, before whom he is exhibited, and before whom he must traverse the construction.[58]

The potential for the viewer to be both participant-subject who apperceives yet is also artistic material, or object, would be explored in Masotta's own happenings.

Upon returning from New York in April 1966, Masotta began planning a larger cycle of happenings by a number of different artists, including Jacoby, Costa and David Lamelas (discussed in Chapter 3), each of whom would be represented by different prominent galleries in Buenos Aires, among them Bonino, Lirolay, and Guernica. Masotta contacted Hugo Parpagnoli and secured the support of the Museo del Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires, but ultimately the project was canceled because of the Onganía coup. Onganía's move to end democratic rule was supported by myriad factions within the country, all of which saw the Illia regime as a failure.[59] With a vote from the military chiefs, Onganía became president (he would remain so until 1970) and declared a "revolutionary stage" in the country's development. The dictatorship dramatically reduced the government, dissolving congress and banning political parties of all kinds.[60]

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[57] Masotta, "Tres argentinos en Nueva York," in *Happenings*, p. 107 Reprinted in *Revolución en el arte*, p. 281. My translation, adapted from *LHN*, p. 188, in which Brian Holmes translates *áreas* as "spheres."
[58] *LHN*, p. 189.
[59] Luis Alberto Romero, *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*, trans. James P. Brennan (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania University Press, 2002), p. 173. The consensus included broad sectors of businesspeople and moderates; the only exceptions were the Radical, Communist and Socialist parties. Some leftists even supported the coup, viewing Illia's regime cynically as an ineffective farce of bourgeois democracy.
[60] As has been discussed in detail by Guillermo O'Donnell, the military faction known as the Azules to which Onganía belonged saw themselves as the paternalistic guardians of peace and order in the country,

The cultural field in Argentina was immediately affected by these developments, particularly in universities, a perennial target for dictators (Perón included). One of the first displays of violence by the new state was directed at the intelligentsia. A day after the coup, police invaded the University of Buenos Aires and assaulted students and professors in what came to be known as "El noche de los bastones largos" [the night of the billyclubs]. Luis Alberto Romero discusses the limitations that the dictatorship placed on culture at all levels:

> Censorship was extended to all manifestations of new fashions, from the miniskirt to long hair, all expressions of the evils that according to the Catholic Church were a prelude to Communism: free love, pornography, and divorce. As in the university's case, it was discovered that a deep stratum of society agreed with the diagnosis of the military or the Church about the dangers of intellectual modernization and the necessity of using authority to extirpate the evils.[61]

The Instituto Torcuato Di Tella was not immediately affected by censorship or state violence. The emergence of conceptual art in Argentina instead took place alongside these political incursions into culture. Masotta's position, however, as a professor at UBA and lecturer at the ITDT is an example of the overlap between the academy and art at this time.

The cycle (in an altered form, not featuring original happenings but as a set of restagings of North American happenings), along with a happening Masotta designed himself, *Para inducir el espíritu de la imagen* [*To Induce the Spirit of the Image*], would ultimately be staged at the ITDT, with a few changes, in November of that year.[62] The

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and in particular as an alternative to politics proper, with its corruption and invasion of personal interest into the public good.

[61] Romero, p. 175.

[62] In the ITDT Archives, preparatory programs indicate a "Ciclo Masotta," ultimately titled *A cerca de: Happenings* [*Around Happenings*] took place from October 25 to November 9, with *Para inducir...* taking

title is a reference to Masotta's experience of a La Monte Young happening in which a deafening drone was created by participants and amplified tape loops. As Masotta reports in "Yo cometí un happening," while he was initially put off by the event he was later intrigued by its visceral impact, which he regarded as a simulation of the effects of LSD:

> The situation was therefore something like an "analogon" of perceptual changes produced by hallucinogens. But the interesting thing, in my understanding, was that this "analogon," this "resemblance" [*parecido*] of the hallucinatory condition, did not end up turning into one. The rarefaction of the perception of time was not sufficient to change what had too much real weight to become unreal into an effective hallucination: the hallucination could not surpass the state of induction. This is the idea I would take to "commit" my Happening five months later in Buenos Aires. But I had another idea in La Monte Young: through the exaggeration of constancy [*continuo*], the incessant sound at high volume, the work converted itself into an open commentary, naked and clear, of the constancy as constancy, and at the same time induced a realization with respect to its contrary. Or, indeed, we could also say that La Monte Young was pushing us to have the somewhat pure experience that was permitting us to make out up to what point certain continuities and discontinuities find themselves at the base of our relation with things.[63]

This "exaggeration" of a concept to create an "open commentary, naked and clear," of that concept recalls Masotta's use of the term "redundancy" in *El "pop-art."* Excessive reinforcement or attention leads to apperception, the analytical move in which code is located, dissected, and broken—in this case what is so analyzed is the claim to transcendence of Young's use of drone music.

Para inducir... began with Masotta lecturing the audience on the history of the happening, crediting its invention to Young instead of Kaprow. His lecture gradually reached a point at which a declaration about the actions within the happening itself was

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place on November 26 between "El concepto del happenings y las teorías," a lecture by Alicia Paez later published in *Happenings*, and *Señales*, a happening by Mario Gandelsonas, on November 27.

[63] *Revolución en el arte*, p. 301. My translation, adapted from "I Committed a Happening," trans. Brian Holmes, *LHN*, p. 195. Holmes translates *continuo* as "constant."

made. "I would repeat the word control to the point of associating it with the idea of a guarantee," Masotta writes. The "guarantee" was that an event would occur—a fire in the room—and that it would be extinguished by a fire extinguisher. Masotta then discharged the fire extinguisher before the crowd [Figure 60]. Following this, extremely loud noise and bright lights were then directed at a group of twenty middle-aged people [Figure 61]. In the photograph of Masotta setting off the fire extinguisher, two people are visible with their backs to him; whether or not they were part of the middle-aged group is unclear. They were originally to be selected from "the downtrodden proletariat"—shoeshine boys, beggars, and disabled people.[64] When the happening was finally executed, however, actors from an extras agency were used instead; they were people from the lower middle class who were dressed to look like they were impoverished. Masotta estimated that he was paying the workers slightly more than they were earning in their day jobs as salespeople of cheap goods in the middle-class bargain stores of Buenos Aires.[65]

As in Minujín's *La destrucción*, Masotta's happening included a fire as a spectacular event. Yet this event was announced beforehand to negate surprise or any semblance of spontaneity. The protective measure of the extinguisher made reference to Minujín's ludic happenings and the fact that an audience was present. The "guarantee" framed subsequent actions as a promise; a prediction and not a use of chance. The event itself was signaled, placed into discontinuity and inspection, its clearly demarcated sections distinguished by the starkly different roles of actors (Masotta as lecturer, the participants as victims). Masotta invoked Greco by including people foreign to the field

[64] This recalls Greco's inclusion of such individuals in his *Vivo-Ditos*.
[65] *LHN*, p. 199.

of art into the work.[66] The latter were not used, however, as markers of authenticity *vis à vis* their marginality to the art in which they were participating. Masotta instead stressed their very constitution as an extra-art category through class, positing a discontinuity between one sub-class and another through costume; such slight differences are present in all of his works. The "spirit"—the ordinarily hidden linguistic structure—of both the participants and the various conventions of the happening were laid out to view, presented for apperception. Yet a very real consequence of dictatorial rule was simultaneously being invoked: the descent from the lower middle class into poverty.

Masotta insists that it was the deeper linguistic structure that mattered, not the actual events: "[I]n reality I was more interested in the *signification* of the situation than in its *facticity*, its hard consciousness."[67] He described *Para inducir...* as "social sadism made explicit," which resonates on several levels. There is the more overt metaphor for the larger sadism of the dictatorship, capitalist exploitation, or both. But on a structural level this violence consists in more than Masotta's humiliation of his participants, and includes his turning them, much like Greco, into "image"; "their spirit shamed and flattened out by the white light," their individuality rendered "flat" or empty.[68] This parallels the shift from the planned to the executed version of *Para inducir...* from authentic destitution to its representation. in the harsh light of linguistic typology, it made

[66] This move would be isolated and refined by Oscar Bony in *La familia obrera* (1968), which installed an actual working-class family on a pedestal in the gallery for hours during the opening of *Experiencias '68*.
[67] *LHN*, p. 197.
[68] Ibid, p. 200. This can be likened to Masotta's take on George Segal in *El "pop-art"*, whose cast-based sculptures he describes as "masks in reverse" that empty out the individuality of sitters into conventional gestures (*Revolución en el arte*, pp. 175-181). In the conclusion of the book Masotta extends the argument to Pop as a whole, arguing that it is a response to the deindividualizing effects of North American capitalism (p. 185).

no difference.[69] The "social sadism" was not the particular humiliations that the subjects endured, but the conversion of those subjects into ideas—the standardization, via linguistic categorization, of their individuality and humanity. Only in the changed version of the happening, after the dictatorship came to power, did Masotta create the situation in which his representatives of the "downtrodden proletariat" were themselves acting out roles. The dictatorship was present not via protest message, but as the structural analogue of the happening. Masotta was indicting both simultaneously.

Masotta likewise considered what creating a happening might mean for his own conversion, via interdisciplinary activity, into "image." The incorporation of academic speech into the work was on the one hand a distancing mechanism that interrupted any unmediated experience of the events, and on the other a transformation of Masotta's very professional identity.[70]

> ...[T]he idea others have of me and about the idea that I had about this idea. Something would change: from a critic or an essayist or a university researcher, I would become a Happening-maker. It would not be bad—I thought—if the hybridization of images at least had the result of disquieting or disorienting someone.[71]

In Masotta's admission of "committing" a happening, then, posits discontinuity between his own competencies as a pedagogue or academic and those of the artist that he was

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[69] It is perhaps possible that this move was made only following the pair of works described below, *El helicóptero* and *El mensaje Fantasma*, which expanded on Masotta's ideas about discontinuity as a tool for intuiting differences between strategies and practices.

[70] This might be read, as Alicia Paez did of the happening in her contribution to *Happenings*, as an inheritance of Brecht's "alienation effect." But it is worth noting, as Paez does, that Brecht's conception of alienation was from total absorption in a fictional text, whereas in the happening there was already a distancing from illusion or narrative, the happening consisting of events that simply occur. Masotta's intervention here more specifically inserts academic speech into the *moment* of the artwork, rendering the work's appearance and its scholarly mediation or interpretation simultaneous. Jacoby, Costa and Escari's *Happening para un jabalí difunto* would similarly conflate the artwork's appearance with its mass media reportage.

[71] *LHN*, p. 197.

taking up for the first time. In *Para inducir al espíritu de la imagen* he begins as lecturer, and in the midst of discussing the concept of control, initiates the artwork and crosses into the category of artist. Control is grounded in protection and safety—Masotta assures the audience that they will be protected from the fire. Immediately afterwards, the audience is shown a group being subjected to pseudo-torture. Control is unveiled as care, potential abuse, and the power to construct images of who people are and what can be done to them. It is also presented as inherently part of the happening and its mode of participation. In this sense, *Para inducir al espíritu de la imagen* is a devastating critique of the genre as it had been practiced up to that point. The happening is unveiled as structurally analogous to dictatorship.

Masotta next designed a pair of works to be juxtaposed: the happening *El helicóptero* [*The Helicopter*] and the "anti-happening" *El mensaje fantasma* [*The Ghost Message*].[72] On July 16 at 2 p.m., an audience was gathered at the Di Tella, informed previously via blurbs in newspapers, as well as letters to individuals associated with the Centro de Experimentación Audiovisual and Centro de Artes Visuales. At 2:00, people were allowed into the hall of the Institute. Six announcers in the crowd informed the audience that they would gather at 2:30 to split into two groups of forty that would take three buses each, leaving from the gate of the Institute at 2:40 and 2:45. The buses took the spectators to different locations in the city: one group was taken to Theatrón in the basement of the Americana Gallery at Santa Fé and Pueyrredón Streets, and the other group to Anchorena Station, an abandoned rail station originally part of the coastal line, in Martínez, a town in the *provincias* of Buenos Aires [Figure 62]. At the Theatrón there was a riotous happening in the manner of the Pop spectacles at the ITDT: 16-milimeter

[72] Oscar Masotta, "Después del Pop," pp. 227-241.

films projected by Louis Moholo, the musicians Telechea and López Tejada playing "Yeh-yeh" music, flash photography, operators of Telenoche, Juan Risuleo's own yelling, and more [Figure 63], in Masotta's description, "these tortured and torturous properties of the image to which lovers of expressionism are attracted."[73] The bus returned to Theatrón at 3:25 to take that group to Anchorena, where they would arrive just too late to see several passes overhead by a helicopter carrying the film star Beatriz Matar, from 4:00 to 4:50, witnessed by those taken to Anchorena originally [Figure 64].[74] The viewers en route to Anchorena had been instructed to wait for the helicopter and the arrival of the viewers from Theatrón, to whom they then had to describe the event that had just been missed. "So there were two chronological times: the time of the misled subjects (those who drained themselves, in truth, 'for nothing') and the reverse of this time (the time of *my* consciousness, 'which knows')."[75] Masotta positioned himself, as artist, outside of the circuit of missed encounters (whether the helicopter or the happening). He is like the second-order viewer who reads about the work after the fact. Only such a consciousness removed from the events would have any sense of the whole.

In "Después del pop: nosotros desmaterializamos," Masotta includes two diagrams of *El helicóptero*. The first is a descending diagonal of pairs of opposite concepts [Figure 65]. There are five groups presented corresponding to different levels:

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[73] Masotta, *Consciencia y estructura*, p. 231. My translation. The film was a "quote [*cita*]" of an Oldenburg film, continuing Masotta's practice of drawing from North American happening-makers that began with the links to Young in *Para inducir...* and would be literalized in *Sobre Happenings*, in which North American happenings were simply restaged.

[74] *El helicóptero* represents an important intersection of the Argentine film and art worlds at this time. Matar had appeared in the films *Tres veces Ana* and *La mano en la trampa*, by noted Argentine *nueva ola* director Leopoldo Torres Nilsson (both 1961), *Jóvenes viejos, Los* (1962), *Racconto* (1963), *Sombras en el cielo*, *Circe*, and *Pajarito Gómez* (all 1964) and *Todo sol es amargo* and *Buenos Aires, verano 1912* (both 1966). See John King, *Magical Reels: A History of Cinema in Latin America* (New York: Verso, 1990), pp. 79-85 and Ana M. López, "An 'Other' History: The New Latin American Cinema," in *New Latin American Cinema*, ed. Michael T. Martin (Wayne State University Press, 1997), pp. 135-156.

[75] Masotta, "Después del Pop," p. 230.

"cosmological," "economic," "socioeconomic," "historic," and "cultural." Each group is split into oppositional terms, each of which is an element in the juxtaposed works. The "lower" term of each dyad (in the descending schema) then splits into a new set of oppositional terms. The cosmological level is represented by "sky" and *subsuelo*, which literally means "subsoil" but could also be translated as "basement." These physical contexts have aesthetic connotations: *subsuelo* in particular suggests "underground," the status of avant-garde or subcultural activity. *Subsuelo* then bifurcates into "residential" and "commercial"—private and public space, exclusive gallery setting or transportation hub. "Commercial" splits into "media" and "neutral status," which in turn becomes "Helicopter"—capitalized, so perhaps the title of the work, and "Water," in quotes and in English, which in turn divides into "Romanticism" and "Expressionism."[76] These oppositions, Masotta indicates, were placed in discontinuity and embodied by different elements in the work. The other schema [Figure 66] indicates these temporal discontinuities by indicating the absence and arrival of the Theatrón audience at the Anchorena events. It is through this temporal structure that "no subject in the audience would be able to take in the totality of the situation in direct fashion." Events were converted into language: audience members had to share information about missed events with one another.[77] Masotta's emphasis on communication that was "'direct,' 'face to face,' 'reciprocal,' and in the same 'place'" suggests that there might still be an analog, human mode of transmission free of modernized media circuits.[78]

El mensaje fantasma was produced as part of a "cycle" of events at the Di Tella, along with *El helicóptero* and an "explanatory" lecture, "Nosotros desmaterializamos"

[76] Ibid, p. 234.
[77] Ibid, p. 228-229.
[78] Ibid, pp. 230-231.

["We dematerialize"], under the coordination of Juan Risuleo.[79] On the 16th and 17th of July 1966, posters were put up in Microcentro ("from 25 de Mayo to Carlos Pellegrini and from Charcas to Lavalle" Streets) that read "This poster will be broadcast on Television Channel 11 on July 20" [Figure 67].[80] On July 20, two ten-second advertisements were broadcast on Channel 11, purchased as advertising time by Masotta through a publicity agency. The "Channel announcer"—whether this was a news anchor or simply a disembodied voice is not made clear—first declared, "This medium announces the appearance of a poster the text of which we are now projecting."[81] The text from the posters was then broadcast, but in a different font than those on the posters [Figure 68].

It was the announcement prior to the broadcast of the message that made the objective clear: "this medium"—television—was announcing the appearance of a poster—another medium. Masotta argued

> ...[T]hat its express purpose consisted in inverting the usual relationship between the communications media and the content communicated. Here, and in a reciprocal and circular way, each medium revealed the presence of the other and its own presence was revealed by the other.[82]

Masotta's "inversion" here is the temporary equivalence of code and message. The content of television is a description of its status as broadcast information, drawing attention to the normally occluded medium through which messages are broadcast. The system, which depends on this occlusion to function, is temporarily broken and visible. In

[79] Oscar Masotta file, Di Tella Archives.
[80] "Este afiche aparecerá proyectado por Canal 11 de Televisión el día 20 de julio," *Consciencia y estructura*, p. 240.
[81] "Este medio anuncia la aparición de un afiche cuyo texto es el que proyectamos," Ibid.
[82] Oscar Masotta, "After Pop, We Dematerialize," trans. Eileen Brockbank, in *LHN*, p. 215. I have modified the translation.

El mensaje fantasma, Masotta's notion of *redundancia* is shifted from Warholian repetition to a new practice in which media are fed into one another and rendered each other's content. Media themselves become redundant, apparent, and dysfunctional.

Taken together, as Masotta intended them to be, *El helicóptero* and *El mensaje fantasma* exemplify a structure taken up in many of the major works of Argentine conceptualism that employ redundancy and discontinuity as strategies, including *Tucumán arde*: integral elements are over-emphasized and the work is broken up into stages or phases so that its parts become the subject of analysis. The first and most obvious level of discontinuity is the pairing of two works in different genres, happening and media work. Both of these works, in turn, break apart into different, temporally displaced stages. The stages, as detailed above, break down in turn according to different sets of conceptual oppositions that bring one another to light. *El helicóptero*'s events are staggered so that they cannot be experienced by all viewers, who must communicate to make sense of what, exactly, they are viewing or missing. Its events are also dramatically different and take place at different times of the day, creating a juxtaposition between the "reality" of the helicopter in the street and the "artifice" of the happening in the theater. *El mensaje fantasma*'s first phase is street advertisement designed to build curiosity about the transmission phase; employing discontinuity, it refers with near exactitude—the fonts being slightly different—to the second phase, which in turn is a broadcast that refers back to the first phase.

"Después de Pop: nosotros desmaterializamos," presented first as a lecture at the Di Tella on July 21, 1967, after all of the above events (and many of those discussed below) had already taken place, is as close as Masotta comes to a manifesto for these

practices. This lecture precedes Lucy Lippard's more widely known essay on the same theme of the "dematerialization" of the art object in favor of the idea.[83] Masotta starts from a reference points in Sartre (which equates "knowing" with "eating," in a nod to the value of apperception) as well as the historical avant-garde: El Lissitsky's essay "The Future of the Book," in which the Soviet artist discussed the obsolescence of older media in the face of new technologies.[84] Presented after the initial series of happenings and "media art" projects by Masotta, Jacoby, Costa, Escari, Risuleo, and Minujín, the essay advocates for the appearance of a new Argentine avant-garde—an echo of Greco's triumphalist *Mi Madrid querido*—situating media-based projects such as *El mensaje fantasma* as a major rupture with the past. The representative and trace of that past is the "genre" of the happening. Masotta argues that avant-gardes become academic and must then be altered from within and replaced by new approaches, as the happening replaced "traditional genres."[85] New genres must negate the old, but are then faced with the paradox of being tied to the older genre through the negation. "I can affirm," Masotta writes,

[83] Juli Carson argues that Masotta and Lippard's essays on dematerialization represent two "primal scenes" of conceptual art, with the primary difference being their semiotic emphasis. She sees Lippard's version of the concept as corresponding to the signified, while Masotta addresses that of the signifier: "Lippard was speaking for a branch of American artists for whom Dematerialism had less to do with the signifier, or the *material unit* of an artwork. Rather, like Greenberg, they were focused on the signified, the artwork's non-visual aesthetic *concept* that transcends its material base." Juli Carson, "Roberto Jacoby's *1968: el culo te abrocho*," in *Roberto Jacoby's* 1968: el culo te abrocho, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: UC Irvine Gallery, 2009) (forthcoming).

[84] El Lissitsky, "The Future of the Book," *New Left Review* 41, vol. 1, Jan.-Feb. 1967, pp. 39-44 (originally published 1926). The contention that Masotta invented and originally disseminated the term "dematerialization" is a cause that has been taken up by a number of Argentine artists in the past several years, none more so than Jacoby. See Roberto Jacoby, "Vanguardia y comunicación," in *Oscar Masotta: Lecturas criticas*, pp. 107-108, and "Después de todo, nosotros desmaterializamos: La teórica del conceptualismo olvidó unos cuantos antecedentes argentinos," *Ramona* 9/10, Dec. 2000-Mar. 2001, pp. 34-35.

[85] "Después Pop," p. 225.

> that there is something within the Happening that allowed us to glimpse the possibility of its own negation, and for that reason the avant-garde is built today upon a new type—a new genre—of works. These works might be termed "anti-Happenings," but there is a problem inherent in that designation: it makes a completely new aesthetic manifestation depend upon a genre, like the Happening, that is no longer new. To get to the point, this new genre of artistic activity that appeared in Buenos Aires in 1966 already has a name: "Art of Mass Communications Media."[86]

Masotta terms *El helicoptero* a happening and *El mensaje fantasma* a "communicational work, or 'anti-Happening.'"[87] *El helicóptero* undermined the presence and immediacy of the conventional happening in Theatrón through the communicational situation initiated by the missed encounter at Anchorena Station. *El mensaje fantasma*, in contrast, did not direct or manipulate participants at a specific site, although it did have a privileged moment that necessitated immediate reception—the television broadcast. Yet even this event was decentered through its contingency on the posters that announced it, which presage and thereby make redundant the event itself. One would not need to experience the event to know about it, as it was advertised on the posters in the street. Urban navigation and the reception of information in the street could suffice or supplant television viewing, and vice versa. The only trace of distinction between event and publicity was the slight discrepancy between the poster font and the televised font. In every other sense, the event had been diffused into forms of reportage that were not completely reliant on privileged instants or sites.

Masotta's artworks are schematic of a historical change that the theorist himself was positing, as though they were scientific proofs of how the happening might be

[86] Ibid, p. 213.
[87] Ibid, p. 214.

historically superceded by a new avant-garde. If events are converted into language in *El helicóptero*, in "Después del Pop" artworks are used as arguments.

> My intention was not only to make a Happening, but to point out the difference between two genres of works, to exemplify the difference between the Happening and "media art." I wanted to point out at the same time that the idea of making works of the latter type was already indicated in Happenings and that the passage emerged as a "logical consequence."[88]

El helicóptero and *El mensaje fantasma* enact the art-historical shift that Masotta advocates in his writing. The "latter type" is found to be latent in the earlier strategy. Language and communication are already central to the happening, and once the unique event is removed from the equation, this underlying code is laid bare. For Masotta, avant-gardism was logical, structural; one genre generates another topologically, moving forth from their shared ground. In the works by Masotta's acolytes discussed below, this new genre was given definition.

Boars Dead and Alive

Happening para un jabalí difunto [*Happening for a Dead Boar*] was first conceived in May and was then carried out from August 21 to December 7, 1966 by Roberto Jacoby, Eduardo Costa and Raúl Escari. All three artists had trained in disciplines other than art at the University of Buenos Aires: Jacoby in sociology (though he did not complete the degree, he would work as a sociologist after 1968), Escari in philosophy, and Costa in literature and art history (he received an M.A. in 1965). Jacoby was born in 1944, and like Masotta first became involved in art in 1965, when he

[88] Ibid.

participated in an event-based group show at Galería Guernica with the work *Vivir aquí* [*To Live Here*], in which he set up his studio in the gallery space and worked there for a week, the duration of the exhibition.[89] He also produced Pop works such as *Todo va mejor con Coca-Cola* [*Everything Goes Better with Coca-Cola*] an angel of death with a soft drink bottle for genitals, which the Nueva Figuración painter Luis Felipe Noé exhibited at a show at the Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires, and polyester anti-Vietnam war sculptures based on newspaper imagery. Born in 1940, Costa trained in drawing and painting under the tutelage of Maria Bonomo in the late 1950s. He became an editor at the magazine *Airón* in 1959, which was linked to the Venezuelan avant-garde group El Techo de la Ballena, while also studying with Masotta and Jorge Luis Borges at UBA.[90] Escari was born in 1944, and also worked at a magazine, the literature review *El escarabajo de oro* directed by Abelardo Castillo, in the early 1960s.[91] While Costa and Jacoby were already practicing artists prior to the *Happening para un jabalí difunto*, for Escari the media works were only a brief foray into actual art-making. He continued as a

[89] *LHN*, pp. 336-337. Ben Vautier had performed a similar project in France in 1962; it is possible that Jacoby might have known about this through Greco. *Vivir aquí* presages a similar project, *Service Area*, by Vito Acconci for the 1970 *Information* exhibition at MoMA in New York, in which the artist set up his studio and received mail at the museum. For biographical information on Jacoby see also Guillermo Fantoni, *Tres visiones sobre el arte crítico de los años 60: conversaciones con Pablo Suárez, Roberto Jacoby y Margarita Paksa* (Rosario: Secretería de Cultura, Educación y Turismo, 1994), pp. 19-29, Ana Longoni and Daniela Lucena, "Roberto Jacoby and his lives" and Ana Longoni and Julia Risler, "Writings by and about R. Jacoby," *Darkroom Website* [www.darkroom.org.art/vidas_en.htm], and Santiago García Navarro, "Live and Learn," *Frieze* (UK), No. 111 (November-December 2007) [http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/live_and_learn/].

[90] Cecilia de Torres, ed., *Eduardo Costa: Volumetric Paintings*, exh. cat. (New York: Cecilia de Torres, Ltd., 2001), pp. 39-40. The chronology included in this text claims that Costa worked with Masotta as early as 1964, which would have been prior to Masotta's Pop conference at the ITDT. For more on El Techo de la Ballena, see Ángel Rama, "Of Terrorism in the Arts," and El Techo de la Ballena, "Pre-Manifesto" and "The Great Magma (First Manifesto)," in *Afredo Boulton and his Contemporaries: Critical Dialogues in Venezuelan Art, 1912-1974* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2008), pp. 256-265, and Gabriela Rangel, "An Art of Nooks: Notes on Non-Objectual Experiences in Venezuela," in *Arte≠Vida: Actions by the Artists of the Americas 1960-2000*, ed. Deborah Cullen (New York: El Museo del Barrio, 2008), pp. 114-133.

[91] *LHN*, p. 332. See also Raúl Escari, *Actos en palabras* (Buenos Aires: Mansalva, 2007), *Dos relatos porteños* (Buenos Aires: Mansalva, 2007), and *Happenings* (Buenos Aries: Eloisa Cartonera, 2005).

critic and writer after a 1967 trip to Paris, funded by the French government, to study with Roland Barthes at l'École Practique de Hautes Études de Paris.[92]

In *Happenings*, Jacoby and Costa present *Happening para un jabalí difunto* as a carefully planned research project, tracing the steps they followed through to the completion of the work—a move in keeping with Masotta's elimination of the expressive possibilities of the work of art in favor of a sober academic tone.[93] Jacoby is credited with the initial concept of a happening consisting only of its reportage, without any event ever taking place.[94] He first planned a gallery exhibition that would consist of only a report, rendering the site of avant-garde activity equivalent to the newspaper or other organ of publicity. From this point, it was proposed that the physical location of the publicity could be dispensed with as well, as preexisting circuits of media reportage were all that were needed to transmit the fictive exhibition. Signed by all three artists in July 1966, "Un arte de los medios de comunicación (manifesto)" [Mass Media Art (Manifesto)] set the terms for the subsequent project.[95] Their ideas bear the stamp of Masotta's exposure of code through discontinuity, but with an emphasis on using already existing media circuits against themselves. They first contend that the happenings at the ITDT existed

[92] *LHN*, pp. 332-33.
[93] This history consists of a section in *Happenings* titled "Un arte de los medios de comunicación," pp. 111-145. The writings are primarily credited to Jacoby and Costa, leaving out Escari, who had fallen out with the group by 1967, and whose solo work, *Entre en Discontinuidad*, was given its own section, which it shared with Masotta's "Yo cometí un happening," which details his own artworks (as discussed above). The section includes a discussion of *Happening para un jabalí difunto* titled "Un arte de los medios de comunicación" (it is subtitled "Realización de la primera obra," though *LHN* credits this as the proper title of the essay), the manifesto itself, Jacoby's "Contra el happening," which expands on the possibility of a mass-media-based art, an analytical essay by Eliseo Verón (who supplies a similar essay for Minujín's *Simultaneidad en simultaneidad* later in the book), and a letter sent to Costa by the Mexican writer Octavio Paz, who critiqued the group's actions.
[94] *LHN*, p. 225.
[95] *Happenings*, pp. 121-122

only via publicity created after the fact of their occurrence.[96] "All that matters," the artists write, "is the image of the artistic event *constructed* by the media."[97] If this is true, not only the art object but also the specific, immediate art-event in general becomes ultimately irrelevant or unnecessary.

> […T]hrough the transmission of information, the means of "performing" the non-existent event, and the differences that arise between the various versions of the same event presented by each media channel, the work acquires its meaning. A work that begins to exist exactly at the moment when the audience becomes aware that it's already over. […] Thus we are taking a key characteristic of the media to its logical conclusion: the unmaking of the objects. In this way we are privileging the moment of the work's transmission over the moment of its creation. *Creation consists in subordinating construction to transmission*.[98]

Such a complete obviation of the privileged event diverges from Masotta's near-simultaneous *El mensaje fantasma*, which displaced the event into street- and television-based reportage but nonetheless focused on particular times and sites in which the work existed. Jacoby, Costa and Escari purge the event entirely to leave only publicity, the event's aftermath in which it is transmitted, interpreted and represented by secondary sources.

The project was initially titled *Happening de la participación total* [*Total Participation Happening*], and was at other points referred to as *Non-Happening*, *Happening que no existío* [*Happening That Did Not Exist*], and *Primera obra de arte de*

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[96] See also Madela Ezcurra, "La Palabra happening en los medios de información masiva," *Happenings*, pp. 189-206. Ezcurra backs up Jacoby, Costa and Escari by contending that the profusion of happenings announced by the media in Argentina was much exaggerated: "The few *happenings* realized in Buenos Aires realized during [August to December 1966] do not justify the exaggerated use that the information media has had for the theme, nor the abusive deformation of what has superceded it" (p. 191), my translation. By "what has superceded it" Ezcurra seems to refer to Media Art's critique of the happening.
[97] *LHN*, p. 223.
[98] Ibid, p. 224.

los medios [*First Media Artwork*].[99] It emerged from an early stage of the project in which Jacoby and Costa interviewed various "personalities, mythical figures known in some way through the media," and had them invent fictional participation in a happening that had never taken place. The responses were distributed to several magazines as factual reports: the newspaper *El Mundo* (August 21), the magazines *Gente* (August 25), *Para Ti* (August 29), and *Confirmado* (September 19), and *El escarabajo de oro* (October). Refutations of the story and explanations of the project were subsequently sent and published, in *El Mundo* on October 30, *Primera Plana* on November 1, *Confirmado* on November 10, and *Inédito* on November 23 (this magazine also mentioned the work in their year-end summary of art on December 7).[100] In "Realización de la primera obra" in *Happenings*, the artists make particular note of the distribution of the different publications—*El Mundo* is largest at 300,000—implying that this circulation constitutes the expanded audience of this type of work of art. María José Herrera notes that the initial refutation date was the same as that of Orson Welles' infamous radio broadcast *War of the Worlds*, an early "media event" that McLuhan had previously written about.[101]

Thirteen photographs had been originally sent to the publications, all taken by Rubén Santantonín, Minujín's collaborator on *La menesunda*, in various locations: private homes, galleries, stores, and a bar. In one Masotta is speaking into the ear of Lea

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[99] These different monikers are mentioned in *LHN*, pp. 223 & 226.

[100] *LHN*, p. 228. *Confirmado* and *Inédito* reported on the information without any prompting from the artists. It is important to note the dictatorship propaganda in certain Argentine newspapers in the 1960s, which, while not an explicit reference of *Happening para un jabalí difunto*, could certainly be understood as an indirect parallel. For example, a newspaper not included in the wide selection of publications used by Costa, Escari and Jacoby was *La Opinión*, edited by Jacobo Timerman, which Marguerite Feitlowitz pinpoints as a consistent supporter of military takeovers such as that of Onganía. Marguerite Feitlowitz, *A Lexicon of Terror: Argentina and the Legacies of Torture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 5.

[101] Paz also mentions Welles in his letter to Costa, discussed below. María José Herrera, "La experimentación con los medios masivos de comunicación en el arte argentino de la década del sesenta: El 'happening para un jabalí difunto,'" in *El Arte Entre Lo Publico y Lo Privado: VI Jornadas de Teoría e Historia de las Artes* (Buenos Aires: Centro Argentino de Investigadores de Artes, 1995), pp. 252-54.

Lublin, another artist, an image taken at the home of the Waljer family [Figure 69].[102] Two images feature dancer Marilu Marini, who had previously performed in Minujín's *La feria de las ferias* and was involved in numerous dance events at the ITDT. In one photograph, a group of people raise their hands in the air as Marini bends over backwards in the foreground, making eye contact with the viewer [Figure 70]. In another she is doubled over on the floor of a bathroom, next to a toilet, holding her shoes in her right hand and propping herself up on a doorframe with her left; a group situated above her mug for the camera [Figure 71]. These images suggest a narrative in which Marini appears to be the center of attention at a party and ends up vomiting in a toilet. They were published in a number of the accounts by magazines [Figure 72]. But the photographs are deliberately ambiguous in their depictions of chaotic collective activity; they signify as both party and happening, both youthful exuberance and "art." As in the ambiguous messages Masotta discusses in *El "pop-art"* to illustrate the flexible nature of the code, the images crafted by Santantonín were designed to function as generic signs of avant-garde activity that could be interpreted in myriad ways. They are vague enough to justify whatever caption they receive, matching preconceived notions of what the much-discussed and rarely witnessed happenings looked like.[103]

Jacoby and Costa described the work as a *triple creación* consisting of the fictional report, its dissemination, and the final moment of reception in which viewers reassemble the entire project from start to finish as a deception that they have been part

[102] Descriptions of people in the photographs were supplied by Masotta, who printed these photographs in *Happenings*, pp. 101-102.
[103] This might be likened to Barthes' discussion of advertising photographs, as when he discusses a Panzani advertisement as aiming to create an ambiguous sense of "Italianicity," catering to the viewer's general expectation of what a desirable Italian meal, infused with the desirability of a foreign culture, might look like. Roland Barthes, "The Rhetoric of the Image," in *Image/ Music/ Text*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 33-7.

of.[104] The work was therefore completed by another mode of "total participation": the mass reception of the fictional report and the revelation of its fictitious nature a few days later. On the one hand, no one took part in the happening, since it never took place. On the other, there was in fact as "total" a mode of participation as possible in the transmission of the nonexistent event; newspapers and magazines had one of the widest possible audiences for such a project. Reading was participating; all one had to do was receive the transmission to have joined in. In a letter to Costa dated November 11, 1966 that was published in *Happenings*, the Mexican writer Octavio Paz pointed out the implications of this mode of reception:

> [A] happening in which no one participates is not really a true "Happening." The distinguishing feature of this manifestation of the traditional theatrical form is its tendency to do away with the notion of the spectator. In your imaginary "Happening," on the other hand, everyone became a spectator, including the supposed actors: each looked at the other, all became the spectacle. [...] The "Happening" is a rebellion against the idea of art as something that takes place before us; it is... a ceremony in which we participate and that we modify with our activity or passivity. Thus, it brings its spectacular reality face to face with the unreality of the spectator. You made everything unreal.[105]

Paz reads the happening as it was previously practiced as a situation in which the viewer is forced to recognize that he or she is as "unreal" or alienated as the larger culture in which he or she lives. In this reading it is essential that the viewer is able to act upon the happening, either through "activity or passivity"; even if the happening's actual involvement of the spectator, and alteration by his or her input, is minimal.

It is curious that Paz downplays the potential criticality of the apperceptive moment in *Happening para un jabalí difunto*, for a month earlier, he had published an

[104] Jacoby, Costa, Escari, "Un arte de los medios masivos de comunicación," in *Happenings*, p. 122.
[105] *LHN*, p. 233-234.

essay on Marcel Duchamp dated October 25, 1966. It focused in particular on *The Large Glass*, and Paz's conclusions are strikingly similar to those of Masotta, Jacoby, Costa and Escari. Paz's reading of the *Large Glass* parallels Masotta's understanding of the potential of redundancy as a strategy for future art: he argues that it is a work about painting that undoes and lays bare the very system of painting for inspection.

> Machines are agents of destruction and it follows from this that the only mechanical devices that inspire Duchamp are those that function in an unpredictable manner—the antimachines. These apparatuses are the equivalent of[...] puns: the unusual ways in which they work nullify them as machines. [...] They are machines that distill criticism of themselves.[106]

Paz sees Duchamp's achievement in explicitly redundant terms: "In short, Duchamp's criticism is two-edged: it is criticism of myth and criticism of criticism. [...] As Myth of Criticism the *Large Glass* is a painting of Criticism and criticism of Painting. It is a work that turns in upon itself, that persists in destroying the very thing it creates."[107] Yet Paz ultimately contends that Duchamp's works "demand an active contemplation, a creative participation" that undermines the meanings that the artist can invest in the work; there is an excess that the artist cannot control that the work generates for itself with the viewer's help.[108] Paz's critique of *Happening para un jabalí difunto* is that it lacks this open dimension. Nothing is left for the viewer to do other than reflect, sociologically, upon his or her own situation in the world. "I think the open work is the path of modern art; that is,

[106] Octavio Paz, *Marcel Duchamp*, trans. Rachel Phillips and Donald Gardner (New York: Seaver Books, 1978), p. 7-8.
[107] Ibid, pp. 71 & 76.
[108] Paz, *Duchamp*, p. 86.

that of the fusion of life and art," Paz writes. "[...W]ithout a work, without a starting point, there is no transmission and no reception, and, therefore, no art and no life."[109]

In "La obra," an unpublished essay dated May 13, 1967 that was purportedly to be published by Jacoby in a never-completed volume titled *Arte de los medios* (that would have detailed further explorations of media art), sociologist Eliseo Verón presents several structuralist models for engaging the *Anti-Happening*.[110] The second is closely related to the dialogical model presented by Roman Jakobson in *Essais de linguistique générale*, a French translation of the Soviet linguist that circulated in Argentina at that time.[111] Contra Paz, Verón argues for the affinity of the *Anti-Happening* with the happenings that came before it on the grounds that both "reveal" their structure, or "fundamental properties," to the viewer:

> There is thus not, in my judgment, a radical opposition between the genre of the happening and this first incursion into the field of the poetic of mass communication, as the authors seem to believe… The work is commenting within the much more global field of mass communication. In both cases, the result is a work that exists by virtue of certain transformations of the (social) material that has been revealed, that is to say, its fundamental properties.[112]

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[109] *LHN*, p. 235.

[110] Eliseo Verón, "La obra," *Ramona* 9/10 (Dec. 2000- Mar. 2001), pp. 46-50. It should of course be noted that Jacoby (credited with the "concept"), Suárez, Ferrari, Benedit, and several other veterans of Argentine conceptualism, as well as historians such as Ana Longoni (listed as a "team" member), have all been closely associated with this magazine, which was recently featured in *Documenta* 12. *Ramona* is thus in many cases the actual artists in question from the 1960s, or their respective historians, who are currently publishing or republishing many of the key texts from the 1960s and 1970s. Because of the stake that artists such as Jacoby have in "firstness" (for example, the originality of Masotta's use of "dematerialization"), one perhaps might not accept as fact the dates that are offered by this hegemonic "little journal" of the present-day *porteño* art world. For background on *Ramona*'s recent involvement with *Documenta* 12, which also featured displays of Graciela Carnevale's *Tucumán Arde* archive and (along with the 2007 Venice Biennale) León Ferrari's *Heliografías*, see "Documenta 12: Magazines," http://www.documenta12.de/magazine.html?&L=1, "Dossier Ramona: Documenta 12 Magazines," *Ramona* 63 (August 2006), Ana Longoni, "'Vanguard' and 'revolution,' key concepts in Argentine art during the 60s and 70s," *Documenta Magazines Online Journal: Brumaria* [Madrid], [http://magazines.documenta12.de/frontend/article.php?IdLanguage=1&NrArticle=669].

[111] Roman Jakobson, *Essais de linguistique générale* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1963), p. 214.

[112] Verón, "La Obra," p. 47, my translation. The Spanish text reads, "No hay pues, a mi juicio, una oposición radical entre el género happening y esta primera incursión en el campo de la poética de la comunicación de masas, como parecen creerlo los autores. […] La obra que estamos comentando lo hace

Paz saw the potential of mass communication as that of delivering messages to more viewers, as opposed to critiquing them to the point of shutting down their possibility. For Verón, the fundamental value of *Happening para un jabalí difunto* was one that happenings had already borne—their ability to expose codes in the "social material" of the surrounding world.

Jacoby, Costa, and Escari expanded on Masotta's critique of the happening in two central ways. First, the oral accounts they solicited from artists transformed the requisite "participation" of the conventional happening into language, similar to the "face to face communication" in *El helicóptero* that disseminated the missed appearance of the helicopter. But Jacoby and Costa instead used fiction to dramatize the absence of the work itself; instead of being "over," now the event never existed in the first place. This resolved the problem of the dichotomy between first and second orders of viewers. There are no first-order viewers whatsoever; people only experience the work secondhand.[113] Everyone, including the representatives of the media in charge of reporting, is equally duped; everyone is then informed of the deception.

