

Production of desire. It means nothing, but works

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“The rule of continually producing production, of grafting producing onto the product, is a characteristic of desiring-machines or of primary production: the production of production.”

Gilles Deleuze/Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (p. 7) 1983, University of Minnesota Press. Minneapolis.

“Desiring-machines are not fantasy-machines or dream-machines, which supposedly can be distinguished from technical and social machines. Rather, fantasies are secondary expressions, deriving from the identical nature of the two sorts of machines in any given set of circumstances.”

Gilles Deleuze / Félix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, (p. 30) 1983, University of Minnesota Press. Minneapolis.

“Don’t panic. ‘Confession is nothing, knowledge is everything.’ That’s a quote but I’m not going to tell who said it.”

Susan Sontag. “Project for a Trip to China” in *I, etcetera*. [Taken from *Debriefing. Collected Stories*] (p. 34) 1997. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. New York.

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When accepting to write a text to be included in the publication of an “exhibition”,<sup>1</sup> several problems arise whose complexity is apparent in a sea of doubts that, like it or not, condition this text. First of all, it

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1 I should point out here that it has become customary to adjectivise the exhibition occurrence from the notion of event, happening, etc., perhaps because the word “exhibition” bears market prejudice, although not necessarily. An extreme that does not work well with the purpose of this text, which is none other than to give rise to some considerations about the conceivable relations between “exhibition/event”, museal “machine” and archive.

highlights the unease implied by writing about something that, barring any unforeseen circumstances, will take place in the near future, but of which nothing is known.<sup>2</sup> Nothing can be known, and even after it has been held, nothing will be known. This is what we know and it is this that allows us to reach a position from which to say a posteriori: “now we know what we have seen, heard, felt, spoken...”

This attempt, then, to write about something that is going to be seen, heard, touched, felt or spoken from a “present” perspective leaves certain considerations open about its plausibility,<sup>3</sup> because by positioning the object in a near future, it invites us to take a step forward so as to be able to confront it from “what has happened”. This gives rise to the suspicion that it is only possible to exercise a present perspective from a certain notion of archive. The present is external to time, but not to action. The present has no time, only space. Indeed, to put it in “Deleuzian” terms, time is deduced from space. What then will be received, what will be seen? It is agreed that nothing can be known, of course, for this has already been stated. But based on this impossibility one can consider the relevance of

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2 Societies in free-market, liberal democracies that have assumed the future was yesterday disseminate the contemporary museum space as the performative space for audiovisual archive. There where action is consumed in its finiteness, all that remains is the narrative character of *what has been seen, witnessed or felt*. This circumstance, closely related to cultural studies, argues in favour of the imperialism of information and archive linked to the development of ICTs.

3 Managing the present is, firstly, recognising it, because of the impossibility of fixing “what is happening” in a body of non-fictional writing, as opposed to the reality of immediate perceptions (images) formed on the retina. This extreme somehow explains the profusion of metaphors referring to fluidity, air, flows, froth, etc., which confirm the proliferation of loss of materiality processes so prevalent in what was published towards the end of the millennium.

making a relatively comprehensive description of the (constituent?) structure of the motivating event we have in mind: a concrete, specific arrangement of an “interrelated set” of items (pieces/objects, texts, diagrams, documents, etc.) produced in different (or not) periods of time by the author, made public in a “show” format (this is a supposition), perhaps of an installational nature, housed in a specialised (public) institutional space and, most importantly, registered and recorded by the temporal exhibition programme that is a museum space.

This description can undoubtedly be expanded further, but apart from the scarcity of space available to do so, it would not contribute anything more to the need for this description. The truth is that no major disagreements are expected to ensure that what is contained in the description will not be what is going happen, and not even what is going to be seen, heard, touched or felt, etc. The need for a description is the same as the need for a diagram, especially if the event is observed, as this text aims to do, from a notion of archive.<sup>4</sup> This notion at the very least leads to two completely different modes: an awareness of history and what is to come. The above description includes these two options: on the one hand, there is the inaugural order of the “interrelated whole” provided by the author and/or curator and, on the other hand, the space for recording and registering, the museal machine that is not restricted to the production of visibility, but instead arbitrates what has to be preserved and what does not. This production of light occurs against the backdrop that the nation state has envisioned for heritage: national identity and its history of immortality.

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4 An approach to these problems focusing more on the 21st century can be found in the book by Andrés Maximiliano Tello entitled: *Anarchivismo. Tecnologías políticas del archivo* (Anarchivism. Political technologies of the archive). Ediciones La Cebra, 2018, Buenos Aires.

