THE MYTH OF
EUROPA
DEMOCRACY EQUALITY CULTURE BEYOND THE NATION STATE
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IN THIS ISSUE

Ioh+gatto, Wanda Wulz, 1932

CHANGE UTOPIA!

Ours are not sterile times. They are not times of political impossibility, nor of inevitable fate. They are not times when utopias cannot change. They are times of disorientation, of other-worldly skies and flowing fields of the sea. Times where thought is forced to meander through corridors it has never navigated; rolling corridors in which noise reverberates, is distorted, and appears to the senses devoid of unity. And imagination plays the games of a child with a tempera unknown, it spreads its hands over colours it has never mixed, witnesses shapes it has never drawn.
But these are nothing if not sketches of possible histories, allegories of yet unimagined arcadias. Our future is a clearing for these dreams, and our times a flux where we will either mould our destinies, or abandon ourselves to them.

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It is with these premonitions and presentiments that this journal and the organisation it represents have started a process of transnational encounters to discern a new and different world. Over the course of the next six months cultural, political, and philosophical voices will meet in six European cities to come back for a final Congress in London in the month of May. This journey, ChangeUtopia!, is a simple contribution to the wider navigation of all those unsatisfied with our present and engaged constructing our future.

(CONTINUED PAGES 2 & 3) ▶

INTERVIEW WITH ALFREDO JAAR

In his work, artist Alfredo Jaar explores the relationship between the “First” and the “Third Worlds”, how the two are materially interdependent and the former implicated in maintaining the power dynamics of the relationship.
To mark a major retrospective of Jaar’s work taking place in Milan, and to celebrate an artist who prolifically continues to engage his audience with the wider world, proposing possible new models of reality, Europa interviewed Jaar during a recent visit of his to London.

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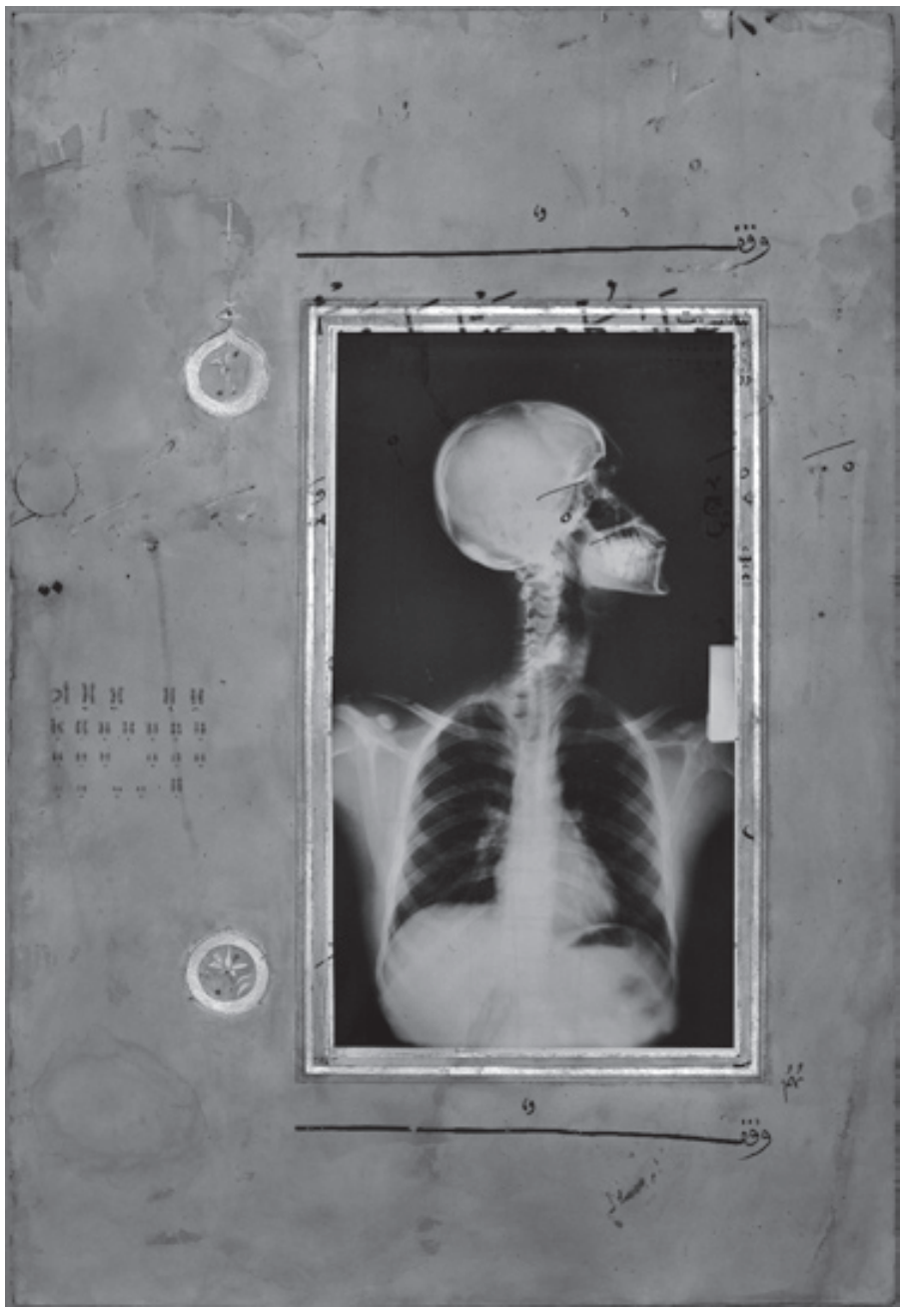
CHANGE

FOR A GLOBAL CONSCIOUSNESS

Over the past decade we have witnessed the emergence of a complex web of political and philosophical suggestions demanding the construction of a world where global exploitation is no longer the norm. Born out of the global movement of the late nineties, many of these demands have found their way in the public political dialectic of today: calls for the governance of unrestrained multinational capital, an awareness of environmental sustainability, the recognition that the state of world poverty is a scandal.