Second, as Alexander Alberro has noted, they utilized Barthes' idea of myth: "[...M]edia art did not conceal its mythical nature, but by presenting itself as myth, as unabashedly artificial, it acquired demystificatory powers by calling attention to the way

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en el plano, mucho más global, de la comunicación de masas. En ambos casos, el resultado es una obra que existe en virtud de ciertas transformaciones de la materia (social) a través de las cuales ésta revela, por decirlo así, sus propiedades fundamentales."

[113] This structure might be likened to Lacan's understanding of the symbolic order and his emphasis on the signifier, which only seems to respond to and name things in "reality," when in fact it is precisely the lattice through which reality comes to exist as such. The difference would be in Jacoby, Costa and Escari's emphasis on the mass media as a source of distortions or fictions, which implies that there *is*, in fact, a "reality" beyond these fictions. For the media artists, there is an implied historicity of media, a point at which the world and events in it became, as it were, more mediated—whereas Lacan might argue that such an order is already fundamental to the subject who has entered the field of language.

meaning is produced."[114] Although he does not make it explicit, Alberro points up the structural link between *Happening para un jabalí difunto* and Masotta's interest in the transformation from "real" individual or event into language and information, which he located at the heart of the happening. This is exposed as the primary function of the mass media as well:

> [T]he manifesto reflects upon the workings of the mass media and emphasizes the manner in which media art gives priority to signifying over what is signified. Yet what makes the manifesto particularly significant is that, by locating media events entirely at the moment of transmission and reception, it suggests that the communications media is a system that undermines or empties the meanings it exuberantly produces.[115]

The circuit of publicity in the mass media is here the code that the viewer is entreated to apperceive. The false content of the happening initially ran through this circuit, as though tracing its path and circulation. This code was turned upon itself—signaled itself—when the newspapers were forced to report on their own mistake. This correction revealed the code while simultaneously breaking that code's ability to transmit its message. Greco's *Vivo-Dito* had signaled the act of signaling to break the cycle of false originality and authorship. For Jacoby, Costa and Escari, "art" was already beside the point; the key was simply to throw other existing closed circuits into tautology, to bring one system after another to the attention of the apperceptive viewer. In "Contra el happening," [Against the Happening], another text included in *Happenings*, Jacoby defended the value of the work as "sociological as a work of art"; not proper research, but a demystifying mechanism capable of forcing viewers to confront "the spectacle of their own deceived

[114] Alexander Alberro, "Media, Sculpture, Myth," in *A Principality of its Own: 40 Years of Visual Arts at the Americas Society*, eds. José Luis Falconi and Gabriela Rangel (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 167.
[115] Ibid, pp. 166-167.

conscience."[116] *Happening para un jabalí difunto* was structured in terms of Masotta's *redundancia*, in which the fictional dimension of mass media reportage is doubled upon itself, over-emphasized through a work that is false from the start. The fictional dimension of publicity is rendered unavoidable. The title's reference to a "dead boar" refers not only to the happening as an exhausted genre but also to the corruptive power of the mass media as well, the possibility that through analysis the artists could render it "defunct," incapable of further deception—it attacks these structures from within.

Was there a message, however, prior to this exposure of the code of the mass media in *Happening para un jabalí difunto*? For there was a lag between the initial dissemination of information and its revelation as a ruse, in which the false happening would have functioned as a real one and participated in a larger discourse that the media was constructing about happenings in general. A clue is provided in Masotta's earlier critique of Minujín for the quality of "constant change" in her happenings, which, although non-teleological, links the form of the happening to the economic and cultural ambitions of *desarrollismo*. The happening's ability to embody that which is "happening," right now, linked it in the Argentine context to myths of newness, progress, and relevance on the international stage. The ITDT and the press contributed to a larger analogy of the happening and an entire country's process of perpetual change. *Happening para un jabalí difunto* exposed the ruse of an advanced society reporting on its own cutting-edge activity; the newness was preordained and did not necessitate real phenomena to function.

The critique of the happening initiated by Masotta concluded November 9, 1966 with *Sobre Happenings* [*About Happenings*]. Jacoby, Miguel Ángel Telechea, Pablo

[116] *LHN*, p. 229.

Suárez, Oscar Bony and (future CAYC-associated artist) Leopoldo Maler were collaborators. This project fulfilled Masotta's earlier ambition of a happenings cycle, but with a shift in focus: instead of artists presenting their own work in the form of new happenings, older North American happenings—Schneemann's *Meat Joy*, two Oldenburg happenings, *Autobodys* and an untitled work, and an untitled happening by Kirby—were restaged. This cycle was the last of Masotta's artworks and the completion of his project of uncovering the codes behind the happening, in which the happening and the event script-based work were rendered equivalent. Masotta treated the happening's posterior status, its afterlife once it has been reported on, as a repeatable script. Much like Ferrari's transformation of expressionist painting into language, Masotta was converting the seemingly unique event into a repeatable unit, converting its seeming immediacy into a script.

Among Masotta's papers in the ITDT archive are several pairs of journalistic photographs that may date from around 1967.[117] Originals are accompanied by clippings of their appearances in newspapers, complete with captions. One is of an accident between a bus and a truck. Another is of Ellsworth Bunker, special ambassador of the United States, holding a headset to his ear (possibly to hear a translation of a speech) during a meeting. A third features Onganía amidst ceremonies for the 154th anniversary of the Battle of Salta, Argentina's first victory as an independent nation [Figure 73]. In a fourth example, reversed from its original image in the newspaper, a man captures a dog

[117] Some of the clippings are dated 1967. The materials are in archives pertaining to Masotta at the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella archives, Universidad Di Tella, Buenos Aires. The fact that Masotta was apparently in possession of original prints of the photos (though not the negatives) leaves the possibility open that it was in fact he or someone who he knew who originally took the pictures. Unfortunately the newspaper clippings were originally cropped quite closely, and none of the images is visibly credited to a particular photographer.

in part of a larger roundup of "affected houses." A fifth features a truck spraying insecticide down a street, perhaps as part of the same initiative, in a town where there a "police action" has taken place. In a sixth pair, a protester with a sign flees police (according to the caption) who have forbidden demonstrations. Two more were published in the same article in *La Prensa* dated February 10, 1967. First police are shown detaining a group of people, who are made to sit [Figure 74], and in the other image men are being carted away on police wagons [Figure 75]. The headline reads, "Realizó la Policia Federal Procedimientos en las Villas de Emergencia que se Levantan en la Zona del Bajo de Belgrano" [Federal Police carried out procedures in the shantytowns located in south zone of Belgrano].

A consistency among all of these images is their journalistic use as proofs of the dictatorship's legitimacy. In almost every photograph, the government is attending to a situation, whether an accident or problem in need of control, the exercise of power over lawbreakers, or official ceremony. In almost every case, these photographs, when distributeed in the news with appropriate captions, reaffirm the legitimacy of the dictatorship, its good management of the country, even its presence in foreign affairs (the U.S. ambassador). By themselves, they possess no immediate explanation or justification and relate back to Masotta's bar schema in *El "pop-art"*: they could signify an illegitimate or legitimate regime, repression or law and order. Once inserted into the mass media circuit, however, captions are added and signification is made clear. These pictures and clippings suggest a new direction for Masotta's explorations in art, that was not developed beyond 1967, one which would have looked more closely at the use of journalistic images by newspapers sympathetic to the dictatorship. The *mise en abyme* of

different media cycled back upon themselves might here have been directed toward more exigent ends, as the analytical abilities so honed by Masotta and the media artists were used to expose the mediatic codes of the dictatorship itself. This is the project that was embarked upon by the artists associated with *Tucumán Arde* in 1968, who included Jacoby: to focus upon, and thereby shatter, the machine of dictatorship itself.

Discontinuities

In a lecture at the ITDT in October 1966 that accompanied Masotta's in the *Sobre Happenings* cycle, Alicia Paez cited discontinuity in the work of John Cage in her definition of the happening. "In Cage there is a certain way of introducing discontinuity by virtue of the separated treatment of the distinct components (pitch, intensity, timbre), that is to say, via the rupture of the ordinary synthesis of this conjunction of sensible realities in every sonic unity."[118] Masotta further expounded on discontinuity in a lecture linked to Paez's, "Los medios de información y la categoria de 'discontinuo' en la estética moderna," or "Information media and the category of the 'discontinuous' [also 'broken' or 'intermittent']"[119] in modern aesthetics," in which he crafted a history of aesthetic uses of discontinuity, and discussed Argentine projects such as Escari's *Entre en discontinuidad* and Jacoby and Costa's *Primera audición de obras creadas con lenguaje oral*, both of 1966. Paez and Masotta attest to the larger interest in discontinuity

[118] Alicia Paez, "El concepto de happening y las theorias," in *Happenings*, p. 46, my translation. The essay was a lecture originally delivered at the ITDT on October 25, 1966 as part of the *Acerca (de) Happenings* series organized by Masotta, which included his own "discontinuity" essay on November 8. Di Tella Archives.

[119] Beatriz Galimberti Jarman and Roy Russell, eds., *The Oxford Spanish Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 261.

as a way of reading code in the emergent Argentine conceptualism.[120] The Grupo del Arte de los Medios Masivos, as initially constituted, did not last beyond *Happening para un jabalí difunto*. The many projects undertaken by Jacoby, Costa, and Escari and a number of collaborators immediately following this project, however, represent the rapid development of their initial explorations with Masotta, among them: 1) the exploration of urban space as a possible venue for further plays between "real" experience and its linguistic mediation, 2) the extension of discontinuity and apperception to other high-tech media and circuits linking them, and 3) the first ventures toward more overtly political applications of the above strategies.

In a recent interview, Jacoby claimed that it was Escari who violated the terms of the indefinite collaboration between the three by producing his own work, *Entre en discontinuidad* [*Enter Into Discontinuity*], on October 8, 1966.[121] At 7 p.m., xeroxes with descriptions of five different intersections in Buenos Aires were handed out at those locations.[122] While each description matched its site, they took different forms. As Escari reports:

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[120] Including his competency as a scholar in the *Sobre Happenings* cycle, Masotta instantiated another level of textual distance from the "original" work or event. Academic speech that identifies, categorizes and historicizes intervened at the very introduction of the work. If Masotta's own writings are taken in earnest, this final gesture was a step behind media art's abiding interest in defining a new mode of practice based in the mass media and its disassembly. The earlier happenings were unveiled as texts that could be staged and restaged in new contexts; their status as unique events was undone and their status as texts for action was cemented. Liz Kotz has explored John Cage's influence on the art of the 1960s, claiming that his key innovation was the conversion of music to text in *4'11"*. She follows the influence of this move through both Fluxus and Happenings, citing the importance of both George Brecht and Allan Kaprow taking a class with Cage in 1958. While Kaprow assimilated Cage's lesson in moving from painting to action, Kotz argues that he did not fully take up the implication that the action now had an inescapably textual basis, as a script. Masotta's move here would seem to bring the Kaprow-style happening back into the fold of this nascent conceptualism. See Liz Kotz, *Words to be Looked At: Language in 1960s Art* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007).

[121] This particular comment was edited out of the published version for purposes of size. Daniel Quiles, "Interview with Roberto Jacoby," *Americas Society Review* 75, Vol. 40, No. 2 (Nov. 2007), pp. 323-330.

[122] Raúl Escari, "Entre en discontinuidad," in *Happenings*, pp. 147-155. Translated as Raúl Escari, "Enter Into Discontinuity: Reflections and Texts," trans. Eileen Brockbank, *LHN*, pp. 255-258.

> [...A]t Corrientes and Paraná, a description was offered through the signage; at Córdoba and Florida, through the buildings; at Santa Fé and Thames, through the colors, at Bartolomé Mitre and Pueyrredón, through the sounds, at Constitución and Lima, through the movement.
>
> The main reason for using the second person was not to take up a literary tradition... rather I sought to address the reader in the terms generally used by advertising.
>
> ...Basically, the sense of the work was to show the reader—to make him recognize—a passage through languages (from the language of perception to written language). At the same time, the work pointed out the radical transformations assumed by this passage, the restrictions inherent in any code.
>
> [...T]he individual was perceiving something, and at the same time he was reading about what he was perceiving. Moreover, through this signaling, as the surrounding environment was turned into the subject, the reader was made to become aware, to take a reflective look at that urban area in which he was submerged.[123]

Entre en discontinuidad expands upon *El helicóptero*'s spatial discontinuity, in which viewers are sent throughout the city. Where *El helicóptero* converted an event into exchanges of language between participants, Escari converted actual sites into linguistic accounts, highlighting discontinuities both between site and language and between languages, different idioms of description. Like the earliest *Vivo-Ditos*, *Entre en discontinuidad* was also a "signaling." But as opposed to en-framing viewers from out of the stream of urban "life" that folds the viewer into the work of art, Escari encourages the viewer him- or herself to frame urban space, bringing an area of the city into contemplation and structural analysis. Masotta writes,

> The "discontinuity" did not only consist in the fact that those whom [Escari] wanted to convert into an audience and to read the texts had to follow a stretch of at most five blocks of the city, but also in the way the text had to be read. [That is, o]n every block—Escari described each block in a text in second person—one's eyes were able to see a part of that on every block. An identical content, here also [...] able to be caught between two distinct levels—one's eyes remained obligated to leap from one to the other, to perceive the difference between the deaf rumor of

[123] Escari, "Enter into Discontinuity," *LHN*, p. 255.

> interior language that accompanies the reading of a written text, and the hard palpitation of lights and noises of the street.[124]

Not long afterwards, at the Córdoba Biennial from October 15 to October 30, Jacoby, Costa and Juan Risuleo undertook a public space-sited work of their own titled *Rescate del azar* [*Rescue from Chance*], in which various elements of the city were painted green.[125] This work constitutes an interesting reclamation of a traditional artistic medium for the new conceptualist context that recalls Greco's continued use of painting as a signaling device in later *Vivo-Ditos*. Paint could be used to coat the urban readymade, to mark a given three-dimensional feature; it allowed the code of the city's infrastructure to be glimpsed; it could remain a tool for art in its ability to signal. Both of these street-based projects continued the lineage established by Greco and Minujín of street-based works, but emptied out any promise of the street as a site of liberation from the art object or institution. This site was merely another object ripe for analysis and dissection as a system.

At this same moment, Jacoby and Costa were experimenting with new aesthetic possibilities opened up by communications media. For *Poema ilustrado*, at the Radio Municipal gallery, Jacoby and Costa presented fragments of ordinary conversation as

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[124] *Revolución en el arte*, pp. 242-243. My translation.

[125] Materials related to the work, including photographs from a 2004 restaging, can be found on a CD-ROM of Roberto Jacoby's work. Roberto Jacoby, *Media Art/Arte de los medios 1966-68*, CD-ROM, Cristian Dios, Isaac Salmún and Lee Towndrow, producers, trans. Andrés Pacheco, 2004. Ana Longoni, in her essay on Ricardo Carreira, contends that the work was executed inside and outside of a single house that constituted the site of the Bienal Paralela. The specific elements painted, she reports, were "a shop window, a lamppost, and a piece of the curb. Inside the house, they painted a drainpipe and other things. It was up to the spectator to establish an association between the green signals inside the building and the ones he spotted outside, tracing a mental design or diagram of a given space" (p. 180). Longoni does not, however, cite any sources for this information. Victoria Noorthoorn discusses the work in her recent Americas Society exhibition, but titles it *Recorte de contexto* [*Cut of context*]. Victoria Noorthoorn and Teresa Riccardi, "Chronology 1957-2007: From Destruction and Dematerialization to a Reconstruction of the Cultural Field in Argentine Art," in *Beginning with a Bang! From Confrontation to Intimacy: An Exhibition of Argentine Contemporary Artists, 1960-2007*, ed. Victoria Noorthoorn (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 96.

poems, broadcast from a tape recorder on a stool set in the gallery. On October 20, 1966, Jacoby, Costa, and Juan Risuleo organized *Primera audición de obras creadas con lenguaje oral* [*First Hearing of Works Created with Oral Language*] at the Centro de Experimentación Audiovisual at the ITDT, in which sections of literary texts were read aloud by readers of different classes and specificities, a shoe-shiner (a possible reference to Greco) and a psychotic among them, and broadcast in the CEA's theater space.[126] This was not the first time Argentine artists had worked with audio recordings, but the recordings here were submitted as the work itself, as opposed to merely complementing an environment or event.[127] Mirroring Masotta's writings about media art, the artists saw this move as the introduction of an entirely new genre of literature.

> a new genre that applies the same principles of literary creation to works created in oral language. […] The tape recorder, storing the language that would later be combined into the work, would operate like an objective memory, outside of the artist. Thus all the richness of oral language would be recovered for literature (tones of voice, the age and gender of the person speaking, perhaps his social class). All this is lost when we work in written language.[128]

"Oral language," as the artists explicitly state, is conceived as a superior, aural writing—written speech—in which codes of the subject become legible. These codes are opened up by discontinuities in voice, tone, and vernacular language as opposed to merely what is said. The perceptibility of difference in identity through voice alone recalls Masotta's

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[126] "First Hearing of Works Created with Oral Language," trans. Eileen Brockbank, *LHN*, p. 253. Victoria Noorthoorn, in her timeline for the *Beginning with a Bang!* Exhibition cited below, contends that Juan Risuleo was co-artist on this project (p. 96), and he is mentioned in the text included in *LHN*.

[127] The work has precedents within Argentine art, among them the combinations of music and art in Madí, and the aforementioned *Arte Destructivo* show of 1961, in which recordings of "fragments of recorded and superimposed texts" were played in the gallery along with a speech that was played backwards. See Victoria Noorthoorn, "Beginning with a Bang! From Confrontation to Intimacy," in *Beginning with a Bang! From Confrontation to Intimacy: An Exhibition of Argentine Contemporary Artists, 1960-2007* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 13.

[128] *LHN*, p. 253.

play with visual markers of class in *Para inducir al espíritu de la imagen*. The play of the signifier in the latter is lost in Jacoby and Costa's emphasis on the documentary proof of the recording; the speakers' identities are understood as stable categories.

Jacoby had in fact produced work outside of the group prior to that point, such as *Maqueta de una obra* [*Maquette for a Work*], in August 1966, presented at the MNBA [Figure 76].[129] The idea was that the work, a sculpture accompanied by drawings and a text, was in fact a model to scale, a study for a larger or "final" version that would never be made. The work is suspended at the initial, planning stage, creating anticipation without realization. It parallels *Happening para un jabalí difunto* in its elimination of a previously essential stage of production, leaving the artist in the ironic position of insisting that an object that represents a "work" is in fact not a work but only the initial stage thereof. This is not redundancy or discontinuity but elision—a signaling of codes of conventional art production, which is built on assumptions about progress through certain conceptual stages.

After his initial collective activity, Jacoby produced conceptualist works on his own that continued to explore the possibilities of communications media, the mass media, and the interrelation between the gallery and sites outside of it, among them *Circuito automático* [*Automatic Circuit*] and *Parametros* [*Parameters*], both 1967. *Parametros*, a "tribute to John Cage," was presented at the CEA on July 7 at 6:15, and consisted of a television broadcast [Figure 77]. The time slot was aimed to coincide with the highest possible ratings and was intended to be the interruption of a regularly scheduled program.

[129] Ibid. The maquette-sculpture, consisting of spheres connected with rods, was made with materials donated by La Cámara de la Industria Plástica. Fantoni, *Tres visiones sobre el arte*, p. 21.

The screen was initially blank for a few seconds, after which a speaker intoned a description of what the viewer was doing: watching the broadcast.

> You are watching... or maybe you just turned on the television. Don't worry, keep looking at the screen... it is white... but also listen carefully to the sound produced by the TV set have you heard it before? Silence. Now listen also carefully to the noises around you... [Description of ambient noises. Viewer is instructed to change channels differently depending on how much his or her television set cost. In white electronic characters:] Take your radio, turn it on, do the same things you did with your TV set but looking at the black screen. Silence. This is not an ordinary situation for you. But you can get used to it if it is not like that. You have to make a decision and change the channel you have already seen some of the possibilities being offered to you. Do it. [All possible distortions and modifications that are possible to make from the channel must indeed be made; in equal time intervals: horizontal, vertical, snow, use of two cameras, one in white and another one in black, etc.]...[130]

The text in *Parametros* insists upon "all possible distortions and modifications" to the system that is presented to the viewer: the closed circuit of television broadcast. The viewer is even encouraged to change the channel by every possible configuration; this is the redundant effect of the work and its instructions. The idea seems to be to fully explore the system so that no possibility is left untried, and to direct all messages to the system and its qualities—the code is made content. The system even includes the Cagean factor of one's surroundings when interacting with the circuit, its status as an environment. This logic is close to that of Minujín's interest in the "environmentalizing" power of the media in her 1966 *Simultaneidad en simultaneidad*, discussed below, as well as David Lamelas's *Situación en tiempo*, also of 1967, which situated a number of television sets turned to static in a darkened gallery (discussed in Chapter 3).

[130] Text included in Roberto Jacoby, *Media Art/Arte de los medios* CD-ROM.

For *Circuito automático*, Jacoby affixed stickers to various sites in public space. The posters displayed a telephone number with images of a man and a woman on either side [Figure 78]. When the number was called the following message was heard:

> The fact that you called means that you have read a small sign that includes pictures of a man and of a woman and a telephone number. Thus you have closed a communication circuit that began when you read the signs, and now concludes. This is an automatic answering machine. When your call arrives it is connected automatically to the tape in which this text is recorded. Thus the usual structure of telephone communication has been changed. All the information flows your way. Indifferent to anything you may say. But this circuit does not report anything. It only speaks about itself, and you may continue listening or may interrupt the communication. My name is Roberto Jacoby and the automatic answering machine was installed and made by Victor Zavalía.[131]

Circuito automático is similar to *El mensaje fantasma*, with a different object: telephonic communication as opposed to television. Like Masotta's earlier work, cues situated in public space turn ordinary passerby into a potential audience for a mediatic work that reports on itself and declares its status as a closed circuit. But this closed circuit was more than the orientation of the media used in relation to one another; it was also a representation of closed signification. The message exhaustively details every element of information about the work, down to the technician's name. Yet one question remains unanswered: why the images of a man and a woman? These ambiguous photographs recall Masotta's interest in the flexibility of the sign for multiple meanings. As much as the closed circuit forecloses viewer interaction beyond the grasping of the system itself, Jacoby includes unfixed signs that actually multiply possible interpretations: missing persons, a dating service, experts, etc. The artist would continue to explore this inclusion of open signs into otherwise closed systems in *Mensaje en el Di Tella* the following year,

[131] Ibid.

discussed in the next chapter. These works were to be fully explained in the book project with Verón based around the idea of media art that ultimately never came to fruition; within a year the priorities of artists in this circle would be completely transformed, and Jacoby would be helping to design *Tucumán Arde*.

Costa, in collaboration with Risuleo, produced *Moda ficción I* [*Fashion Fiction I*] (1966-1967) at Osvaldo Giesso Gallery in Buenos Aires, a project that would be continued and published in magazines such as *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* when Costa moved to the United States in 1968 [Figure 79].[132] The initial stages of the project involved proposals for the publication of fashion photographs of models wearing accessories, mainly jewelry, that Costa had designed, accompanied by texts by the artist that mimicked fashion copy. The choice to publish a work in different magazines continues the investigations of *Happening para un jabalí difunto*, although the system in question was no longer art-related publicity as transmitted by the mass media but the fashion system, which Barthes was writing about at that very moment and which had already been engaged by the Surrealists in the 1930s.[133] Later in 1967 Costa traveled to New York and showed the work to Leo Castelli, who was enthusiastic and introduced Costa to Richard Avedon, and the artist subsequently sat in on photo sessions with models Marina Schiano and Marisa Berenson, who would appear as the *Fashion Fiction* models in its *Vogue* guise. This trip would precipitate Costa's relocation to New York in 1968, where he would continue the project as *Fashion Fiction* and collaborate with a

[132] See Cecilia de Torres, "Chronology," in *Eduardo Costa: The Volumetric Paintings*, p. 40 and Alexander Alberro, "Media, Sculpture, Myth," p. 179 n. 28. The artist also traveled to Caracas that year, where he met members of the avant-garde collective El Techo de la Ballena [The Roof of the Whale], at a symposium organized by the Rockefeller Center that is a rare example of Latin American artistic interchange *within* Latin America.

[133] Roland Barthes, *Systeme de la mode* (Paris: Editions de Seuil, 1967). For links between Surrealism and fashion, see François Baudot, *Fashion and Surrealism* (New York: Assouline, 2001).

network of poets and conceptualists, among them John Baldessari and Vito Acconci, who were then developing the artist's magazine *0 to 9*.[134]

A letter in the David Lamelas Papers addressed to Marta Minujín, dated November 24, 1966, sent from El Club de Directores del Arte, invites her to a "spectacle" titled "La Musicosa" featuring a roundtable afterwards titled "¿Qué nombre le damos a esto?" [What name do we give this?] at which the topic "¿La publicidad es un arte o el arte es publicidad?" [Is publicity an art, or is art publicity?] would be discussed.[135] Prior to *Happening para un jabalí difunto* and the many experiments of Masotta and his followers, it would have been hard to conceive such discussions taking place in the context of Buenos Aires, where publicity, in an unquestioned or un-signaled form, was a fundamental element of the operations of developmentalist art institutions such as the ITDT and Museo de Arte Moderno. 1966 is the year in which the codes by which new art was introduced and discussed in Argentina became a fixation, the subject matter of both works of art and symposia and discussions around art. This event, as with much of the art that was to come, is evidence that Masotta and the media artists contributed to the

[134] The tracing of the 1966-1967 activity of the artists in Masotta's reading group only provides one window into what was a much larger scene of innovation in Argentine art at that moment. In addition to their personal visits to New York, the media artists also maintained correspondence with Argentine Liliana Porter, Uruguayan Luis Camnitzer, and Venezuelan José Guillermo Castillo, who were engaged in mail art practices between the two countries and founded the New York Graphic Workshop in 1964. The latter promoted the production of prints a resistance to their historically supplementary status, and developed a conceptualism based around mailings and language-oriented works on paper. Fernando G. Delgado and Juan C. Romero, *El Arte Correo en Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Vortice, 2005), pp. 39-40. See Lyle Rexer, "Roundtable: New York Graphic Workshop," *Art on Paper*, Sept./Oct. 2008, pp. 51-59, *Obras del New York Graphic Workshop*, exh. cat. (Mexico City: Galería Universitaria Aristos, 1966), and Luis Camnitzer, Jóse Guillermo Castillo and Liliana Porter, *New York Graphic Workshop: Luis Camnitzer, José Guillermo Castillo, Liliana Porter* (Caracas: Museo de Bellas Artes, 1969). In addition, in Fall 2009 the Blanton Museum of Art at the University of Texas, Austin will host an exhibition of the Workshop, *The New York Graphic Workshop: 1964 – 1970*. Gabriel Pérez-Barreiro, Ursula Davila-Villa, and Gina McDaniel Tarver, *The New York Graphic Workshop, 1964-1970*, exh. cat. (Austin: Blanton Museum of Art, the University of Texas at Austin, 2009).

[135] David Lamelas Papers, Special Collections, Getty Research Institute.

expansion of a field in both the immediate context of Buenos Aires and, soon, on an international scale.

Invasions

While *Simultaneidad en simultaneidad* [*Simultaneity in Simultaneity*] (1966) represents a significant transition in Marta Minujín's art, she had previously explored the use of television in her work. Her happening *Cabalgata* had been transmitted live on Argentina's Canal 7, and she had included a closed-circuit television in a chamber in *La menesunda* in which viewers could see themselves. This latter choice anticipated the artist's approach in *Simultaneidad en simultaneidad*, which was conceived in April and executed on October 13th and 24th at the ITDT as the Argentine installment of the *3 Country Happening*, a collaboration with Allan Kaprow, who executed a simultaneous happening in New York, and Wolf Vostell, who did so in Berlin.[136] With this work, Minujín abandoned the dialectic between technological materials and devices and handmade objects and sensorial effects in her earlier happenings and environments in favor of elaborate configurations in which viewers were interacted with various communications media, landing her in Masotta's good graces to the extent of inclusion in *Happenings*.[137]

While Kaprow's work in the later 1960s and particularly the 1970s utilized communications media such as video, his earlier happenings were predicated more on the

[136] Adriana Lauria, "El happening: Una estrategia inclusiva y revulsiva de la cotidianeidad en el arte. Aproximación hermenéutica a 'Simultaneidad en simultaneidad' de Marta Minujín," in *El arte entre lo publico y lo privado*, pp. 255-260. Kaprow, whose happenings had been reported in Argentine newspapers since 1962, visited Buenos Aires in 1966 and met with Minujín. At this moment both artists embraced new technologies that facilitated faster communication between disparate sites. *LHN*, p. 161.
[137] "Simultaneidad en simultaneidad," in *Happenings*, pp. 90-96. In this text, both Kaprow and Vostell are credited along with Minujín on *Simultaneidad*.

importance of interactions between participants in the same place, and less on their broadcast through recording devices. Vostell, had proposed events involving television as early as 1959, however, and the *3 Country Happening* bears the marks of his interest in the mapping of geographical space through the use of telecommunication technologies.[138] A postcard announcing Vostell's *Dé/collage Happening* of May 21, 1966, staged at the Bide-a-Wee Home Assocation Inc. in Wantach, New York, featured a map of Queens with dotted arrow lines leading from Manhattan to the show, which was on Long Island. The "First Announcement" for the *3 Country Happening* a few months later has a similar design, though now the map comprises the Western Hemisphere: North and South America, Europe and Africa [Figure 80]. Texts on the map are featured in English, German and Spanish, changing depending on what region of the world they happen to be near. Dotted lines connect the cities of New York, Buenos Aires, and Berlin, and along each it reads "telephone" in each language. Dotted lines also run from each of the three cities toward a central point; along the lines it says "TV" and this central point is labeled "Early Bird Satelit." Concentric circles additionally radiate out from each city, remaining generally within the field of the triangle connecting them, but also outside its boundaries—suggesting on the one hand the literal reach of a medium such as television and also a more generalized idea of communication media's power to expand the audience of art. Additional dotted arrow lines at the bottom of the poster, one from Vostell's name—"Vostell 27.4.66"—point to what appears to be a half-marble glued to the page, with another arrow line pointing to the phrase "After this a global happening festival is planned for 1967."

[138] Vostell referred to some of these works as "TV-décollage." One example in the Allan Kaprow Papers is dated June 1959, making it among the earliest artistic experiments with television. Box 70, Allan Kaprow Papers, Getty Research Institute.

Descriptive text for the event found in the Allan Kaprow papers claims that Vostell, first, and Kaprow, second, were "receiving instructions" from Minujín via radiophone, and that they later contacted her via the same medium to initiate her event. *Simultaneidad en simultaneidad* comprised two parts, the first of which, titled "Invasión Instantanea," Minujín described as an "environmental signal." A hand-drawn storyboard for this phase of the happening, detailing different media and durations for various sections was ultimately sent to Kaprow and kept in his correspondence files.[139] The sequence would be bookended by a close-up image of Minujín's face. After this opening shot there were images of or representing different media being transmitted—television, radio, and teletype—along with footage of the simultaneous events of Kaprow (a variation of his *Household* (1964), in which participants licked jam from the hood of a car) and Vostell. The event was transmitted for 10 minutes to 120 preselected people via radio, television, telephone, and telegraph. The plan also has images of the presumed receivers of the information, sitting at home near radios and telephones that sound in succession. A different set of notes indicates that the soundtrack would read as follows: for the image of Minujín's face at the beginning, "Now I, MM, am invading you. At this moment I am getting into your atmosphere by means of this dotted line." As the images would change and Kaprow and Vostell's happenings were shown occurring, Minujín would explain that they were going on simultaneously. A half a cow would be pierced by three persons, and Minujín would acknowledge that she were conducting the same happening in Buenos Aires—but this may indicate merely that she was transmitting it in Buenos Aires. Then Vostell would claim that 100 bottles of milk were being placed on

[139] Marta Minujín File, Box 69 Folder 4, Correspondence with Artists section, Allan Kaprow Papers, Getty Research Institute Special Collections, Los Angeles.

100 street corners in Berlin, and also in Buenos Aires. At the concluding show of Minujín's face, the text reads:

> We have arrived to the invasion. yes sir, look at the invaded ones, they are moving their radio controls, just like you are doing, they watch TV they areceive (sic) a phone call, they open the door, they get a telegram—be simultaneous, yes—you are now one of the invaded ones.
> You are listening to the signal. Reach your own conclusions.

The event was transmitted simultaneously in Berlin (with Vostell) and New York (with Kaprow), who were informed by Minujín over radiophone, an early form of wireless telephone using radio waves. In the second phase, "Simultaneidad envolvente" [Enveloping Simultaneity], the artist and a group of assistants selected sixty members of the mass media, mostly journalists, and brought them to the Di Tella [Figures 81 through 83]. Each was placed before a television and a radio, where they were filmed, photographed, and recorded giving "their opinion of the event and the 'media' in general." Eleven days later, the participants returned to the Di Tella to watch and listen to their recorded selves.

The most obvious discrepancy between *Simultaneidad* and some of the other media works at this moment was one of budget. Records in the ITDT archives indicate that the Institute paid for televisions for use in the events.[140] In terms of theme, however, it is very much a Masotta-era conceptualist project. As in *El mensaje fantasma*, and some of Jacoby's subsequent works, the goal was to make the viewer aware of the communications media themselves at the precise moment that they were transmitting messages. In using the word *invasión*, Minujín suggests an interruption of ordinary media—a "signal" consisting of art instead of ordinary media content. And while this

[140] Marta Minujín files, Di Tella archives, Buenos Aires.

"invasion" made constant reference to its different forms of media, it was also new programming—documentation of Kaprow and Vostell's happenings—a substitute media content or message. "Signal" for Minujín does not refer to Masotta's deictic operation, the tautological feeding of media circuits into themselves; it is a channel, a multimedia art program that connected one to an international field of artistic activity—an ephemeral public of which one was a member by virtue of being a receiver.

Simultaneidad did stress a moment of revelation—one geared specifically for its participants who were professionals in the mass media field. It was these people who were subjected, as it were, to self-mediatization, to viewing themselves as recorded content. Those who ordinarily engineered the mass media were folded into it, rendered object instead of organizing subject. While no particular ideology was advanced beyond that, in line with Minujín's non-didactic encouragement to "reach your own conclusions," this more specific viewer targeted for apperception of the effect of the code identified two groups: those controlling the media and those receiving it. Within this presumed self-consciousness about the consequences or power of the media, there is the suggestion of a call to a responsibility, even if its terms are not specified.

In a text on *Simultaneidad en simultaneidad* in *Happenings*, Verón claims to have participated in the happening, noting that it was specifically media elites who were selected for the project, and interprets the media content of the work through terms applied to earlier, non-mediatic happenings, where the idea was the neo-Dadaist reconfiguration of "everyday life":

> […W]e can postulate that it is possible to form an adequate description of the quotidian situation of "a-consumer-observing-television-in-his-house," for example (we could call it "normal" situation, N), mediating a basic opposition:

mass media/context
and five pairs of secondary oppositions:
activity/passivity
personal/impersonal
private/public
reality/irreality
observer/observed.[141]

Anticipating Masotta's sets of oppositions for *El helicóptero*, Verón is arguing that in the "quotidian" situation, the first, seemingly positive term in each of the subsequent dyads—activity, personal, private, reality, and observer—is related to the experience of the mass media, and not the presumably real "context" of one's home. Verón concluded that "[t]he mass media have invaded the context, but inverting their habitual role as *emissaries* with respect to the consumer, function as *receptors of the actions of the consumer*."[142] The mass media afford the viewer a measure of empowerment and agency, but also render his or her home a trap of enclosure, passivity, and observation.

Masotta's position on Minujín shifted after *Simultaneidad en simultaneidad*. In *El "pop-art"* he acknowledged her prominent position as a contemporary artist but critiqued her reluctance to acknowledge power relations (unlike Romero Brest, who contended that *La menesunda* was beyond the scope of criticism).

> The theoretical foundations, so to speak, that accompany Minujín's works are well known: a vision of the social process as a phenomenon of continuous change, on the one hand, and on the other a conception of the work's relation to the viewer as immediate, *participative* contact, as *situation*, with a cathartic value that is supposed to replace the isolated and aestheticizing presence of the traditional plastic object. By conceiving of the work as mortal—with its value consisting precisely in this, since it puts the very limit of the concept of the artwork to the test—this vision of art considers the social system, on the contrary, as indestructible. Here I am referring to what goes on in Marta Minujín's head. For

[141] Eliseo Verón, "Sobre Marta Minujín: Un happening de los medios masivos: notas para un analisis semántico," in Oscar Masotta, ed., *Happenings*, pp. 80-1. My translation.
[142] Ibid, p. 86.

> Minujín everything changes, everything becomes and transforms, constantly and quickly. But thereby, one suspects, nothing changes for her, nor can the development of the societies themselves be substantially modified.[143]

If social experience can be added to art, Masotta implies, it is as subject to critique or transformation as any other element.

With Minujín now examining how mass media technologies might be turned upon their purveyors, Masotta praised the work in the prologue to *Happenings* and noted her obvious connection to the media theorist Marshall McLuhan. Masotta noted that Minujín did not call *Simultaneidad* a "happening," even though the larger project was titled *Three Country Happening*. In truth, in the very text included in *Happenings*, *Simultaneidad*'s two phases are referred to as both "events" and "happenings." Masotta argues that the project constitutes signaling in his sense of the term: pointing something out and bringing it into visibility and consciousness.

> Minujín, along the lines of McLuhan, thinks that the communications media "surround" [*ambientan*] audiences, and that in her own work and through the simultaneous use of different communications media—radio, television, telegraph—she does none other than "signal" to audiences, that is to say, help them to become conscious of this fact, of this environmental power of the media.[144]

Masotta contends that with *Simultaneidad* Minujín literalized the "environmental" experience of media—what McLuhan would later call their ability to "massage" the

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[143] Ibid, p. 179, Spanish in *Revolución en el Arte*, p. 129.

[144] "Marta Minujín, en la línea de McLuhan, piensa que los medios de información 'ambientan' a las audiencias, y que en su propio trabajo y mediante el uso simultáneo de medios de información diferentes—radio, televisión, telegramas—ella no haría sino 'señalar' a las audiencias, es decir, ayudarlas a tomar conciencia de ese hecho, de ese poder ambientacional de los medios." My translation. The verb "ambientar" does not have a proper equivalent in English—it is a verb made from the word for "background" or "environment," so as a verb it literally means to posit oneself as an environment for another. This seems to correspond to McLuhan's notion that new media "massage" their users in such a way that the user is unaware of the mediation.

receiver, to surround him or her in such a way that their very presence is unnoticeable.[145] In the first part of *Simultaneidad* Minujín treats the multimedia bombardment of her viewers as an "invasion," that infusion of information that is highly conspicuous; it cannot be missed. As a consequence, its very "environmental" character fails. In "Simultaneidad envolvente," in contrast, Minujín creates an excess of environment—a control center where the environmental effect can be reproduced simultaneously for sixty people at a time—that undoes the privacy of televisual experience. This phase of the project created redundancy through sheer number. It also pitted two environments against one another: that of the mass media against the enclosure of the institutional space at the ITDT. It is only by gathering and containing members of the mass media in the art institution that Minujín can expose the media's power to surround and enclose inconspicuously. If a medium like television creates an enveloping environment for the lone viewer in his or her home, in a setting in which dozens of others are experiencing this same surround, this illusion of solitude disappears. One is face to face with the fact that these illusions and technological reproductions are provided to countless others instantly. Again, it is those who regularly supervise the such broadcasts who are the intended recipients of such insight.

But Minujín's event was not intended solely for power brokers within the information and entertainment industries. There are two types of viewer for *Simultaneidad*: the original participants, who were present for the events themselves, and those viewers in the larger sphere of the work following its dissemination via the mass media and the distribution of *Happenings*. The category of the analytical viewer—one

[145] See Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The medium is the massage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1967) and the film produced for NBC, Marshall McLuhan, Ernest Pintoff, and Guy Fraumeni, *This is Marshall McLuhan the medium is the massage* (New York: McGraw Hill Text-Films, 1967).

who has distance from the closed circuit of the work—is preserved. He or she has the ultimate purview of that work, that of Minujín herself, and can reflect on the spectacle of members of the mass media being subjected to self-reflection from a considerable spatial and temporal remove. It is the same position occupied by the viewer of the photograph of Greco performing the *Vivo-Dito*: a quite different position than that of the passerby being circled and signed. If there are two frames, there are two types of viewer: participants and second-order observers.

One important difference between Minujín's pre- and post-1966 work is the function of the "station," the mini-site within the environment that the viewer was entreated to pause in front of and interact with before moving on to further stations. In Masotta's terms, this would constitute a spatial discontinuity, a breaking up of the work into different sections that would allow the viewer to comprehend the whole as a series of parts. In *La menesunda*, stations consisted of explicitly analog, sensorial interactions; room by room, different senses of the viewer were put into play. The recording booths of *Simultaneidad en simultaneidad*, on the other hand, were not so much sampled by a passing participant as the participant was sampled—recorded—by the media harbored in those stations. The viewer effectively went from processing the work to being processed by it, converted into information. But this was not the random participant called for by *La menesunda* or *El batacazo*—the participants had been hand-selected, in a sense, to be educated about their own relation to their chosen field, a practice that Minujín would refine with the use of computers in future projects.

Minujín argued that her aim was to "de-alienate those present," to give the media circuit an apperceptive self-consciousness.[146] A passage from McLuhan's *Understanding Media* serves to clarify the aims of *Simultaneidad en simultaneidad*.

> Similarly, a very much greater speed-up, such as occurs with electricity, may serve to restore a tribal pattern of intense involvement such as took place with the introduction of radio in Europe, and is now tending to happen as a result of TV in America. Specialist technologies detribalize. The nonspecialist electric technology retribalizes.[147]

McLuhan's mystification of the illusion of community provided by television is at the heart of Minujín's project. The worldwide broadcast of the happening aims for a "retribalization" of the art audience, its unification via a "simultaneity" of art-content—an appropriation of the power of the television medium. At the same time, Minujín's participants are power brokers within the mass media. They are exposed as those who make the decisions to impose an ideological fantasy of collectivity that is inherent in the experience of television. It is not just the medium that is the message, but the power relations the medium normally obfuscates. *Simultaneidad en simultaneidad* used the spatial effect of the art institution, as a site of enclosure and containment, to expose and undo the considerably larger circuit of the mass media. This use of the ITDT itself as a critical tool would be brief. More often than not in the late 1960s, the spatial and discursive conditions of the Argentine art institution were the targets of analytical attack.