It was Michel Foucault who expressed most interest in the relationship between the great institutions of confinement and the technology of the archive, providing an account of the shift from societies of sovereignty to disciplinary societies, and from these to societies of control. But it was Gilles Deleuze who expressed it thus in his writings:

Types of machines are easily matched with each type of society –not that machines are determining, but because they express those social forms capable of generating them and using them. The old societies of sovereignty made use of simple machines– levers, pulleys, clocks; but the recent disciplinary societies equipped themselves with machines involving energy, with the passive danger of entropy and the active danger of sabotage; the societies of control operate with machines of a third type, computers, whose passive danger is jamming and whose active one is piracy or the introduction of viruses. This technological evolution must be, even more profoundly, a mutation of capitalism [...].<sup>5</sup>

If, as stated, any historical formation can be defined by a regime of visibility and a regime of statements, what is the regime of visibility of the present? What are the statements of capitalism of infinite accumulation? We turned to a “present perspective” above to account for an event that will inevitably happen in the near future, but what we are dealing with now, what we are dealing with in (connected) societies of control is what subject is the subject of the present,

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5 Gilles Deleuze. *Postscript on the Societies of Control*. (p. 6). The MIT Press, 1992, Cambridge, MA. Financial capitalism based on the infinite accumulation of money is outside all thinkable worlds.

because there is no subject, only processes of subjectivation.<sup>6</sup> In other words, there is the production of ethical and aesthetic selfs to the detriment of moral subjectivation and these participate in knowledge and power, to express it according to Foucault.

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We know that we are subjects of multiple agency and that time has passed ever since the beginning of the gradual destitution of the modern subject, so echoed by the difficulties involved in thinking of a first-person subject in the singular. This is an issue where the traces of its problems can still be found in the dense, concentrated passage of conducting daily life, despite having lost its relevance in the social communication of today. Perhaps this is not the place to continue along these lines. This may be so, but I point it out to locate, however precariously, Meana’s creative process engaged with the often used quotation by Marx from the *Communist Manifesto*: “All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and men at last are forced to face... the real conditions of their lives and their relations with their fellow men.”<sup>7</sup>

Having said this, and as a preamble to possible subsequent approaches to Meana’s exhibition event, I have to admit my familiarity with his work ever since its beginnings, because he produced a

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6 Gilles Deleuze. *La subjetivación. Curso sobre Foucault* (Subjectivation. Course on Foucault). Vol. 3. Editorial Cactus, 2017, Buenos Aires.

7 Marshall Berman. *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*. (p. 21). Penguin, NY, 1988. The image evoked by the book’s title refers to “a description of modern bourgeois society” made by Karl Marx, which is somewhat surprising given the resource of evanescence to define modern reality.

great deal of it within Trayecto Galería, thereby allowing me to be a direct witness to the work he carried out during this time. After a brief beginning with an interest in painting, Meana becomes impervious to representation and its problems to position himself in the fields of sculpture, objects, installation, photography, video or performance. One should not necessarily consider this opening up as an inter- or multi-disciplinary space, as one would normally be inclined to think, but simply accept it as a list of available aesthetic resources. From there it is possible to create a space to show the non-separation of "doing/thinking" and include the (multiple) context as another element in defining possible actions. From here one can understand his arrival to writing, which has maintained a strong presence throughout his career.

Let us stop for a while here to address the title that Meana has devised for this solo exhibition in Artium: *NOS[ YO ]OTROS*. One immediately realises that it is a title to be seen more than to be read. In addition to underlining the importance that the problems of cultural identity have had in his works,<sup>8</sup> the fact that he preferred to employ an image instead of relying on the linguistic nature of the various elements comprising it indicates that each individual element cannot be read outside the relationship that incorporates them into the image. Therefore, the image/title shows that the artist is inviting us to think or rethink the available idea of "I" within a context of non-exclusive present multiplicity. But perhaps it is also a

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8 François Jullien. *La identidad cultural no existe* (There is no such thing as cultural identity). (p. 9). Ed. Taurus, 2017, Barcelona. In the translator's comment written by Pablo Cuartas: "François Jullien's first philosophical gesture involves becoming a foreigner in one's own language, a gesture that addresses the aim of recovering, in everyday speech, senses obscured by time and custom." It seems appropriate to note the familiarity of this "becoming a foreigner in one's own language" with the positions taken by Meana in his artistic work and writings.

resource that will most likely bring us closer to the surroundings of the work/life context in which the pieces to be shown are recorded, dating back to the 1990s<sup>9</sup> until today.

It is true that identity as a problem is not separate element from my activity as an artist, but the form taken by the title composed by Meana is a cause for encouragement. The title refers to a type of diagram that includes an inserted/écart "I"<sup>10</sup> in a "We" by dividing the latter into two: us/others. The plural "we" usually encloses a dual operation: on the one hand, it includes and, on the other hand, it excludes, closes in on and expels a part of itself: the plural "others". Those who are not "I". It can therefore be seen that "We" is a false plural, because everything points to the fact that it is a plural confined to the "unity of group", whose elements are subjected to homogenisation processes. There is no plurality in the "We", but arbitrary group homogeneity. There is no identity as such, but rather a process of shifting that makes cultural identity impossible, no matter how much fear or vulnerability encourages the vindication of identity and brings with it the return of nationalisms in the face of globalisation processes.