[146] Quoted by Adriana Lauria in "El Happening…" p. 259. Original quote from "Marta Minujín reunió personalidades en un inquietante 'happening' ¿Qué quiere que le diga?" *Gente* [Buenos Aires], no. 67, (November 3, 1966), pp. 38-39.
[147] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1964), p. 24.

Chapter 3
Interruptions: Space and Speech, 1968

[...I]t would be unfortunate if the logical correlative was that we intended an act of DIRECT communication.[1]
-Margarita Paksa

In this room the participating audience, which has come together by chance for the opening, has been locked in. [...] I have taken prisoners.[2]
-Graciela Carnevale

Tucumán Arde [*Tucumán is Burning*], which opened to the public on November 3rd, 1968 at the Confederación General del Trabajo de los Argentinos (CGTA) union hall in Rosario, is an informational architecture [Figures 84 and 85]. Images, newspaper clippings, and handwritten slogans and diagrams cover walls, hallways, floors. In photographs, impoverished subjects stare back at the viewer; agricultural machines and products lie dormant; labor is at a standstill. The texts displayed throughout the space serve as interchangeable captions for these pictures, as do audio broadcasts of interviews that are perpetually broadcast, layering aural matter onto imagistic and textual content. Films are periodically presented. A sociological report is handed out upon exit that reprises the overarching message, ostensibly the result of all of this research: the Onganía dictatorship's aggressive privatization of the sugar industry has impoverished the rural state of Tucumán in the north of Argentina; dissent has been prohibited; the regime has suppressed it and disseminated propaganda about its success in the region to sympathetic media outlets. This is the situation, and something must be done. The space the viewer is in and the collective activity that produced it are implicitly figured as part of what can be done. Yet this landmark collaboration of over thirty artists, journalists, sociologists and

[1] Margarita Paksa, "Mesa redonda—esto es un juicio," in *Sobre el discurso de mi* (Buenos Aires: Fundación Espigas, 2003), pp. 43-44, my translation. Original text 1967.
[2] Graciela Carnevale, "Project for the Experimental Art Series," *LHN*, trans. Marguerite Feitlowitz, p. 299. Original text 1968.

union activists from different cities did not merely transmit a transparent message. The viewer was also required, via the materials presented, to analyze and break the dictatorship's informational methods—a politicized version of the analytical practices that were introduced by Oscar Masotta in the period between 1965 and 1967. In order to guarantee this, the viewer's physical presence was required in the space of the exhibition; it was imperative that he or she enter the union hall and experience its multimedia bombardment.

Tucumán Arde is situated at the crux of two dialectics—one related to exhibition space, the other speech—that attended the emergence of Argentine conceptualism. In keeping with the broad exchange of ideas and spirit of collectivity at this moment, this chapter is a thematic survey of projects by artists from both Buenos Aires and Rosario between the years 1966 and 1968. Two key concerns are isolated: the first is the application of Masotta's analytical conceptualism to physical setting of the institutional context. Artists such as David Lamelas, Ricardo Carreira, Oscar Bony, Margarita Paksa, Eduardo Favario, Aldo Bortolotti, and Graciela Carnevale initially designed works that scrutinized the gallery's contents to the extent that it could no longer function unnoticed. By 1968, a number of these same artists had experimented with virtually empty rooms that reduced the site to a trap for the viewer to escape. *Tucumán Arde* was deeply informed by this seeming exhaustion of gallery space, even as it identified and utilized a new enclosure in which art could appear. The second preoccupation—one shared by these same artists as well as Juan Pablo Renzi, Léon Ferrari, Roberto Jacoby, Pablo Suárez, and many others—is with politicized speech. Masotta's focus on code had bracketed the question of whether or not the artist was obligated to offer a substitute

message in place of the one that had been disabled. As late as May 1968, artists in Buenos Aires and Rosario were engaged in a quiet debate that is evident in different artworks and actions: some saw the country's political situation as necessitating clear messages from art, while others questioned the very possibility of articulating any message free of the play of the signifier. *Tucumán Arde* is an attempt to reconcile these two discrepancies: between autonomy from institutions and the utility of indoor exhibition space, and between speaking and thinking about speaking, which makes it harder to speak.

Situations of Space

A number of the artists who would apply the lessons of analytical conceptualism to the gallery setting began as sculptors in dialogue with international trends. David Lamelas, born in Buenos Aires in 1944, is particularly emblematic of this trajectory. Some of his earliest works integrated Pop imagery onto sculptural surfaces, as in *Jugador de rugby en dos secciones piramidales* [*Rugby Player in Two Pyramidal Sections*] (*1964*) [Figure 86], but he soon shifted to an idiom of geometric abstraction in which large, colorful geometric elements were attached to or protruded from gallery walls. *Pieza conectada a una pared* [*Work Connected to A Wall*], installed at Galería Guernica in 1964, features two column-like extensions propped against the wall that led down to a polygonal floor sculpture [Figure 87]. In literalizing a movement from the vertical exhibition space of painting to the horizontal and three-dimensional area of sculpture, this work occupies the position between painting and sculpture that Donald Judd would

designate a "specific object" in 1965.[3] North American sculptors such as Anne Truitt would not have been Lamelas's only starting point, however, as the transition from modernist abstraction to colorful hybrid forms incorporating both two- and three-dimensional elements had already occurred in Brazil in the late 1950s with the emergence of *neo-concreto* and artists such as Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Clark.[4] Lamelas was also close to Marta Minujín (he would collaborate on *La menesunda* in 1965), who had her first success in Buenos Aires in 1964 with brightly colored inhabitable mattress sculptures; works such as *Pieza conectada a una pared* remove the readymade while keeping the form and its architectural frame of reference.

The introduction of a new material led to a major transition in Lamelas's work in 1966, when he began to utilize thin metal plates in tandem with or in place of the bulkier sculptural forms he had previously employed. One of the most succinct of these is *Situación de cuatro placas de alumino* [*Situation of Four Aluminum Plates*] (1966) [Figure 88]. With rectangular plates laid across the floor at the edge of the wall, the floor, and the wall itself—the last plate touches the floor and curves up to the wall, with which it then aligns vertically—this piece seems to mark or identify the basic parameters of a contained area of exhibition within a larger gallery. The plates mark the possibilities and limits of this space: a work must either engage the wall by hanging or leaning on it, rest on or protrude from the floor, or some combination of the two that can occupy or traverse the angle created at the intersection of wall and floor. In aligning with the wall, the plate parallels the viewer's vertical orientation; in occupying any stretch of the floor, the plate

[3] Donald Judd, "Specific Objects," *Arts Yearbook* 8, 1965, pp. 74-82. See James Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).
[4] See Guy Brett, "A Radical Leap," in *Art in Latin America*, ed. Dawn Ades (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), pp. 253-283.

outlines a vector in the viewer's horizontal movements through the space. With an economy of means, *Situación de cuatro placas de alumino* outlines an entire range of possibilities for the system of the exhibition of a single work.

The alteration in the thickness of his sculptural materials allowed Lamelas to position the plates on the ground as though they were another layer of the floor. They could be organized in various ways to point to other objects or to call attention to the ground or floor itself. This is clearly the objective in *Señalamiento de tres objetos*, of 1966, originally installed in a park in central Buenos Aires and later restaged in Hyde Park in London in 1968, which consisted of rectangular metal plates being placed around three different objects; in Hyde Park, a tree, a lamppost, and a man sitting in a chair [Figure 89].[5] The plates do not function as sources of visual interest in their own right, but as aggregates of a signaling system. Their rectilinearity allows them to guide a line of vision toward an object of attention, while their repetition around this object creates a sense of a circle or frame. While it brings to mind Greco's *Vivo-Ditos*, the form of the circle is suggested by discrete units, resulting in lines that are dotted, broken, or interrupted. A discontinuous line is used to signal, or encircle, something else. In addition, the signature, the link between the artist's body and the act of framing, has become unnecessary. Once set in place, the work is like a machine that runs without reference to the artist. Lamelas drops, as it were, the "dito"—the hand's deictic role in signaling—along with its authorial baggage.

Also in this year, Lamelas began to break up and displace his sculptural works throughout different areas of gallery space. *Conexión de tres espacios* [*Connection of*

[5] Heike Ander, Anke Bangma, Barbera van Kooij, eds., *David Lamelas: A New Refutation of Time*, exh. cat. Kunstverein München (Düsseldorf: Richter, 1997), p. 37.

Three Spaces], also titled *Prolongación de una cantidad limitado de espacio* [*Prolongation of a Limited Spatial Volume*] which received a special prize at the Premio Di Tella in 1966, continued Lamelas's shift from geometric abstraction to a use of geometric elements to signal or identify elements in exhibition space. The work was installed in three different galleries at the ITDT [Figure 90]. Propped against one wall separating the rooms was a 2.6 meter-high rectangular flourescent light box of white opaque glass, like a smaller and illuminated version of the wall. Two smaller, unlit rectangular forms protruded from the opposite wall. A molding along the bottom of all of these forms led the viewer around the wall to another room, where another sculptural form lined the right angle of the wall, a flourescent light placed at the angle between the wall and the floor. Beyond that work was a completely empty and darkened space.[6]

Like many of Lamelas's works from the mid-1960s, *Conexión de tres espacios* places volumetric sculptures throughout galleries in such a way as to guide or collide with the viewer's progression through the space.[7] The work is broken up into disparate elements, but the molding connects these parts as well as the galleries they are in, as though illustrating a larger perceptual unity that can be created by an observant viewer circulating the rooms. It is he or she who establishes the connection between the three spaces. The sculptures are organized in such a way that they extend or "prolong" already-existing elements of the gallery space—in one case a wall, in another the two sides of a wall that normally end in its angles, in the third case the point of 90-degree contiguity between wall and floor. In indexing or echoing the forms and functions of these

[6] Katzenstein, *Lamelas*, p. 38.
[7] Lamelas's papers and notebooks from the period contain numerous sketches for such sculptural environments, often with a viewer included in the proposed gallery space, trapped by or encountering various geometric forms that protrude from the walls or block off areas of the space. David Lamelas Papers, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

architectural features, they are made conspicuous as elements that ordinarily invisibly condition the experience of art viewing. The internal illumination of two of the objects might be read analogously, as an imbuing of the work with the task ordinarily given over to that architectural space; instead of needing to be lit, they light themselves in addition to the surrounding space.[8] Instead of focusing attention on the museum object protected by glass, the glass is smoked and light projects outward from the structure, drawing all attention to the surrounding context. The final unlit and empty space is signaled in a different manner: through simple juxtaposition with the other rooms.

Conexión de tres espacios organizes a phenomenological experience of gallery space for a viewer that is intended to result in analytical findings. This is no bodily experience of volume or space; it is an act of research that permits the gallery to be grasped as a machine or system. Lamelas makes phenomenological experience itself the object of inquiry, effectively placing it, as Greco did the framing circle and signature, in a frame, or in quotation marks.[9] The viewer first experiences the space phenomenologically, but then dissects the gallery's role in facilitating this experience, cued by subtle architectural touches: a demarcation here, an angle here, lighting there. Discreet features and spaces of the gallery are parsed into discontinuous mini-sites. Once read, its traditional function as inconspicuous platform for disinterested contemplation of

[8] Benjamin Buchloh argues that the central object that echoes the horizontal movement of the wall also additionally refers to the form of the exhibition vitrine. This supports the reading that these sculptures reverse the gallery's traditional purpose of lighting the object. See Buchloh, "Sign and Structure in the Work of David Lamelas," in *Neo-Avant-Garde and Culture Industry* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), p. 316.

[9] Buchloh argues that Lamelas positioned himself against the "false neutrality of the means and the spaces of Minimalist sculpture," Ibid, p. 317. Thought in terms of Masotta, however, a more accurate account might see Lamelas as using minimalism's inherent literality against itself to reveal the space of the gallery. Just as Greco uses the signature and frame to undermine themselves, Lamelas crafts a minimalism so ingenuous that it irrevocably signals its institutional conditions of possibility.

art objects is no longer possible. Lamelas positions institutional space as the target of analytical conceptualism.

Ricardo Carreira, Oscar Bony, and Pablo Suárez, all close associates of both Masotta and Lamelas in Buenos Aires, subsequently explored a related operation: they examined the gallery's constituent materials.[10] This strategy was on display at Jorge Romero Brest's *Experiencias visuales '67* exhibition, which replaced the yearly Premio Nacional because of decreased resources.[11] Romero Brest removed the element of competition from the Prize format by splitting and sharing the available funds with the artists, and the dual meaning of *experiencia* was clearly in play in the experimental approach of the artists that he selected. Carreira, who a year earlier had created *Soga y texto* [*Rope and Text*], one of the first examples of Kosuth-style conceptualism in Argentina [Figure 91], presented *Ejercicio sobre un conjunto* [*Exercise About A Conjunction*], in which a section of the floor of the gallery was polished to repeat the

[10] Carreira is a particularly important figure because of his role as a disseminator of ideas. He was born in 1942 in Buenos Aires, like Escari studied philosophy at UBA, and dropped out prior to finishing his degree. Ana Longoni notes that Carreira was an associate of Masotta's group of artists and intellectuals who was involved in ongoing dialogues between artists as they developed their sculptural and conceptual practices. She foregrounds Carreira's interest in *deshabituación*, translated roughly as "estrangement," linking him to the modernist strategy of "defamiliarization," in which the ordinary or taken-for-granted is made strange and seen anew. *Deshabituación* might be likened to signal as understood by Greco and Masotta, although the redundant or doubled signal or frame is not addressed by Longoni. See Ana Longoni, "El deshabituador. Ricardo Carreira en los inicios del conceptualismo," in *Arte y Literatura en la Argentina del Siglo XX* (Buenos Aires: Fundación Espigas, 2006), pp. 61-106 & 161-203. Jacoby helped create a recent issue of the journal *Ramona* dedicated to Carreira, featuring recollections and newly reproduced poems and texts by the artist. See "Dossier Ricardo Carreira," *Ramona* 8, December 2000, pp. 3-39.

[11] See Jorge Romero Brest, *Experiencias visuales '67*, exh. cat. Instituto Torcuato di Tella (Buenos Aires: Maria Bravo, 1967), John King, *El Di Tella y el desarrollo cultural argentino en la decada del sesenta*, pp. 113-126, and Universidad Di Tella archives. The exhibitions attempted to negotiate the shift from traditional media to expanded practices that had occurred in very short shrift in Argentine art. The term *experiencia*, which can mean both "experience" and "experiment," may have been drawn from Romero Brest's prior interest in phenomenology, while setting up a dichotomy between a previous, more traditionally contemplative art and one closer to Eco's "open work" that is completed by the viewer. See Andrea Giunta and Laura Malosetti Costa, eds., *Arte de posguerra: Jorge Romero Brest y la revista* Ver y Estimar (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2005), *LHN*, pp. 76-153, and Romero Brest, *Arte en la Argentina: últimas décadas* (Buenos Aires: Paídos, 1969).

shape of a panel mounted on the wall.[12] In addition there was raw plaster and chalk (the materials actually constituting the gallery), a section of red velvet spread on the floor, and a text describing the work. "I always use the same scale for the wood laths," Carreira wrote in an unpublished text,

> I use nameable and clearly differentiated, almost opposed, materials, but which do not warrant—the trouble—for such a sampling.
> A chalkboard. It is also important. Everything is very clear, of circular composition and does not permit a linear organization of the argument.
> At least I wanted that to be my wish...
> Plaster, chalk, wood, glass, and velvet in 500 centimeters by 700 centimeters, using space as volume.[13]

Ana Longoni argues that part of Carreira's "wish" was to demystify materials he was using.[14] In Masotta's terms, the artist was positing a discontinuity of the very materials that comprise the gallery as a setting. The chalk and plaster, normally combined to form walls, are here extracted from one another and displayed side by side, along with a section of the wood floor and a self-referential text not unlike the wall text. Only the velvet does not refer directly to materials that would be found in any modern gallery space, but it could refer to curtains or ropes used to demarcate or cover areas or walls. Carreria argues for the production of a "circular" as opposed to a "linear" argument to produce a reasoning that is "very clear"—he is referring to the viewer's task of making sense of the information at hand. The viewer is to resolve the apparent paradox of adding

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[12] Florencia Battiti, "Ricardo Carreira," *LHN*, p. 330. *Soga y texto* was his submission to the 1966 Premio Ver y Estimar at the Museo del Arte Moderno, was a thread hung across a room, a sample of the string attached to an easel, several photocopies of the coiled thread, and a textual description of the thread. The work was effectively restaged at the "Bienal Paralela," at the Córdoba Biennial that same year. This time, according to Juan Pablo Renzi, the rope was hung across a street, reaching from the balcony of a house to the sidewalk in the same location as Jacoby and Costa's *Rescate del azar*, and a sample collection of different varieties of rope, along with a series of knots, was submitted as an alternate form of information about the rope. See Fantoni, *Arte vanguardia y política en los años '60*, p. 41.
[13] Ibid, pp. 85-6.
[14] Longoni, "El Deshabituador," pp. 184-5.

up the circular reasoning presented by various materials placed in the gallery. This is a position analogous to the hypothetical consciousness outside of Jacoby's *Circuitos informacionales cerrados*, or that of the second-order viewer of Masotta's happenings and media works. It is a viewer who is bidden to make sense of information and essentially "read" a system which, once it is separated and understood, ceases to function. Once Carreira takes the gallery apart, it is visible, but also in pieces. It stops being a background for works of art and becomes an object of attention and dissection. Margarita Paksa writes:

> Ricardo occupies and transcends a didactic role where theories and works are directed to educate. He produces a wide articulation between materiality and writing, entering and exiting from one to the other, approaching or removing the sign of signaled reality. The act of signaling is thus constituted as intentional, active, already what slices, shows, separates.[15]

As for Masotta, and Greco before him, the idea that the work was "signaling" elements to which the viewer's critical attention could be drawn was a central aspect of the work of Carreira and the group of other artists around him.

Oscar Bony's submission for the same exhibition, *60 metros cuadrados y su información* [*60 Square Meters and Their Information*], consisted of sixty meters of wire mesh laid out on the floor of the gallery so that the viewer walked on it when entering the

[15] Margarita Paksa, "El Objeto Señalado," *Pagina/12* (Nov. 2, 2000-January 31, 2001), p. 2. Also published in *Brújula* No. 43, Year 5 (Dec. 2000), p. 2. Ana Longoni, "Revelamientos y revelaciones," *Ramona 8* (December 2000), p. 3. Longoni's text is a polemic of Margarita Paksa's 2000 Carreira retrospective at MAM and the accompanying CD *Vida y obra de Ricardo Carreira*, which was produced by Paksa, which, Longoni notes, contains numerous errors and omissions, among them the inclusion of a reproduction of a page of Carreira's speech at the First Meeting related to *Tucumán Arde* with underlining by Longoni that Paksa mistakenly attributes to Carreira. Much of this issue of *Ramona* is dedicated to the varying reactions of artists from the 1960s at this posthumous restaging of Carreira's work, which clearly led to a reckoning about the historicization of the 1960s for those involved.

room [Figure 92].[16] A camera projecting footage of the wire was set up in the center of the room, projecting this image of the material on the floor onto the wall of the gallery. Bony set up a closed-circuit of media along the lines of *El mensaje fantasma*, in which sculptural or environmental media (the mesh) was rendered the content of a different medium, film, the technology of which was supported, as if on a flat pedestal, by the sculptural material that it had rendered filmic. A third term, however, was the exhibition space serving as support for both the mesh and the projected image. The cycling of different media into one another mimicked—and utilized as its substrate—the floors and walls of the gallery.

Pablo Suárez echoed Carreira and Bony's work with gallery materials and space with *Cal, pared, alamabrado y sus modificaciones* [*Lime, Wall, Wire Fence, and Their Modifications*] [Figure 93].[17] The work consisted of a trash can situated in front of a wall that partially obscured a wire-mesh fence. The installation prevented viewers from entering one of the gallery spaces. While utilizing the same fence as Bony, Suárez's "modification" of his materials demonstrates a more confrontational possibility. Bony's closed circuit of sculptural and filmic media positions the viewer both as analyzer and as presence figured in the gallery space (one becomes cognizant of the wire mesh as floor

[16] See *Oscar Bony, el mago: obras 1965-2001*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Museo de Arte Latinoaermicano de Buenos Aires, 2008). Bony also produced several short films in the mid-1960s. Born in 1941, he was also integrated within the circle around Masotta and the ITDT, and in an interview for the *Ver y Estimar* volume he describes regular meetings with Emilio Renart (who produced hybrids of Pop, kinetic art and surrealism), Santantonín (who in addition to the *Happening para un jabalí difunto* images regularly took official photographs at openings), Suárez and Carreira. *Premio Ver y Estimar*, p. 99. His first sculpture was submitted for the 1965 *Premio Ver y Estimar*, in the vein of the *estructuras primerias* also produced by Lamelas, Paksa and others.

[17] Born in 1937 in Buenos Aires, Pablo Suárez trained as an agronomist, worked as a figurative painter and sculptor, and experimented with a wide variety of styles before arriving at conceptual practices after a trip to New York in 1965. See Ana María Battistozzi et al, "Queremos tanto a Pablo," *Ramona* 75 (October 2007), pp. 11-32, Guillermo Fantoni, *Tres visiones sobre el arte*, pp. 7-17, Roberto Jacoby, "Pablo Suárez: In Memoriam," *Ramona* 61 (June 2006), p. 6, Lisa Roberts, "Pablo Suárez: A Portrait of Resistance," in *Argentina, 1920-1994: Art from Argentina*, ed. David Elliott, exh. cat., (Oxford: Museum of Modern Art, 1994), pp 106-113, and *LHN*, pp. 354-355.

by walking on it), whereas in *Cal, pared, alamabrado y sus modificaciones* the viewer is barred from entry.[18] His or her experience of the work is precisely in being excluded from part of its space, which calls attention to the accessible and inaccessible spaces and conditions of the gallery as a whole, its status as an architectural system that guides the viewer along certain trajectories and not others.[19]

Lamelas's *Situación de tiempo* [*Situation of Time*] was featured in the Romero Brest exhibition *Más alla de la geometría: extensión del lenguaje artístico-visual en nuestros días*, which opened at the ITDT in 1967 and traveled to the Center for Inter-American Relations in New York in 1968.[20] Seventeen televisions were arranged in a horizontal series on stands along three walls of a darkened gallery [Figure 94]. The televisions were on, but received no signal, and played only static. They were positioned as readymades produced by the Di Tella family's business, SIAM—the institutional sponsor was conspicuously integrated into the work itself. Set in a line as identical and repeated units, the televisions conflate two notions of seriality: number and mass production.

Buchloh and Nicolas Guagnini have argued that this work is deeply critical of the universalist ambitions of minimalist seriality as well as the Argentine art institution's attempt to position itself meaningfully in the international context of contemporary

[18] Suárez's earlier work reflects an interest in control over the viewer's movement in a space; along with Lamelas he had contributed to *La menesunda* in 1965. At the Córdoba "bienal paralela" in 1966 he presented *La acción encadenada* [*Linked Action*], a path charted across a space by several cardboard boxes that the artist periodically rearranged. Roberts, "A Portrait of Resistance," p. 107.

[19] In his interview with Guillermo Fantoni, Suárez mentions a different work comprised of walls "equal to those of the room" that divided the gallery space, shown at Galería Vignes. The artists' comments here shed light on his notion of "modification"—he argues that the space was one that was "already being measured inside us," and that the goal was therefore to "produce a modifiation that would allow its qualities to be appreciated." *Tres visiones sobre el arte*, p. 8.

[20] Jorge Romero Brest, *Beyond geometry, an extension of visual-artistic language in our time* / *Más alla de la geometría: extensión del lenguaje artístico-visual en nuestros días*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Centro de Artes Visuales, Instituto Torcuato di Tella and New York: Center for Inter-American Relations, 1967/1968).

sculpture. The cue, for both writers, is *Situación de tiempo*'s utter lack of content or message; the fact that, essentially, nothing is "on." Guagnini writes, "in Lamelas' *Situation of Time*, there is really nothing to see, nothing to project, no metaphors, no spectacle, and nothing to be identified with or to identify. ... There are no universal pictures or a program to tune into in *Situation of Time*—there is only a *ruin* of the universal."[21] Buchloh sees the work's resemblance to the darkened space of a movie theater or concert hall as a reference to the pervasion of art display by aspects of entertainment: "[...I]n a gesture of seemingly neutral self-reflexivity, Lamelas ingenuously collapsed the corporate sponsor's technological contribution into a critical reflection of the structural changes occurring within the cultural institutions of the public sphere."[22]

Situación de tiempo's complete negation of content or message, however, makes it difficult to fix a ultimate message. Lamelas refuses two of the most distinctive characteristics of the medium—playback and transmission—in favor of the sculptural facticity of the sets themselves, as objects, and the jarring visual and auditory "white noise" they emit when not connected to and part of a circuit of information. The static conjures the curious double meaning of the word "feedback": at once regulating mechanism that understands and monitors the functioning of the machine, and "noise," the obverse of a clear message, that which distorts or prevents transmission. In the

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[21] Guagnini, "A Situation of Time: Despite Geometry, Beyond the Universal," in *A Principality of Its Own: 40 years of visual arts at the Americas Society*, eds. José Luis Falconi and Gabriela Rangel, exh. cat. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 193. Guagnini positions the work within the history of exhibitions such as Romero Brest's *Más alla de la geometría: extensión del lenguaje artístico-visual en nuestros días*, which opened at the ITDT in 1967 and traveled to the Center for Inter-American Relations in New York in 1968. While the exhibition aimed to transcend or go "beyond" the geometrical orientation of constructivist, minimalist, and kinetic forms, few of its works were actually conceptual in nature.

[22] Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Sign and Structure in the Work of David Lamelas," in *Neo-Avant-Garde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), p. 319.

resultant vacuum it is the context, the exhibition space, that appears. The static functions not as image, but as illumination, brightening the surrounding space of the empty gallery in which the viewer is standing. The sets function in the manner of the metal plates in *Señalación de tres espacios*, creating a sense of a dotted line running across the three walls of the gallery and partially encircling, or marking, the viewer's position and context. This peculiar use of television—as illuminating sculptural unit—creates, curiously enough, the possibility for an open circuit. Were Lamelas interested in presenting a closed circuit such as Masotta's *El mensaje fantasma*, he would have created a feedback system within the gallery akin to the one provided in *La menesunda* (on which he was an assistant): for example, a television could project an image of the gallery in which the televisions were presented. This would echo the works of media art in which the viewer stood outside and cast an analytical gaze to figure out the system. But the television sets in *Situación de tiempo* incorporate the viewer within the field of the work. His or her apperceptive time is reflected back; the lack of message is like a blank slate on which to project interpretation or content.

The impulse to analyze the structural conditions of the gallery context is also reflected in certain works by members of the Grupo de Rosario, an avant-garde that formed in that city in the second half of 1966.[23] In 1967 there were a profusion of such

[23] The "Grupo de Arte de Vanguardia," also referred to as the "Grupo de Rosario," that coalesced between 1966 and 1968 is characterized by a consistent heterogeneity of approach that was periodically unified by manifesto statements against the art bureaucracy in the city. In the latter, a collective voice was asserted that constituted a counterpublic advocating for itself within a larger art public that claimed to represent it. This group included future *Tucumán Arde* collaborators Beatriz Balvé, Bortolotti, Carnevale, Noemí Escandell, Favario, Rubén Naranjo, and Renzi, along with Osvaldo Boglione, Fernández Bonina, Carlos Gatti, Lia Maisonnave, Guillermo Tottis, and others. In the early years of the decade many of them trained in the studio of the painter Juan Grela, a link to the 1950s Rosario vanguard known as the Grupo Litoral. Grela had centralized artistic education in the city around his own well-stocked bookstore since the 1940s. Rosario had also been the source of an earlier politicized movement of mural painters known as Movimiento Espartaco, led by Ricardo Carpani. While the younger group of artists soon rejected this

works by *rosarino* artists that were exhibited at a series of exhibitions devoted to publicizing Rosario's contemporary art. For *Rosario '67*, curated by Hugo Parpagnoli at the Museo de Arte Moderno, Bortolotti created *El Plano Inclinado*, a series of oval panels of different colors arrayed diagonally across a wall [Figure 95]. He soon transitioned to tautological language-based works that made aspects of the viewing situation explicit. His show at Galería Lirolay in 1967 consisted of three panels with three vertically descending texts that described precisely what and how the viewer was reading, depending on whether he or she chose to read horizontally or vertically.[24] His work for *El arte por el aire* in La Plata in at the end of 1967 consisted of a sign hung on the wall reading "Hang this sign on the wall at a height that facilitates its reading. Order of Aldo Bortolotti of Rosario. Execution of the order Museo de Arte Moderno Bs. As. in the Hotel Provincial de Mar del Plata / Verification by you, in this place."[25] This text identifies all of the parties involved in the circuit of exhibition—artist, institution, site, viewer—and clarifies their roles through orders. These works by Bortolotti systematically explore the parameters of viewing or exhibiting a work in a gallery space. Reading

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Mexican-inspired avenue of political art as anachronistic, its call to form unions independent of institutions was later echoed in the alliance with the CGTA and complete abandonment of institutions in *Tucumán Arde*. The contingent of artists from Rosario that ended up in *Tucumán Arde* had by then repeatedly positioned themselves as a bloc against a larger art establishment. See "El Grupo Litoral, un mojón en la historia del arte argentino," *Página 12* (Buenos Aires), Sept. 12, 1998, and Guillermo Fantoni, "Rosario, opciones de la vanguardia," in *Cultura y política en los años '60* (Buenos Aires: Universidad Buenos Aires, 1997), pp. 287-298 and *Una mirada sobre el arte y la política: conversaciones con Juan Grela* (Rosario: Homo Sapiens Ediciones, 1997), and Andrea Giunta, "La Sociedad de los artistas de Rosario," in *Arte Argentino Contemporaneo: Rosario* (Rosario: Macro, 2004), pp. 23-73.

[24] They could be read either horizontally or vertically. Read vertically panel by panel, they read "According to Bortolotti / it is evident that / this is the first sign," "on reading these signs / this one is in the middle / you can confirm this," and "you will see that this is the last / of all / reading again." Read horizontally across the panels like text in a book, they read "According to Bortolotti on reading these signs you will see that this is the last / it is evident that this one is in the middle of all / this is the first sign you can confirm this reading again."Longoni, "El dishabituador," pp. 76 & 175. I substitute "sign" for *cartel*, which she translates as "phrase."

[25] Longoni, "El dishabituador," p. 77. See also Hugo Parpagnoli, *El arte por el aire*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Museo de Arte Moderno, 1967).

signals the act of viewing or of exhibition, calling attention to itself, its components, and its conditions of possibility.

Favario's contribution to *Rosario '67* was *Volúmenes de naturaleza estática, tensionados por el cambio de situación* [*Volumes of Static Nature Brought into Tension by Change in Situation*], two cube-like forms positioned next to one another; a more or less generic minimalist work [Figure 96]. For *Estructuras primarias II*, however, which took place at the same time at the Sociedad Hebraica, he produced *Sombra proyectada sobre piso y pared* [*Shadow Projected on Floor and Wall*], which simulated, through an enamel painting, a "shadow" stretching from a geometric sculpture to the wall behind it [Figure 97].[26] Much like Lamelas's work from this moment, a particular perceptive effect of sculpture in a gallery space—the shadow it casts onto architectural features—is doubly signaled, in this case with paint. A seemingly natural effect of a volume in a space has been isolated by rendering it both artificial and unavoidable. In a different work in *Rosario '67*, Graciela Carnevale demonstrated the acute awareness of features of the gallery that would characterize her better-known works of 1968 [Figure 98]. *Oposición estático-dinámico* consists of two elements: a wall that doubles the gallery wall behind it, from which a set of three curved forms protrude from near the ceiling, and a shorter element in front of the wall, separate from it, from which four wave-like forms stick up. The curved forms near the floor and up above echo one another, although not precisely.

[26] In Argentina, this mode of sculpture, which was taken up by a number of artists in Buenos Aires and Rosario, was not described as "minimalist" or "literal" as in the North American context, though it did come to be referred to as "estructuras primarias," after the 1966 *Primary Structures* show in New York at the Jewish Museum. In 1967 Jorge Glusberg, who would found the Centro de Arte y Comunicación in 1969, curated a show (appropriately enough, at the Sociedad Hebraica) titled *Estructuras Primerias II* with Argentine examples. Robert Morris was awarded the Di Tella international prize in this year, reflecting this wider respect for minimalist sculpture in the country at that moment.

The *rosarinos*' many radical actions in 1968 were all the more abrupt a transition in light of these earlier, more cerebral investigations.

One of the most thorough explorations of the effects of exhibition space in this period was created by the Buenos Aires-based Margarita Paksa, an associate of Lamelas and Carreira, for *Experiencias '68* at the ITDT [Figure 99]. *Communicaciones* consisted of various physical and mediatic elements placed in relation to one another, organized as different "sequences."[27] The first sequence was a room with "dihedral angles" (taken from airplane construction, using three points to create a gentle incline) constructed in the apartment of architect Osvaldo Giesso, "for relaxing, introspection, sleeping, or love."[28] Sequence 2 was a 33 rpm record, *Sanatario del sueño*, [*Sleep Sanctuary*] that played a spoken description of the room. Sequence 3 was the other side of the record, decorated with a disc-shaped pattern of wavy lines, which played a recording of two people having sex.[29] The fourth and final Sequence consisted of a rectangle of gallery space that was filled in with sand, where Paksa and her partner had made imprints of their bodies. "When we started the exhibition, this action was photographed, documented. The purpose of the photo was to freeze the event, which would be reproduced in the mass media, such as it was in *Primera Plana* No. 282."[30] The action was repeated once per week. In front of the sand box was a record player with headphones; the record related to Sequences 2

[27] "Proyecto Realizado: Comunicaciones," in *Proyectos: sobre el discurso de mi*, pp. 74-80.
[28] Translation in *LHN*, Eileen Brockbank, p. 245.
[29] *Proyectos*, p. 74. The design was by Alfredo Fontana under the direction of Alfredo Distéfano. Curiously *LHN*, p. 245, though it purports to be a translation of the text in *Proyectos*, claims that the design was by Juan Carlos Distéfano, an artist who would gain notice in the 1970s for politically themed prints. The couple was Paksa and her partner, which places the work in symmetry with contemporaneous projects involving the recording of the artist's sexual activity such as Carolee Schneemann's *Fuses*, of 1965. This is a fruitful juxtaposition, in that Schneemann's manipulation of film stock and editing in *Fuses* served to enhance the expressive qualities of the material that had been recorded, while Paksa's production of a record and clinical measurement of viewer interaction with that indexical trace of the intimate act evidences a desire to filter corporeal experience through structural analysis.
[30] *LHN*, p. 246.

and 3 was there for the purpose of an "intimate" listen ("intimate" hinting at the erotic aspect of Sequence 3).

Paksa devised a chart that breaks down various points of interaction between the viewer and the different elements of *Comunicaciones*, divided into *emisor* [sender], *codigo* [code], *estimulo* [stimulus], and *receptor* [receiver] [Figure 100].[31] These categories correspond roughly to those that Masotta, citing the Jakobson essay "Linguistique et poétique," posited as the five conditioning factors upon a message in *El "pop-art"*: emitter, receiver, contact, context, and the message itself.[32] The senders—the environment in the Giesso Studio, the description of that environment, the breathing heard on the "Candente" side of the record, a performance at the ITDT in which the artist and her partner imprinted themselves in the sand—are isolated by their codes ("architectural," "record," "body action") and resultant stimuli ("tactile visual," auditory, visual auditory) that they transmit to the receiver (presumably the viewer). The category of receiver does not specify particular a subject who experiences the work so much as possibilities of reception and resultant action on the part of the spectator. The "architectural," "tactile/visual" environment offered "the possibility of being used for relaxation, introspection, sleep, or love. (Ambiguous message)." The "auditory" recordings, on the one hand, create a situation in which "The audience member/listener is introduced into seven minutes of white noise, nothingness, the void. (Ambiguous message)," and on the other "It is proposed to the audience member/listener that he energetically mobilize his senses. (Singular message)"—that is, he or she is encouraged

[31] Paksa, *Sobre el discurso de mi*, p. 78. It is noteworthy here that one completely absent element in the schema is the artist herself.
[32] Masotta, *El revolución en el arte*, p. 150. Roman Jakobson, "Linguistique et Poétique," in *Essais de linguistique générale* (Paris: Minuit, 1963), pp. 209-220. Masotta in fact leaves a Jakobsonian category out: in the latter's schema, there is also "code," which corresponds to "context" on the vertical axis.

to take up the sensual activity he or she hears on the recording. This singularity of message is seen as corresponding to a specific effect, a unique causality. It is not entirely clear why the "Candente" side of the record is seen as providing a "singular message," however, premised on the recorded breathing sounds alone. Paksa seems to contend that the fact that the sounds would be universally understood as copulation would make their message less "ambiguous." In the "visual auditory" "body action" performance in the ITDT, the receiver is offered "[r]econstruction of sequences in the imagination of the audience member/listener. (Ambiguous message)."

Comunicaciones is an analytical revision of Minujín and Santantonín's *La menesunda* of three years earlier and the genre of the sensorial environment in general. As discussed in Chapter 1, *La menesunda* was a seemingly open work that nonetheless relied on an architectural trajectory to direct the viewer's movements and actions. *Comunicaciones* foregrounds that fact that its elements were closed circuits sending information to a receiver who cannot respond to or alter this content. The room in the Giesso studio is positioned as a site at which an original event of sexual activity took place—a restaging of the couple in bed in *La menesunda*. This privileged moment is sealed off from the viewer, who only experiences its indexical afterlife via recordings. The viewer's experience of these supplementary media is then evaluated and parsed structurally. It is not the experience of the viewer that is privileged, nor his or her ability to make sense of the work, but the fact of transmission itself. Every experience of sound, touch, or movement is premeditated, calibrated in advance for its effects. *Comunicaciones* sees Paksa gesturing beyond the apperceptive model to one in which the dichotomy between viewer and system is once again effaced. If Masotta had wanted to

pry them apart—to allow the viewer to step back from systems in which he or she is ensconced to look at and temporarily disarm them—Paksa is reinscribing the viewing subject within the system. In doing so, she is alluding to a second-order viewer who joins her in studying the first. *La menesunda* is rendered a laboratory in which various stimuli are directed at an object of research: the viewer. This viewer is under observation—being studied—even as he or she analyzes elements of the work. [33]

Air Prisms

Lamelas's contribution to *Experiencias visuales '67* was a work titled *Limite de una proyección*. In a darkened room, a single spotlight from the ceiling shone on an empty circle on the floor below it [Figure 101]. This work, like *Señalación de tres espacios*, revises Greco's earliest *Vivo-Ditos*, which extract material from the world and signal it as art. But this frame is not mobile. The darkness necessary for the spotlight to create its signal in the first place can only be achieved within a closed space, that of the gallery. In a sense, it is an analogy for the gallery, which can only contain and cannot delimit from quotidian space. An object might occupy the frame, or the viewer, but the frame above all has limits. *Limite de una proyección* is just that—it shows the limits of a frame that is contingent on events in the gallery.[34] Lamelas's untitled submission for *Experiencias '68* again used a completely empty gallery to rephrase the proposition of

[33] While Paksa entered a similar lull in art production following *Experiencias '68*, she did design a number of functional objects, including the *MAC Muebles Acrílicos* [*Acrylic Furniture*] line designed with Osmar Cairola and presented at Galería de Este in November 1968. She would return to art in the later 1970s, with *La cena*, a series of drawings of pigs and other butchered animals that suggested the horrors of the post-1976 dictatorship. *Comunicaciones* was restaged at Fundación Proa in Buenos Aires in 2005.

[34] There was also a *Limite de una proyección II* that consisted of the spotlight being shown on four acrylic panels laid in a square, corner to corner. This variation provided a double frame or signaling of empty space, one created by light and the other by sculpture. *David Lamelas: A New Refutation of Time*, p. 45.

Situación de tiempo: that the viewer's space, time, and thought have been folded into the work, that they have become the sculpture. The later work consisted of two empty slide projectors that beamed light onto gallery walls, creating illuminated areas that viewers could pass in front of, casting their shadow on a wall-turned-screen [Figure 102]. These works are part of a broader trend toward partially or completely empty galleries by Argentine artists, many of them from Rosario, between 1967 and 1968. The implication of these works, particularly in such profusion, is that the exhibition site itself, once rendered a point of analytical focus, may be exhausted as container for art and artwork alike—which would necessitate its abandonment by both artist and spectator.[35]

Juan Pablo Renzi, one of the leaders of the Grupo de Rosario, designed *Coordenadas especiales de un prisma de aire* [*Spatial Coordinates for an Air Prism*], for *Rosario '67*.[36] This sculpture articulated the lines of a cube that essentially framed empty gallery space [Figure 103]. This work served, in a similar but more direct manner than *Conexión de tres espacios*, to mimic the rectilinearity of the exhibition site. Like a hollowed-out version of Tony Smith's *Die* (1962) [Figure 104] or a gigantic version of one of the basic units used by Sol Lewitt, who Renzi had met in Buenos Aires a year earlier, it refigured the gallery as a giant vitrine, container, or cage. The artist was also working at this same time with the idea of displaying water or air in different types of containers. His contribution to the *Arte por el aire* show was *Agua de todas partes del mundo* [*Water from All Parts of the World*], in which liter bottles of water from Hong

[35] This conclusion was not, however, shared by Lamelas, who continued to produce gallery-bound works of art. He left Argentina in the middle of the exhibition and did not return. His work while abroad is discussed at the beginning of Chapter 4, but it is worth noting the link between *Untitled* (1968) and film, a medium that the artist would take up starting in 1969.

[36] Renzi discusses the Grupo de Rosario in detail in Guillermo Fantoni, *Arte, Vanguardia y política en los años '60: Conversaciones con Juan Pablo Renzi* (Buenos Aires: El Cielo por Asalto, 1998).

Kong, New York (with a "certificate of constancy" from Lewitt) and other cities were displayed on the floor in grids, in a rectangular space delimited by tape [Figure 105].[37] From signaling immaterial sections of gallery space through sculpture, Renzi was importing space, whether air or liquid, from other locations, expanding its reach within the parameters of serial display to absurdist effect.

At a group show at Galería Lirolay in 1967 with Grupo de Rosario members Fernández Bonina, Noemi Escandell and Lia Maisonnave, Carnevale produced *Sala blanca*, a work using an empty gallery accompanied by only a recording of a heartbeat at the entrance [Figure 106].[38] For an exhibition with Bortolotti and Renzi at the same gallery from April 22 to May 4, 1968, Eduardo Favario created *Luz amarillo* [*Yellow Light*], an empty gallery bathed in yellow light accompanied by the sound of a loud sine wave [Figure 107]. Photographs of Carnevale and Favario's works speak to different attempts to portray this practice. In the latter, a group of younger men look on, amused, as Roberto Jacoby mock-meditates, seated on the floor. The image is closely cropped so that the entire space is not visible, and seems full; in the absence of work, the room has taken on a social function; it is a gathering place. In the former, one female figure, Carnevale herself, appears in a far corner, dwarfed by the space. In this image it is clearer that the empty gallery is a limit-point for gallery-based work, not unlike the grid or

[37] Jorge Glusberg, *Juan Pablo Renzi: obras de 1965 a 1985*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Centro de Arte y Comunicación, 1985), p. 3. The catalogue incorrectly dates the work 1963. Renzi credits a visit to Argentina by Sol LeWitt for his work in open sculptural forms. Renzi discusses the period in detail in Guillermo Fantoni, *Arte, vanguardia y política en los años '60: Conversaciones con Juan Pablo Renzi* (Buenos Aires: El Cielo por Asalto, 1998). See also Leila Driben, Fabian Lebenglik, and Daniel Samilovich, *Homenaje a Juan Pablo Renzi: Oleos 1976/1992*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Fundación San Telmo, 1993), for examples of his later work, in which he began producing paintings in a surrealist idiom.

[38] In 1966, as a student, Carnevale had won a scholarship to study in Buenos Aires with the painter and critic Julio E. Payro, where she had the opportunity to sample different contemporary styles, though she did not yet meet with the Di Tella artists. Details in this section, particularly her date for the empty gallery work, are from Carnevale interview, Longoni and Mestman, *Del di Tella a* Tucumán Arde, pp. 273-79, and from materials in the Graciela Carnevale archive.

monochrome for painting. Once there is only sound left to display—in Favario's case, a harshly artificial sound, in Carnevale's the recognizably organic, intimate sound of a heartbeat—the gallery is signaling itself.[39] There are no more elements to make sense of, no constituent parts, only the exhibition context in its bare facticity: an empty container.

Roberto Plate, an artist tangentially associated with the Masotta group, took a different approach to an artwork consisting of features of the institutional context for his contribution to *Experiencias '68*, in the process creating the source of a controversy that would come to define the exhibition. He installed a replica of a public bathroom with access for six people, though without functional plumbing, in the ITDT [Figure 108]. Similarly to an earlier Plate work in which he replicated a flight of stairs in the gallery, this bathroom elevated an ordinarily ancillary part of the institutional context to the status of art.[40] An aspect of this work that has never been discussed is its possible reference to psychoanalytic theory. Generic silhouette signs for "male" (clad in a suit) and "female" (wearing a dress) appeared on the two doors to the bathroom, recalling one of the iterations of Lacan's bar schema in "The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious" (which Masotta drew upon for a semiotic schema in *El "pop-art,"* discussed in Chapter 2) [Figure 109]. The bar divides the signifiers "male" and "female" from two identical doors below each word to demonstrating how "the signifier... enters the signified"—in this case, how the textual signifiers inflect the visual signifier for "door" with an entire function and exclusive set of users.[41] Plate instead used the visual signifiers for

[39] Yves Klein's *Le vide* (1958) had previously displayed a completely empty gallery for an exhibition. This work was situated, however, within Klein's play between transcendence and falsity, as though the viewer was to have an "immaterial," spiritual experience of the void.
[40] This closely recalls a Carreira work in which he situated a flight of stairs made of resin at the top of already-existing stairs in the gallery space at the 1966 *Plástica con plasticos* exhibition at the Cámara de Industrias Plasticas. Longoni, "El dishabituador," pp. 82-84.
[41] Lacan, "The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious," p. 143-144.

"Gentlemen" and "Ladies," without text, superimposed on two doors that opened onto the same bathroom. The artist subverted the interplay between language and architecture that is the gender-divided public bathroom, undoing the subtle operation by which male and female individuals are directed into different spaces.

From the opening night forward, viewers of *Sin título* wrote and drew graffiti on the walls of the bathroom. The resultant sexual and political statements, which included anti-Onganía slogans, led to the police's censorship of the work, with the rest of the show permitted to continue. Giunta notes that Jacoby's and Jorge Carballa's explicitly political works (Carballa's addressed Vietnam) were not censored, but that "[i]n this case, what had been censored, beyond the works themselves, was the response of the public…"[42] This reading might be taken further. Precisely in masquerading as a functional unisex bathroom—rooms in the institution to which specific people are directed and not others—but actually admitting both sexes, Plate's space became appropriate for transgressive, metaphorically scatological exercises of free speech. *Sin título* restaged Ferrari's *Civilización occidental y cristiana* controversy, introducing unwelcome language into the institution. This was facilitated by a compartment erected within the gallery where one was shielded from view and thus allowed to express prohibited sentiments. The state then intervened, revealing its monopoly of power over public language, even that of a cultural institution.

Plate's work was censored on May 22. The majority of the artists in the show dismantled their works and threw them into the street on May 23 [Figure 110]. A circular was published along with the action, stating the collective nature of the destruction and an analogical perspective on the censorship: "…this is not only about imposing [the

[42] Giunta, *Avant-Garde, Internationalism, and Politics*, p. 269.

dictatorship's] own point of view on fashion and taste, with absurd haircuts and arbitrary arrests of artists and young people in general; they are trying to do the same thing with the work of these artists. …Argentine artists resolutely oppose the establishment of a police state in our country."[43] Giunta proposes a connection between the event, the *Arte destructivo* show of 1961, and Minujín's destruction of her works in *La destrucción* in 1963, which would situate expressive violence as the central gesture of the refusal of the artists associated with *Experiencias '68*.[44] But the destruction that cut short *Experiencias '68* was not generative in the service of new modes of aesthetic creation, but a wholesale rejection of the institution. This refusal was coupled with a symbolic gesture of movement into the street, into public space, that Greco had employed in *Mi Madrid querido* in 1964 to inaugurate a new Argentine avant-gardism.[45] Where Greco's street-based *Vivo-Ditos* were generally extra-institutional, that is, not precluding object production and gallery exhibition, *Experiencias '68* ended on a decidedly anti-institutional note, with an all-important gesture: the physical abandonment of the gallery.

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[43] "Final Statement of the Participants in *Experiences '68*," trans. Marguerite Feitlowitz, *LHN*, pp. 291-294. Original Spanish reprinted in King, *El Di Tella y el desarrollo argentino en la decada del sesenta*, p. 120-121.

[44] Giunta, "Destrucción-creación en la vanguardia artística del sesenta: entre *Arte Destructivo y Ezeiza es Trelew*," in *Arte y violencia* (Mexico City: Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas—UNAM, 1995).

[45] It is instructive to compare this gesture to the use of public space in Edgardo Vigo's work in La Plata at this moment, in which elements in the urban environment were signaled in a manner comparable to Greco's *Vivo-Ditos* and Costa, Escari, and Jacoby's projections of discontinuity onto features of the city in 1966. Vigo's *Manojo de semaforos* [*Bunch of Traffic Lights*] (1968) instructed viewers to come to particular intersections and traffic lights at particular times, which María José Herrera and others have likened to the "psychogeographic" practices of the Situationists. While the goal of the Situationists was to allow for a gradual discovery of the capitalist structuring of the city through *dérive* [drift], however, I would argue that the signal allowed Vigo a far more specific and incisive engagement with particular sites and features—the traffic light matched his earlier interest in neo-Dada "useless machines" in that it purported to order the city but, when signaled, was revealed as an absurd and arbitrary mechanism. In this way, the signal is different from Situationist *détournement*, in which features of capitalist infrastructure are used against their instrumental function. The signal places an object of attention in quotes, allowing its structural character to be grapsed while undoing its usefulness. By contrast, the necessary movement of destroyed works out of the gallery by the *Experiencias '68* artists figured the street as a counter-site in which they could be exhibited to an imagined expanded public. See María José Herrera, "Vigo in (con)text," in *Edgardo-Antonio Vigo*, ed. Besoytorube, pp. 64-65.

The *Ciclo de Arte Experimental* in Rosario that September resulted from Romero Brest's exclusion of all of the *rosarinos* from *Experiencias '68*; it was an extra-institutional initiative with anti-institutional sentiment.[46] Brightly colored posters with photographic portraits of each artist were produced [Figure 111], but this conventional publicity was offset by the antagonistic nature of many of the works, none of which featured art objects.[47] The focus was consistently on the gallery setting: Fernandez Bonina included only signs with prohibitions against smoking and speaking; Jaime Rippa produced a "modification" that was "reflexive about the material utilized (the space)"; Maissonave traced a square on the floor that was repeated on a page given to visitors. Puzzolo filled the room with chairs, as though in preparation for a conference, so that they were visible from the street. Favario "closed" the gallery, as though it contained a censored work [Figure 112], prefiguring the point at which the series was offically shut down, closed by the police after Graciela Carnevale used her slot to lock the opening-night crowd in the gallery for an hour [Figure 113]. "I have taken prisoners," she writes, "The point is to allow people to enter and to prevent them from leaving. Here the work comes into being and these people are the actors... they are obliged, violently, to participate."[48]

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[46] The fourteen shows of the *Ciclo* were accompanied by separate one-page profiles for each artist (Emilio Ghilioni and Rodolfo Elizalde shared their slot), many of which were written by Renzi, who did not participate himself. There was, additionally, a group statement signed by all the participants and Renzi.

[47] See individual artists' profiles, *Ciclo de Arte Experimental* (Rosario: Instituto di Tella, 1968), Fundación Espigas archives, and "Experimental Art Series," in *LHN*, pp. 298-304. Romero Brest refered to Carnevale's action in his unpublished letter of 1969 to *Studio International*. Summarizing the years 1967 and 1968, Romero Brest divides the "experiences" into "spatial situations," "semiotic signals," one "sociological experience," "vital situations" (in reference to Carnevale and other such interventions of this moment. "Letter from Jorge Romero Brest, Buenos Aires, to Peter Townsend, editor, *Studio International*, London," *LHN*, p. 135.

[48] *LHN*, p. 299.

Carnvale's gesture was not only to reproduce, in the "safe space" of an art exhibition, the real violence that the dictatorial state could enact on its citizens. Her expectation was that the audience would not remain contained but would simply break out of the gallery by breaking its wall-sized glass windows. Brian Holmes writes, "[C]an we... read Carnevale's enclosure piece as an allegory of the way that social classes are transformed under conditions of urgency?"[49] Certainly this reading is possible, but Holmes downplays the work's structural logic. Carnevale sought to articulate the teleological movement from sculpture to environment to action, from participatory artwork to everyday life, by rendering the empty gallery an enclosure, a container. The viewer is visible through the glass of the gallery by a second-order spectator; he or she is contained in a giant vitrine. Yet the implied outcome—which, ironically, did not transpire in this case, since someone on the outside freed the viewers—is that the imprisoned participant will free him or herself, and by extension free everyone else in the room. The safe space of art is turned into a holding cell that can and will be escaped to contact the lived world beyond it.

Plate's work for *Experiencias '68* unexpectedly located a hinge between the environment and speech through its creation of a safe space. By replicating the white walls and functional enclosures of the gallery, the artist had crafted a work so open that its viewers were actively responsible for its censorship. Through graffiti, viewers altered the focus of Plate's work from the architectural codes of the institution to anti-dictatorship messages. The variations on the empty gallery work in the *Ciclo de arte experimental*, on the other hand, engineered liberations from exhibition space, but

[49] Brian Holmes, "Transparency to Exodus: On Political Process in Mediated Democracies," *16 Beaver ARTicles*, http://www.16beavergroup.org/mtarchive/archives/001575.php, 2005.

without the component of the message. With *Tucumán Arde* also underway at this time, however, the effective transmission of political speech had already become the objective.

In Place of His Talk, We Ourselves Will Speak

One of the first collaborations between artists from Rosario and Buenos Aires who would later work together on *Tucumán Arde* took place in Córdoba at the end of 1966 at the *Primer festival de formas contemporáneas*, the "Bienal Paralela" conceived by the artists to coincide with the *Tercera bienal americana del arte* sponsored by Industrias Kaiser Argentina.[50] Among others, Rosario artists Aldo Bortolotti, Eduardo Favario and Juan Pablo Renzi and Buenos Aires artists Oscar Bony, Ricardo Carreira, Eduardo Costa, and Pablo Suárez carried out the happening *En el mundo hay salida para todos* (*In the World There is an Exit for Everyone*) on the final day, in which they locked the audience in the exhibition for an hour, prefiguring Carnevale's *Ciclo de arte experimental* work. The artists returned with a group of student protesters enraged by the recent killing of student leader Santiago Pampillón, dramatizing the idea of politics invading the gallery context.[51] The fact that this gesture took place contemporaneously with the media art investigations in Buenos Aires speaks to the fact that even as the analytical approaches outlined above were in mid-development, options for more

[50] This is the same Bienal Paralela at which Jacoby and Costa executed *Rescate del azar* and Carreira produced the alternate version of *Soga y texto* outlined in the section above. Guillermo Fantoni, "Tensiones hacia la politica: del Homenaje al Viet-nam a la Anti-Bienal," *SiSi* (Buenos Aires), 2, Vol. 2 (Summer 1990), pp. 33-9. See also Marcos Winocur, "La Bienal-Kaiser o el precio del irracionalismo," *Cuadernos de Cultura*, no. 83 (Jan.-Feb. 1967), a critique of the Bienal Paralela as merely another biennial or "sub-biennial" feeding off the publicity of the main one. Winocur downplayed the significance of the political gestures undertaken by the group. Discussed by Longoni and Mestman, *Del Di Tella a* Tucumán Arde, pp. 73-4.

[51] Lisa Roberts, "Pablo Suárez: A Portrait of Resistance," in *Argentina, 1920-1994: Art from Argentina*, ed. David Elliott, exh. cat., (Oxford: Museum of Modern Art, 1994), p. 107, Giunta, *Avant-Garde, Internationalism and Politics*, p. 266, Longoni and Mestman, *Del di Tella a* Tucumán Arde, p. 73.

confrontational and message-based actions were being weighed that engaged the architecture of the institutional site and effectively turned it against its viewers. This dual mode of investigation typified artistic innovation at this moment in the city of Rosario, where the progression from object production to conceptual practice took place much more rapidly than in Buenos Aires.[52] In Rosario, seemingly contradictory trends intermingled between 1966 and 1968: geometric sculpture and conceptual works as described above, and collective, manifesto-based, anti-institutional statements that anticipate *Tucumán Arde*.

In September 1966 Renzi and Favario executed the "joke happening" "Manifesto Anti-Mermelada," in which they interrupted a talk given by the critic Pedro Giacaglia, one of the judges at the Salón, by noisily opening a jar of marmalade and eating it.[53] In its

[52] Rosario is not the only smaller city in Argentina with rapid artistic production at this moment. In Córdoba Jorge Bonino undertook, starting in 1965, a series of Greco-esque performative projects related to language that consisted of quasi-academic lectures for which attendees would receive diplomas afterwards. In might be termed a mix of Greco and Ferrari, he posted signs around Córdoba with indecipherable language on them. In a 1968 performance, *Asfixiones y enunciados*, Bonino spoke in clear language but attempted to avoid saying anything of any substance whatsoever, which might be likened to Ferrari's isolation of the material drawn dimension of writing. In this way Bonino treats speech as emitted sound, its signifier, but not necessarily message or content. See Ana Longoni, "Action Art in Argentina from 1960: The Body Exposed," in *Arte ≠ Vida: Actions By Artists of the Americas*, ed. Deborah Cullen, exh. cat. (New York: Museo del Barrio, 2007), pp. 86-87 (unfortunately Longoni does not cite any sources for this information). La Plata, too, was the site of a particularly fertile group linked to Edgardo Vigo, an artist and poet who produced some of the first neo-Dada objects in Argentina in the late 1950s, and included the artists and poets Omar Gancedo, Carlos Ginzburg, Jorge de Luján Gutiérrez, Juan Carlos Romero, Luis Pazos, and Hector Puppo. In the post-Perón moment it was above all the La Plata avant-garde who took up the production of artist's magazines in Argentina, which include *WC* and *DRKW* (1958-1960), *Diagonal-Cero* (1962-1968), which published poetry, woodcuts, and reports on visual art, and *Hexágono '71* (1971-1975), which took up more radical formats, consisting of folders and typographic objects. While this milieu was relatively hermetic, there were intersections. Romero Brest visited La Plata to scout these artists, and in the 1970s Vigo participated in CAYC exhibitions and events. See Daniel Besoytaorube, ed., *Edgardo Antonio Vigo*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Fundación Telefónica, 2004), Fernando Davis, "Prácticas 'revulsivas': Edgardo Antonio Vigo en el escena crítica del conceptualismo," doctoral dissertation proposal, Universidad Nacional de La Plata, and "Edgardo Antonio Vigo: textos recobrados," *Ramona* 76, November 2007, pp. 10-20. A full archive of the La Plata avant-garde is maintained at the Centro de Arte Experimental Vigo in La Plata, Argentina; a variety of its extant materials were displayed at the exhibition *No-Arte-Sí: Itinerarios de la vanguardia platense* at the Fundación Centro de Artes Visuales de La Plata, 2007.

[53] Alberto Guidici, *Arte y política en los '60*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Fundación de Banco Ciudad, 2002), p. 202.

undermining of an officially designated speaker at an art event—countering official speech with a silent oral activity, eating—this gesture anticipated a great many of the institutional protests that would take place in 1968. The choice of food referenced the collectively authored "A proposito de cultura mermelada" [Regarding Marmalade Culture], a manifesto signed by a host of different artists [Figure 114].[54] Marmalade, Renzi recalls, refers to "the nose critic, the critic with no rational referents, who does not analyze, who does not study, who sees painting with nothing more than his nose."[55] Significantly, it is sensorial response that is lampooned as inferior, even anti-intellectual, the same experience that projects such as *La menesunda* had privileged only a year prior. It called for an increased commitment to formal innovation: "in this sense we reaffirm one more time our defense of serious, profound, creative and revolutionary painting that always imparts new possibilities of knowledge and emotion to the viewer; a painting of study, of investigation, which synthesizes the intellectual possibilities of the creator in an expressive manner."[56] It was after this performance that the group began shift away from painting. Favario, for example, moved from assemblage-paintings with incorporated found elements to simply presenting accumulations of boxes or chairs [Figure 115].

The first extensive conversations between the Rosario and Buenos Aires vanguards took place in Córdoba.[57] Renzi describes the orientation of the *rosarinos* as conflicted in relation to their *porteño* contemporaries, arguing that in Rosario there were

[54] "A proposito de cultura mermelada" was signed by Bortolotti, Fernando Adrián Barbé, Osvaldo Mateo Boglione, Rodolfo Elizalde, Favario, Mónica Garate, Carlos Gatti, Emilio Ghilioni, Ana María Giménez, Martha Greiner, Edmundo Giura, Silvia James, José María Lavarello, Coti Miranda Pacheco, Renzi, Jorge Sllullitel and Guillermo Tottis.
[55] The artists were housed in the same dormitories. Fantoni, *Arte, vanguardia y política*, p. 44.
[56] Guidici, p. 205, my translation. Giunta sees the text as "closer to the classic canon of modernism" in its call for a continuity, as opposed to a break, with tradition. *Avant-Garde, Internationalism, and Politics*, p. 265.
[57] Fantoni, *Arte, vanguardia y política*, pp. 41-42.

less provisions made for advanced art. A more confrontational posture had to be taken up, even as there was an effort to make a mark in the larger Buenos Aires context.

> [...S]peaking with people from Buenos Aires, seeing distinct situations, the confrontation presented itself. The people of Buenos Aires, the young ones like us, had it easy, indeed, pleasant and protected—you cannot forget that in this moment the Di Tella comprised the entire system—and Romero Brest protected them. [...T]he Di Tella was also an official culture, we were also aspiring to be recognized by [Brest]. But in Rosario we lived in the style of the historical vanguards, although in this moment this term was not used.[58]

This ambivalence toward institutions and sense of under-recognition in relation to a larger and more cosmopolitan city were important factors in the heterogeneous production and collective activity of the Rosario vanguard. The fusion between the two groups was not resumed until conflicts between institutions and artists in 1968 situated early Rosario collaborations in a new light.

In April 1967 the *rosarinos*, which had by this time incorporated a different group of young artists that included Carnevale, Escandell, Maisonnave, and Púzzolo,[59] authored and published "Contra la reoficialización de un arte caduco" [Against the reofficialization of decrepit art], also known as "De cómo nuevamente se pretende dar oxígeno a una pintura que hace tiempo ha muerto" [How one tries anew to give oxygen to a long-dead painting]. The statement critiqued the requirements that had been set for participation in the Primer Salón Anual de Pintural Litoral, as well as the judges selected to jury the exhibition, who are deemed "incompetent to give any kind of judgment about painting."

> No one is unaware that over the past year Rosario experienced a climate of cultural commotion thanks to the visible and massive irruption of young painters

[58] Ibid.
[59] These artists had also been working together in a rented studio. "Plástica: la libertad llega a Rosario," *Primera Plana*, June 9, 1968, p. 67.

> who introduced new forms of communication and expression as never before seen in our medium. Faced with this year 66, which without doubt was the year of the Rosario vanguard, a reofficialization of a painting without cultural value wants to oppose itself, organizing [...] a public event run by those who are not merely resistant in the face of new explorations, but have always been so for all artists working outside of their circle and with approaches different from theirs.[60]

Although these manifestoes began as recognizably modernist aesthetic propositions, their practice of positing a united and oppositional bloc within the Rosario art context bears instructive differences with, for example, Jacoby and Costa's manifesto for media art that was published with *Happenings* in 1967. "Arte de los medios masivos de comunicación (manifesto)" essentially explicated a single work that had already been executed; it is like a hypothesis for an experiment, the data of which was to and indeed, in the text, did follow. The Rosario manifestoes instead establish an underrepresented group that seeks to champion its approach against an authority that is claiming to adequately represent it.

Two protest actions at institutional events followed on the heels of the collapse of *Experiencias '68*. On July 12, at a meeting of Amigos de Arte in Rosario in which Jorge Romero Brest was to speak, before he could take the stage, Renzi and others members of the Grupo de Rosario blacked out the lights and read a statement.

> Ladies and Gentlemen, we wish to inform you that this is an assault on the lecture by Romero Brest, and that in place of his talk, we ourselves will speak, although for a very short time, because we believe that words do not constitute an enduring testimony and that they can be easily distorted[... S]o we want you to remember the action itself, the small violence we have perpetrated by imposing our presence on you.[61]

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[60] Giudici, *Arte y política en los '60*, p. 206. My translation. "Contra la reoficialización de un arte caduco" was signed by Bortolotti, Fernández Bonina, Carnevale, Escandell, Mario Alberto Escriña, Favario, Ghilioni, Gatti, Greiner, Giura, Maisonnave, Pacheco, Estela Molinaro, Puzzolo, Roberto Ostiz, Renzi, Rafael Sendra and Tottis.

[61] "Interruptions: Braque Prize and Assault on a Lecture by Romero Brest," *LHN*, pp. 294-6.

Two points are noteworthy: the concern, on the one hand, that if too long, the message will be "distorted," and the description of the gesture as one of "small violence," which implies a larger context of violence, the dictatorship itself. Nothing is to be left to chance; the message must be clear, and the focus is now on the dictatorship, which can be contested by proxy, in the institution. Speaking in Romero Brest's "place," the artists usurp his authority, which is constituted by a fundamental tautology: it establishes, but is also established by, the fact that Romero Brest, the director, is allowed to speak. This places the Grupo de Rosario within the terms of the speech-acts that Austin denigrates as "infelicities"—unwelcome speech-acts by those not authorized to speak.[62]

The Romero Brest interruption is an attempt to move beyond Masotta's analytical approach: to reveal the codes of power within the institution, but to also immediately thereafter advance a new, substitute message.

> [...w]e are here to offer, to You and Your Consciousness [*Conciencia*], this act, this simulacrum of an attack, as a Collective Work of Art, and as the beginning of a new aesthetic... We believe that art means active commitment to reality, active because it hopes to transform this class-based society into something better... Death to all institutions! Long live the art of the Revolution![63]

The Grupo de Rosario aimed to condense apperception of code with a misuse of that same code to impart an alternate message. This was the objective four days later as well, when a group of Buenos Aires-based artists, accompanied by Favario, interrupted the Premio Georges Braque ceremonies at the Museum of Fine Arts in Buenos Aires by playing recordings of their own speeches over the official ones, leading to their arrest

[62] Austin, *How to do Things with Words*, p. 14.
[63] Ibid, p. 296.

[Figure 116].[64] With the embrace of this strategy by the vanguards of both cities, Masotta's analytical model had been significantly revised, most of all in terms of the viewer. Previously, he or she had to invest the effort to read a given system, as though adding up a series of clues. In the face of the "Collective Work of Art," the viewer need only listen.

One of the most dogmatic advocates of this message-based approach was León Ferrari, who in the period between 1965 and 1968 had shifted to a comparative model—holding up two or more examples side by side for juxtaposition—from the combinatory practice of his drawings between 1962 and 1964, in which different media were merged so that one prevented the other from functioning. He began compiling *Palabras ajenas* [*Words of Others*] in 1965, not long after the alteration of *Civilización occidental y cristiana* at the ITDT. It was ultimately published in 1967 as a book that abandoned any remaining pretense of visual interest or draughtsmanship on the artist's behalf, though the cover of the book featured an image of *Civilización occidental y cristiana* [Figure 117].[65] *Palabras ajenas* intermingles hundreds of different quotes from news reports, historical figures, and canonical texts such as the Bible, with an overarching theme of the history of violence in the West. The quotes are not positioned in chronological order, but are collaged as readymade texts that expose a transhistorical brutality. One section begins

[64] The artists involved were Javier Arroyuelo, Ricard Carreira, Favario, Jacoby, Eduardo Ruano, Suárez, Rafael López Sanchez, and Domingo Alberto Sapia. The CGTA lent its lawyers to get the artists released from jail, which facilitated the *Tucumán Arde* collaboration later on. The Grupo de Rosario had refused to participate in the Premio Braque and produced an explanatory manifesto, "Siempre es tiempo de no ser cómplices" [It is always time to not be accomplices]. It was signed by Boglione, Bortolotti, Carnevale, Elizalde, Escandell, Favario, Bonina, Emilio Ghilioni, Martha Grenier, Jose M. Lavarello, Maisonnave, Naranjo, Puzzolo, Renzi, and Jaime Rippa.

[65] León Ferrari, *Palabras ajenas* (Buenos Aires: Falbo, 1967). This sculpture's ability to function as image on the cover of the book, and as a frontal theater prop in the theater versions of *Palabras ajenas*, speaks to the argument in Chapter 1 that it is a sculpture that is fundamentally imagistic, a compound sign that functions opposite to the *Escritos deformadas* and *Cuadros escritos* in adding up to a clear and direct meaning.

with a quote from Hitler that reads: "I did not start this war." The next line, "I did not want this war," is from President Johnson. The subsequent text alternates between a news report about Vietnam and the Apocalypse of Saint John.[66] With radio anchors reciting different sections, *Palabras ajenas* was staged as a theater piece in London in 1968 by the artist Leopoldo Maler (an assistant on *La menesunda*) under the title *Listen, Here, Now!* (it was staged in 1972 in Buenos Aires as *Pacem in terris*).

In *El "pop-art,"* Masotta observes that a code can be isolated and exposed through the "non-sense" [*no-sentido*] created by redundancy. One example is repetition in Warhol, which takes focus away from the content of the image itself and allows for cognizance of the conditions of media—both his particular use of media such as silkscreen as well as the larger role of reproduction in the mass media. *Palabras ajenas* shifts redundancy's register to the message by reiterating the same message again and again. This is a revision of Ferrari's notion of *babelismo* from several years earlier. Many different voices are present in a single work, but their multiplicity of meanings and contexts communicate cohesively. They are directed towards a singular signification; the many fragments of spoken and written words amount to a dossier of evidence of the drive toward power and oppression, the unholy union of violence and theological justification throughout history. Rather than his earlier drawings' refusal to communicate, the conversion of *Words of Others* into theater evoked Ferrari's new emphasis on address, on the direction of language at the viewer as confrontation or edification. In the theater version, telex machines were used by the speakers as lecterns, and Ferrari also requested

[66] *LHN*, p. 285.

that a telex machine receiving up-to-the-minute reports from the war be included just outside the theater so that the audience could keep abreast of the latest events.[67]

After the arrests following the Premio Braque protests, a large group of artists held the Primer Encuentro Nacional del Arte de Vanguardia in Rosario to discuss a future anti-institutional direction. Ferrari presented a paper titled "El arte de los significados" [Art of Signifieds], worth quoting at length as a summation of his artistic creed at this moment. He argued that his generation of artists had become disillusioned with the possibilities provided by both institutions and complex art with unfixed meanings, which he likened to the Rorshach ink blots used by psychologists that are designed to elicit subjective interpretations.

> These works, which might be called Rorschach art, are of open, free, or multiple meaning, and their expressive personality is almost null, so they are limited to being a point of support [*apoyo*], a center of suggestion from which the observer encounters something he himself determines, or simply rejects if he is not interested. With this type of work, the author cannot transmit messages because, if he were to include them in his painting, their message would be deformed when their meaning is transformed in the viewer.[68]

The use of the word "deformed" here brings to mind the *escrituras deformadas* of only a few years earlier. Ferrari could be rejecting his own work from the 1962-1964 period,

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[67] Giunta, *Leon Ferrari: Retrospectiva*, p. 372.

[68] León Ferrari, "El arte de los significados," in *León Ferrari: prosa política* (Buenos Aires: Siglo veintiuno editores Argentina, 2005, p. 25, my translation. This text is usually translated "The Art of Meanings," but it is helpful here to link the term to the structuralist usage of *significado*, as foil to *significante*, or signifier. *Apoyo* is here used in its sense of a specifically psychoanalytic source of "support," as in the Rorshach's function as a blank slate onto which the analysand can project the content of his or her unconscious. The abstract painting, like the Rorschach blot, is, in its indeterminate meaning, a substrate onto which to project possible significations that arise from the viewer's consciousness. Ferrari also uses the terms *significado* for noun "meaning" and *significante* for the adjective "expressive," the Spanish words that happen to correspond to the linguistic differentiation between signified and signifier. This section might therefore be translated: "... are of open, free or multiple signifieds... and their signifier personality is almost null..." This posits a direct relationship between the signifier of the work being abstraction, here understood as mere substrate for the viewer's own personal content, and the multiplication of possible signifieds that then results. When signifier is mere conduit for external projection, the signified is uncontrollable.

with its emphasis on media over message. "Deformation" also brings to mind the Jakobson-like schema of communication designed by cybernetic theorists Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver, in which "noise" inevitably distorts any message sent to a receiver.[69] Ferrari's solution is to restore a clear political message to art using sophisticated techniques of transmission. "Our work," he writes, "consists in searching for aesthetic materials and in inventing laws for organizing them around their meanings [...T]he successful work of art will be one that, within the artist's context, will have the same impact as a terrorist attack in a country being liberated.[70]

Communications

Ana Longoni and Mariano Mestman have dubbed the series of exhibitions, protests and discussions leading up to *Tucumán Arde* as the "itinerary of '68": a logical progression from an inability to articulate political speech in the gallery context to the imperative to exert such speech within the political sphere itself.[71] Such a purview, however, entails a profusion of artistic proposals and experiments in extremely short shrift, including key works lost in the chaotically abrupt ending of *Experiencias '68*. Upon closer inspection, it is clear that not every work of this moment was intended to fit into a larger teleology even if, as Suárez suggests below, there is a shared sense that a rupture is imminent. Some of these same artists, particularly those who had come from Masotta's orbit, were simultaneously struggling with the implications of wholesale

[69] Shannon and Weaver, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*, pp. 3-6.
[70] *LHN*, p. 316. In his interview with Fantoni, Suárez claims he undertook, at one point in 1968, a literalization of Ferrari's sentiment: he detonated explosives in the street as an artwork. This was one of several confrontational street-actions performed at this time by Suárez, Jacoby, Paksa and others in Buenos Aires, including a project in which the water in public fountains was dyed red to commemorate Che's assassination.
[71] Ana Longoni and Mariano Mestman, *Del Di Tella a* Tucumán Arde, pp. 254-266.

spatial and discursive rupture with the art institution. This is manifested in two related problematics: several works below question the efficacy or even the possibility of direct speech, while others examine the difficulty of representation as a tool for political advocacy. At stake are the analytical possibilities that Masotta had outlined for art, which invariably result in the dismantling and disabling of whatever system has been placed under consideration.

The potential for pessimism about transparent communication in the institutional setting is reflected in the notes for Margarita Paksa's unrealized *Mesa redonda: esto es un juicio*, of 1967 [Figure 118]. She proposed an artists' panel, such as the ones that had attended Masotta's happenings cycles and *Experiencias visuales '67*, as a work of art in its own right. The questions would be formulated in advance and mailed to participants along with the invitation. The artists' panel would be physically elevated in relation to the audience, to "highlight the position of art, on a preferential plane, above, as if it had an aura."[72] A light would illuminate the given artist respondent, who would remain silent as his or her response was broadcast via audiorecording. At first these recorded answers would match the question they were following, but as the event went on their order would be jumbled so that they would answer the wrong questions. The audience would effectively be attending a roundtable that had already occurred; this element of temporal discontinuity is stressed by the artist in her notes for the project. "One's opinion," she writes, "is not the result of a process taking place this minute, but, one way or the other, it is determined in advance. It is memory that is doing the acting. [...]Only the audience

[72] Paksa, "Mesa redonda: esto es un juicio," in *Proyectos: sobre el discurso de mi*, p. 44. "Round Table: This is a Judgment," in *LHN*, p. 243.

makes a show of believing in spontaneity, because it will always attend a performance, even if it doesn't want to."[73]

Mesa redonda aimed to direct the audiorecording against its normative function: the authoritative documentation of unique instances of information to critique the convention of the artists' roundtable that accompanied many of the exhibitions of contemporary art at the ITDT (these frequently included Romero Brest himself, speaking simultaneously as critic, curator and collaborator).[74] Rejected by Romero Brest for obvious reasons, *Mesa redonda* would not have merely been a cynical portrait of the predictability of art world publicity. Its implications stretched to the pre-made nature of utterance in general, which precludes the expression of original ideas in all speech contexts, and particularly language as regulated by the institution. Despite its rhetoric of openness to new ideas, the dialogue facilitated by ITDT roundtables had boundaries thanks to the very rules of the game. Artists were expected to say certain things—to, for example, discuss the motivations behind their work, or their theories in general—and not say others. *Mesa redonda* used communications media—audiorecording and broadcast, or the roundtable itself as medium—as tools for the analysis of the art institution. Once exposed as a mechanism, the roundtable would no longer be able to convincingly deliver information about an exhibition, artist, or works. The artist's notes for the project contain the following passage:

> If our work fit into a synthesis of concepts; if we voluntarily removed from our own works the expressive stroke or emotional touch that (no doubt) excited our predecessors; if we expressed ourselves through an IDEA rather than on the

[73] *Proyectos: sobre el discurso de mi*, p. 43 & *LHN*, p. 242.
[74] Roundtables such as these accompanied both *Experiencias Visuales '67* and *Experiencias '68*. Audiorecordings of these roundtables, directed by Romero Brest, are included as CD-ROMs with the text *Arte como provocación*.

> decision to confuse the spectator, it would be unfortunate if the logical correlative was that we intended an act of DIRECT communication.[75]

Paksa observes a quandary implicit in the analytical approach: the abandonment of previous practices such as abstraction, which result in open-ended content, to a viewer who reads systems might lead to the sense of a "direct" message, a substitute content. The conventional institutional roundtable that permits artists the chance to express their ideas is spurious, structured in advance by power relations.[76] Paksa seems concerned, however, that any effort to propose an alternate system might refashion art as a programmatic or didactic project that only reinstates the game with new rules.

For the *El arte por el aire* exhibition in La Plata at the end of 1967, Carnevale created a media work: the newspapers *La Nación*, *La Razón*, and *La Capital*, purchased each day of the exhibition and collected side by side to show consistencies and differences in reportage. This work closely resembles a 1967 project by Suárez at Galería Vignes at which "several tons" of newspapers were deposited and added to with each day's new editions so that they aggregated into piles.[77] The difference between these two

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[75] Paksa, *Sobre el discurso de mi*, p. 43-44. My translation.

[76] A similar pessimism about art's possibilities informed the Grupo de Rosario's participation in the group show *OPNI*, or *Objeto pequeño no identificado* [*Small Unidentified Object*] (a play on the Spanish abbreviation for UFO), at Galería Quartier in Rosario in November 1967, which required only small-scale conceptual works. Bortolotti simply supplied a check for the price of his work on display, Favario a bank note for the $5,000 that he had been given for a different work. Bortolotti and Favario's works in *OPNI* stripped art of everything but its commodity status, as though reducing the object to its numerical value and nothing more. In correspondence with the heightened faith in Rosario for the manifesto and the break with the institution, however, these works seem to lead by negative example. If the art object is nothing more than its monetary value, these works imply, then a counter-practice is necessary, one which evades the object altogether.

[77] Fantoni, *Trés visiones sobre el arte*, pp. 8-9. Suárez does not give an exact date for the project; he refers to it as "after 1966," and "this would have been around 1967" after describing an earlier work at Vignes that sounds very much like *Cal, pared, alamabrado y sus modificaciones* ("I modified a space by making walls equal to those of the gallery but dividing it into another form"). The fact that interview accounts must be relied upon as evidence of these works is a problematic dimension of assessing the overall production in this period; it is naturally possible that Suárez was aware of Carnevale's project and was seeking to alter the historical record in his favor. It should be noted that Favario also used newspapers in his work for *El arte por el aire*—he sent a series of newspapers with instructions on how they should be displayed

works marks an instance of movement from medium to content, from code to message. Suárez's gesture focused on the material substrate of newspaper information—paper itself—marking its normally unnoticed accumulation over time as a way to index both the time of the exhibition and the corresponding time in the system of the mass media (that is, the work would not present itself or the gallery as a static and unchanging environment, but would morph with time and with the progression of the news).[78] Carnevale instead focused on the content of the newspapers themselves, in encouraging viewers to discern consistencies and differences—a forerunner of Ferrari's comparisons between different sources of information in *Tucumán Arde*. Yet here the authority of each newspaper was undermined by the other. The power of a given message, it seems, might be softened by its necessary inclusion in a larger field of competing messages.

Pablo Suárez's work for *Experiencias '68* consisted of a letter sent to Romero Brest that was mimeographed and given to viewers at the entrance to the exhibition, in which he laid out his reasons for not participating in the exhibition: the institution was not actively contesting the dictatorship.[79] "I ask myself," he wrote, "if it is important to

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throughout the gallery space on floors and walls, keeping him more in line with Suárez's newspaper-as-material approach.

[78] These two works are similar to Arte Povera artist Luciano Fabro's *Pavimento—(tautologia)* in this same year, in which newspapers were arranged in a rough square on the gallery floor. In accordance with the tendencies of this movement within Italy, the newspapers here are used more as a "poor" material with which to make new varieties of sculpture than a commentary on the systems of the mass media or the gallery. Richard Flood and Frances Morris, "Introduction," in *Zero to Infinity: Arte Povera 1962-1972*, exh. cat. (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 2001, p. 17.

[79] Suárez did, however, accept the same funding as the other participants. Hermelo and Paz, *Ver y Estimar: Previo al Di Tella*, p. 22. This would not be the last time that an artist from this milieu used institutional funding to undertake an unconventional or critical act. Federico Manuel Peralta Ramos, a Greco-like trickster, received a Guggenheim grant for $3,500 in 1968, which he used to pay off debts accrued for a solo exhibition, to purchase suits for himself and his friends and paintings for himself and relatives, and to throw a banquet for 25 other associates. He then formally reported on these expenditures to the Guggenheim and argued that they constituted an artistic act of "provoking situations." Copies of letters exchanged between Peralta Ramos and the Guggenheim are in his artist file at the archives of the Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires. See also Noorthoorn, *Beginning with a Bang!*, pp. 14-16 & 87-90.

do something within the institution even if it collaborates in its destruction? … If we know how it will end, why insist on taking even the last step? Why not place ourselves at the limit?"[80] Suárez suggests that the majority of arists were already aware that extra-institutional activity was going to be an inevitable necessity, as though a series of "steps" of extrication were already apparent. By this logic, even *Experiencias '68*, an exhibition concept so radical and so inclusive to new approaches that a letter of rejection would be readily included, was only stalling a final and total break. Similar to Ferrari's *Carta a un general*, this is a letter, shown as a work, about the pointlessness of sending a work to an exhibition.

Suárez contends that institutions are inevitably positioned against both the aesthetic and political ambitions of artists: "Today, what I don't accept is the institution itself, which represents cultural centralization, institutionalization, and the impossibility of valorizing things at the moment they affect the medium."[81] This very phenomenon was apparent when Romero Brest allowed the letter to be distributed, demonstrating the institution's ability to assimilate even an assault on its own legitimacy (only Plate's work, with its scatological connotations, resulted in censorship). Suárez figures the street as an idealized democratic site unrestricted by the boundaries of the field of art or the reach of the state: "Those who want to be understood at all, say it loud in the street or anywhere that won't distort what you're saying."[82] As the artist fully knew, however, the physical

[80] Pablo Suárez, letter to Jorge Romero Brest, May 13, 1968, Graciela Carnevale archives. Translated by Jane Brodie in *Beginning with a Bang! From Confrontation to Intimacy: An Exhibition of Argentine Contemporary Artists, 1960-2007*, ed. Victoria Noorthoorn, exh. cat. Americas Society, New York (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 85-86.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Ibid.

space of the street would not be enough; to truly transmit a message to a mass audience one would have to utilize the mass media, with its own mechanisms of distortion.