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9 The change of millennium was strongly thematised during this decade by assimilating it to a new world: something will cease to be in the year 1999 and something will begin in the year 2000. Nonetheless, as Baudrillard: "This decade could be erased from the calendar and nothing would happen."

10 *Op. cit.* Third chapter, *Diferencia o écart: identidad o fecundidad* (Difference or écart: Identity or Fecundity). (p. 43). Écart is a term put forward by François Jullien to account for the diversity of cultures without resorting to the "differences" among them. "Both indicate a separation, but *difference* does so from the perspective of distinction and *écart* does so from the point of view of distance."

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The term “state of necessity” has found its place in global discourse as it seeks an approach to the notion of vulnerability at a time when progress-oriented (Western) societies have uncritically accepted that the only option one has is to choose from either change or disaster. This approach reveals that the sensible choice is not to choose “disaster” and it is therefore likely that the “only” reasonable option, whether we like it or not, has to be “change”, and in this case a paradigm change for sustainable economic development. We thus find ourselves amidst the tremor of a network of paradigmatic changes that do not seek happiness or the well-being of people making up these administered populations based on order in the domain of liberal democracies.

As regards this liberal domain, one must remember that although an intense dynamic of paradigm change is underway –some prefer to call this a change of civilization– these changes are not arising from population groups brought together by ideologies, religious beliefs, epistemologies or cosmovisions of a historical horizon, the way in which it was possible to think from positions of modernity. For the first time, and this is its uniqueness, individuals are no longer the expressions of social change, because centrality is now occupied by the evaluation of the disaster catastrophe. For the first time, it is economic, political, epistemological, etc. “groups” that are ordering “a world” and individuals are expressed by the degrees of fragility acquired from exposure to the new paradigms that drive that world claimed to be sustainable.<sup>11</sup> In the clamour of

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11 One need only read the definition of sustainable development at [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org) to see that the concept of sustainability arises negatively as a “planetary emergency”. E. Morin has claimed in numerous texts –before the

the time that we must live, the subject has become “affected” by what can be said to be the result of administering necessity, in other words, a contemporary subject is an individual concerned about breathing, understood as a desire to live, to state it along the lines of López Petit.<sup>12</sup>

A project entitled “IncurSIONES#ExcursionES” was programmed in Trayecto Galería with the participation of Juan Carlos Meana. Its goal was to provide some kind of response to the always conflictive –and sometimes opposed– manner of relating between the physical and the psychic. An approach to the question about the status of the subjective (and therefore of the subject) in a society organised around overcoming any thinkable metaphysics. What is it then that makes us subject today? When attempting to speak of the subject, the first thought that leads us considering it in a certain way is that which guides us towards the very fact of its destitution. But if for a moment we became the coroners of that “body”, we would discover alongside Foucault that the main cause of such an orbit is the gradual deactivation or neutralisation of subjectivity in various actional processes, in favour either of an idea of nature as the only source of knowledge or of the analyses on power relations as the basis of the social whole.

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abandonment of modern utopias– that it was appropriate to redefine social and cultural purposes in order to provide oneself with a new conscience, and he urged a reform of thought to do this. J. Rancière, on the other hand, noted that the transition from the 20th to the 21st century can be summed up in the constant abandonment of promises, so that –according to Ulrich Beck– it can be understood that we inhabit risk societies.

12 Santiago López Petit. *Entre el ser y el poder. Una apuesta por el querer vivir* (Between being and power. A commitment to wanting to live). Siglo XXI Editores, 1994.

It is far more likely that when we believe we are beginning to realise the world that welcomes us through the conceptualisations of power and its strategies, or when we attach little importance to psychophysical interactions in measuring the states of the system, we are negligently ignoring the status of subjectivity in the structure of reality, thereby slamming the door on the need to establish an ethic of responsibility (Jonas) in actional logic. A responsibility that is difficult not to summon with the available data at the present time. A thought engaged in these considerations will attempt to analyse the state of the subjective within the realm of contemporary creation, knowing that this implies going beyond the internal/external, the healthy/sick, the strong/weak, etc. A thought indicating the contradictory yet at the same time pertinent question: What objectively is subjectivity in creative processes? Subjectivity undoubtedly exists, as has already been indicated by the title of this exhibition, but what is its *status* in the evaluation of actional “a prioris”?

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Finally, where does Juan Carlos Meana seem to speak from? By using simple, emphatic words borrowed from G. Wilches-Chaux, from “a crisis of paradigms and cosmovisions, and at the same time from a very serious ecological, humanitarian crisis”. In other words, from a critical state that triggers multiple readings and enables lines of thought that explore other ways of thinking about reality configured in a radical present –if this were possible– as a way of restoring “situated knowledges”<sup>13</sup>, which expel the double sense/nonsense of the dynamics of acting when developed against a backdrop of situational probabilities.

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13 Donna J. Haraway. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women. The Reinvention of Nature*. (Ch. 9, p. 183), 1991, Routledge, NY.