May 1968 played a role in Roberto Jacoby's *Mensaje en el Di Tella*, which consisted of three elements: a photograph of a Black Power activist in the United States, a text by Jacoby that was reproduced in large print in the gallery, and a teletype machine connected to the news agency French Press (run by the movements of May 1968) transmitting up-to-the-minute reports about events in Europe [Figure 119]. The text was displayed using white detachable letters on an enlarged black bulletin board, with a handwritten signature at the bottom [Figure 120]. "The future of art," it reads, "is not connected to the creation of works, but to the definition of new concepts of life, with the artist as propagandist for these concepts."[83] This sentiment recalls Greco's neo-avant-garde call to fuse art and life, but in this case it is not for the sake of art; the artist will be in the service of new social formations. Jacoby does not mention politics explicitly, but he seems to be in agreement with Suárez that the end of the gallery-based artwork is at hand. It is noteworthy that he chose to display his written text through interchangeable letters contrasted with the trace of his hand in the signature, as though the text is one of other possible messages. The photograph of the radical activist is even more ambiguous. Like the open-ended signifiers of youth and creativity in the *Happening por un jabalí difunto* photographs, the signification of this image is unfixed. It could stand for a reality that is exclusively outside the museum context; a shared struggle that crosses international boundaries and unites oppressed people everywhere; the specter of violence in developed countries at this moment; or even more idealized notions of a radicalized

[83] Roberto Jacoby, "Message in the Di Tella," trans. Marguerite Feitlowitz, in *LHN*, p. 290, and *Media Art / Arte de los medios 1966-68*, CD-ROM, section on *Mensaje en el Di Tella*.

proletariat. The straightforward use of political content is here held up side by side with its status and manipulability as information. *Mensaje en el Di Tella* is poised between analysis of propaganda and propaganda's uncritical use, and the work is situated in a context in which reflection is still paramount.[84] The telex machine, however, serves to bring the outside inside, feeding information on an ongoing revolt into the gallery context.

The telex machine, rarely used as an artistic medium, was used by several Argentine artists at this moment.[85] A variant of the teleprinter, the "telex"—short for "teletype exchange"—first appeared in 1962, although the first telex network preceded the device.[86] Telex added to the teleprinter an internal switching function in the style of a rotary telephone, and was primarily used for different businesses to send electronic telegrams to one another. But it was also used in journalism to channel streams of

[84] As Longoni and Mestman report, this faith in aesthetics would be a source of conflict throughout the *Tucumán Arde* collaboration (and a reason for the departure from the project of artists such as Margarita Paksa and Ricardo Carreira. Buenos Aires artists were generally more disposed to retain elements of aesthetic reflection in the project, while artists from Rosario favored a more directly propagandistc approach. See *Del Di Tella a* Tucumán Arde, pp. 150-169.

[85] Other artists' use of the telex include David Lamelas's *Office of Information* a month later (discussed below), León Ferrari's installment of telex machines outside the theater for *Listen! Here! Now!* of that same year. It would later be used in Hans Haacke's work *News; UPI-WGNS Wire* (1969), shown at the *Software* show at The Jewish Museum in New York, which featured several teletype machines printing out local, national, and international news feeds. See Kenneth Baker, "Software, The Jewish Museum," *Artforum* (December 1970), pp. 80. Philip Glahn, *Estrangement and Politicization: Bertolt Brecht and American Art, 1967-79*, Doctoral Dissertation, CUNY Graduate Center, 2007, pp. 172-205.

[86] The teleprinter was first developed in the early 1900s to transmit encoded telegraph communications. In the form of the "Morse sounder," it quickly replaced the Morse writing telegraphs in World War I. The first teletype printing device was submitted for patent in the United States in 1924. The first national teleprinter system was installed within the government in Germany in 1932, and the first international teleprinter system was founded in between Germany, The Netherlands and Switzerland in 1934. Telex added an internal switching function that previously consisted of a manual telephone switchboard, and now allowed different businesses to send telexes to one another. See Anton A. Huurdeman, *The Worldwide History of Telecommunications* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2003), pp. 300-307. A combination of the words "teleprinting" and "exchange," "telex" can mean either the document that arrives via telegraphy, that which has "just come in," the network established between different devices that can send telexes to one another, or the device itself, which resembles a large typewriter. See Patrice A. Carré, "From the telegraph to the telex: a history of technology, early networks and issues in France in the 19th and 20th centuries," *Flux* 11, Vol. 9, 1993, pp. 15-31.

information as they were produced by, for example, the Associated Press in real time.[87] For *Circuitos informacionales cerrados*, Jacoby had proposed using a telex machine in conjunction with television cameras and screens to feed a series of different media into one another and effectively record or report on one another. The use of the telex in *Mensaje* instead opened the circuit of the work informationally and geographically. Whatever events the students and workers were able to transmit to news agencies in France would enter a circuit that opened onto the gallery. It was an example of an open circuit, in which individuals were creating their own news and immediately transmitting and disseminating it internationally via communications media.

On the one hand, Jacoby politicizes McLuhan's maxim, written in regards to the telegraph, that "[t]he simultaneity of electric communication, also characteristic of our nervous system, makes each of us present and accessible to every other person in the world."[88] The project forces political events into the context of an art exhibition, shattering the isolation required for aesthetic contemplation. But on the other, there is an implicit critique of this idea of ever-presentness on Jacoby's part, for this presence to one another is always already mediated by pliable signs that can be skewed to oppositional ideological ends.[89] *Mensaje en el Di Tella* suspends the moment of the exposure of the code just before it is supplanted with an new message—the implications of the Black Panther, or the radicality he stands for. The very material of such a message remains in suspension as well, potentially cooptable for different ends. Perhaps the text is a caption

[87] See Richard Pyle, "A Circuit to Anywhere," in *Breaking News: How the Associated Press Has Covered War, Peace, and Everything Else* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 2007), pp. 22-53.
[88] McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, p. 248.
[89] As argued in the Conclusion, it was precisely this project that is at the heart of Ferrari's *Heliografías* of 1978 to 1983, which open up the signifactory possibilities of an array of different basic visual signs that were part of the Letraset vocabulary of images.

to the photograph, or the photograph illustrates the text, or the teletype information is a proof of the spread of radical ideology. The different messages are interchangeable, but have not been narrowed down or concatenated into a single, direct message such as Ferrari's *Civilización occidental y cristiana*. They are clues that do not add up to an explicit directive. Masotta's analytical viewer is poised here on the edge of inspiration and action, that point at which interpretation becomes conversion to a cause, membership in a movement, or catalyst for action. In 1966 Jacoby had written in "Contra el happening" that "[…P]erhaps, the old conflict between art and politics… which people have tried to transcend by introducing a political 'content' into art, will be settled by the artistic use of a medium as political as mass communication."[90] *Mensaje en el Di Tella* does not "settle" the issue, but gestures toward a potential reconciliation of analysis and action, in which the former informs the latter.

Oscar Bony's *La familia obrera* [*Working Class Family*] consisted of a working-class father, mother, and son who sat on a pedestal for the duration of the opening of *Experiencias '68* [Figure 121]. A recording of ambient sounds from their home was broadcast.[91] On the wall there was a text indicating that the artist had agreed to pay the participants the wage that they would have received had they been working, harking back to the payment scheme that Masotta had employed for his happening *Para inducir al espíritu de la imagen*.[92] The project was not the original one that Bony had proposed for

[90] *LHN*, p. 231.
[91] The father was Luis Ricardo Rodríguez, a machinist or die-maker, the mother his wife Elena Quiroga, and the child their son, Máximo Rodríquez Quiroga. See María José Herrera, "Arte y realidad: 'La Familia Obrera' como ready-made," in *Arte y poder: Jornadas de teoría e historia de las artes* 5 (Buenos Aires: Centro Argentino de Investigadores de Arte at the Universidad de Buenos Aires, 1993), p. 174-182. Herrera notes that the initial reviews of the show, prior to its destruction at the hands of the artists, were extremely negative, p. 178.
[92] Ibid, p. 180. Herrera notes that Bony himself later claimed that his payment was double the normal wage, but a number of critical sources from the period claim that it was equivalent.

Experiencias '68, but his first plan—an empty room of with a hidden microphone and speaker that amplified the sound of the viewer walking into and around the space—had proved too expensive.[93] This unrealized project would have followed up earlier works such as *60 metros cuadrados y su información*. From the feedback loop of the latter, Bony would have progressed to only the viewer and the context, without the art; the audio would have functioned as aural feedback. Instead, the artist marked the viewer's presence in a different manner: through class distinction. The worker and his family were interlopers in a context in which they were not normally found, surrounded by bourgeois and upper-class art-goers. The choice to include an entire family, and not simply a single adult worker, is noteworthy. On first glance, as with many of the works in *Experiencias '68*, they appear to be readable as an open sign onto which any ideology might be projected. The humiliation of sitting for hours in a gallery while people with greater incomes stared at them could be seen as a figure for the exploitation of the working class under capital. Or, on the contrary, their placement on a pedestal suggests a literal and metaphorical elevation of the traditional family unit that the dictatorship championed. This range of possible representations, however, was to fall away before the fact that these living people were in fact present, actually there. *La familia obrera* stands in an artistic lineage of the incorporation of real objects into the picture plane from collage to the readymade to the neo-avant-garde. The artist was not seeking a synthesis of art and life, however, so much as an opposition. In Bony's view, the prior absence of the proletariat from the institutional context made them un-frameable, so that they could not but supplant the work of art on the pedestal, its traditional place of display. The move

[93] Ibid, p. 178. The theme of the empty gallery that is instead "filled" with a sound component recurs in the work of a number of artists of this moment, including that of Renzi and Carnevale.

was not to widen the scope of art to include life but to replace the work of art with a social reality that could not be assimilated.[94] It is not that the viewer cannot process the working class family through metaphor or reference—the viewer, in this case, is not the only viewer. The act of signaling remains paramount here. The pedestal is a traditional signaling device that draws attention to what is placed upon it. But that object of attention is also a group of subjects who bounce the signal back through their own gazes (or, as in a photograph from the exhibition, they simple ignore those who come to see them) [Figure 122]. The circuit of the work is pried open radically: there are new viewers where the work should be.

Limit-Situations

The groundwork for *Tucumán Arde* was laid from August 10-11, 1968 in Rosario at the Primer Encuentro de Arte de la Vanguardia, a think-tank comprising artists from different cities that was dedicated to finding a political role for art (and which featured Ferrari's "Arte de los significados," discussed above).[95] The meeting was organized by S.A.A.P., La Sociedad Argentina de Artistas Plasticos, which had previously organized the *Homenaje a Viet-Nam* and *Homenaje a Latinoamérica* exhibitions. Papers on art and

[94] The idea that this really was a working class family signifies the obverse of Masotta's intentions in *Para inducir al espíritu de la imagen*, where in the end it did not matter whether the participants were from the class they seemed to be from or not. See Patricia Rizzo, "La Pasión Segun Oscar Bony," unpublished text, 1994, Fundación Espigas archives, Buenos Aires, and also *Oscar Bony, el mago: obras 1965-2001*.

[95] Details about the *Tucumán Arde* collaboration in this section are taken from Graciela Carnevale, *Inventario. Archivo Graciela Carnevale*, exh. cat. (Rosario: Centro Cultural Parque de España, 2008), *Tucumán Arde. Eine Erfahrung: Aus dem Archiv von Graciela Carnevale* (Berlin: Auflage b_books, 2004), Longoni and Mestman, *Del Di Tella a* Tucumán Arde, pp. 150-69, Longoni, "La intervención política como programa estético: Una lectura de *Tucumán Arde*," in *El arte entre lo publico y lo privado*, pp. 261-268 and "*Tucumán Arde*: Encuentros y desencuentros entra vanguardia artística y política," in *Cultura y política en los años '60*, pp. 315-327, Katzenstein, ed., "First National Meeting on Avant-Garde Art and *Tucumán is Burning*," in *LHN*, pp. 305-26, Graciela Sacco and Andrea Suelto, *Tucumán Arde* (Rosario: Sacco-Sueldo, 1987), and "Tucumán Arde... Por qué?" and other materials photographed directly from the Graciela Carnevale archive, Rosario, Argentina.

politics were presented by Carreira, Ferrari, Renzi, and Rosario-based literature scholar Nicolás Rosa.[96] Carreira's contribution, "Compromiso y arte" [Commitment and Art], first echoes Paksa's sentiments about the avant-garde work's minimal effect on the spectator, and then argues that it is precisely in this limited capacity that art can "contribute" to a revolution.

> I will have *tolerated* my extended, captive consciousness during the work of art. I have noted that some states of consciousness are more tolerable than a toothache. [...]Despite their materiality, thought and art are always "about" X, a thought "about." I don't mean that they are simple signs that always mean the same thing, rather that the wall is less important than the real immediate wall; but when the object named X or the situation named is revolutionary, "the words" grow with their object. [...]Art doesn't make for total revolution. Art can accompany it. [...W]ith respect to art, returning to the question of art, let it be clear: I believe that so-called formal investigation is of the utmost importance.[97]

His reference to a "wall" suggests his *Ejercicio sobre un conjunto*, which was "about" a wall insofar as it dissected that wall's constitutive materials.[98]

Juan Pablo Renzi's paper, "La obra de arte como un producto de la relación conciencia ética-conciencia estética," [The Work of Art as a Product of the Ethical Conscience-Aesthetic Consciousness Relationship], echoed Masotta in pointing to the dual meaning of the term *conciencia*, and argued that the assembled group comprehend

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[96] In his dense theoretical text, Rosa outlined a historical dialectic in experimental art between "originality" and "unpredictability," clearly drawing from Verón, Masotta (he mentions *redundancia*), and other structuralists in claiming that "man is essentially a medium for receiving, transforming, and emitting information." Rosa's concern for the distortion of messages based on the larger structure of their "channel" or medium leads to his call to "signal the degenerative character" of "the perversion of communication" found in, "propaganda," "deliberate distortion," and other forms of "a pathology of communication." "One of the aspects of the crisis of contemporary bourgeois society," he argued, "is precisely the incapacity to elaborate new assumptive, autonomous modes (in the sense of freedoms) on the level of everyday life." See "Ponencia sin título de Nicolás Rosa presentada en el I Encuentro Nacional del Arte de Vanguardia," in Longoni and Mestman, pp. 142-146. My translation.

[97] Ricardo Carreira, "Art and Social Commitment," in *LHN*, p. 318.

[98] Carreira did not participate in *Tucumán Arde* beyond these preparatory meetings due to mental illness. Longoni and Mestman, p. 311.

their present as a *situación limite* or "limit-situation."[99] This may be a reference to the Brazilian activist pedagogue Paolo Freire, who used the term in his 1968 book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* to designate a difficult self-confrontation beyond which the subject can expand or overcome his or her own boundaries. "As [men] separate themselves from the world," Freire writes, "[...]as they locate the seat of their decisions in themselves and in their relations with the world and others, men overcome the situations which limit them: the 'limit-situations.'"[100] The recognition of the limit-situation is a positive step, for it allows for a strategy to be devised within those limits. For Renzi, the limit-situation for artists was one of discipline. Being trained in aesthetics, they were best suited to aid political activism through aesthetic means. Renzi contended that their effect would be greater if they acted in concert: "[P]olitically speaking, our stance will have cultural weight as long as we act as a group, and as long as our activity is clearly defined within the limits of our specific project: aesthetic creation."[101]

The Primer Encuentro concluded with a consensus that attention should be drawn to the situation in Tucumán. The state had responded to local protests over privatization

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[99] Ibid, pp. 132-133. My translation. The text of the talk begins with a schema that outlines how the new work of art will be a "product of the relation: / ethical conc. / aesthetic conc." In the next column, "General foundation: Study of the relation between aesthetics and ideology" is positioned between conscience and consciousness, which are given three tasks each. Conscience develops definitions of ideology and politics, as well as "politico-cultural action," while aesthetic consciousness develops a new context, field, and function for the work of art, and the materials to realize this function, and lastly "establishes a work of art that yields, through its structure, the ideological *conciencia* of the artist."

[100] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 89. Freire traces the concept back to Jaspers and more recently Alvaro Veira Pinto. See also *Educação como Práctica da Liberdade* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra 1985), originally published 1967.

[101] Renzi, "The Work of Art..." in *LHN*, p. 310. Gerald Raunig has recently proposed a new model for discussing artistic projects that overlap with political activism. Addressing the Viennese Actionists' fraught interactions with radical student groups in 1968, he writes: "[...W]hat is beyond these kinds of sequences, hierarchies and juxtapositions are the temporary overlaps, micropolitical attempts at the *transversal concatenation* of art machines and revolutionary machines, in which both overlap, not to incorporate one another, but rather to enter into a concrete exchange relationship for a limited time." See Gerald Raunig, *Art and Revolution: Transversal Activism in the Long Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Semiotext(e), 2007), p. 18.

with a propaganda campaign, "Operativo Tucumán," that insisted that the region was being reinvested in and that conditions were improving [Figure 123]. The radically left CGTA, run by Raimundo Ongaro, had recently split with the larger Argentine union and was a logical partner in this enterprise, as it had already condemned the crisis in Tucumán as one of its "axes of protest" in its message of May 1, 1968.[102] Demonstrations and strikes were prohibited by the dictatorship, and the CGTA was only permitted to use its offices as sites for discussion and cultural events. The name *Tucumán Arde* was suggested by Margarita Paksa at a second preparatory meeting in Castelar, in reference to René Clément's 1966 film *Paris brûle-t-il?*, released in Spanish-speaking countries as *¿Arde Paris?*[103] Several scenes in the film, however, anticipate techniques employed for *Tucumán Arde*, such as the posting of street signs reading "Paris se bat," and the collective work of groups with opposed ideals. Paksa's title serves to *détourn* the original by way of a response, an answer to the question: Tucumán *is* burning, for disaster has not been avoided.[104] Photographs from both of these meetings were circulated—the artists took care to create images of coming to consensus, even though they did not reveal the political nature of their project to prevent government interference [Figure 124].

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[102] Alberto Giudici, *Arte y Politica en los '60*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Salas Nacionales de Cultura, 2001), p. 55.

[103] Andrea Giunta, *Vanguardia, internacionalismo y política* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2001), p. 370, n. 101.

[104] An epic about the final days of the Nazi occupation of Paris, the film features a cast of French and American stars, including Jean-Paul Belmondo, Alain Delon, Kirk Douglas, Anthony Perkins, Orson Welles, and many others. In the film, Hitler repeatedly calls the Nazi general in charge of Paris as the German forces continue to lose the war, asking "Is Paris burning?" Unlike a typical Hollywood war film, heroes appear for only brief sections and do not dominate any stretch of action; militaristic snare drumming follows the action throughout. In 1966, the closing images of a victorious General de Gaulle walking through Paris amidst jubilant crowds would have functioned as a rightist defense of the Prime Minister amidst rising political upheaval. The unity of disparate groups in the film is addressed when one of the resistance leaders meets with the German general in charge of Paris under a cease-fire. The General asks why the Resistance is still fighting, and the Frenchman explains, "You command an army of regulars. When you give an order your men obey it. The Resistance is an alliance of many movements, and I don't control them all... Our ranks include communists and anti-communists. Now we're all battling against a common enemy!"

Tucumán Arde was planned in three stages, each with its own "informational circuit." The first consisted of two trips to the Tucumán region during September and October by a group of artists, economists, journalists, photographers, psychologists, and sociologists who contacted and interviewed, documented, or collaborated with local union officials, journalists, students, teachers, priests, and filmmakers. The group's presence, under the cover of promoting a fictional exhibition called the *1st Bienal de arte de vanguardia* [*First Biennial of Avant-Garde Art*], attracted significant media attention. To distract the police, a press conference was held at a local museum at which false information about the biennial was disseminated. Later, when the research was completed, a second press conference presented some of the real findings and openly lambasted the government's economic policies.

The second stage, the "exhibition-condemnation," involved the installation of what was called a *circuito sobreinformacional* [overinformational circuit] at the CGTAs in Rosario and Buenos Aires.[105] An advertising campaign publicized the exhibition. In Rosario, the city was canvassed with posters and graffiti. The first posters read "Tucumán," the second "Tucumán Arde." These words also appeared before films and on tickets at movie theaters [Figure 125]. Newspapers reported on these enigmatic gestures

[105] The signatories of the general statement of *Tucumán Arde*, written by María Teresa Gramuglio and Nicholás Rosa, were María Elvira de Arechavala, Beatriz Balvé, Graciela Borthwick, Aldo Bortolotti, David de Nully Braun, Graciela Carnevale, Raúl Pérez Cantón, Jorge Cohen, Sara López Dupuy, Rodolfo Elizalde, Noemí Escandell, Eduardo Favario, León Ferrari, Emilio Ghilioni, Edmundo Giura, Gramuglio, Marta Greiner, Roberto Jacoby, José Maria Lavarello, Rubén Naranjo, Oscar Pidustwa, Estella Pomerantz, Norberto Púzzolo, Juan Pablo Renzi, Jaime Rippa, Rosa, Carlos Schork, Nora de Schork, Domingo J. A. Sapia, and Roberto Zara. Many others, including Margarita Paksa, Ricardo Carreira, and other sociologists of CISCO, the Center for Investigations in the Social Sciences (represented by Balvé on the statement), were involved in preparatory and research stages of the project.

and contributed further publicity.[106] Later, posters for the bogus *First Biennial* appeared, using a stylized font that mimicked typesets used for exhibitions of contemporary art [Figure 126]. This strategy represents an instrumentalized version of *Happening para un jabalí difunto*, shifting the use-value of a false art-event from that of apperception to subterfuge to delay censorship.

On November 3, the exhibition-condemnation was inaugurated [Figures 127-129]. The entrance was partially barricaded with bags of sugar. The names of the owners of the sugar factories were printed on the floor so that one could not help but walk on them. Handmade signs were interspersed with groups of photographs that attested to poor working conditions, machines going unused, and the effects of poverty on children [Figure 130]. These images were enlarged and in some locations displayed as grids, and frequently consisted of the subjects staring back at the viewer. Audio interviews with union officials and workers were played over loudspeakers, and films were shown over the course of the month. Every two minutes, the lights would black out, corresponding to the statistical frequency of child mortality in Tucumán. At the exit, students and workers handed out an eighteen-page report on the Tucumán situation compiled by sociologists.[107] The project continued to expand during the duration of the installation as new information and ephemera were added.[108]

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[106] Newspapers sympathetic to *Tucumán Arde*, cued by journalists working on the project, provided extensive coverage. Different reports on the lead-up to the Rosario installation are collected in the Graciela Carnevale archive, and detailed in Longoni and Mestman, *Del Di Tella a* Tucumán Arde, pp. 150-195.

[107] See Quiles, "Interview with Roberto Jacoby," *Americas Society Quarterly*. See also Eliseo Verón, *Imperialismo, lucha de clases y conocimiento: Veinticinco años de sociología en la Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Tiempo Contemporáneo, 1974), pp. 93-104.

[108] See the translation of the audio transcript for the documentary about *Tucumán Arde* featured in the Queens Museum of Art show *Global Conceptualism* (1999), featured in *PART* 5, Issue on Latin American Art, Winter 2000 (http://dsc.gc.cuny.edu/part/part5/arde.html). This documentary was prepared from materials in the Graciela Carnevale archive, although its authoritativeness has been disputed by artists such as Roberto Jacoby, who feels that it under-represents the contributions of CISCO and the sociologists

León Ferrari's contribution to the exhibition was a display of conflicting media reports about Tucumán [Figure 131].[109] They were news clippings from different sources about similar events, arranged in a handmade grid format to allow for easy comparison. Again and again newspapers sympathetic to the dictatorship were invalidated by sources that contradicted their accounts. Ferrari staged a moment of contemplation or analysis for the viewer, but the conclusion was inevitable. As in *Palabras ajenas*, these different voices do not distort one another but instead add up to a singular message: the dictatorship is in liege with these newspapers, which disseminate its propaganda as fact. This is "over-information": the repetition of juxtapositions to create a clear message. The "pattern" that Bateson sees as a consequence of redundancy is here one based in content, the pattern of a power relation. Redundancy or "over-information" makes this reality inescapable. These are manners of form and display that yield incontrovertible proof. Apperception now constitutes the reception of clear messages: the dictatorship's reports are propaganda concealing economic exploitation and the suppression of free speech. The idea here is the breaking of the dictatorship's machine of publicity and information control. Once revealed, it cannot function.

The third stage of *Tucumán Arde*, which went unrealized along with a long-term installation in Buenos Aires and other installations that were planned for Santa Fé and Córdoba, was to have been the publication of all of the research, along with documentation of the exhibition-condemnations.[110] This move would have extended the

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involved. See Daniel Quiles, "Interview with Roberto Jacoby," *Americas Society Quarterly*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (November 2007), pp. 323-330.

[109] In one selection of articles, Economic Minister Salimei was quoted claiming that no sugar worker would lose his job. Other articles placed contiguously completely contradicted his claims and offered evidence of government repression of worker protest in the region.

[110] "First National Meeting," *LHN*, p. 306.

reach of the project's message beyond the spatial confines of the CGTs and into a larger and continually expanding field of discourse: the reportage, and commentary upon reportage, of print media. It also would have fit Masotta's model of dissemination of new work on a number of different registers: physical exhibition space, roundtable, academic conference or press conferences related to the event, media coverage, and publication of a book and/or archive. By the time that the second installation in Buenos Aires was closed by the police, however, the *Tucumán Arde* group that had begun to fracture due to differing political views.[111] The majority of the artists involved from both Rosario and Buenos Aires would subsequently stop producing art for the next five to eight years. *Tucumán Arde* was not widely reported upon abroad, although the artists did help to design a spread for Jean Clay's magazine *Robho* in France (which was also one of the first European reports on *neo-concreto* in Brazil), and Lucy Lippard mentioned it in her summation of the 1960s and 1970s.[112] Its first sustained historical discussion was by the cultural theorist Néstor García Canclini in 1979.[113]

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[111] Longoni documents a variety of continued meetings by different groups that splintered off from the original *Tucumán Arde* group, although a similar interdisciplinary project—in which artists used complex aesthetic tools to aid a larger activist/sociological project, was not undertaken. Future collaborative protest works, such as *Malvenido Rockefeller*, a condemnation of David Rockefeller's visit to Argentina in 1969, returned to the group show model of *Homenaje de Viet-Nam*, emphasizing in some cases graphic design over art objects. One of the most interesting revisions of practice was undertaken by Roberto Jacoby, who joined the Grupo Cine-Liberación, which featured the directors of the radical film *La hora de los hornos* (1968), Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, and produced several issues of the leftist journal *Sobre*.

[112] Jean Clay, "Les fils de Marx et Mondrian: Dossier Argentine," *Robho* (Paris), nos. 5-6 (1969), and Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The dematerialization of the art object from 1966-1972...* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 59. Lippard credits *Tucumán Arde* exclusively to "The Rosario group." She also mentions the *Ciclo de arte experimental*, p. 49, in which she details Lia Masonnave's work most closely, mentions Carnevale, but does not describe Puzzolo's gesture. The only other Argentine work addressed in the book is Oscar Bony's submission for *Experiencias visuales '67*: "a bare room with a tape-recorded loop describing the room's measurements and features in minute detail," p. 30.

[113] Néstor García Canclini, *La producción simbólica: teoría y método en sociología del arte* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1979), pp. 133-136. Claiming to have interviewed all of the participants between 1975 and 1976, Canclini positions the project as an act of contestation against a larger trend toward "symbolic strategies of economic development."

In 1973, the year Lippard's book was published, Carnevale and Ferrari attended the Encuentro de Artistas Plásticos Latinoamericanos in Havana, Cuba, and reflected on the achievements and limitations of *Tucumán Arde*.[114] "If indeed the *Tucumán Arde* exhibition was relatively good, taking into account the leap from the Di Tella to the CGTA, the group could not ultimately develop a new language *for* nor *with* nor *from* the exploited people," Ferrari lamented, echoing the prescription of Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*: "the investigators and the people (who would normally be considered objects of that investigation) should act as *co-investigators*."[115] He noted, however, the significance of at least aspiring to this end: "*Tucumán Arde* proposed the construction of a new language with another public, with another coauthor: the exploited."[116]

Tucumán Arde attempted to resolve two problems for Argentine art in 1968. The first was how to escape not only the institution but also the problematic enclosure of gallery space in general. The solution offered by the Rosario and Buenos Aires installations was the inclusion of indexical documentation—photographs, film, and audiorecording—throughout the exhibition space. This mapped the distant exterior reality of the countryside onto the interior of the union hall, joining viewers as much as possible with the experience of researchers. Bony's insertion of the proletarian subject into the space of exhibition was reduced to an effect of photography, film, and audio. This documentation constituted proof of not only the destructive actions of the dictatorship but also the fact that the research had taken place, that the collaborators on the project had been to Tucumán. The problems inherent in this contention—that the interdisciplinary

[114] This meeting was preceded by one centered on the Southern Cone at the Universidad de Chile in 1972.
[115] Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 97.
[116] León Ferrari, "Repuestas a un cuestionario de la Escuela de Letras de la Universidad de La Habana sobre la exposición *Tucumán Arde*," in *León Ferrari: prosa política*, pp. 38-40. My translation. See also Longoni, *Del Di Tella a* Tucumán Arde, pp. 219-222 and 230-232.

group consisted of intellectuals with little connection to the workers, that the workers were not representing themselves but were being advocated for—were not acknowledged. Greco's complex signal was rejected in favor of the straightforward, traditional uses of these media. Proletarian Tucumán becomes the ultimate anti-institutional territory, even if it appears only via proxy in what is effectively a substitute institution: the CGTA. *Tucumán Arde* kept intact and utilized the power of institutional architecture, which allows the spatial and informational experience of the viewer to be controlled while he or she navigates the space of the exhibition. As much as the collaborators on the project aimed for it to someday be diffused as information in the mass media, the Rosario installation necessitated the presence of the viewer: it was constructed as an architectural mechanism of transformation, in which one would enter as apolitical art-goer, and exit as a citizen capable of acting politically—a member of a bloc.

In terms of the second problem—the subtle debate in Argentine conceptualism between Masotta's analytical operation and *el arte de los significados*—a compromise was struck that preserved *Tucumán Arde*'s imperative to collectively assert an anti-dictatorship protest. Elements of the project, such as Ferrari's juxtaposed newspaper articles, provided moments in which viewers could analyze the dictatorship's communicative codes. Propaganda was taken apart so it could be understood, rendering it incapable of functioning; the viewer's attainment of consciousness was a form of empowerment. The one system, however, that could not be analyzed and broken was that of *Tucumán Arde* itself—neither its uncritical use of journalistic documentation nor its effective containment and programming of its viewers. Those points at which the organizers of the project asserted their faith in the transparency of certain media, truths,

or experiences were carefully chosen to keep the analytical operation from turning back upon the system that had put it into service.

These contradictions do not detract, however, from *Tucumán Arde*'s larger significance as a critical voice in the face of an authoritarian regime. The ultimate ambition of the project, which was not fully realized, was to act as a consensus formation that was not bound by exhibition space, a single location, or particular dates. With each successive exhibition, additional publicity would have been generated, and with the book publication, the collaborators would have been able to insert an accurate record of the project into a larger circuit of information. The ambition might be elucidated by Umberto Eco's distinction between what he calls "alternative information," which "acts on the message as a *signifying form*," and "counter-information," which "acts on the message as an existing *signified*." He elaborates:

> *Counter-information*... has a *parasitic* relation to the official message at its point of reception and it operates so as to encourage the receiver to: a) read the message using other codes; b) identify the codes by which the transmitter wanted the message wanted to be read in order to infer their ideological intentions; c) analyse the message so as to draw attention to the transmitter's manipulations of the signifiers...[117]

Counter-information recalls the dual meaning of *conciencia*—it is at the interstice of consciousness and conscience, analysis and action. Masotta's analytical work of art is expressly counter-informational—its viewer is to become conscious of ideological codes. With *Tucumán Arde*, this operation was extended to a larger audience that was to coalesce, to form its own world. In order for this world to be directed against the preexisting dominant one, however, a vision had to be articulated beyond that of merely

[117] Umberto Eco, "On Chinese Comic Strips: Counter-information and alternative information," in *Apocalypse Postponed*, trans. Robert Lumley (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 148-166.

knowing and dismantling a system. A replacement message, a substitute system, had to be posited. *Tucumán Arde* is thus something of a reconciliation of "alternative" and "counter-information." The project comprised both an attempt at apperception of the codes of propagandistic information, as well as the promotion of a new message of leftist solidarity in the face of the exploitative military regime.

Tucumán Arde also bears a striking similarity to Jürgen Habermas's original vision for the public sphere: to shame the government into better care of its citizens through the informational dissemination of a consensus position.[118] While Habermas pointed to the rise of the newspaper in the eighteenth century as the facilitator for the original bourgeois public sphere, in Argentina in the 1960s one would have to account for the demise of the free press under dictatorship. *Tucumán Arde* might be understood as taking up the public sphere's task of responsible journalism in a context in which a) it is the proletariat, not the bourgeois class, that is of chief concern and b) the mass media was no longer disposed toward critiquing the state (indeed, the ability and willingness of the press to pressure the state with the public sphere's concerns might be said to be the very measure of democracy in any political order). In conventionally understood democracies, free speech ensures that the public sphere's central problem is that it can never truly represent everyone and must exclude the concerns of specific groups.[119] Under dictatorship, however, any semblance of a public sphere is likely a hoax, manipulated by the state to provide the appearance of a free press. This is what might be termed an anti-

[118] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989).
[119] This is the source of the critique of Habermas's public sphere initiated by Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge in 1972, which has been developed in recent decades by a number of scholars. See Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989).

public sphere: the mere appearance, without the reality, of objective reporting and concern for social welfare. *Tucumán Arde*'s hybrid of art, journalism and politics found a recuperative role for art in such a desperate situation: to articulate what remained of the possibility of a public sphere—of critique, and circuits for transmitting it—under dictatorship.

Chapter 4
This Art is a Jail: Counterpublics and Containers, 1968-1976

I do not take part in the responses to the statements since, as a receiver of all the contributions, my reference is prejudiced.
My choice of the three statements does not imply agreement or disagreement with any of the three statements.[1]

-David Lamelas

2. Quotidian form of *conciencia*: Individual *conciencia*.
3. Expansion of quotidian *conciencia*: Acquisition of *conciencia* of energy.[2]

-Víctor Grippo

Is the recuperation of a code comprehensible to all feasible?[3]

-Horacio Zabala

In 1970, at the Venice Biennale, Luis Benedit presented *Biotrón*, a rectangular glass structure containing 4000 bees and twenty-five flowers growing at controlled intervals with the aid of fifty 100-watt lamps [Figure 132].[4] This work initially appears to be a closed circuit: the natural symbiosis between bees and plants. But the system on display is neither autonomous nor "natural." The artist has researched, designed, and constructed it, and even exhibits the original plan alongside the finished work [Figure 133]. The live bees and flowers nurture one another via this environment—they are protected, they survive. Yet we are also protected from them, by the giant vitrine in which they are trapped. The fact that their behavior can be contained and observed at a safe distance is as much on display as any biological phenomenon. The natural system is contingent upon the architecture that surrounds and supports it. In *Biotrón*, nourishment and imprisonment are one and the same.

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[1] David Lamelas, *Publication* (London: Nigel Greenwood Inc Ltd, 1970), p. vi.
[2] Víctor Grippo, "Analogy I," in *Víctor Grippo*, exh. cat. (Birmingham: Ikon Gallery, 1995), p. 47.
[3] Horacio Zabala, "Seventeen Interrogatives on Art," *GT*-135-A, July 12, 1972. Henceforth CAYC's yellow announcements will be referred to as *gacetillas*, or *GT*, with their corresponding numbers and dates.
[4] See Dan Cameron, "Luis Benedit: Field Work," in *Argentina, 1920-1994: Art from Argentina*, exh. cat., (Oxford: Museum of Modern Art, 1994), pp. 94-8, Jorge Glusberg, "Los modelos interesantes de Luis F. Benedit," in *Argentina: 1970—XXV Biennale de Venezia—Italia*, exhibition pamphlet (Venice: Direzione Generale di Relazioni Culturali—Ministero degli Affari Esteri—Argentina, 1970).

Benedit is representative of a current in Argentine art in the 1970s that, in embracing the functional system instead of breaking it down, inverts the terms of 1960s conceptualism. Greco reduced art to the operation of the frame and signature, to the nominal act, so that its underlying operation of authorship could be opened up and questioned. Masotta, Jacoby, Lamelas and others analyzed the mass media and the institutional context to expose their inner workings and render them dysfunctional. *Tucumán Arde* employed these analytical methods to empower intellectual and proletarian subjects to dismantle and undermine the power of the Onganía dictatorship. Yet in the work of Benedit, Víctor Grippo, Horacio Zabala, all of who were working at the Centro de Arte y Comunicación (CAYC) in the early 1970s, the machine—used as artistic material, but also figured as the institution itself—functions more smoothly. The focus is not on a system's constituent parts or how they work, but its result; not the structure of the experiment its situation of containment, but on objects—metaphors for human subjects that in some cases take the form of live animals—that are experimented upon or contained. These demonstrations of such forceful acting-upon or containing are structural analogues for political subjectivity in Argentina at this moment, where the state was taking increasingly violent measures against its citizens that would culminate in the coup of 1976.

With the majority of the artists involved in *Tucumán Arde* no longer producing, it was artists such as David Lamelas and Marta Minujín, working abroad, who further explored the possibilities of code-based practices between 1968 and 1976.[5] Continuing to

[5] Lamelas and Minujín are but two examples of Argentine conceptual artists working abroad at this time who helped to share the fruit of collaborative activity in Buenos Aires, Rosario and La Plata with international artists and institutions. Among other examples, Grupo del Arte de los Medios Masivos members Raúl Escari and Eduardo Costa were from 1968 on based in Paris and New York, respectively.

refine strategies they had developed in the mid-1960s, they disseminated approaches that were developed in the Argentine context in international art milieus and exhibitions. Having previously used sculpture and environments to interrogate the gallery context, Lamelas turned his analytical approach to film, exhibition publications, and video while in London and Los Angeles. With *Publication* in 1970, a group exhibition consisting only of its catalogue, he simultaneously participated in and scrutinized an art counterpublic in dialogue about the legitimacy of language in art. Minujín adapted her multimedia happenings for the North American context, advancing a subtle and playful form of institution critique in projects such as *Minucode* at the Center for Inter-American Affairs in 1968. Both artists experienced limitations to these approaches, particularly as they related to the political. In Lamelas's work the analytical tendency always undercuts the possibility of communicating a message—if the counterpublic is analyzed, it cannot function—and he would ultimately turn to fiction to escape this bind. The tension Minujín sustained between political and festive party gradually shifted toward the latter, supplanting critique with desperate optimism. Both artists were concerned with smaller yet international networks of artists, critics and institutions that Michael Warner terms "counterpublics": spaces "of discourse organized by nothing other than discourse itself"[6] that are "defined by their tension with a larger public."[7] The counterpublic differs from the public sphere implicit in *Tucumán Arde*, which broadcast a consensus about a course of action needed by all, its inherently factional, subordinate position; it must jockey for

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Escari became a full-time writer of aesthetic and cultural criticism, while Costa forged a hybrid practice between art and fashion that involved the design of jewelry and the creation of photo spreads for fashion magazines in his continuing *Fashion Fiction* series. See Alexander Alberro, "Media, Sculpture, Myth," pp. 168-179. See also "Fashion Show Poetry Event," Americas Society archives, New York.

[6] Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, (New York: Zone Books, 2002), p. 67.

[7] Ibid, p. 56.

attention with other publics. Lamelas joined and commented upon on a small community of conceptual artists in Europe, while Minujín brought smaller institutions representing Latin American art to limited audiences, like the Center for Inter-American Relations in New York, under an analytical gaze. As in Masotta's work, the analytical model portends that for the mechanics of the counterpublic to be unveiled, it must cease to be an effective promotional apparatus. It is no coincidence that by 1975 Minujín was back in Argentina organizing a work titled *La academia del fracaso*, or *The Academy of Failure*.

In what follows Lamelas and Minujín serve as bookends to a consideration of CAYC, the institution that emerged as the center of contemporary art after the Instituto Torcuato di Tella's closure by the state in 1970. It was conceived and directed by lighting entrepreneur and art critic Jorge Glusberg, who reprised the ITDT's hegemonic aims for national and international visibility for Argentine art under increasingly more repressive political circumstances.[8] CAYC drew not only from Jorge Romero Brest's model of an interdisciplinary institution but also from Masotta's organization of groups of artists and language of understanding systems, effectively re-institutionalizing the rhetoric and practices of the period between *El "pop-art"* and *Tucumán Arde*. The Center was itself a container, situated underground, where experimental art could be practiced in safety, but this literal retreat from the public space of the street testifies to a reluctance to solicit an audience beyond an inner circle; it was an institutionalized counterpublic only internationally. Its artists who were most concerned with questions of containment and communication—Grippo, Benedit, and Zabala—commented on this situation in their

[8] The Center has received relatively little consideration by scholars in comparison to the ITDT. For the most comprehensive discussion of CAYC not generated by the institution itself, see Natalia Pineau, "El CAyC: La reconstrucción de un programa institucional," in *ICAA Documents Project Working Papers* (Houston) No. 1, September 2007, pp. 25-30.

individual work. The era between 1968 and 1976 is thus one in which 1960s rhetoric and strategies—the problematics of analysis versus speech and institution versus counterpublic—were reevaluated and struggled with amidst extraordinary and disastrous events.

Violent Codes

David Lamelas's *Office of Information About the Vietnam War on Three Levels: Visual Image, Text, and Audio* was installed at the Venice Biennale from June 15 to October 15, 1968 [Figure 134]. It featured the installation of an office in the gallery: a desk with a live attendant reciting news related to the Vietnam War in different languages over a speaker system as it came off the ANSA news wire, printed telex feed via a teletype machine from the same wire service, and an audiorecording produced from the daily recitation of the news that was compiled into a sixty-day archive of the exhibition.[9] The original title was to have been *Information Complex on a Subject Selected from the Three Levels of the Image (Visual, Writing, Sound)*, but Lamelas altered it to explicitly mention the war, to be an "office" instead of a "complex," and to leave the object of the "three levels" ambiguous (it is unclear whether the "office" or the "Vietnam War" is parsed into on three levels), as opposed to deriving them from "the image."

One dimension of *Office of Information* that has not been addressed by scholars is its close resemblance to Jacoby's *Mensaje en el Di Tella*, which had appeared at the ill-

[9] See Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Structure, Sign and Reference in the Work of David Lamelas," in *Neo-Avant-Garde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American Art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003) p. 321, Inés Katzenstein, ed., *David Lamelas: extranjero=foreigner=étranger=Ausländer*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Fundación Olga y Rufino Tamayo: Malba--Colección Costantini, 2006), p. 77, and "Reality Rush: Shifts of Form, 1965-1968," in *Beyond Geometry: Experiments in Form, 1940s-1970s*, ed. Lynn Zevelansky (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), pp. 192-194, and the Papers of David Lamelas, archive, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

fated *Experiencias '68* exhibition a month earlier. Both works used telex machines to introduce incoming news feed—political realities mediated and transformed into information—into the space of the exhibition. A point of difference is that despite the title's mention of a "visual image," there is in fact nothing to see in *Office of Information* other than the office, the informational apparatus. *Mensaje en el Di Tella* includes a photograph of a Black Panther alongside news feed from the Paris riots and an artist's manifesto about the role that art can play in revolutionary activity. Jacoby juxtaposes information on three different "levels" from three different countries. While the openness of this content for whatever use is implicit, geographical points in a nascent global radicalism have been mapped. *Office of Information* provides no writing by the artist, no other points of reference for the incoming data other than the facts and materials of its presentation, accumulation, and recording. It is as though Lamelas did not choose Vietnam—as incendiary a subject matter as could be chosen—to infuse his work or the Biennale with politics, so much as to submit it to a media-focused analysis that would empty it of meaning. As Masotta might put it, this would "induce the spirit" of this pervasive topic and its remote referent. The distance the information travels irrevocably severs it from its source—it becomes data to be recited and collected. This corroborates the artist's insistence that his work does "not address intellectual or sociological problems."[10]

Office of Information marks a turning point in Lamelas's career, after which he would refine strategies he had first honed in Argentina for European and North American conceptual art galleries and exhibitions. Of the many artists close to Masotta in the mid-1960s, he most successfully parlayed his local recognition into an international art career.

[10] David Lamelas, "My Approach to Work in 1968," trans. Eileen Brockbank, in *LHN*, p. 247.

In the process he became integrated into a group of artists, curators, and collectors who were linked internationally through conceptual art, among them Daniel Buren, Marcel Broodthaers, Gilbert and George, Ian Wilson, Lucy Lippard, and others. Like Greco before him, he reflected on his situation as an interloper and operator in the artistic milieu of Europe. But if the conceptualist network was expanding the global reach of this artistic approach, the work itself, in contrast with the Argentine emphasis on political action in 1968, was becoming ever more hermetic and self-reflective, ever more focused on intricacies of language and the institutional context. When Lamelas made reference to political violence during this period, he consistently undermined any possibility of asserting a response through his focus on media and code.

He remained abroad after the Biennale, settling in London and taking courses at St. Martin's College of Art with John Latham, Barry Flanagan and others.[11] He immediately began exhibiting throughout Western Europe and building relationships with gallery owners and other artists. That September, on the invitation of Anny de Decker and Bernd Lohaus of Wide White Space Gallery, he presented *Análisis de los elementos por los cuales se produce la consumisión media de la información* [*Analysis of elements that produce consumption of information media*] at Prospekt '68 at the Dusseldorf Kunsthalle, a Konrad Fischer-organized showcase for new gallery-based work [Figure 135]. Three tape recorders were set up that recorded six hours of BBC radio transmission

[11] In terms of conceptualism, the United Kingdom is the opposite of the French, Italian, and Spanish milieus where Greco traveled in the early 1960s: the conceptual art devised there is known for its austere refusal of marketability. Lamelas was certainly acquainted with such artists; he exhibited in a show curated by Art & Language member Charles Harrison and included Gilbert and George in *Publication*. But he did not restrict himself from traveling to the continent and making connections there; *Publication* and several other of his works from the early 1970s are records of his quite international network of associates. London was also home to Guy Brett and Signals Gallery, arguably the most welcoming institution for Latin American artists in Europe in the late 1960s and early 1970s, which would have given Lamelas the chance to meet, among many others, Brazilian artists such as Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Clark.

from London—news, music and publicity respectively.[12] Daily newspapers were displayed that tracked the duration of the work in the exhibition. Finally, an arbitrarily selected television commercial, filmed for projection, was displayed.[13] This work repeated the three-part structure of *Office of Information* (and *Mensaje en el Di Tella*): the information and its different categories of content and mediatic substrates are offered up as research, for study by the viewer. The parsing of systems of news broadcast and media content are separated by theme and medium, encouraging reflection on the mass media's creation of categories for content broadcast through the same channels. The accumulation of newspapers to mark the time of the exhibition recalls Suárez, Favario and Carnevale's earlier installations.

Raúl Escari, who by this time had relocated to Paris, joined Lamelas in writing "Self-Awareness," published in *Art and Artists* in 1969. The text consisted of Lamelas's commentary about several of his own works—*Prolongación de una cantidad limtada de espacio*, *Modificación de dos espacios*, *Límite de una proyección*, and *Situación de tiempo*—to which Escari added responses in italics and a concluding section, "Art as Activity." A direct link to Masotta, he portrayed Lamelas as a lone author who had personally devised strategies developed in the larger Buenos Aires context. The text begins by declaring that "Fiction is one of the most used elements in creative fields... Any 'work of art' contains a mystery of elaboration/production which starts before the work itself; that is, the artist or person who carries out something in a 'specialized field'..." Lamelas is hinting that the work as a whole, as a "mystery" sealed off from the viewer, is an artifice—a significant departure from the use of fiction in *Happening para un jabalí*

[12] Maria José Herrera, "En medio de los medios," p. 111.
[13] *David Lamelas: A New Refutation of Time*, p. 53. See also Papers of David Lamelas, GRI Archives.

difunto or *Tucumán Arde*, where it is in the service of a larger end, be it consciousness of the mass media or political advocacy.[14] He writes, "I am in favor of the creation of works that can create consciousness"—a consciousness of their own inherently fictional or constructed condition. Escari adds:

> Of the three elements the aesthetic field comprises—author, spectator and work of art—the latter appears as the meeting point of the first two... The contrary appears in the case of David Lamelas: the work—as effect, product—disappears and what springs up in its place is the activity (the artifice) of its production. Thus, this labor becomes unthought of in the "aesthetic field." As the idea of the work of art disappears, that of the author and spectator disappears, too... One and the other consent to the production of the work of art in the void determined by its absence, becoming producers and product simultaneously. This labor is not more than a small part, a quotation, of a vaster discourse; that of the means of information. ...Transform: to the extent that he will mark the reading of those writings, taking them out of their center; the information then stops being an object of consumption (daily newspapers[,] magazines, news bulletins) to become a double production: 1. of that reading 2. of a work of art.[15]

In a subtle shift of emphasis, Masotta's terms have been replaced by notions of "production" and "information." The idea that the work itself has "disappeared" recalls Masotta's "dematerialization," but what is exposed in the absence of the work is no longer code but a certain "labor" that produced the work in the first place and in which the viewer is now participating. Escari's term "double production" is reminiscent of the "triple creation" of the *Happening para un jabalí difunto*, in which the false happening

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[14] Lamelas's interest in fiction, which continued into his film and video work, first appears in *False Information About Oxford* (1968), produced for the group exhibition *Garden Project* organized by Charles Harrison at Christ Church College in Oxford. The work consisted of discrete samples of incorrect information about the city ("Population: 2,000,000") that were printed on pieces of paper and scattered around trees and other outdoor objects. This transposed the fictional operation of *Happening para un jabalí difunto* onto the spatial signal of Lamelas's sculptural works. Unlike the earlier anti-happening, however, the fictional quality of the information is announced from the outset; it is identified in advance as art. See *David Lamelas: A New Refutation of Time*, p. 59.

[15] Raúl Escari and David Lamelas, "Self-Awareness," *Art and Artists* (London), no. 20 (July 1969), pp. 18-21. Reprinted in *David Lamelas: A New Refutation of Time*, pp. 115-119. *LHN* reprints an abridged version of "Art as Activity," pp. 249-250.

was disseminated in temporally disparate stages in the mass media. Lamelas, however, is extracting samples of information from "out of their center," i.e. their normal place in the mass media, and placing them into the frame or gallery context, where they are appreciated simultaneously in their original form and as works of art. Jacoby, Costa, and Escari had demanded the entry of the work into circuits beyond those of art; Lamelas retrenched media and media content alike back into an aesthetic context.

He began making 16-milimeter films in 1969, initially to continue previous investigations of gallery space such as *Conexión de tres espacios* and *Situación de tiempo*. His first, *A Study of the Relationships Between Inner and Outer Space*, is divided into three phases, maintaining a tripartite structure while switching from spatial to temporal discontinuity.[16] Phase A examines the Camden Arts Centre that sponsored the project, Phase B provides exhaustive information about "Means of Communication" in London such as transportation and postal services, and Phase C consists of street

[16] Time is another preoccupation of Lamelas's work during this period that can be traced back as early as *Conexión de tres espacios* and *Situación de tiempo*. Lamelas's first film to directly engage this theme was *Time As Activity*, produced for the *Prospekt '69* exhibition at Düsseldorf Kunsthalle, which featured three four-minute takes of different sites in the city, one of which was the Kunsthalle itself. Three stills from the film, titled *Düsseldorf*, were published in the French magazine *VH101* in 1970 as a separate project; in similar works, *Antwerp* and *Brussels* (both 1969), Lamelas hired professional photographers to take three images of sites at different times between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., and then exhibited the images of each city in a gallery in the other city. Films such as *Gente de Milano* (1970), *Cumulative Script* (1971), and *To Pour Milk Into a Glass* (1972), similarly pinpoint analogues for film's capturing of time within the space seen through the camera. *Time as Activity* and *Gente de Milano* use the ongoing movement within the city of traffic and people to index the passage of time that the camera captured and is using as one views it. *Cumulative Script* features a series of takes of a man running down a London street into a park, where he meets another man, aligning the physical movement through a city with the temporal movement of both a narrative script and film itself. *To Pour Milk Into a Glass* features repeated takes of milk being poured into a glass that is in an increasing state of disrepair; by the last take, milk is poured out onto mere shards. The work evokes both the passage of time as well as the separate "take" of roughly the same event that is used in narrative film, in which there is simultaneously repetition and subtle differences. This experimentation was not limited to films. In *Time* (1970), executed for Les Arcs in the French Alps, Lamelas gathered fifteen participants outdoors in a line, instructed each to turn, and, after a minute, tell his or her neighbor the time.

interview footage in which participants are asked about the upcoming moon landing.[17] The film begins by "analyzing" different architectural features of the Centre's gallery, such as floors, walls, and angles of the ceiling [Figure 136]. Then the focus shifts to people: workers at the museum recite their titles and job descriptions. London is introduced with a map showing different residential zones of the city. Footage is shown of railroad stations; a voiceover notes, "The underground lines are organized in such a way that the circle lines take people in. Other lines take people out of the city." After this, buses, airports, highways, and information services are presented: newspapers, magazine shops, television, postal delivery, street advertising, public telephones, and telegram centers [Figure 137]. This is followed by data about zoning, climate, winds, and pollution. In Phase C, Asa Beneviste conducts interviews, asking similar, yet subtly different, questions about the moon landing to different interviewees, for example how the respondent would feel if a "negro" or Chinese person were the first to land on the moon.[18]

Lamelas uses the phrase "outer space" to mean both the space outside the gallery and the destination to which astronauts travel. In the gallery, the camera fulfills the same signaling function that sculptural or lighting elements had previously served in Lamelas's work. As the frame expands to incorporate to the surrounding urban environment, the film relies on statistical information as much as it does documentation to seemingly cover every possible aspect. In the final segment, the interest shifts from the specific

[17] Pierre Bal-Blanc and Nicolas Trembley, *David Lamelas; Films 1969-1972/2004*, 9 films on DVD (Paris: Bureau des Vidéos, 2005).

[18] A reference here is Jean-Luc Godard's *Masculin-Feminin* of 1965, which similarly alternates staid views of a European city with sequences in which people are asked series of bizarrely aggressive survey questions (the protagonist is working for an advertising firm that specializes in focus groups). Lamelas strips this earlier filmic text of narrative so that images and audio footage of the city are mere information, akin to the droll recitation of other facts about the area, but a trace of the earlier filmic text remains in the Beneviste's confrontational mention of race.

characteristics of the gallery space and its surrounding context of the city to the subjects within that city, and how they respond to questions. The subject, as opposed to the architectural or urban feature, speaks back—he or she returns information. This work is followed up in *Antwerp-Brussels (People and Time)* (1969), a series of photographs of local artists, dealers, and collectors, among them the artist himself, Marcel Broodthaers, Anny de Decker (of Wide White Space Gallery, Lamelas's gallery in Antwerp), and dealer Kasper König, set against urban backdrops in either city [Figure 138]. Each individual is identified by text underneath the photograph, and each centered and shot at some distance, so that there is a generous view of the city around them. Like the initial series of talking heads in the gallery in *Inner and Outer Space*, these seemingly arbitrary urban subjects turn out to be the network that makes the work possible, the individuals whose labor and interests support and condition the very artistic investigation that has, in turn, framed them as objects.

In 1970, Lamelas made the film *Interview with Marguerite Duras*, in which the writer is shown at her home being interviewed by Escari, whose voice is heard off-camera [Figure 139].[19] It was exhibited with ten still photographs taken during the session—the shutter can be heard on the soundtrack—and ten panels of text, maintaining the practice of three "levels" of information that undercut one another slightly.[20] While the filmed encounter provides an illusion of access to the writer, the photographs refuse

[19] Duras, who during World War II worked for the Vichy government while also participating in the Resistance and whose husband barely survived a Nazi concentration camp, fits the model of a politically engaged cultural figure that Lamelas would focus upon repeatedly in his work of this period. That many of her works deal with traumatic gaps in subjective historical records makes her a particularly appropriate choice for an artwork in which the cultural producer's recollections are mediated by recording media. See Jane Bradley Winston, *Postcolonial Duras: Cultural Memory in Postwar France* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

[20] "'Interview' with Marguerite Duras,' in *Luxonline*, [http://www.luxonline.org.uk/artists/david_lamelas/interview_with_marguerite_duras.html].

it. They echo the inherent quality of film, which is itself composed of many such separate still images, and undermine the reliability of the documentary format. The dialogic scenario of the interview, in which the subject is probed for supposed insight into his or her work or personal life, undergoes same redundant analysis that Masotta had directed at other mass media operations.[21] It is not the content of the interview but its structure that is under consideration.

Later that year, David Lamelas produced *Publication* through Nigel Greenwood Gallery—an exhibition that consisted merely of a pamphlet with responses to a series of statements sent to thirteen artists and writers involved in conceptual art: Keith Arnatt, Robert Barry, Stanley Brouwn, Daniel Buren, Victor Burgin, Michel Claura, Gilbert & George, John Latham, Lucy R. Lippard, Martin Maloney, Barbara M. Reise, Lawrence Weiner, and Ian Wilson [Figure 140].[22] There were several preliminary versions of *Publication* that were altered in the final project, such as a round table discussion, a

[21] This tension between photograph and film would be explored in subsequent works such as *Film Script* (1972), in which a storyboard was displayed in the gallery, as though spatializing the moving film that would normally be contained to a screen and unfolded over time. This work makes for a fruitful contrast with that of Brazilian artist Hélio Oiticica, who was also in London around this time, whose environments of the early 1970s, such as the *Cosmococas* series produced in New York in 1973 with Neville D'Almeida, created similar interplays between still images (overlaid with lines of cocaine to emphasize their "frozen" quality) and projected images in a plush environment setting. This is an illuminating difference with Lamelas, who keeps the focus on the juxtaposed media; for Oiticica it is the experiential dimension for the spectator that is most important, for Lamelas the analytical. See César Oiticica Filho, *Hélio Oiticica / Neville D'Almeida*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: MALBA, 2005), and Charles LaBelle, "Hélio Oiticica," *Frieze* 64 (Jan.-Feb. 2002).

[22] Seth Sieglaub, Hanne Darboven and Marcel Broodthaers were also originally contacted, but Sieglaub and Darboven declined to participate, and Broodthaers' response arrived too late to be published. Sieglaub sent Lamelas a letter dated August 21, 1970 in which he claimed to be "phasing out my involvement in the Art world" and that in any case "it has become a 'matter of policy' for me never to write anything." In an interesting comment given the nature of the *Publication* project, which precisely made Lamelas not just artist but curator and promoter simultaneously, Sieglaub lamented that some had confused him with a practicing artist himself. "One problem I had in the Art world was that people confused and compared my role of an organizer with that of an artist. Which has never been my intention." He offers to get Lamelas in touch with Lucy Lippard and Ian Wilson, who both participated in *Publication*. David Lamelas Papers, Getty Research Institute Special Collections, Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

recording of which would be typed in the catalogue.[23] Lamelas's notes for the work include a drawing of a table with positions marked for the different participants, next to which he wrote, "A situation produced for me about a certain specific subject... arts matter."[24] This project recalls Paksa's unrealized *Mesa redonda* of 1967, in which responses were similarly to be taped. The final version kept a trace of this earlier idea by placing six copies of the publication on a round table, as though at the places of different participants.[25] The final version of the text of *Publication* reads:

> 1. Use of oral and written language as an Art Form.
>
> 2. Language can be considered as an Art Form.
>
> 3. Language cannot be considered as an Art Form.
>
> These statements were given to the previous list of artists and critics for consideration.
> Their responses are published in this book, which constitutes the form of the work, presented first in Nigel Greenwood Inc Ltd London, between the 23rd of November and the 6th of December 1970.
> I do not take part in the responses to the statements since, as a receiver of all the contributions, my reference is prejudiced.
> My choice of the three statements does not imply agreement or disagreement with any of the three statements.[26]

Lamelas's statements, and indeed the project as a whole, closely resemble Lawrence Weiner's text included in the *January 5-31, 1969* exhibition curated by Seth Siegelaub, (which did not exist beyond its catalogue):[27]

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[23] "Publication (1970)," Box 2, Folder 1, David Lamelas Papers, Getty Research Institute Special Collections, Getty Museum, Los Angeles.
[24] Box 2, Folder 5, David Lamelas Papers, Getty Research Institute Special Collections, Getty Museum, Los Angeles. The original plan was to gather the participants in a single space to discuss the three "statements": "ROUND TABLE. Six persons to take part. Three statements to be considered: 1. Use of oral and written language as an Art Form. 2. Language can be considered as an Art Form 3. Language cannot be considered as an Art Form. A tape is to be taken of the complete discussion. From this tape, a text will be made. The complete text will be available in a catalogue form.
[25] *A New Refutation of Time*, p. 74.
[26] David Lamelas, *Publication* (London: Nigel Greenwood Gallery, 1970), p. 1.

1. The artist may construct the piece.
2. The piece may be fabricated.
3. The piece need not be built.

Each being equal and consistent with the intent of artist, the decision as to condition rests with the receiver upon the occasion of receivership.[28]

This text is reproduced in *Publication* as Weiner's contribution, and Lamelas's statements repeat the author's professed dissociation with their effects. Weiner leaves the ambiguously phrased "decision as to condition" up to the viewer, while Lamelas elects not to "take part in the responses" or to "imply agreement or disagreement" with the statements. In a 1972 interview, Lamelas described *Publication* as an example of "syllogistic form"—art as a mode of deductive reasoning. "Too much emphasis," he argues, "has been placed upon the statements in the book because of the dialectic implied by 'language as an art form.' The question of language is explicit because it is also the subject of the book, but I was interested in the context not the subject."[29] As in *Interview with Marguerite Duras*, a dialogical convention in the art world—the exchange of ideas between like-minded artists—has been extracted from its context and redundantly signaled. The medium of this signal is the exhibition catalogue. One has been crossed with the other, and this, in turn, is presented as art.

In the process of designing *Publication*, Lamelas shifted from face-to-face group dialogue and mediation through recording to propositions and responses sent through the

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[27] The exhibition featured Weiner, Robert Barry, Douglas Huebler, and Joseph Kosuth at a rented office space in New York in January 1969, where catalogues were placed on a kind of waiting room at the entrance. Jack Burnham, "Real Time Systems," *Great Western Salt Works: essays on the meaning of post-formalist art* (New York: G. Braziller, 1974), originally published as Jack Burnham, "Real Time Systems," *Artforum* 8, No. 1, 49-55.

[28] Lawrence Weiner, "Statements," in *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, eds. Charles Harrison and James Wood (Boston: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002), p. 894.

[29] "Extracts from an interview with David Lamelas," December 1972, typed text in the Papers of David Lamelas, Special Collections, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

mail to break up the interaction and making it collective only in the final assembly. Lamelas takes care to note his objectivity and lack of opinion or "prejudice," even though it is his statements that initiate the responses. The resulting responses by artists took the form of texts of varying lengths, some more serious essays on the question of the legitimacy of language in art, others more poetic or humorous responses. Lippard's text was presented as the "property" of Douglas Heubler, who then "loaned" it to the work [Figure 141]. Martin Maloney's page consisted of a poem asserting that "the word rejects objects," some of which resemble structuralist or cybernetic diagrams [Figure 142]. After the responses there is a final section titled "Oral Language" [Figure 143]. The pages that follow are blank, attesting to the unwriteable character of speech and also to the idea that the reader might add his or her own response.

Marcel Broodthaers, whose contribution was too late for Lamelas to include it, submitted a drawing of a fish with a quotation mark for an eye [Figure 144]. Beneath the fish are answers to each of the three statements: "1. Oral Fish Eye," "2. No," and "3. Yes." As a caption to the drawing, "Oral Fish Eye" underscores the multiple senses implied in "Use of oral and written language as an Art Form," which appears to give both spoken and written language (seen by the eye) equal weight. "Fish," however, suggests a remainder, something visible that is outside language, that might preclude the domination of language by art. In the three statements, however, Lamelas does not endorse such a hierarchy. As in *Interview with Marguerite Duras*, *Publication* extracts a dialogic process inherent in spheres of cultural production and places it under the spotlight of the signal and its implied analytic operation. The statements are not arguments for or against language in art or conceptual art; the first statement is not even a full sentence. Upon

close inspection the seeming conversation about these topics breaks down into the individual responses that never cohere into a whole. They are grouped together because the exhibition and its attendant publication have done so. As in Siegelaub's *January 5-31, 1969*, the catalogue ceases to function as a supplement to an exhibition, becoming instead a self-reflective document of the show's conditions of possibility.

Publication is, however, incontrovertible proof of Lamelas's status as an artist in a conceptual art public: a group of practitioners in dialogue about the legitimacy of language as an art form. Statements 1 and 2 speak to a possible aesthetic platform—that language can in fact be art—while statement 3 states the implicit dominant position, which would define art on more traditional grounds. Crucially, Lamelas himself does not take a position, precisely because he is holding the entire project up to scrutiny. If, however, the counterpublic is redundantly signaled, no collective position can be advanced—other than publicity about the semblance of a position. *Publication* is a critique of an international conceptual art network in the moment of its formation, as though Lamelas's entry into this milieu could be simultaneously experienced and analyzed. It exposes the implicit connection between counterpublic activity within art and the imperative of publicity, a point that Alexander Alberro has made in relation to the North American variants of conceptual art promulgated by Seth Sieglaub and others.[30] As discussed below, this was the precise ambition of CAYC under Glusberg, who used a consistently austere graphic design to promote its artists as a group internationally. *Publication*'s format also matches that of larger group exhibitions of this moment such as *Information* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, in which artists were similarly allotted a page or two pages in a catalogue to make individual statements that presumably

[30] See Alexander Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003).

contributed to a larger whole.[31] Such shows, Lamelas suggests, are always already discontinuous, even as they construct a seeming unity.

Lamelas continued to include European and American colleagues in his work through the 1970s, as in *London Friends* (1973), in which the artist photographed himself and others in his London milieu in the manner of spreads for fashion or celebrity magazines [Figure 145]. The insertion of fiction into this constellation of art production and reflection about it altered Lamelas's method, introducing an element of fantasy into otherwise sober processes of analysis.[32] Fiction opens the tautological trap of signaling and disabling, allowing for new possibilities of message and structure to become legible even as self-reflexivity about code is maintained.

Lamelas's embrace of fiction provided a way of addressing political realities that went beyond their mere neutralization into information. *The Violent Tapes of 1975*, shown at the ICA in London in 1975, is another series of photographs that illustrate a science fiction narrative set in the year 2300. After a nuclear war destroyed Sydney, the story goes, a new city was built nearby from which all violence was banned, the only remaining evidence of it being videotapes from 1975. The main characters discover and abscond with the tapes, reintroducing violence into the city when the authorities chase

[31] Curator Kynaston McShine refers in his catalogue essay to dictatorships in Latin America and included a number of Brazilian neo-concretists and conceptualists as well as a one-time collaboration from several Argentine artists who called themselves Grupo Frontera that drew from prior media art, in particular Minujín's work: a taping area in which visitors were filmed answering a survey of questions, and a set of televisions farther on in the exhibition at which they were shown their responses. See Ken Allan, "Understanding *Information*," in *Conceptual Art: Theory, Myth, and Practice*, ed. Michael Corris (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 144-168, and Kynaston McShine, *Information*, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1970).

[32] This practice continues in *Rock Star (Character Appropriation)* (1974) and *Los Angeles Friends (Larger Than Life)* (1976). In the former, a series of photographs of Lamelas with long hair and a guitar preening in generic rock n' roll poses, likens art-world success to that of becoming a famous rock star. *Los Angeles Friends* comprises a series of drawings of Lamelas's circle in Los Angeles, the appearances of which oscillate between fetishistic fan drawings and criminal sketches.

down and kill the heroine.[33] The stills replicate generic sequences from action films, such as chases, fights, and romantic interludes [Figure 146]. Katzenstein and others have pointed to the stills' "parody," their emptying out of specific filmic meaning from the individual images, and certainly this is consistent with the artist's explorations of types, gestures, and styles in his work.[34] But another reading might be chanced, in light of the artist's ongoing consciousness of his separation and distance from his starting point of Argentina, which was by then in increasingly dire straits. The future world cleansed of violence was the Western Europe and North America that Lamelas was negotiating; the spectral or repressed violence, only able to be experienced through the reifying manipulation of information media, was that of Latin America. As impossibly distant as popular film is from actual violence, there is a strange dependence upon its veracity, a trace of the real impossible to view directly or completely eradicate, in both Hollywood blockbusters and Lamelas's parodic variants.

In 1976 Lamelas moved to Los Angeles, with the aim of integrating himself into the film industry. After finding access to video and editing equipment at the Long Beach Museum of Art through its director David Ross, however, he produced a series of videos, beginning with *The Hand* (1976) [Figure 147]. Most of these works mimic formats of television news such as the anchorperson delivering supposedly objective reportage behind a desk, or the interviewer who travels to a given subject's home and asks

[33] The original handwritten narrative is in the David Lamelas Papers, Getty Research Institute. Lamelas's explorations of fiction also included his films *The Desert People* (1974), which comprised an entire narrative and *cinema vérité* structure in which subjects claim to have witnessed an authentic Indian rite that is never represented. Like many of Lamelas's filmic works, *The Desert People* generated other works consisting of stills from the film, titled *A Fiction* and *Cast*, both 1975.
[34] "A Situational Aesthetics," pp. 81-82.

questions, presumably attaining more personal content.[35] "I wanted to make films," Lamelas recalls, "but what happened is that American television made a deep impression on me. [...]I wanted my videos to be broadcast on television."[36] Lamelas's aim to broadcast empty or fictional versions of genres of television on actual television—to infect the medium with proof of that medium's operational code—places this work in line with the counterpublic film and television projects of a number of other artists and filmmakers working at this time, including Alexander Kluge.[37]

The main character of *The Hand* is Kevin Gold, a long-haired rock star who is interviewed by reporter Barbara Lopez on a show called "Newsmakers" about his recent arrest, in which it was alleged that he may have helped leftist militants transport guns into the country.[38] The show begins with Gold singing "Song for Ray," a generic 1970s folk-rock song with vague and personal lyrics, and then progresses to an interview. Lopez relentlessly attempts to connect the singer's lyrics to a revolutionary agenda, providing example after example. The singer, presumably out of fear that he will provide the authorities more proof with which to prosecute him, denies over and over again that his

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[35] Later videos include *The Dictator* (1976), *Scheherazade* (1980), *The Dictator Returns* (1984), and *Manila Run* (1987), all of which are collaborations with the artist Hildegarde Duane. These videos deal with the mass media's presentation of dictators from third-world regions or countries (Latin America, the Middle East, and the Philippines—*Manila Run* being specifically about Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos), particularly in the interview format in which a male personality (always played by Lamelas) is asked questions that delve into both his public and private life by a female interviewer (often portrayed by Duane). These works support my argument that Lamelas addressed the various political crises of the time by attending to their emptying-out and representation within mass media forms such as television.

[36] From a 2005 interview with Inés Katzenstein. Inés Katzenstein, "David Lamelas: A Situational Aesthetics," in *David Lamelas=stranger*..., p. 82.

[37] The creation of critical alternative television is one of the ambitions of counterpublic spheres discussed in Kluge and Oskar Negt's book *Public Sphere and Experience*, and in recent years this impulse has been discussed in relation to the video and film work of other artists in the 1970s, among them Vito Acconci and Yvonne Rainer. See Philip Glahn, "Brechtian *Journeys*: Yvonne Rainer's Film as Counterpublic Art," *Art Journal*, vol. 68, no. 2 (Summer 2009), and David Joselit, "The Video Public Sphere," *Art Journal*, vol. 59, no. 2 (Summer 2000), pp. 47-53.

[38] The singer's curly hair, mixture of personal and political lyrics, and period of seclusion hint at the contemporaneous life of Bob Dylan, but as with Lamelas's other "character appropriations," no real person is specified.

work contains any political content or that he himself has any affiliation. Ghila Benesti, a Marxist activist, is brought onto the show; she joins the host in trying to get Gold to admit his political leanings. He continues his denials as, off set, a gloved hand is shown loading and finally firing a gun. The violence is not shown; there is only a text indicating that he has been killed.

A larger allegory for Lamelas's career up to that point may be drawn from *The Hand*. Having departed an art milieu that was in mid-radicalization in 1968, Lamelas's first work abroad was a demonstration of how information about the Vietnam war could be made apolitical. Through his peripatetic movements in Europe and the United States, Lamelas stayed close to conceptualist circles focused on questions of language and publicity, avoiding the label of a "Latin American" or "Argentine" artist whose work focused on events in his home country. Yet for all of the distancing mechanisms that his work employs to interrogate reality's mediation through language, media, and art, he returned again and again to violence and repression as messages or themes, however emptied of specificity or sincerity. Like *Office of Information*, his videos from the late 1970s have it both ways, making reference to horrific events in his home country and elsewhere that are veiled in parody. In Lamelas's work, it is only in parallax—via an refusal of national identity so that home is forever in flux, and a disavowal of message in which the code remains central—that the real of political violence can be addressed.

Another Art of Systems

Born in 1932 in Buenos Aires, Jorge Glusberg emerged as a critic in the shadow of Jorge Romero Brest, writing for the journal *Ver y Estimar* in the 1950s.[39] He also received a degree in civil engineering at the University of Buenos Aires in this period; his scientific background would inform CAYC's theoretical orientation and programs. He began writing in the Artes y Espectáculos section of the magazine *Análisis* in 1963. In 1966 he studied informally with the semiotician Luis Prieto, who had been fired by the University of Córdoba and moved to Buenos Aires.[40] In 1967, he organized his first exhibition, *Estructuras Primeras II*, which, as discussed in Chapter 3, included works by Paksa, Lamelas, Favario, Carnevale, and others that, in Glusberg's words, were "communicable only to those receivers who know the rules of the game."[41] This Latin American sequel to *Primary Structures* was replete with ITDT-like terms such as "communication," "structural psychology," and "participation": "[the works] are not placed before the public, but around it; the public is made to participate."[42]

The CAYC was originally called the Centro de Estudios de Arte y Comunicación, emphasizing its pedagogical intent. Its inaugural exhibition was *Arte y cibernética* in August 1969, which was first shown at Galería Bonino but later traveled in a series of permutations; catalogues featured images of computer circuitry on the front and back

[39] A number of important Latin American critics were associated with the journal at this time, including Samuel Paz and Marta Traba (a later opponent of the ITDT). See Andrea Giunta and Laura Malosetti Costa, eds., *Arte de posguerra: Jorge Romero Brest y la revista* Ver y Estimar (Buenos Aires: Paídos, 2005).
[40] Glusberg, *Conversaciones*, p. 29. See Luis J. Prieto, *Pertinence et pratique* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1975).
[41] Jorge Glusberg, *Estructuras Primeras II*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Sociedad Hebraica, 1967). Renzi, in his interview with Fantoni, mentions Glusberg as one of the few *porteño* critics interested in the Grupo de Rosario, although he adds that he saw this interest as self-serving. Renzi would exhibit at CAYC in 1985, in a show that defined him as a painter at the expense of conceptual work in the 1960s such as *Tucumán Arde*. See Jorge Glusberg, *Juan Pablo Renzi: obras de 1965 a 1985*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: CAYC, 1985).
[42] Ibid.

cover [Figure 148].[43] For Glusberg, what united the artists he assembled for the show, which included Luis Benedit, Antonio Berni, Ernesto Deira, Osvaldo Romberg, and others, was "computation," primarily demonstrated through computer graphics [Figure 149]. Cybernetics was one of several labels that Glusberg would use to link his artists as a group and promote them internationally.[44] Masotta had derived terms from Bateson and the linguistic side of cybernetic theory, but not to legitimize the new art so much as to explicate its operations. The CAYC utilized much of the same language to describe what its artists were doing, but in a consistent effort to link them to larger international trends incorporating high technology such as computers, video, and scientific gadgets. This was apparent when, in 1970, of the Center's name was changed to the more succinct Centro de Arte y Comunicación and the moniker "arte de sistemas" [systems art] was introduced to categorize and promote the Center's artists. The term repeatedly featured in CAYC group exhibitions of the early 1970s, among them *De la figuración al arte de sistemas* in

[43] The *Arte y cibernética* show traveled extensively throughout Argentina and Uruguay, undergoing different permutations—one version of the show featured Japanese computer artists who were apparently the inspiration for the project. See *Arte y cibernética*, exh. cat. (Montevideo: Comisión Nacional de Artes Plásticas, 1970), and Jorge Glusberg, *Arte y cibernética*, exh. cat. Galería Bonino (Buenos Aires: CEAC, 1969) and *Arte y cibernética*, exh. cat. Museo Municipal de Bellas Artes Juan B. Castagnino (Buenos Aires: CAYC, 1970). The latter (now, unlike the 1969 version, titling Glusberg "Director de CAYC," features a typically self-reflective gesture. It concludes with two short sections titled "Why should we show this exhibition of Japanese drawings" and "Because we included Benedit, Berni, Deira, Mac Entyre, Romberg and Vidal in this show," respectively, noting that CEAC had met the Japanese artists in February 1969 and that the Argentines had utilized their computers to produce their own drawings (for the Montevideo show they utilized the IBM-funded Escuela ORT in Buenos Aires): "...[A]nd the principles of the C.E.A.C. are not only the investigation and experimental work but also teaching—meaning that our function is not limited to exhibiting foreign advances but learning from their experiences."

[44] The theme of reconciling art and new technology was a trend at this moment, in New York with groups such as E.A.T. (Experiments in Art and Technology, founded by Robert Rauschenberg and Billy Kluver), which helped fund projects by Marta Minujín, in London with the 1969 *Cybernetic Serendipity* exhibition at the ICA, curated by Jasia Reichardt (who published an essay in the *Arte y cibernética* catalogue and lectured with Glusberg at CAYC), and in the widespread reception of Jack Burnham and other cybernetic theorists by artists such as Dan Graham and Hans Haacke. Reichardt also curated a major exhibition of 45 Latin American artists at the ICA in 1974. The historicization of the popularity of cybernetics in art circa 1968-1972 has begun in the field in recent years. See *Art Journal* no. 67, vol. 3 (Fall 2008), in particular María Fernández, "Detached from HiStory: Jasia Reichardt and *Cybernetic Serendipity*," pp. 6-23 and William Kaizen, "Steps to an Ecology of Communication: *Radical Software*, Dan Graham, and the Legacy of Gregory Bateson," pp. 86-107, and Luke Skrebowski, "All Systems Go: Recovering Hans Haacke's Systems Art," *Grey Room* 30 (Winter 2008), pp. 54-83.

1970, *Arte de sistemas* in 1971, *Arte de sistemas II* in 1972 (which consisted of three separate shows, *Arte de sistemas internacional*, *Arte de sistemas Argentina*, and *Arte e ideología. CAYC al Aire Libre*), *Arte de sistemas en Latinoamerica* in 1974, and others.[45]

"Systems art" refers to the cybernetically inflected work of Hans Haacke and others that dated back to the mid-1960s. It became one of the Center's most frequently employed concepts, as though it was the key institution at which systems art was practiced. "Art systems," Glusberg writes in the materials related to *Arte de sistemas* exhibition,

> refers [sic] to processes rather than to the finished products of "good art"... By taking advantage of the scientific method, and its possibilities of abstraction and modelling [sic]; one may delve more deeply into these creative experiences, studying their results as variables within society as operations and not as simple, explicit elements.[46]

"Arte de sistemas" is general enough to summarize the Center's diverse output. It also represents a link to Masotta's thought, and the art it helped generate. Still based in Buenos Aires until 1974, when he left for Europe, Masotta was working primarily as a Lacanian theorist; he never appeared at CAYC.[47] Nonetheless Glusberg characterized the

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[45] See Jorge Glusberg, *Art Systems in Latin America*, exh. cat. Institute of Contemporary Arts, London and Espace Pierre Cardin, Paris (Buenos Aires: CAYC, 1975), *Arte de sistemas*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: CAYC, 1970), "Arte de sistemas en el III Bienal Coltejer. Medellín, Colombia," *GT*-116 and 116-A, April 19, 1972 and May 10, 1972, *Arte de sistemas: X (Víctor Grippo), Y (Alberto Pellegrino), Z (Alfredo Portillos)*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: CAYC, 1971), *Arte e ideología: CAYC al aire libre*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: CAYC, 1972), *Center of Art and Communication in Camden Arts Centre: From figuration art to systems art in Argentina*, exh. cat. (London: Camden Arts Centre, 1971), *De la figuración al arte de sistemas*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: CAYC, 1970), and *El grupo de los trece en arte de sistemas*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: CAYC, 1972),

[46] Jorge Glusberg, *Arte de sistemas*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Centro de Arte y Comunicación, 1971).

[47] In April 1969, Masotta organized the first conference on Lacan in Buenos Aires. In the early 1970s he published translations and gave numerous lectures on Freud and Lacan, and worked to organize an Escuela Freudiana de Buenos Aires. The same year that the school was founded, however, Masotta went into exile and eventually settled in Barcelona in 1976, where he lived the last three years of his life and oversaw the foundation of the Biblioteca Galega de Estudios Freudianos. See Estela Paskvan, "Notas biográficas de Oscar Masotta," in 65-74. Germán García, *Oscar Masotta: Los ecos de un nombre*, pp. Oscar Masotta, *El*

Center's artists as a group working collaboratively on artistic methods for decoding systems. The relative absence of Masotta associates from the art world at this moment, coupled with Glusberg's omission of the group in his historical writings, lent the impression that CAYC hosted the first such systems-oriented artists in Argentina.[48]

Throughout the 1970s, CAYC demonstrated a keen awareness of its international reception.[49] Foreign artists and theorists, among them artists Mel Bochner, Christo, Antonio Dias, Barry Flanagan, Charles Harrison, Sol LeWitt, and Lawrence Weiner, critic-curators Guy Brett, Pierre Restany and Willoughby Sharp, theater director Jerzy Grotowski, and theorists Umberto Eco and Abraham Moles, were given solo exhibitions and/or lectures.[50] In addition, Lucy Lippard organized the 1970 exhibition *2.972.453*, a version of a series of conceptual art shows titled the population of the city in which each appeared.[51] This show featured index cards for each artist, a template format that was

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modelo pulsional (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Altazor, 1980) and *Temas de Jacques Lacan* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Nueva Visión, 1971).

[48] See Jorge Glusberg, *Arte en la Argentina: dEl "pop-art" a la nueva imagen* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de Arte Gaglianone, 1985). Glusberg's account of the 1960s in his summary of Argentine postwar art features a number of the important players, including Alberto Greco, Marta Minujín, David Lamelas, and Margarita Paksa, although they are strangely placed after CAYC artists such as Grippo and Benedit. It is also interesting that Horacio Zabala is similarly left out, perhaps because of his departure from the Center and Argentina in 1975.

[49] One exception to this was in 1971, when Glusberg was a juror at the São Paulo Biennial and did not join the boycott instituted by a number of artists including Gordon Matta-Clark, who wrote a letter in protest. See Nicolás Guagnini, "No, no y no: cuando los artistas se niegan a los curadores," *Ramona* 15, August 2001, pp. 10-12.

[50] See "Charles Harrison en Buenos Aires," *GT*-44, April 4, 1971, *Christo, Barry Flanagan: en el CAYC*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: CAYC, 1972), *Lawrence Weiner: 10 diez obras*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: CAYC, 1971), *Mel Bochner: Centro de Arte y Comunicación*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: CAYC, 1972), "Sol LeWitt," *GT*-146, August 15, 1972, "Toward a Sociology of the Objects: Seminary by Abraham Moles," *GT*-144-A, August 31, 1972 (Moles lectured August 29 and September 1), Antonio Dias, *Society: The Illustration of Art*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: CAYC, 1973), and Jorge Glusberg, *Art in Argentina* (Milan: Giancarlo Politi Editore, 1986), p. 20. Guy Brett spoke on August 27 and September 3, 1973. Umberto Eco spoke on August 13 and 14, 1970, and was introduced by Eliseo Verón, a former associate of Masotta's; his lectures were titled "Articulation of visual codes" and "Who must be the protagonist in artistic practice." See "Humberto Eco en el CAYC," undated announcement, CAYC archives, MoMA Library, New York. Grotowski's participation is detailed below.

[51] See Jorge Glusberg and Lucy Lippard, *2.972.453*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Centro de Arte y Comunicación, 1970), and "Arte conceptual," *GT-20* (Buenos Aires: CAYC, 1970). It is possible that this show represents the first appearance of the term "conceptual art"—listed on the *gacetilla* as the title of the

repeated in the *Arte de sistemas* shows [Figure 150]. Likewise, from 1969 foward the Center produced scores of near-identical yellow news announcements or *gacetillas*, emblazoned with the CAYC logo, were mailed to international art centers [Figure 151]. These reported on the majority of exhibitions, lectures, symposia, publications, and events organized or participated in by the Center, often retrospectively.[52]

The emergence of CAYC took place against the backdrop of increasing political and cultural repression. 1969 marks the year of the "Cordobazo," an uprising in Córdoba that left relations between right and the left increasingly violent, as Onganía lost his grip on power and a succession of presidents and unstable regimes followed.[53] The return and reelection of Juan Domingo Perón provided a moment of optimism, as it was widely hoped that he could reunite the country. His arrival at Ezeiza airport was marred by soldiers firing into the crowds, however, and Perón did not prove a defender of leftist causes. Violent exchanges between left and right militant organizations continued, and Perón died only a year later, leaving his wife, Maria Estela Martinez de Perón, known as "Isabelita," in power. In an attempt to stabilize the country, she continued the

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show—in the Argentine context. Lippard, who had traveled in Latin America, previously visited Argentina, and met and continued correspondence with members of the Grupo de Rosario, allotted identical rectangular cards to each artist for representation in the catalogue. Her global perspective on conceptual art's development was likely an influence on Kynaston McShine in his international inclusiveness in the *Information* show that year.

[52] The retrospective *gacetillas* tend to be those produced in English, which were likely intended to keep institutions such as MoMA in New York abreast of CAYC's activity. Archives of these many bulletins are available at the library of the Museum of Modern Art and the Benson Library at the University of Texas, Austin. The bulletins attest that the Center hosted all manner of intellectual activity, from poetry readings to conferences on psychoanalysis.

[53] For general information on this period see Paul H. Lewis, *Guerrillas and Generals: The "Dirty War" in Argentina* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002), Mark J. Osiel, *Mass Atrocity, Ordinary Evil, and Hannah Arendt: Criminal Consciousness in Argentina's Dirty War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), David Rock, *Argentina 1515-1987: From Spanish Colonization to Alfonsín* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 355-403, Luis Alberto Romero, *A History of Argentina in the Twentieth Century*, trans. James P. Brennan (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania University Press, 1994, pp. 219-254, and Diana Taylor, *Disappearing Acts: Spectacles of Gender and Nationalism in Argentinas Dirty War* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997).

empowerment of the Alianza Anticomunista Argentina [Argentine Anticommunist Alliance], or "Triple A," an ultra-right-wing death squad initiated under her husband by José López "El Brujo" Rega, minister of social welfare. The Triple A supervised torture and disappearances after a group of military officers led by General Jorge Rafael Videla carried out the coup of March 1976, but their operations had begun prior to that point. The generals referred to their lockdown of the country as the "Proceso de Reorganización Nacional" [The Process of National Reorganization], and it constituted an overturning of the economic and political order.[54] An estimated 30,000 people were killed, and the practice of disappearances decimated the ranks of the left, with many intellectuals assassinated or forced into exile. The Process ended the developmentalist dream of a democratic country of international economic and cultural stature as well as the leftist aim of socialist revolution in Argentina.

In a 1992 interview with newspaper columnist Horacio de Dios, Jorge Glusberg is asked, "When did you decide to create a center to replace the Di Tella?" Glusberg responds, "I didn't want to replace anything!

> Di Tella disappeared when it had come to impose a spirit of experimentation, but it had a millonaire's support as opposed to our possibilities at CAYC. There was also a questioning by artists for ideological reasons... not only of the Di Tella, but also all official institutions tainted by uniforms. Thus we began to think of a solution. The necessity existed to create an alternative private space, because foreign intellectuals, artists and architects did not want to speak in spaces presided over by officers or their henchmen.[55]

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[54] Looking at various Latin American dictatorships under the influence of American Cold War interests, Naomi Klein has convincingly linked the abusive methods of dictatorships with a larger principle of "shock" that she argues is ultimately for economic gain. By this logic, the process of torture by which the subject is gradually stripped of his or her sense of self is an analogue of the economic shock engineered by the mass privatization and profiteering that the University of Chicago economist Milton Friedman had argued would return a given country to a primordial, purified economic condition. See Naomi Klein, *Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007), pp. 1-128.

[55] Jorge Glusberg, *Conversaciones sobre las artes visuales: Respuestas a Horacio de Dios* (Buenos Aires: Emecé Editores, 1992), p. 45. My translation.

The "spirit of experimentation" that led to the ITDT's "disappearance" appears to be that of Masotta and his followers, although they are not mentioned by name. Second, while CAYC was not funded by a major industrial company, Glusberg was a wealthy and strong enough entrepeneur to support a dense program of exhibitions and lectures, relying on personal international contacts to place his artists in biennials and to entice intellectuals to come to Buenos Aires. He is ambivalent about leftist "ideology," the cause of confrontations between artists and the institution, and sees his "alternative private space" as the "solution" to the escape from the institution sought by the vanguard as well as the problem of state interference. For Glusberg it is better to operate quietly than be forcibly silenced.

The "Grupo de los Trece," a group of thirteen artists who represented CAYC internationally and at major exhibitions in Buenos Aires, was formed following a series of workshops at the Center by Jerzy Grotowski, the Polish playwright, beginning on September 12, 1971.[56] The workshops first included a large group of invitees that was later winnowed down to twenty-one people and finally thirteen: Jacques Bedel, Luis Benedit, Gregorio Dujovny, Glusberg, Jorge González Mir, Víctor Grippo, Carlos Guinzburg, Vicente Marotta, Luis Pazos, Alfredo Portillos, Juan Carlos Romero, Julio Teich, and Horacio Zabala. Of these, all were artists except for Glusberg, although he did occasionally co-author collaborative works. The group was organized around a model of "research" that Grotowski had previously defined in his book *Towards a Poor Theater*, which had also been an inspiration for *Arte Povera* in Italy:

[56] Ibid, p. 59. The number thirteen was seen as an auspicious number, as it recalled the thirteen chairs in the theater Grotowski had founded in Opole, Poland at the beginning of the 1960s. In the 1970s Grotowski traveled extensively worldwide, including trips to Mexico and Haiti.

> We do not work in the same way as the artist or the scientist, but rather as the shoemaker looking for the right spot on the shoe in which to hammer the nail.
> The other sense of the word research might seem a little irrational as it involves the idea of a penetration into human nature itself. In our age when all languages are confused as in the Tower of Babel, when all aesthetical genres intermingle, death threatens the theatre as film and television encroach upon its domain.[57]

Although Grotowski wrote this in an attempt to isolate the essential features of theater, his attitude toward group work and research is clear: research seeks out clear solutions through group work in order to undo the effects of a Babel-like condition of fraught or impossible communication.

The Grupo de los Trece met for the next several years in a weekly workshop, frequently exhibiting as a group and home and overseas (though works were generally individually authored).[58] They exhibited in so many international contexts that a *gacetilla* announcing their one-year anniversary in 1972 was titled "The Group of Thirteen exhibits at home and opens on December 15th," as though it was a rare chance to see such a celebrated group and, as Glusberg put it, "drink a glass of Argentine wine" [Figure 152].[59] This announcement is written in English and dated December 27, 1972, nearly two weeks after the opening of the anniversary exhibition that lasted until March 25 (an inconvenient date for an exhibition in Buenos Aires, which typically empties of the upper classes during the late summer months). It exemplifies Glusberg's effort to demonstrate

[57] Jerzy Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre*, trans. Eugenio Barba (London: Methuen, 1968), p. 27.
[58] See "Arte en cambio (Grupo de los Trece)," *GT*-233 and -239, May 18 and June 11, 1973, *Hacia un perfil del arte latinoamericano: muestra del Grupo de los Trece e invitados especiales*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires, CAYC, 1972), *The Group of the Thirteen at the XIV Bienal de São Paulo*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires, CAYC, 1977), "The Group of Thirteen in Art Systems," *GT*-214-A and -214-A-1, April 9, 1973.
[59] Jorge Glusberg, "The Group of Thirteen exhibits at home and opens on December 15," *GT*-195-A, December 27, 1972. The *gacetillas* numbered "-A" typically correspond to English translations of Spanish versions, and thus it is likely that there existed a corresponding Spanish *GT*-195 that is not in MoMA's collection.

to institutions outside of Argentina that CAYC was a congenial and thriving center of activity.

In the middle of 1972, the British psychoanalytic theorist David Cooper was brought to the Center to work with the Grupo de los Trece [Figure 153]. He was a close associate of Michel Foucault's who shared an interest in institutional power and discourse throughout history.[60]

> The Group of the Thirteen worked during eight months with David Cooper who endeavored to realize an exhaustive analysis of the group's internal problematic. A metagroup was formed and under Cooper's coordination not only investigated the anxieties of each one of its members and interpersonal motivations, but also the connections between art and the capitalistic system, between cultural revolution and dominant political ideologies, between receivers of art works and a model for a new society.[61]

An advocate of what he called "anti-psychiatry," Cooper, in Glusberg's words, "helped us coordinate the Group weekly in operative form, so that, individually, we continued working in independent form with our own languages and at the same time developed a group activity."[62]

The Grupo de los Trece represents one of the few avant-gardes in history for whom collaboration was identical with group therapy. In a manner analogous to Lamelas's projects about dialogue and promotion in international networks of conceptual art, collective activity generates and publicizes works of art, but must be simultaneously scrutinized. *Tucumán Arde* used the analysis of systems as a destructive or catalytic tool

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[60] The emphasis on containment in so many of the CAYC artists' works anticipates the discursive history of the prison system that Foucault would craft in 1975. See Michel Foucault, *Surveiller et punir: naissance de la prison* (Paris: Minuit, 1975).
[61] "David Cooper with the Group of Thirteen," *GT*-213-A, April 9, 1973.
[62] *Conversaciones sobre las artes visuales*, pp. 60-61, my translation. Michel Foucault's approach to the history of madness has also been linked to the anti-psychiatry movement. See David Graham Cooper, *Psychiatry and Anti-Psychiatry* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1967).

against an object of political power. The sociological report given out at the exit did not analyze the effects of the project upon its viewers but reaffirmed a situation of impoverishment and governmental abuse elsewhere. In *Tucumán Arde*, collaboration simply operated. It was not reframed to become an object of interest in its own right, at least until retrospective considerations. In the 1970s, the re-institutionalization of the counterpublic took place structurally on the level of the doubled frame or the redundant signal. If a counterpublic is formed, this very fact must be analyzed; it becomes its own source of interest. The counterpublic is back within the boundaries of *experiencia* in the sense of the experiment, that delimited art event that is sealed off from larger effects, and in this way Glusberg's project is a more formally organized inheritor of Romero Brest's *Experiencias* shows at the ITDT. The counterpublic short-circuits itself, and at CAYC this was seen as a sign of sophistication: to refuse the direct message and instead turn back upon oneself.

CAYC's exhibition galleries provided a futuristic counterpart to the scientific tone of the institution's art and programs. Designed by Justo Solsona as a three-level structure with prominent dark metal features and technological gadgets in plain view, the Center was both literally and metaphorically "underground" [Figure 154]. The building, on Calle Viamonte in downtown Buenos Aires, had originally contained a bookstore. Glusberg had preferred Clorindo Testa, who had been recently acclaimed for his Banco Londres building in Microcentro, and CAYC features traces of Testa's signature metal enclosures and armatures.[63] Photographs present the artists as though they are researchers staffing a laboratory [Figure 155]. In the context of the increasingly violent and repressive 1970s in

[63] *Conversaciones sobre las artes visuales*, p. 46.

Argentina, the Center being largely below ground suggests a sanctuary or shelter from danger on the surface.

A notable exception to CAYC's eschewing of public space is the *Arte e ideología. CAYC en el aire libre* section of *Arte de sistemas II*, staged in Plaza Roberto Arlt, between Bartolome Mitre and Rivadavia Avenues in downtown Buenos Aires, in 1972.[64] Interactive works such as the traditional bread-making oven constructed by Víctor Grippo, Jorge Gamarra, and A. Rossi, discussed below, and a puppet theater created by Alfredo Portillos, were scattered throughout the area [Figure 156]. The show was censored and dismantled by authorities only a day later, who recognized this move outside of the Center's confines and into public space for what it was—a reach beyond an almost invisible space into public view. Materials related to the show anticipated this monitoring and closure by the state, none more so than a map detailing the area and the location of individual works [Figure 157]. The seemingly open-ended site of public space is always already circumscribed as information, all of its possibilities anticipated beforehand. In a letter dated September 30 of that year, Glusberg appealed to the Center's international "art friends" to write to President Alejandro Augustín Lanusse about the "police process to which the director of the CAYC is being subjected and revision of the resolutions which led to the closure of the exhibition."[65]

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[64] See "Art and Ideology at CAYC in the Open Air," *GT*-166-A, December 21, 1972, "Arte e ideología: CAYC al aire libre," *GT*-168, September 14, 1972, and *Arte e ideología: CAYC al aire libre*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: CAYC, 1972). As in the case of many of the Center's exhibitions, the catalogue features separate pages allotted to each artist. These contributions having an ambiguous relationship to the works they describe. As with "preparatory" works on paper at CAYC in general, these entries may be part of the works they outline and not merely supplements (see the beginning of the Zabala section below). The *gacetilla* for the show notes than an earlier outdoor CAYC exhibition had taken place in November 1970 in Plaza Rubén Dario.

[65] Unaddressed letter signed "CAYC" dated September 30, 1972, MoMA Library archive of CAYC materials, New York. The letter came with two "communiques," one that had been published in *La Nación*, detailing and decrying the censorship. Yet these protests assert that the content of the show was in fact *not*

When Perón's return eased restrictions on freedom of speech in 1973, CAYC staged exhibitions with openly political content, such as homages to Chile and Salvador Allende, who had just perished amidst the CIA-engineered coup d'etat by Agosto Pinochet.[66] Instead of shutting down operations amidst the 1976 military coup, however, Glusberg continued the activities of the Center, enduring the exile of the more openly leftist members of the Grupo de los Trece.[67] In 1977, the Grupo de los Trece, with several members in absentia, were awarded a group prize at the Bienal de São Paulo, and Glusberg was personally awarded a medal by the junta when they returned to Argentina. As recounted by cultural theorist Nestor García Canclini, Glusberg embraced a highly problematic, if not scandalous, language of "humanism" to describe CAYC's art production, which he contended was benefitting the dawn of a new Argentine state.[68] From a brief moment of engagement with a larger public between the years 1972 and 1973, the Center's focus had returned to such a traditional sphere of art that the

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political and of an "exclusive [sic] artistic intention." The event is also mentioned in a letter to the Secretary of Foreign Affairs dated June 25, 1973 in which the Grupo de los Trece boycotted the São Paulo Biennial on account of the Brazilian police state.

[66] See "Exhibición homenaje a Salvador Allende," *GT*-285, September 24, 1973 and "Open Letter to the Chilean Military Junta," *GT*-310-A, November 15, 1973. The first exhibition that appeared after Perón's return to power was Zabala's *Anteproyectos*, discussed below.

[67] Later, when certain artists went into exile during the dictatorship, the number of members dwindled to nine: Bedel, Benedit, Glusberg, González Mir, Grippo, Maler, Marotta, Portillos, and the architect Clorindo Testa, a new addition. Certain of the earlier members, such as Marotta, Pazos, Carlos Romero and Zabala, had utilized more overt political content; it is significant that Testa and Maler, one of the country's major architects and an internationally prominent body artist, joined in their stead. The group's name was changed to Grupo CAYC in 1979, long after the structural change to the group; for example, at the 1977 São Paulo Biennial they still exhibited as the Grupo de los Trece, even though the earlier members had already left the country (see note 50).

[68] This dark moment in the institution's history has been rarely touched by scholars, perhaps because until recently Glusberg was still a powerful figure in the art world of Buenos Aires as head of the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes. See Néstor García Canclini, "Modernity After Postmodernity," in *Beyond the Fantastic: Contemporary Art Criticism from Latin America*, ed. Gerardo Mosquera (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), pp. 43-5. Canclini had himself lectured at CAYC on November 23, 1972 on the topic of a structuralist consideration of avant-gardes, a subject that he tackles in greater detail in his later work. See "Para una sociología de vanguardias artísticas por Néstor García Canclini," *GT*-188, November 1, 1972 and Néstor García Canclini, "Arte vanguardias estéticas, estructura social y cultura popular," *GT*-228, May 14, 1973, and *La producción simbólica: teoría y método en sociología del arte* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1979).

Renaissance was invoked. This predicament was engaged on communicative and architectural levels by the three members of the Grupo de los Trece discussed below.

Analogies

Víctor Grippo was born in 1936 in Junín, a province of Buenos Aires. He trained in chemistry and biology at Facultad de Farmacia y Bioquímica de la Universidad Nacional in La Plata, making a secondary living as a painting instructor (he studied painting, drawing and sculpture in secondary school). He had his first solo exhibition of expressionist figurative paintings in 1958 in the warehouse of the newspaper *Nueva Era* in the city of Tandil in Buenos Aires Province.[69] In the succeeding years he continued to develop his painting and sculpture in and around the La Plata area, traveling to Buenos Aires frequently. He turned to abstraction in 1963. At the same time he continued working as a scientist, ultimately taking a position at the Instituto Biológico de la Provincia de Buenos Aires from 1965 to 1968.

In October 1966, Grippo was featured in the group exhibition *Investigación sobre el proceso de la creación* at Galería Vignes.[70] It was organized by the artists Kenneth Kemble and Enrique Barilari, who both participated in *Arte destructivo* in 1961. The later show was similarly presented as the result of collective research, this time on the potential of creation for artistic practice. The catalogue offers an open-ended definition of creation: "[W]e invite those who believe that the process of creation implies an open

[69] The Polish novelist and dramatist Wiltold Gombrowicz, an emigré to Argentina during the war who remained until 1963, attended this show with a cane and an exaggerated limp to lampoon the work as "arte rengo" [lame art]. Jorge Di Paola, "El bastón de Gombrowicz," in *Victor Grippo: reunión homenaje* (Tandil: Museo Municipal de Bellas Artes, 2002), pp. 28-32.

[70] *Investigación sobre el proceso de la creación: Renart, Kemble, Barilari, Grippo*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Galería Vignes, 1966).

attitude in perpetual development, to join this group of study—not a movement..."[71] Grippo presented a work, *Sistema*, that bears a clear relation to the investigations into communication undertaken by Masotta and his circle in that same year [Figure 158].[72] The work featured three different posterboards illustrated by text, photographs, and drawn and painted diagrams corresponding to "ARTISTA/EMISOR," "OBRA/CANAL," AND "PUBLICO/RECEPTOR" [artist/transmitter, work/channel, public/receiver]. The first panel consisted mainly of photographic portraits of the artist. The central panel, dedicated to the work as a "channel," used a series of arrows to demonstrate how paintings of abstract forms, in particular a circular form from bottom center to bottom right, are derived from scientific diagrams. The final section is divided into two panels, one a rectangular grid of six paintings of abstract circuitry or connections (although many of these circuit-like elements do not fully connect), and a chart to its right with images of different groups of people represented by different signs (e.g., three generic figures linked into a form). "The public or receiver of these images considered statistically," Grippo writes, "the majority turn their backs, some are interested, others become skeptical owing to their own limitations, and finally there is a valid addressee."[73] *Sistema* is the first of the artist's works in which the artist made a clear effort to intermingle artistic forms with those of biological and chemical experiments. It is also significant for the terms incorporated from the schemas of language and information theorists who were being read at this time by the Masotta group, such as Roman Jakobson (whose terms Paksa later employed in *Comunicaciones*) and Claude Shannon and Warren Weaver,

[71] Valeria Semilla, "Chronology," in *Grippo: una retrospectiva, obras 1971-2001*, ed. Marcelo Pacheco, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires, 2004), p. 344.
[72] This is the title given in the Ikon Gallery retrospective. The MALBA retrospective titles it *Emisor-canal-receptor*, p. 344.
[73] Ikon Gallery retrospective, p. 45.

whose communication chart shares a tripartite structure and directional arrows [Figure 159].[74] The final panel reproduces several of Grippo's paintings from this period, which mix abstract and machine- or circuit-like forms [Figure 160].

Sistema appears in a show about creation by artists who had previously championed destruction. But the latter practice was being extricated from its expressionist history in Argentine art by Masotta, who refigured it as a series of cold, systematic operations: redundancy undoes the direct message, discontinuity breaks the work into parts, signaling clips out a detail from a larger field.[75] In contrast, *Sistema* outlines stages in the reception of art not to stop art from working, but as a proposal for future practice. Grippo will find his "valid addressee"—the last step of a functional communicative system—who will not dissect or analyze but simply receive. This smooth process is antithetical to Masotta's project.

Grippo moved to Buenos Aires in 1967 and participated in that year's Premio Ver y Estimar with *Abstracción simbólica de una destilería (maqueta)* [*Symbolic Abstraction of a Distillery (Maquette)*], a sculpture designed from plastic that emitted a strong, "oppressive" odor [Figure 161].[76] Instead of an architectural model, however, the work resembles a part of a machine. The artist's declaration that it was a "maquette" and not a finished product recalls Jacoby's *Maqueta de una obra*, although with a relation to the

[74] Shannon and Weaver, *The Mathematical Theory of Communication*, p. 5. For Shannon, however, it is essential that an outside factor impinge on the transmission of the message, yielding a distorting "noise." This is not a factor explicitly included by Grippo, even though what is shown is precisely an adaptation or distortion of form via artmaking. In Masotta, Jacoby, and others, noise was acknowledged through subtle differences or discrepancies, for example the alteration of font between the posters and television broadcast in *El mensaje fantasma*.

[75] As discussed in Chapter 1, the destructive act in Argentine art in the early 1960s was used as an expressionist or chaotic element to add to actions related to authorial anxiety, as in Greco's Madrid *Vivo-Dito* and Minujín's *La destrucción*.

[76] The artist claims the original size of the work was too big to fit in the gallery and that he had to cut the legs down. Eduardo Diaz Hermelo, *Premio Ver y Estimar*, pp. 116-117.

world of technology and production as opposed to the terms of art itself. In 1968 Grippo had a solo exhibition of synthetic enamel paintings at Galería Lirolay, *Entre la simetría y el diseño* [*Between Symmetry and Design*]: abstractions also derived from mechanical forms. Between 1969 and 1971 he produced kinetic works with moving mechanical elements, among them *Elastociclo* in 1970, an abstraction with shapes that would press up from beneath the canvas [Figure 162].[77] This work was exhibited alongside its preliminary sketches, a practice that would become part of his and Benedit's signature styles: the plans are not merely supplementary, but are elevated to the same position as their product.

It was also at this time that he first became associated with Glusberg and CAYC. Grippo's focus was on energy-based systems, beginning with *"E" (Energía)* (1971), presented at the Tercero Salón Ítalo, sponsored by Compañía Italo Argentina de Electricidad at the Museo de Arte Moderno in Buenos Aires.[78] Behind a framed canvas, a machine typed out "energía" in Morse Code. Energy is converted into language, and vice versa; the two become analogical. *Analogía I*, first shown at CAYC, featured a rectangular grid of forty wooden compartments, each with a potato attached to copper and zinc electrodes [Figure 163]. The spectator could turn on an attached voltmeter, positioned in the middle of the structure, to observe the amount of current generated from the potatoes. Below the voltmeter is a text, printed on the structure itself, that provided dictionary-style definitions for *papa* [potato] and *conciencia* [conscience/consciousness],

[77] The influence of kinetic artists such as Gyula Kosice, in particular his fantastic architecture project for a "hydrospatial city," could be further discussed in relation to CAYC in general, as their emphasis on process and science has a parallel with much of the Center's production linking art and science (Julio Le Parc would also have to be included here as well). See Guy Brett, *Force Fields: Phases of the Kinetic*, exh. cat. (London: Hayward Gallery, 2000).
[78] *Tercer Salon Italo: la energía en las artes visuales*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Museo de Arte Moderno, 1971).

a description of the terms' *función cotidiana* [everyday function], and a description of an *ampliación de la función cotidiana* [expansion of everyday function].[79]

The first of Grippo's many works using potatoes have been interpreted as elements of Latin American agriculture, analogues of human knowledge, or illustrations of alchemy, one of the artist's fascinations. But in the political context of this moment, there is another, unavoidable connotation: electric shocks administered during torture.[80] In the latter practice, which state forces had begun to employ at least a year prior, electricity is forced into the body of the subject to derive information. Torture does constitute a form of alchemy: the conversion of citizen to object and subversive into informant.[81] *Analogía I* demonstrates, in structural terms, the obverse: electricity is extracted from the object of study. Yet the skin of the potatoes is the same hue as human skin, and the compartments resemble cells in a prison. If the potatoes are regarded as objects that are acted upon, the analogy functions. This is a connotation that has been rarely pointed out in the literature on the artist, even though others were making anti-torture works at this same moment, among them Ignacio Colombres y Hugo Pereyra's *Made in Argentina*, which was produced for the anti-torture show *Salon de la picana* [*Cattle Prod Salon*] of 1971 [Figure 164]. This acrylic representation of a body hung upside down and being shocked with electrodes also featured real wires and a

[79] Ikon Retrospective, p. 47. Potatoes are a consistent feature of Grippo's work throughout the 1970s. He used them frequently as generators of energy, and as well as in numerous works about alchemical transformations, such as *Analogía II*, in which a raw potato was juxtaposed with a potato burnt to a black cinder.

[80] My reading of Grippo here is at odds with a generally optimistic take on his work that predominates in the literature. See Ana Longoni, "Víctor Grippo: His Poetry, His Utopia," in MALBA retrospective, pp. 283-290, Marcelo Pacheco, "Víctor Grippo: A Warm Conceptualist," in *Art from Argentina*, pp. 100-105, Nelly Perazzo, "Víctor Grippo: An Art of Reflection," *ArtNexus* (Jan.-Mar. 2002), pp. 48-53.

[81] Klein, *Shock Doctrine*, pp. 3-47 & 75-115. See also Marguerite Feitlowitz, *A Lexicon of Terror*, pp. 19-62, and Lewis, *Guerillas and Generals*, pp. 131-163.

voltmeter.[82] Later works with potatoes, such as *Analogía IV* (1972), shifted focus from the electric element and compared the potatoes with burnt or glass versions, as though attesting to obscure alchemical transformations [Figure 165].[83] At the XIV São Paulo Biennial in 1977 at which the Grupo de los Trece won the Gran Premio, the artist restaged *Analogía I*, this time with the addition of a table and chair containing hundreds of potatoes, all connected to dangling wires [Figure 166].[84] At the height of El Proceso, the simple increase in the quantity of potatoes was metaphor enough.

The concept of analogy operates on at least two levels in the *Analogía* series that correspond to the dual meaning of *conciencia*: consciousness and conscience. The "expansion of quotidian *conciencia*," results in "the obtaining of energy-consciousness"—an awareness of the energy latent in the seemingly static object that is the potato. Energy is the analogue of the potato: the latter can be converted into the former. Analogy for Grippo might then be understood as a fully-functioning machine that drives his works and their operations. In practice, it is often realized as alchemy, the transformation of substances into one another. But then there is also what Grippo terms the *forma cotidiana de la conciencia*, "individual conscience." It is true that a lone individual may be conscious of something, but there is also this other connotation, that of personal or political conscience, that is a part of *conciencia*'s "quotidian" experience. The viewer sees a work that contains an obvious analogy about oppressive political

[82] Alberto Giudici, *Arte y política en los '60*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Salas Nacionales de Cultura, 2001), p. 70. Giudici surveys a number of the group protest exhibitions of this moment, which stressed representational and agitational works, such as posters, in the manner of the earlier *Homenaje a Viet-Nam* show. One exhibition of the América latina No Oficial group featured anti-torture posters designed by former members of the Grupo de Rosario such as Carnevale, Renzi and Maisonnave.

[83] Grippo's alchemical depiction of atrocity owe a debt to the work of Joseph Beuys, in particular his *Auschwitz Demonstration*. See Mario Kramer, "Joseph Beuys: Auschwitz Demonstration, 1956-1964," in *German Art from Beckmann to Richter*, ed. Eckhart Gillen (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 261-275.

[84] Elena Oliveras, "Anónimos," in *Víctor Grippo: reunión homenaje*, p. 107.

conditions. In this case perhaps the hope would be for the work to a catalyst for the viewer's conscience. "I produced a series of *Analogías*," Grippo writes, "…through which metaphoric elements were combined leading to objective conclusions and ethical concerns, by way of allusion to an ample range of action in vegetable functions and human consciousness."[85] The model is that this conscience, or consciousness of a political problem that the viewer already knew existed, is activated by a reflection of this situation back at the viewer, a veiled message that must be deciphered for consciousness/conscience to occur.

For the *Arte de sistemas II: CAYC en el aire libre* exhibition in 1972, Grippo teamed with artist Jorge Gamarra and a rural worker identified as "A. Rossi" to produce *Construcción de un horno popular para hacer pan*, a traditional bread-making oven through which, until it was stopped and destroyed by the police, the collaborators distributed loaves of bread to passersby in Plaza Roberto Arlt [Figure 167]. "Purpose: To revalorize an object of everyday use," the artists wrote, "which implies, over and above the constructive, sculptural aspect, an attitude."[86] This is a take on modernist defamiliarization: to revalorize something ordinary means that this ordinary thing was prior devalued or under-appreciated. They continue: "Pedagogic result: To describe the process of the construction of the Oven and the making of the Bread. Distribution of a leaflet. The participation of the public will be possible via an exchange of information."[87]

There is a difference between the representation of the rural worker in *Construcción de un horno popular para hacer pan* and *Tucumán Arde*. In the 1968

[85] Victor Grippo, "Art is, above all, a circumstance," in *Grippo: Una Retrospectiva, Obras 1971-1994*, exh. cat., ed. Marcelo Pacheco (Buenos Aires: MALBA, 2004), p. 313.
[86] Ikon Gallery Retrospective, p. 49.
[87] Ibid. I substitute "exchange" for "interchange" for the word *intercambio*.

collaboration the worker is positioned as an occluded and oppressed Other situated outside of Argentina's cities, yet hardest hit by the economic policies of the dictatorship. He or she is depicted as a stand-in for an entire class in need of advocacy, and a potentially revolutionary partner for the intellectuals—in this sense the proletariat is both subject and object of *Tucumán Arde*. In *Construcción*, a worker is co-creator, although his curiously truncated first name indicates his difference from the artists. As in *Tucumán Arde* material from the countryside is transposed to the city, and is placed in a new context or frame. But this functional rural object corresponds to an idealized sense of rural life, based in preindustrial traditions and sustenance. Ironically in light of the work's immediate censorship, the language of the class struggle is completely absent.

This theme persists in a series of works that Grippo produced during El Proceso, starting with *Algunos oficios* [*Some Trades*], shown at CAYC in 1976: an installation of various agricultural tools and objects. The objects were arrayed to suggest situations of work, such mallets and bricks laid near a larger block of stone [Figure 168]. The show marks the beginning of a shift by Grippo, Benedit and others who remained at the Center after the military coup to themes of Argentine national identity—one situated in the country and not the city. Both Grippo and Benedit emphasize the objects involved in traditional rural work in Argentina, with little acknowledgment of modernization or industrialization. In contradistinction to their projects reflecting the claustrophobic or murderous containment of the dictatorial state, these works of the later 1970s accord with the dictatorship's own ideology: that an essential or pure Argentina exists (which for the junta necessitated the elimination of subversive or "impure" citizens). Although Grippo continued to create analogies for The Process in certain of his works from this moment,

Algunos oficios reflects his incorporation, along with several of his CAYC colleagues, of an essentialism that was elsewhere the foundation of a ruling fascism.[88]

Labyrinths

Luis Benedit is the only member of the Grupo de los Trece included in *Inverted Utopias: Avant-Garde Art in Latin America*, the 2004 survey of Latin American avant-gardes curated by Mari Carmen Ramírez and Héctor Olea. Ramírez uses him as an end-point for the avant-garde, a sign that the ambition to forging a politicized unity of art and life in Latin American art has been abandoned: "As a bizarre counterpoint to all these transgressions, the controlled insect and plant environments by Luis Fernando Benedit—developed since 1968 and ending in the *Fitotrón*...—offer a caustic metaphor of confinement... to illustrate the tragic outcome of the Latin American utopias of the last critical rebuttal of the century: the 1960s."[89] His art is positioned as politically metaphoric, referring to political realities obliquely. How he arrived at such an approach—through representational painting—is exemplary of the development of Grupo de los Trece artists, many of whom derived conceptual practices from preexisting talents.

Benedit was born in Buenos Aires in 1937. He graduated with a degree in architecture from the Universidad Nacional de Buenos Aires in 1963, having already had his first solo exhibition at Galería Lirolay in 1961.[90] He worked in the architecture studio of Acevedo-Becú-Moreno, designing his first house for the Santa Coloma family in San

[88] This period effectively ended in 1980 with Grippo's *Vida-muerte-resurrección*: a vitrine which contained several geometric metal structures in which dry beans that had been placed inside expanded over time and burst through the metal. Although some scholars have interpreted this work as a hopeful gesture about the disappearances, it is worth noting the appearance of the beans that have spilled out of the structures. They appear dark and dormant—an entropic spill as opposed to a guarantee of new life.
[89] Mari Carmen Ramírez, "A Highly Topical Utopia," *Inverted Utopias*, p. 14.
[90] Rafael Squirru, *Luis Benedit*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Galería Lirolay, 1961).

Isidro in Greater Buenos Aires.[91] His early painting combined *art brut* with Mesoamerican forms such as the Aztec *chacmool*, as in *Michelín* (1962) [Figure 169].[92] In 1963 he traveled to Madrid, where he worked in the studio of the architects Faci and Larrea Cisneros. That year he returned to Buenos Aires and produced the environment *Barbazul* with the artist Vicente Marotta at the Museo de Arte Moderno in Buenos Aires.[93] In 1967 he returned to Europe, overseeing the construction of a house in Rome and studying with the architect Francesco Fariello on a grant from the Italian government. He began working with bright acrylics, painting psychedelic pictures of animals and landscapes [Figure 170]. His interests in biology and botany date from this moment, as do his first experiments with turning his paintings into three-dimensional habitats for living animals. He was particularly interested in the Arte Povera artist Janis Kounellis, who in 1967 exhibited planters with live cacti growing in them in a gallery, and would famously, a year later, display live horses in L'Attico Gallery in Rome.[94]

In 1968, Benedit returned to Buenos Aires and began working for Alberto Prebisch (his father-in-law, an architect who designed the iconic Obelisco in the center of the city) and exhibited works with live animals at the solo exhibition *Micro-Zoo* at Galería Rubbers. There were separate plexiglass habitats for birds, cats, ants, lizards, fish, turtles, and bees [Figure 171].[95] They were hung from the ceiling in the middle of the

[91] Patricia Rizzo, "Biografía documentada," in *Luis F. Benedit en el Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes: obras 1960-1996*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, 1996), p. 283. Among other prizes in this period, Benedit won the Faja de Honor at the 1962 Premio Ver y Estimar.
[92] See Mujica Láinez, Manuel, *Benedit*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Galería Rubbers, 1963).
[93] Hugo Parpagnoli, *Barbazul*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Museo de Arte Moderno, 1966).
[94] Rizzo, p. 284. See *Zero to Infinity*, pp. 160 & 237-250.
[95] See Luis Benedit, *Micro-Zoo*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Galería Rubbers, 1968) and "Artes y spectáculos: Plástica: El micro-zoo de acrílico," *Primera Plana*, December 3, 1968.

gallery to emphasize their three-dimensionality.[96] The structures mimic the forms of his earlier psychedelic landscapes, and in some cases contain colorful imagery on flat elements of the structure [Figure 172]. It is as though one of his paintings has been thickened to generate a hollow within. This literal space beneath the picture plane, physically inside the work, becomes a shelter for a living inhabitant. The picture plane is transparent so that the static image that was on its surface is replaced by a *tableau vivant* of a quasi-natural system. In addition to his Arte Povera contemporaries, Benedit was also drawing on the use of animals in Greco and Minujín's actions and happenings, although his implications could not be more different. Greco released rats into exhibitions to shock viewers with a newly live art; a symbolic register of liberation was added when Minujín released birds in works such as *La destrucción* or *Suceso plástico*. But from the start Benedit's aim was to contain and control living things, and hold them up for display. The operation is much closer to Greco's early *Vivo-Ditos*: the *Micro-Zoo* is a frame that has become a home, a trap, or both.

In 1969 he began to participate in exhibitions organized by Glusberg, who wrote the essay for the *Micro-Zoo* catalogue. The first of these were the *Arte y cibernética* shows, for which Benedit submitted computer renderings of insects—a different way to represent the natural mediated by the artificial. After this followed an extremely prolific phase, which lasted until the mid-1970s, in which the artist produced a multitude of variations on the habitats: aquariums, plant feeders, birdhouses, and mazes for ants and

[96] It is worth considering the influence of Santantonín's *Cosas*, which were also suspended in the gallery, on *Micro-Zoo* (see Chapter 1). Santantonín saw the *Cosas* as emphatically *not* sculpture in its traditional sense; as mere "things" that necessitated viewer interaction to be activated as art. Like Grippo, Benedit turns to the functional forms of scientific experimentation to achieve distance from the traditional sculptural object. The *Micro-Zoo* objects are not merely acted on by a viewer, but protect and house their own living charges. They are objects that "do," and "do to," other objects.

rats that are essentially offshoots of behavioral studies [Figure 173]. With *Biotrón*, as mentioned at the start of the chapter, he fashioned a pollination system. This work was followed by *Fitotrón*, a giant hyrdoponic habitat exhibited at the *Projects: Luis Fernando Benedit* show curated by Katherine Keller at MoMA in New York in 1972, which refigures a traditional artistic genre, the landscape, as a living diorama [Figure 174].[97] As in the *Micro-Zoos*, the frame is reimagined as the vitrine separating the viewer from the natural scene that is no longer represented but presented as a living thing. Like Grippo, Benedit repeatedly exhibited plans alongside their finished products.

It is in *Laberinto invisible*, created in 1971 and also shown in the MoMA show, that Benedit literalized the implied metaphors of control in his other projects. A maze for people in which mistakes were signaled by alarm bells triggered by motion-sensitive lights, it was characterized by Glusberg as a "trial and error learning experience" [Figure 175].[98] A successful completion of the maze would yield the "reward... of the privilege of observing the looks and behavior of a 'Mexican ocelot' (an amphibious creature which is supposed to be related to the origin of the human species)."[99] The critic's text about the

[97] See Jorge Glusberg, *Luis Benedit: Phitotron*, exh. cat. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, Buenos Aires: Centro de Arte y Comunicación, 1972).

[98] Important North American sculptural precedents for this work are Robert Morris's maze-like sculptures and Bruce Nauman's claustrophobic environments. While neither Morris nor Nauman were included in the CAYC's many exhibitions and invitations of foreign artists, Morris had won the Di Tella's Premio Internacional in 1967 and Nauman was established enough for Glusberg to have known of his work through constant international travel. While neither make an explicit point of studying viewer behavior, both posited a clear connection between minimalism and the control of the viewer's body or trajectory. See A closer comparison may be Dan Graham's works involving video and mirrors, in which a viewer's reaction to the effects of video delay are revealed to him simultaneously in mirror reflections and video feed (Graham featured in the international component of *Arte de sistemas II*). But for Graham, the participant him- or herself was to be the receiver of this behavioral information; he or she was not rendered research object for a different viewer. See Janet Kraynak, "Dependent Participation: Bruce Nauman's Environments," *Grey Room* 10 (Winter 2003), pp. 22–45, Roald Nasgaard, *Structures for behaviour: new sculptures by Robert Morris, David Rabinowitch, Richard Serra, and George Trakas*, exh. cat. (Toronto: Art Gallery of Ontario, 1978), and Bennett Simpson, Chrissie Iles, and Jeremy Strick, *Dan Graham: Beyond*, exh. cat. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009).

[99] Jorge Glusberg, "Luis Benedit at the Museum of Modern Art, New York," *GT*-181-A and -181-A-1, December 28, 1972. The exhibition was presented by Bernice Rose, an associate curator at MoMA.

work, which cites the Danish linguist Louis Hjemslev, testifies to Glusberg's role in defining CAYC work for international reception. He argues that *Laberinto invisible* parses the "plane of expression" and the "plane of content" of its code, the elements that "carry out an orientation function to the running of the labyrinth," such as mirrors and lasers, and the experiential "meanings of a code... organized in semantic structures," such as light and sound. "The Benedit Labyrinth," he concludes, "thus fulfills all the formal conditions required for the structuring of a semiologic [sic] system."[100] This passage exemplifies Glusberg's tendency to characterize any CAYC work as fundamentally linguistic, which obscures more obvious implications: viewers are inserted into a predetermined and controlling architecture that allows for their behavior to be studied. If in 1960s Argentine conceptualism the viewer is a thinking and analyzing subject, he or she is now a test subject.[101]

The shift to the human register only makes clear a subtler insinuation of the ubiquitous preliminary drawings in Benedit and Grippo. The plan or blueprint stands in for the laws that govern the work, an echo of the scientific laws that it supposedly contains. If Masotta's art is analytical, that of these CAYC artists has a juridical dimension. The work is ostensibly about "natural laws," when in fact it is ultimately

[100] Ibid.

[101] One important comparison is with GRAV, the Paris-based kineticists led by Julio Le Parc, who created *Labyrinth*, a maze-based interactive installation that emphasized the viewer's experience of the space and its changing effects, for the exhibition *Nouvelle Tendence* at the Musée des Arts Decoratifs in 1964. Being a frequent figure in the writing of Jorge Luis Borges, the labyrinth has served as a theme, image or title for many Argentine artworks, including one of León Ferrari's works on paper in the late 1970s (see Conclusion). *Laberinto invisible* also bears comparison with other examples of Argentine conceptual art in which the participant seems to be acted upon or even humiliated, such as Masotta's *Para inducir al espiritu de la imagen* and Bony's *La familia obrera*. While Glusberg might argue that both Masotta and Benedit turn their live material into language, there are two significant points of distinction. Masotta and Bony's works are both about class difference, whether as an effect of language or appearance or as the foundation of a new viewer, while Benedit's participant is the universalized subject of science (hence the mention of the "origin of the human species"). *Laberinto invisible*'s stress on researching the participant's behavior does have a precedent in the charting of the sensory effects of different elements in Minujín and Santantonín's *La menesunda* and Paksa's *Comunicaciones*.

conditioned by the man-made laws devised by the researcher-artist. In Benedit, these laws can be reduced to a single maxim: the entire system is contingent upon its containing and nourishing architecture, its frame and prison. It is in this sense that he anticipates the real and imminent juridical catastrophe of 1976. The Process was not a spontaneous bloodletting but a planned structural change to an existing system. Marguerite Feitlowitz writes, "'Revolution' was, in fact, one of the junta's forbidden words. The days of spontaneity and froth were over. The country was being rescued by a *plan*, the Process for National Reorganization."[102] The state's power to take the life of any individual deemed subversive is the sinister flipside of its obligation to protect its citizens. These conditions amount to a harsh reality for art: apperception of the Process is not going to stop it.

Jails

The *Arte e ideologia. CAYC al aire libre* exhibition featured a work by Horacio Zabala titled *300 metros de cinta negra para enlutar una plaza pública* [*300 Meters of Tape to Plunge a Public Square into Mourning*]. In his catalogue entry, Zabala offered a sketch of a public square in which three figures can be seen [Figure 176]. The black tape mentioned in the title runs along the walls of buildings that surround the figures, tracing a line situated several feet above their heads. Pictured from a distance, the tape creates a perspectival grid that draws the eye to the back of the square, beyond the figures at front right. The urban setting renders even open public space an enclosure that the tape traces and signals, mapping a space that has already been mapped or foreclosed. The reason for

[102] Feitlowitz, *A Lexicon of Terror*, p. 22.

mourning is apparently this framing of public space, from which point it ceases to be truly public and becomes a marked and watched zone of space and speech. The dictatorial imperative of surveillance is likened to the artist's imposition of the frame or signal.

Born in Buenos Aires in 1943, trained as an architect at UBA, Zabala was involved with CAYC from 1971 to 1976, when he was exiled to Europe, moving from Rome to Vienna to Geneva over the course of the subsequent 22 years.[103] He had his first solo exhibitions in 1967 and 1968 at Galería Lirolay and Galería Arte Nuevo in Buenos Aires. He had connections with the avant-garde of La Plata from his involvement in the 1966 XXVI Salón de arte de Mar del Plata that he ultimately utilized on CAYC's behalf, drawing Edgardo Vigo and others from that context into the reach of the Center. Zabala's first exhibition at CAYC was as part of the *Fotografía tridimensional* show in 1971; in 1972 he began exhibiting with the Center as part of the Grupo de los Trece, in the shows *Hacia un perfil del arte latinoamericano*, *Arte e ideología*, and many others.

In 1972, Zabala repeatedly inserted variations of the phrase "art is a jail" into his works. "Today art is a prison" or "1972 art is a prison," often repeatedly printed on paper via a rubber stamp left hanging on the work on a wire or string, figures in *El arte es una cárcel*, *Art is a jail*, and *Hoy arte es una cárcel I* [Figure 177]. There is a tension between the physical exertion of stamping and the identicality of message; the body is indexed in minute differences of density and legibility. A key variation of this is *Este papel es una cárcel*, a photograph in which a hand is seen writing the "L" at the end of two phrases already written on a piece of paper: "ESTE PAPEL ES UNA CARCEL / THIS PAPER

[103] See Rodrigo Alonso, "Bocetos de una sociedad carcelaria," in *Horacio Zabala: Ejercicios y tránsitos*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Museo de Arte Moderno, 1998) and Jacobo Fiterman, ed., *Horacio Zabala: Anteproyectos (1972-1978)*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Fundación Alon, 2007).

IS A JAIL" [Figure 178]. Zabala's choice to repeat the phrase in both Spanish and English recalls CAYC's insistently bilingual promotional materials. In an echo of Greco's documentation of his *Vivo-Ditos*, the act of drawing is photographed as it is occurring. This documentation is now the work itself; there is no prior performance that has been lost. The photograph once again frames the artistic act of framing, although here what is being framed is the work—the statement, the declaration that "this paper is a jail"—within the constraints of the page. The framing edge of the work of art is figured as a prison sealing off representation from reality. The human hand that enters the picture is not acting on the material support, but being imprisoned by it.

Also in 1972, the artist initiated his series of *Anteproyectos*, later exhibited in a solo exhibition at CAYC in 1973 and continued into 1974. These blueprints of absurdist prisons include *Anteproyecto de cárcel flotante para el Río de la Plata III* [*Blueprint for a floating prison for the Río de la Plata*] and *Anteproyecto de cárcel subterránea para la Ciudad de Buenos Aires III* [*Blueprint for a subterranean prison for the city of Buenos Aires*] [Figures 179 and 180].[104] The drawings feature hand-drawn grid backgrounds that resemble graph paper, but with imperfections and missing lines. Each features multiple views of each structure, with precise measurements and, in some cases, human figures represented within. In a number of the works, including the subterranean prison, Zabala includes a sign on the horizon that could be read as either a tree (a sign of a natural landscape) or as an atomic explosion (a reason for the jailed subject to have sought refuge in the prison).

[104] "Horacio Zabala: Anteproyectos," *GT-226*, May 3, 1973. See also Guidici's *Arte y Politica en los '60*, pp. 161-2. See also *Horacio Zabala*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Fondo Nacional de las Artes, 2002).

The *Anteproyectos* echo Grippo and Benedit's frequent incorporation of blueprints into their projects, but they have no finished product. This is a different machine than analogy or scientific experiment; the removal of any concrete result yields ironic humor.[105] It is a thinly veiled critique of the signature style of the Grupo de los Trece and the architecture of CAYC's galleries, coming from within in both cases.[106] The *Anteproyectos* over-identify with the totalizing aspirations of architecture and science-based art, exaggerating their most problematic aspects. The bulletin announcing the show depicts a "reformatory" for artists, situated underground and complete with a gesticulating figure addressing a group, perhaps musing on the benefits of their safety, perhaps lamenting their situation of containment [Figure 181]. This figure is repeated in the drawing for *300 metros de cinta negra*.

In 1974 Zabala produced several acrylic-on-paper works titled *De-formaciones*, which consisted of altered maps of Argentina [Figure 182]. In both, a body of water in the north of the country, the Mar Chiquita, is enlarged or linked to other rivers and lakes to separate Chile and Argentina from the rest of the continent of South America. In *Tensión*, *Argentina empaquetada*, *Todos los fuegos el fuego*, and *Rica del Sur*, also from that year, he performed other operations on maps of the country: turned on its side with lettering printed over it, folded into rectangular boxes and wrapped and sealed with a wax, ripped apart and burned and placed under plastic, blotted out by a dark rectangle

[105] Parody has in fact been previously applied to Benedit's work as an interpretive model, in the Mari Carmen Ramírez exhibition *Cantos paralelos*. This show focuses on Benedit's later drawing and sculpture, in which the artist painted drawings produced by his children and infused them with myths about the Argentine countryside. The artist's earlier work that is discussed in this chapter is not part of that exhibition's focus.

[106] One example of this is the exhibition of "plans"—some of which are designed by artists and are not architectural—for a hospital in Africa, which opened, and remained open, in the same month as the 1976 coup. See Clorindo Testa, Héctor Lacarra, Janine Portalis, and Julio Torcello, *Proposal for a Regional Hospital Africa, tropical zone* (Buenos Aires: Centro de Arte y Comunicación, 1976).

imprinted via monotype [Figure 183]. The original information of the map is distorted; blotted out; folded into three-dimensionality. It remains clear that Argentina was the original content; the trace of this original message persists, peeking through the manipulations. The works hint at a similar god's-eye view to that of Benedit's *Biotrón* and *Laberinto invisible*, the gaze of the planner envisioning how to bend an entire geography to his or her will.

After the artist went into exile in Paris in 1976 he continued to use phrases equating art and jails, in mail art exchanges with On Kawara and in works such as *Slogans* (1978) [Figure 184].[107] Zabala's statement, credited to him, is paired with a phrase credited to Daniel Daligand: "L'art ne sera vivant que le jour où le dernier artiste sera mort" [Art will not be alive on the day the last artist dies]. A page with eight stamps of the double-slogans is suspended below an empty case of pastels. *Prison Share* (1978) consists of a certificate, complete with a coat of arms, on which Zabala has signed the statement "I hereby certify that the holder of this share has 49% of his/her freedom" [Figure 185]. The signature here returns to Argentine art not as a confrontation with historical and geographical anxieties about authorship and originality, but as a powerless and meaningless trace. The artist authorizes the quantification of an unquantifiable condition that, in the artist's home country, no longer exists.

Each "victim" will be driven to a different destination[108]

[107] For information on Zabala's mail art projects, including his and Edgardo Antonio Vigo's *Last International Mail Art Exhibition* of 1975, see Fernando G. Delgado and Juan Carlos Romero, *El arte correo en Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Vortice, 2005), pp. 37-47 & 55-59.
[108] This is a quote from the artist's notes on *Kidnappening*, August 1, 1973, Marta Minujín Artist File, Museum of Modern Art Library.

Marta Minujín spent much of the period after 1966 abroad in an ultimately failed bid to become an internationally recognized artist. Like David Lamelas, she joined the artistic networks of a major cosmopolitan center, made them the subjects of artworks, and addressed political questions obliquely. After the restaging of *El batacazo* in New York in 1966, she moved to the city in 1967, remaining there until 1969 and then returning for another period in the early 1970s. Her first stop was Montreal, where she created *Circuit* on April 28, 1967 for the Pavillon de la Jeunesse at the Montreal Expo [Figure 186]. On the 22nd, a questionnaire appeared in Montreal newspapers that readers could fill out and send back to the artist by the 25th. It surveyed personal details such as name, sex, height, hair color, and fashion preference; a computer compiled three groups based on shared characteristics.[109] Participants were asked to appear at the Youth Pavilion on the 28th with portable radios, whereupon they were split up into the three prearranged groups and moved to different positions around the building. One group was sent to the auditorium, the next to a space called the Agora, and the third was told to form a line outside the theater. The group in the auditorium watched slides of external views of the pavilion, video footage of the queued group outside, and the film *Superheterodino* [*Super-heterodyne*], played on forty televisions placed between the seats and on eight televisions on a mobile stage where eight participants were seated. Three larger monitors in the auditorium showed sections of Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane*, and the *Batman* television series. Loudspeakers broadcast audio feed of the group outside as they took Polaroids of themselves that were then projected on the walls of the theater. The second group in the

[109] Jorge Glusberg, "Vivir en arte: nuestra antología de Marta Minujín," in *Marta Minujín*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, 1999), pp. 26-28. Sabine Breitwieser claims that there was "the participation of numerous famous people and their look-alikes," but this is not backed up in any of the other accounts. Breitwieser, *Vivencias*, p. 24.

Agora could only watch the other two groups. Through the radios, all three groups could hear audio footage of their counterparts, as well as their own audio fed back to them. Places were then switched, and switched again, so that by the end each group had occupied each site and its corresponding influx or reduction of information.

In *Circuit* Minujín divides viewers into demographics—groups of common ages or interests—that are availed of different degrees of access to the same media event. Some participants are directed into spaces and observed, while others get to do the observing. When the roles are reversed, participants end up occupying multiple positions, both first- and second-order viewership. The formal logic of the work is suggested by the title of the film, *Superheterodino*: a "heterodyne" signal is a hybrid radio or television frequency created by the combination of a signal external to the receiver and one issuing from inside it. The participants are themselves these internal and external generators of frequency; they form a circuit that transmits information inside and outside of the theater. *Circuit* repeats *Simultaneidad en simultaneidad*'s recording and circumscription of participants by communications media while reprising its multi-day structure. The initial stages of the project consist of the participants' voluntary interaction with the classified ad. The newspaper functions as a net or incorporating mechanism for the project, a metaphor for the mass media in general. The advertisement, and viewer's choice to respond to it, is a horizon beyond which one enters into the media circuit (thus this circuit is not limited to the physical location of Pavilion). The convention recalls Greco's *Vivo-Ditos* in Madrid that similarly located participants, in that case children, through the newspaper, and *Happening para un jabalí difunto*'s extension of the reach of the apperceptive work of art to that one-to-one interaction with print media object. The

medium of the newspaper, once unfolded and read, takes hold of the viewer. It is an extension of the work that folds that viewer into its field.

A year later, Minujín produced *Minucode* at the Center for Inter-American Relations in New York [Figure 187].[110] The work combined the newspaper solicitation, computerized selection process, and isolation-by-demographic of both *Circuit* and *Simultaneidad*; as in the latter, groups were created by profession and gathered in four separate cocktail parties at the institution, with a final cocktail party being held to inaugurate a public exhibition of materials produced during the parties [Figure 188]. Questionnaires appeared on May 7, 1968 in local papers as disparate as *The New York Times* and *Women's Wear Daily*. Eighty people for each of the four cocktail parties were then gleaned from the approximately 1000 responses. The questionnaires asked for information about profession (the only categories provided were business, fashion, art, and politics), "To what extent are you active in the other three areas?" and "What materials turn you on?" [Figure 189]. During the parties, eight participants, pre-selected from each group by their requests to be "leaders," were led into a nearby room where there were movie and slide projectors, strobe lights, microphones, amplifiers, record players, and other devices. There, with the help of light artist Tony Martin, they created a "second environment": what Minujín called the "'subplot' of the cocktail party situation."[111] In addition, each party was filmed by a number of stationary cameras, photographers, and cameramen. These light shows were shown at the exhibition phase of

[110] Minujín was not the only Argentine artist who exhibited at the CIAR in the late 1960s. In addition to the artists who were featured in Romero Brest's *Beyond Geometry* show, Eduardo Costa, one of the creators of *Happening para un jabalí difunto*, staged an elaborate project in 1969, the *Fashion Show Poetry Event*. While there is not sufficient room here to review Costa's work abroad and collaborations with New York conceptualists, a comprehensive account is provided in Alexander Alberro, "Media, Sculpture, Myth," pp. 168-179. See also "Fashion Show Poetry Event," Americas Society archives, New York.

[111] Marta Minujín, "*Minucode* statement," Center for Inter-American Relations, 1968, in Americas Society archives.

Minucode from May 27th to June 8th, which featured all four of the "sub-plot" environments created by the smaller groups shown simultaneously along with the footage of the cocktail parties. The content was projected around the room from different sources onto the walls and onto viewers' bodies.

Alexander Alberro argues that in its emphasis on the mass media's capability to generate totalizing environments, *Minucode* represents a break with Minujín's earlier works.

> The content of *Minucode* was the medium. Information was brushed against information. The particular type of information was irrelevant; what mattered was its interplay with other information, a phenomenon true to everyday experience. The aim was to call attention to the contextualizing power of the contemporary mass media, its construction of media environments, and to heighten the audience's awareness of the transformed nature of perception under these conditions. ...The underlying belief was that media environments had come to replace—and were in fact more *immediate* than—unmediated social environments as the site of direct communication. Here, the work came into conflict with Minujín's earlier happenings, which, in their insistence on presence and direct communication with objects and persons, were increasingly considered myth-based.[112]

Alberro rightly notes Minujín's shift over the course of the 1960s from the supposed immediacy and participation of happening or environment to the spatially and temporally discontinuous media work. Certainly the title of the work, *Minucode*, declares its interest in code over message. It promises, as it were, Minujín's code—a unique combination of the codes designed by the artist and those created by the participants during the cocktail parties. Alberro does not account, however, for why the cocktail parties were designed to gather people of particular professions. In addition, the artist's interest in the codes of communications media appears before 1966, from *Leyendo las noticias*, in which the

[112] Alberro, "Media, Sculpture, Myth," p. 165.

artist was literally drowned by newspapers, to *Cabalgata*, disseminated televisually in the moment of its occurrence, to *La menesunda*, with its feedback of audience members in the midst of their very progression through the sensorial space. In terms of *Simultaneidad en simultaneidad*, *Minucode* is a continuation of the interest that Masotta mentions in exposing the "surrounding" or "environmentalizing" power of media—their ability to surround, control, and yet remain inconspicuous.[113]

Simultaneidad, Circuit, and *Minucode* situate the viewer between analog and digital interfaces.[114] Instances of direct contact between body and medium are processed into free-floating digital forms such as audio and televisual playback. Once extracted and severed from the participant's body, information can be projected in a room, played back at a later date, or sent round the world on television or radio. In *Minucode*, the viewers create content that is ultimately projected back onto them; it is they who play with or wield the media. This constitutes a degree of control withheld from *Simultaneidad*'s participants, who in their professional lives control everyone else's mediatic experience. In the earlier work it was up to the first-order viewer to recognize and understand the environment around him or her; in *Minucode* they craft a new one, an alternate media

[113] As discussed above, the newspaper might also represent an example of a media "environment." Other Minujín projects from this moment share an interest in this idea, none more so than *Minuphone*, co-designed by design technician Peter Bjorn of Bell Laboratories and shown at Howard Wise Gallery in 1967: a phone booth that generated different effects—different lighting, smoke, air, water, the viewer's image projected on a TV screen on the floor—depending on the combination of numbers pressed and the fluctuations of the viewer's voice. Kitsch as it may have been, *Minuphone* literalizes an entry into a "media environment" that controls one's perceptive and informational surroundings. The project was created with funds from a Guggenheim Fellowship. See Marta Minujín biography circa 1968, unpublished document, Americas Society archives.

[114] My understanding of "analog" here is drawn from Brian Massumi, who contrasts it with the "digital," which consists of copies of copies and has its truest definition in computer code. Massumi frames the relation between analog and digital in affective terms, arguing that it is only the analog that bears traces of the body and its fluid interaction with the world around it. For example, computer code might produce words which appear on the screen, but it is only in being contacted and read by human eyes that those words truly "appear." See Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. 138-143.

environment. In this sense, *Minucode* is more democratic than *Tucumán Arde*, which gave its viewers little to do beyond absorbing information and theoretically becoming catalyzed as political agents. The projects share in common their emphasis on architecture as a site in which viewers are bombarded or surrounded by information and media. For all of the techniques of discontinuity and displacement involved, both depend on the viewer-participant's presence in a contained architectural site to collectively receive information.

This practice of projections onto the bodies of participants in *Minucode* also recalls Andy Warhol's Exploding Plastic Inevitable, or EPI, which featured the Velvet Underground and took place at his Factory studio from 1966 to 1967. At this series of party-happenings, films projected onto visitors' bodies conspired with the cacophonous music to disorient the viewer or to achieve, as David Joselit writes, a "shattering of figure/ground relationships"—not figure and ground in terms of a two-dimensional image, but in terms of visual or aural lived space.[115] Minujín's use of bodily projection in *Minucode* served a different purpose: it rendered the space *all ground*. By projecting content from the previous party at the same site onto that site, the ground, or context, was doubled—redundantly signaled. Both the site, and its ideological relationship to its events, lost its transparency.

In press materials for *Minucode* dated April 16, 1968, Minujín is quoted as saying, "The main elements upon which the accompanying project is based consist of various groups or social environments shown as systems which function independently of

[115] See David Joselit, "Yippie Pop: Abbie Hoffman, Andy Warhol, and 60s Media Politics," *Grey Room* 8 (Summer 2002), p. 73. See also Joselit, *Feedback: Television Against Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007) and Branden Joseph, "My Mind Split Open: Andy Warhol's Exploding Plastic Inevitable," *Grey Room* 8 (Summer 2002), pp. 80-107.

one another and which meet only in the neutral field of art."[116] The artist's choice of venue, however, the Center for Inter-American Relations, was anything but neutral. It was founded in 1965 by a group of businessmen headed by David Rockefeller to strengthen ties between the United States and Latin America on cultural, economic and political fronts. As an institution, the CIAR's message was that cultural spheres such as art and fashion were anything but independent or "neutral fields"—they were caught up in political and economic relations, dependent on global capital and power. Minujín eschewed the avant-garde leisure of the Factory in favor of the more traditional cocktail party, evening counterpart to the daytime meeting. The cocktail party is that event in between work and play; its ultimate purpose is the establishment of networks. Like *Simultaneidad* before it, *Minucode* self-reflection by members of certain professions about an activity central to their work. The guests were not merely looking at different media or forms of information, but images of their own networking. The social activity required to consolidate and perpetuate power in and between their respective fields was reflected back at them. What appears to be a display of media or code for its own sake nonetheless has a message: the network unites cultural, economic, and political spheres. The CIAR was created as a site for the formalization of cultural, economic and political initiatives and partnerships. In an increasingly globalized capitalist world, Rockefeller was accumulating the cultural capital accrued by providing one of the few spaces in New York at which Latin American artists would be showcased.[117] Veiled by its playful

[116] "For release to morning edition of Tuesday, April 16, 1968," unpublished document, Americas Society archives.

[117] See Luis Camnitzer, "The Museo Latinoamericano and MICLA," in *A Principality of Its Own*, ed. Rangel, pp. 216-229. Camnitzer argues that the lack of venues for Latin American artists in the early 1970s served to unite and politicize Latino and Latin American artists of different national backgrounds. See also Taína Caragol's ongoing dissertation project, CUNY Graduate Center, which will historicize the institutionalization of Latin American art in New York art institutions, as well as the symposia and

participatory appearance, *Minucode* pointed out this state of affairs only three years after the CIAR's formation, from a position within the institution and with its complete ideological and financial support. It is the intra-institutional counterpart to *Tucumán Arde*'s liberatory anti-institutional gesture.

One year after *Minucode*, Fernando Cardoso and Enzo Faletto would write the foundational book of dependency theory, which described the perpetually dependent position of Latin American countries upon wealthier countries such as the United States.[118] The CIAR represented the implicit hierarchy of the Cold War partnerships between North America and its neighbors to the south. The networking codes that *Minucode* exposed were likewise not innocent, and twofold: there was on the one hand the subservience of cultural fields to those of economics and politics, and on the other the larger situation of Latin America's dependence, reflected microcosmically in Minujín's own situation as an Argentine artist needing the New York milieu for cultural legitimation.[119] Her mode of critique is fundamentally different from that of *Tucumán Arde*. Using the ludic atmosphere that she was obligated to provide as a Latin American artist, she subtly exposed the mechanisms of power that were conditioning her reception and success in the United States.[120] Both *Minucode* and *Tucumán Arde* bombarded viewers with information, but *Tucumán Arde* aimed to repeat the message until it was received, while *Minucode* used subtext.

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publications relating to the ongoing research and exhibitions project *Meeting Margins: Transnational Art in Latin America and Europe 1950-1978* sponsored by the University of Essex in conjunction with the University of Texas, Austin.

[118] Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, *Dependencia y desarrollo en América Latina* (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, SA, 1969).

[119] Minujín later made ironic commentary on this state of affairs in a 1985 performance at Exit Art with Andy Warhol, *Payment to Andy Warhol of the Argentine Foreign Debt in Corn*. Photographs feature the two artists seated side by side above a pile of unshucked ears of corn.

[120] In this sense *Minucode* is to the institution's role in promoting artists from the periphery what Lamelas's *Publication* is to the counterpublic or avant-garde that welcomes peripheral members.

Minujín's interest in collectivity, which can be traced back to her earliest efforts to "burn out" her identity or potentiality through collaboration, resurfaces in a series of happenings from her second sojourn in New York (1972-74), among them *Interppening* (a collaboration with Juan Downey, August 1972) and *Kidnappening* (August 1973), which were both staged at MoMA, *Nicappening*, a politically-charged intervention in the Parke Bernet Gallery, and *Imago Flowing*, in Central Park (September 1974).[121] *Interppening* and *Imago Flowing* led large crowds in the recitation of mantra-like incantations, conjuring the spectacle of momentary utopian collectivity but also the dangers of such uniformity then being illustrated by the rise of neofascisms in Latin America and elsewhere. *Kidnappening*, a tribute to the recently deceased Pablo Picasso, staged abductions of spectators from MoMA to various sites around New York City by a group of actors with faces painted to resemble Picasso paintings [Figure 190]. In Argentina at this time, kidnappings had become a strategy of both left and right extremists, from the kidnapping and execution of former president Pedro Aramburu by the Montoneros in May 1970 to disappearances of activists and intellectuals by state-sponsored death squads which had commenced in 1971.[122]

Kidnappening reveals two limits of Minujín's practice. On the one hand, her work within art institutions approaches a point of irredeemable kitsch. At the height of institutional critique, the artist aids MoMA in its celebration of the ultimate modernist hero through a private happening for connected socialites. On the other hand, a new faith

[121] See "Art Event Staged by Marta Minujín in Museum Garden" and "Kidnappening: An Artistic Adventure Created by Marta Minujín for Summergarden," MoMA Press Releases, August 1972 and August 1, 1973, Americas Society archives.
[122] For a detailed account of this turbulent political moment, see Guillermo O'Donnell, *Bureaucratic Authoritarianism: Argentina, 1966-1973, in Comparative Perspective*, trans. James McGuire and Rae Flory (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 227-335.

is evident in the salvific power of code-based art—she is attempting to redeem a form of ongoing political violence in Latin America as a mode of participation. The newspaper's ability to ensnare viewers into the work's field is reformulated as one's literal kidnapping by art. Like Lamelas's *The Hand*, *Kidnappening* is at a profound remove from actual violence yet nonetheless betrays an awareness of it. Its counterpoint from that same year is Minujín's *Soft Gallery*, a collaboration with Richard Squires in which 200 mattresses were organized into the floors, walls and ceiling of an environment [Figure 191].[123] Here the form of the gallery is doubled with one of the artist's earliest materials. The hard surfaces upon which art is normally exhibited and experienced are replaced by those for love and sleep. Beyond the mere protection provided by CAYC and the containers created by its artists, in the *Soft Gallery* there is an added dimension of comfort and even care for those who would enter.

Minujín returned to Buenos Aires in 1975 and staged *La academia del fracaso* at CAYC.[124] The project consisted of a ten-day interdisciplinary conference devoted to the theme of failure for which participants had to fill out questionnaires in advance. Employing the scientific language of Grippo and the Grupo de los Trece, Minujín's likened her goal of deriving productivity from failure to alchemical reactions "similar to topping and cracking that transforms petroleum into essences of a highly volatile energy." She continues:

To facilitate the treatment, failures have been divided into three levels:

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[123] *200 Mattresses*, exh. cat. (Washington, D.C.: Harold Rivkin Gallery, 1973). The environment was up from April 5 to April 28, 1973.

[124] There are unfortunately no extant images of the event. This was not the first time Minujín had worked with CAYC. In January 1970 the artist hosted a multimedia event at the Center that contrasted film and music from hippie actions in New York and religious ceremonies in Nepal and Tibet. See "El Festival de la Vida—Light Show," unnumbered and undated *gacetilla*, MoMA Library.

> Level I: Those who remain obsessed with success and need others to judge themselves. When failure comes, they are frightened because they live as if failure were a punishment for an erroneous action, the defect of which they failed to see.
> Level II: Those who, in order to safeguard themselves from failure, question the guidelines and conventions of society. They live failure as a social affront to mainstream lifestyles.
> Level III: Those who have transcended and, indifferent as they are to social recognition, push back the frontiers of knowledge, developing an exasperated search for the aesthetic, for an understanding of everything that will be a source of pride to a society which, for the moment, ignores them.[125]

With *La academia del fracaso* Minujín moved away from her previous uses of technology in favor of the CAYC group research model, which ironically brought her full circle. She proposes a collective effort to investigate, understand, and triumph over failure, as in *La destrucción* she enlisted the efforts of fellow artists to destroy her previous artistic identity so that she could emerge anew.[126] The political resonance of this project, half a year before the coup, is clear. She once again looks to potentiality—in its full sense, as the possibility of both success and failure—as a generative principle. Perhaps failure, this logic goes, is a solution in disguise. Minujín argues this at the precise moment at which democracy in Argentina is about to inhabit, for a long and tragic duration, its diametric opposite.

[125] "Academia del Fracaso," *GT*-524, July 22, 1975. My translation. See also Jorge Glusberg, *Marta Minujín en el Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, 1999), 42.

[126] It is a noteworthy that in 1975 both Minujín and Ferrari return to modes or approaches from their early-1960s production. Minujín revisits the anxious terrain of potentiality, while Ferrari, as though returning to his starting point, starts again with abstract drawing, and for a second time charts a path from abstraction to language (although this time the wildly unstable language of Letraset), as explained in the Conclusion below.

Conclusion
Languages for the Unspeakable

León Ferrari's *Heliografías* series, produced while he was in exile in São Paulo in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and the *Siluetazo* collaboration between artists and the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo in 1983 are salient commentaries on the dialectics of Argentine conceptualism that are discussed in this dissertation. As was the case with many of the artists associated with *Tucumán Arde*, Ferrari eschewed traditional art production in the early 1970s.[1] The genesis of the *Heliografías* dates to 1975, the year in which he began drawing again. He picked up more or less where he had left off in 1964, with abstract, calligraphic linear designs [Figure 192]. In 1976 he fled to Brazil; the junta later disappeared his son. After settling in São Paulo, he began experimenting with Xeroxing, heliography, and other media such as video with a group of artists that included Carmela Gross. The latter devised a technique of repeating the same scribble via a rubber stamp—a mechanization of Ferrari's "deformed drawing" in which what appears to be a handmade drawing can be reproduced endlessly. In 1979 Ferrari began a series of drawings and collages using different Letraset images, which are applied to a substrate via rubbing. They are not drawn, but imprinted. The earliest of these works, with titles such as *Codigos* [*Code*] and *Diccionario* [*Dictionary*] [Figure 193], reference the linguistic nature of the Letraset vocabulary, which was originally intended as discrete images of people, objects and characters for architectural designers. Different signs, such

[1] He did participate in actions with other artists such as *Malvenido Rockerfeller* [*Unwelcome Rockerfeller*], a series of poster designs opposing Nelson Rockerfeller's visit to Argentina in 1971. He also proposed a mural calendar that would track human rights abuses to the National Salon. When it was rejected, he participated in counter-biennials, including one in New York that contested the São Paulo Biennial. See Andrea Giunta, ed., *Leon Ferrari: Retrospectiva. Obras 1954-2004*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Centro Cultural Recoleta), 2004, p. 375.

as animals and letters, are placed alongside one another as well as beside what appear to be hand-drawn clusters of lines, creating sets of associations that freely multiply. The signs are not limited to the syntagm of written language; they can be read horizontally, vertically, diagonally, or in groups. Their meaning is constantly in flux in relation to the different characters around them; each movement from one sign to the next results in new associations. It is up to the viewer to arrange the information. This could be seen as a return to the earlier freedom of interpretation that Ferrari granted the viewer in the early 1960s in his *Dibujos escritos*, but with the multiplicity of possible meaning in this case literalized through an abundance of signs.

From these explorations, Ferrari entered an extremely prolific phase, experimenting with this new vocabulary, sampling myriad organizations, and gradually augmenting scale and complexity. In 1980 he began using Letraset in a much larger format—in some cases 1.2 meters by 3 meters—in his series of *Heliografías* [Figure 194]. One of these is titled *Bairro*, which is Portuguese for "neighborhood" but also "district"—an urban area that is delimited or marked off in some way. Yet this representation of urban space appears, if anything, unlimited. As a blueprint, it corresponds to an impossible place. There is neither origin nor intended product for this image, neither preexisting nor future referent. Perhaps this is why many, including the artist himself, have called these images "architectures of madness," a phrase that precludes any closer formal inquiry.[2] Ferrari would initially apply Letraset images to

[2] "Ferrari refers to the use of Letraset in his heliographies and explains: 'The result looks like urbanization or plans, with a certain Surrealist humor, and in some way they can also be seen as an architecture of madness,'" in Giunta, trans. Tamara Stuby unless otherwise indicated, *León Ferrari: Retrospectiva*, p. 381. Original quote in Vicente Zito Lema, "León Ferrari y los secretos del hombre y la sociedad," *La Voz* (Buenos Aires), July 26, 1984. See also Maria Clara Bernal and Gabriela Salgado, *León Ferrari's 'Mad Architectures'*, exh. cat. (Essex, UK: University Gallery, University of Essex, 2002). Roberto Jacoby describes the *Heliografías* in Foucauldian terms, as a "vast jail." Roberto Jacoby, "Las Herejías de León

Mylar paper alongside hand-drawn lines. Light would then be shined through these originals onto sheets of light-sensitive paper treated with ammonia, which would then be Xeroxed as multiples. The enormous pictures were then folded and mailed to different artists and curators, worldwide, as mail art.[3] Ferrari numbered each edition over an infinity sign—a reference to both their infinite reproducibility (a deliberate undermining of their status as unique objects) and their seeming infinity of detail.[4]

The 1976 coup saw a return to figuration by Argentine artists such as Antonio Berni, Antonio Segui, Juan Pablo Renzi, and Margarita Paksa, among many others, through which the horrors of the dictatorship were referenced through neoexpressionist grotesquerie [Figure 195].[5] Ferrari was part of this trend, although not in the mode of his peers, for the *Heliografías* undermine representation even as they represent people and places. The spaces they articulate are not perspectival, as it is impossible to realistically be positioned directly above absolutely every person and object simultaneously in such a vast area. Yet their close resemblance to development plans, maps, or diagrams make them easily read as either existing or future lived spaces. As such semblances of

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Ferrari," *Crisis* (Buenos Aires), January 1987, pp. 71-73. Quoted at length in *León Ferrari: Retrospectiva*, p. 378.

[3] Ferrari referred to them as "the largest examples of mail art in the world," quoted in Gabriel Pérez-Barreiro, ed., *Blanton Museum of Art: Latin American Collection* (Austin, TX: Blanton Museum of Art, University of Texas, Austin, 2006), p. 192.

[4] For brevity's sake, only the *Heliografías* that resemble architectural blueprints are discussed. The series involves is split between the "architectural" or "urban" images and more abstract works such as *Cruzamento* [Portuguese for *Intersection*] (1982), in which Ferrari pushes Letraset characters, most often a human figure in mid-stride, away from their ability to signify individually and toward uniformity as compositional units or digits á la Benday dots.

[5] Segui and Berni, who had worked in a figurative mode all along, led the trend, and even 1960s conceptualists such as Pablo Suarez and Margarita Paksa used it to obliquely reference ongoing horrors. Leaving behind the Expressionist tendencies of 60s Argentine painting, Berni and Suarez sought to convey a sense of dread through images of prostitution that recall the shift in Prewar German painting from the Expressionist mode to the unsettlingly naturalistic images of Neue Sachlichkeit, while Segui arguably adopted a Surrealist idiom. Paksa's naturalistic drawings of cooked pigs resonate most viscerally in their obsessive attention to detail. See Andrea Giunta, "Pintura en los '70: inventario y realidad," in *Arte y Poder*: *Jornadas de Teoría e Historia de las Artes No. 5* (Buenos Aires: Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, University of Buenos Aires, 1993).

preparatory drawings, the *Heliografías* recall the predominance of the plan in the work of CAYC artists. As in Zabala's *Anteproyectos*, they refer to no result or preexisting site. There is a shared emphasis on the authoritarian dimension of architecture, its ability to control people, to funnel them down passageways and into spaces, to force them to react in planned ways.

The Letraset vocabulary that Ferrari employs comes out of an earlier, and quite different, modernist trajectory: the prewar drive to establish a universal language of signs. In 1936, the Viennese sociologist Otto Neurath and the Cologne-based artist Gerd Arntz collaborated on a vocabulary of basic signs that they dubbed "'ISOTYPE': International System of Typographic Picture Education."[6] Their ambition was to design generalized signs for the majority of objects and phenomena in modern life; a new dictionary of images [Figure 196]. They were intended to be potentially applicable to a variety of different purposes, chief among them statistics, street signage, and education. Neurath conceived of Isotype as "a sign-for-sign picture language" that would place images on par with words. They were intended to be universally recognizable by anyone, a "figurative Esperanto"[7] to trump all linguistic difference—to establish a utopian condition of, as Neurath put it, "debabelization."[8]

While not specifically Isotype, the walking figure [Figure 197] and other Letraset signs used in the *Heliographs* are inheritors of Neurath and Arntz's modernist aspiration towards universalized signs. The convenience of this figure for the creation of

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[6] Otto Neurath, *International Picture Language: The First Rules of Isotype* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1936), p. 7.

[7] Enrico Chapel, "Otto Neurath and the CIAM—The *International Picture Language* as a Notational System for Town Planning," in E. Nemeth and F. Stadler, eds., *Encyclopedia and Utopia: the life and work of Otto Neurath (1882-1945)*, Vienna Circle Institute Yearbook 4 (Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1996), p. 170. For information on Neurath's biography, see Paul Neurath, "Otto Neurath (1882-1945)—Life and Work," also in *Encyclopedia and Utopia*, pp. 15-28.

[8] *International Picture Language*, p. 13.

architectural or urban plans is obvious: it can be placed or repeated wherever people are intended to traverse or occupy areas of represented space. Yet the diffuse meaning that Ferrari amplifies is already present its conventional use. The walking figure is meant to simultaneously correspond to both the actual trajectory of a single person and the presence of all people who might traverse that space. As a sign, it is simultaneously individual and multiple, specific and general. Ferrari plays these two registers of meaning, representational and statistical, against each other. If a given figure begins to suggest a believable scene, the mad profusion of other signs undoes that believability, pushing the figure's status back towards that of the statistical sign. Neurath's "debabelization" has given way to Ferrari's *babelismo*, in which individual intention is lost in a multitude of semantic possibilities.

The *Heliografías* contrast hand-drawn lines and readymade Letraset characters. These imperfect, hand-drawn lines represent features of architectural space: demarcations, walls, and openings. Yet the Letraset figures also bear evidence of the artist's hand; of the smudges and residues left by the process of their application. And it is these industrially produced glyphs that retain the ambiguity of Ferrari's earliest works on paper, prior to his dogmatic *arte de los significados* phase. The *Heliografías*' presentation of constraining architecture inhabited by undifferentiated automata is not limited to the Argentine dictatorship; it allegorizes all modernist dreams turned nightmares. It exposes the controlling character of *Tucumán Arde*, with its own attempt to program mass audiences through architecture. This message, however, is undermined, however, by the multitude of signs, which both facilitate and represent open, uncontrollable signification. It is a desperate attempt to reconcile contrary methods in a

time of crisis: to use the semiotic structure of "Rorschach art" as the conduit for *el arte de los significados*.

The *Heliografías* are a tragic meditation on the inefficacy of art in the face of modern state terror. The freely proliferating meanings of his drawn language are imprisoned by their architectural shell—by the limits of the plan, be it a dictatorial or leftist one—yet the infinitude of signs also prevent that plan, or any protest against it, from being read. In a 1982 interview, Ferrari said, "I don't agree that art can effect a social revolution, but I also don't agree with those who say that art is useless, because they deny its contribution to society, which, even if it is a grain of sand, remains important, makes it possible to talk about things that are unspeakable."[9] Returning to the starting point of both Ferrari and Greco—art reduced to the basics of drawing and writing—the *Heliografías* can conjure the unspeakable precisely because they are written, and not spoken. This is their fundamental incommensurability, their internal contradiction: they are a language for the unspeakable, as though meanings that multiply beyond coherence might somehow answer ongoing atrocities.

In 1977, while the disappearances were still ongoing, the Madres de la Plaza de Mayo began meeting in the center of Buenos Aires to protest the junta's assassinations of their children and family members. Starting September 21, 1983, this activist group began collaborating with the artists Rodolfo Aguerreberry, Julio Flores and Guillermo Kexel to produce *El Siluetazo* [*Silhouette-Event*], in which the Madres, the artists and hundreds of volunteers posted thousands of silhouettes printed and drawn on life-size

[9] Ferrari is originally quoted in Adriana Malvido, "El arte tiene un peso politico muy fuerte, que puede servir al poder o a las fuerzas que lo combaten: Ferrari," *Uno*más*uno* (Mexico), April 8, 1982, p. 16. This article is quoted in Aracy Amaral, "León Ferrari: The São Paulo Years," trans. Odile Cisneros, in Andrea Giunta, ed., *Leon Ferrari: Retrospectiva. Obras 1954-2004*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Centro Cultural Recoleta), 2004, p. 358.

sheets of paper were throughout the space of the city [Figures 198 and 199]. The events were restaged at the Obeslisco in the center of the city several months later.[10] At the moment of transition from dictatorship to a new and fragile democracy, this project served to bring to visibility precisely what the military had attempted to utterly erase from public life: those individuals who represented, either truthfully or with no basis whatsoever, the "subversive" values and legacy of the 1960s that the government so desired to eradicate. These victims of state terror were represented through their absence through the form of the silhouette. They were distributed throughout public space as specters of difference, a remainder of the subject that refused to disappear. This signaling of absence makes direct reference to both Greco's silhouettes of participants in his Madrid *Vivo-Ditos* and *Tucumán Arde*'s incorporation of graffiti into its publicity campaign prior to the Rosario installation [Figure 200]. From the neo-avant-garde hope to enfold the entire lived world into art to the utopian ambition for art to make essential contributions to a nascent revolution that would obliterate class difference and exploitation, the gaze of the street action and public speech had turned rearward. The emphasis would from now on be on the past, on a desperately needed recovery of a traumatic history.

This shift is perceptible in the transition from the ITDT era to that of CAYC. The sociological reflection promulgated by Oscar Masotta, Roberto Jacoby, and other conceptual artists was undertaken in anticipation of something, as though imparting skills for future use, an empowerment of the viewer to know his or her structural circumstances in contribution to a larger endeavor of societal knowledge. *Tucumán Arde* attempted to

[10] Ana Longoni, "El Siluetazo (The Silhouette): On the Border between Art and Politics," *Sarai Reader: Frontiers* (2007), p. 181.

become this project: to exist wholly in the present, address the specific needs and problems of that present, and affect immediate change. If heterogeneous production of the artists of CAYC can be generalized about, it could be argued that they, too, were focused on present conditions, but in terms of generating reflections of those conditions through analogy or metaphor, with far less optimism about the possibility of changing them (the metaphor of containment is particularly powerful in this regard). Viewers were treated to some sense of their own predicament through the perspective of those in control, but were ultimately figured as the contained creatures and subjects who were simultaneously imprisoned and dependent—utterly subjugated. Working while the subsequent atrocities of the Process were underway, Ferrari developed a language that could not communicate a politics to a potential public nor an account of ongoing violence. He unearthed the mad multiplicity of the sign to evoke the sudden chasm between 1960s aspirations and 1970s realities.

The *Siluetazo* might be understood in light of Masotta's primary field, psychoanalytic theory. Masotta's analytical work of art is akin to the analysand's work of investigation into his or her own structural makeup, for example the patterns of behavior controlling desires and decisions. The hope of analysis is that consciousness of these patterns might allow for more control over them, through sheer force of knowledge. The *Siluetazo*'s collective act of reflection on Argentina's traumatic 1970s is yet closer to the psychoanalytic emphasis on the past as a source of painful repetition—the aim is to lay the past bare so that one might stop reliving it. The intuition of structure, once again acted out in public space by a collective, here becomes historically charged. Apperception acts upon the atavistic system of the past itself, to know it, and, in doing so, end its reign.

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