In the process many of these requests have been watered down, rendered palatable when not innocuous to the status quo. But their radical potential remains. It remains because the adjustments that have been offered have not worked, and have not worked in their very own moral terrain: the sustainability of the system. And it remains because what these demands heralded was nothing short of the emergence of a global consciousness.

And what is most striking about the three demands presented above? It is that the object of these political positions is not one of our historical usual suspects. There is no direct reference to 'class', no direct reference to 'state'. Instead an appeal, in what is essentially an ethical demand, to suffering, wherever it is to be found. An appeal on behalf of the disadvantaged of our societies, cutting through the north-south economic divide and the east-west clash of civilisations.



And the radicality of such a stance should not go unnoticed. In times when increasingly vociferous cries of localistic greed are to be heard across Europe, when privileged communities shut their gates to the foreign and combat even merely national redistribution, what a stance to make of man beyond nations the subject of our attention!

This is where the European Union presents a positive side. Its role, albeit still too limited, as a redistributive power. Its attempt, albeit still embryonic, to create solidarity between peoples and across nations.

But the radicality of this cry is also to be found in its dangerous nature, in the threat it poses to our very conceptual scheme and the repartition of moral responsibility. And here it speaks to Westerners and Europeans, and to the privileged of privileged nations, first of all. To all those who, out of a global system where the rule of the jungle prevails, where force rules, where injustice and exploitation are tolerated, to all those who from such a system stand to gain. To gain perhaps an ephemeral gain, but one that seems to govern uncontested; to gain materially.

For a certain arrangement of the trade system, a certain structure of clientele amongst weaker nations, a certain free hand given to our enterprises abroad—enrich us. If we forced our multinationals to respect more stringent labour rights in the delocalised factories of the global South the price of consumer goods would increase; if, as a sign of our historical debt to the world's environment, we followed the requests of the emerging economies of devoting a percentage of our GDP to promote emissions-saving projects in poorer countries, the cost would be dear.

But is the time not ripe to finally reach democratic maturity and take responsibility for injustice being perpetuated in our name by the governments that represent us?

The discourse on migration serves as an excellent example of our current state of irresponsibility. We act as if migrants were being driven towards our lands by baffling gravitational forces; our states view themselves as neutral actors having nothing to do with migration, to which they can respond either brutally or with sympathy, with *charity*, through a more or less strict regulation on asylum seeking procedures, relaxation of internal controls, concession of partial rights, etc.

But this hides the connection between the phenomenon of migration and the economic and military actions of the "receiving" countries or their prime economic actors. It misses the crucial awareness of the *un-foreign* nature of the causes that make of a foreigner an immigrant, it forgets the logics of global exploitation that depart from our own capital cities.

And so, can we believe in a politics that would go against our interests? Can we imagine a politics that would see in the *other* the object of its action?

But who is the 'us' of those interests? The 'us' of the nation, an 'us' that is itself a lie, concealing unequal distribution, poverty and alienation in our own societies. And it is from here that we must start again; from an awareness of inequality, from a rejection of the dominance of profit, from a recognition of the unsustainable imbalance of the current system. And from a refusal of the association between our interests and those of the economic elite. And we will perhaps find that the greatest contradiction of our age is not that between rich and poor countries. But, more simply, that between rich and poor.

European Alternatives

EUROPA is the journal of European Alternatives, a transnational civilsociety organsiation promoting intellectual and artistic engagement withthe idea and future of Europe, and actively promoting the emergence ofa positive transnationalism in the cultural and political sphere.

European Alternatives organises events and discussions throughout Europe, along with the flagship London Festival of Europe each Spring.

You can find more information about us on

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UTOPIA:

BEYOND HOMO ECONOMICUS

The present global economic crisis, whatever its final place in the historical ranking of *most dramatic economic crises* that many seem fixated on trying to predict, has already brought about unprecedented coordinated international economic intervention and has put yet more serious question-marks over both the "Washington-Consensus" as a model for development, and more generally the principles underlying the current functioning of the global economy. What is much more important, however, and what is presently undecided, is whether it will provide the opportunity for political innovation beyond mere technical fixes to the status quo.

The immediate causes of what was first the *financial* crisis, and then became a more general *economic* crisis - irresponsible mortgage lending, unregulated speculation and borrowing, opaque financial products etc. - are increasingly well identified and analysed, and the technical debates about regulatory reform as well as discussions of the best ways to restart the system are well under way. What is startlingly and alarmingly lacking from the enormous amount of discussion surrounding the crisis however, are any serious political assessments of the *way of life* both presupposed and promoted by the economic system we are in. What is more, many of those who have been long-term critics of elements or the entirety of the "Western way of life" have expressed their feeling of unpreparedness, of the acceleration of history, of urgency. It is worth asking where this feeling of unpreparedness might come from before suggesting some reasons for thinking that the current economic crisis opens the possibility for alternatives to be articulated.

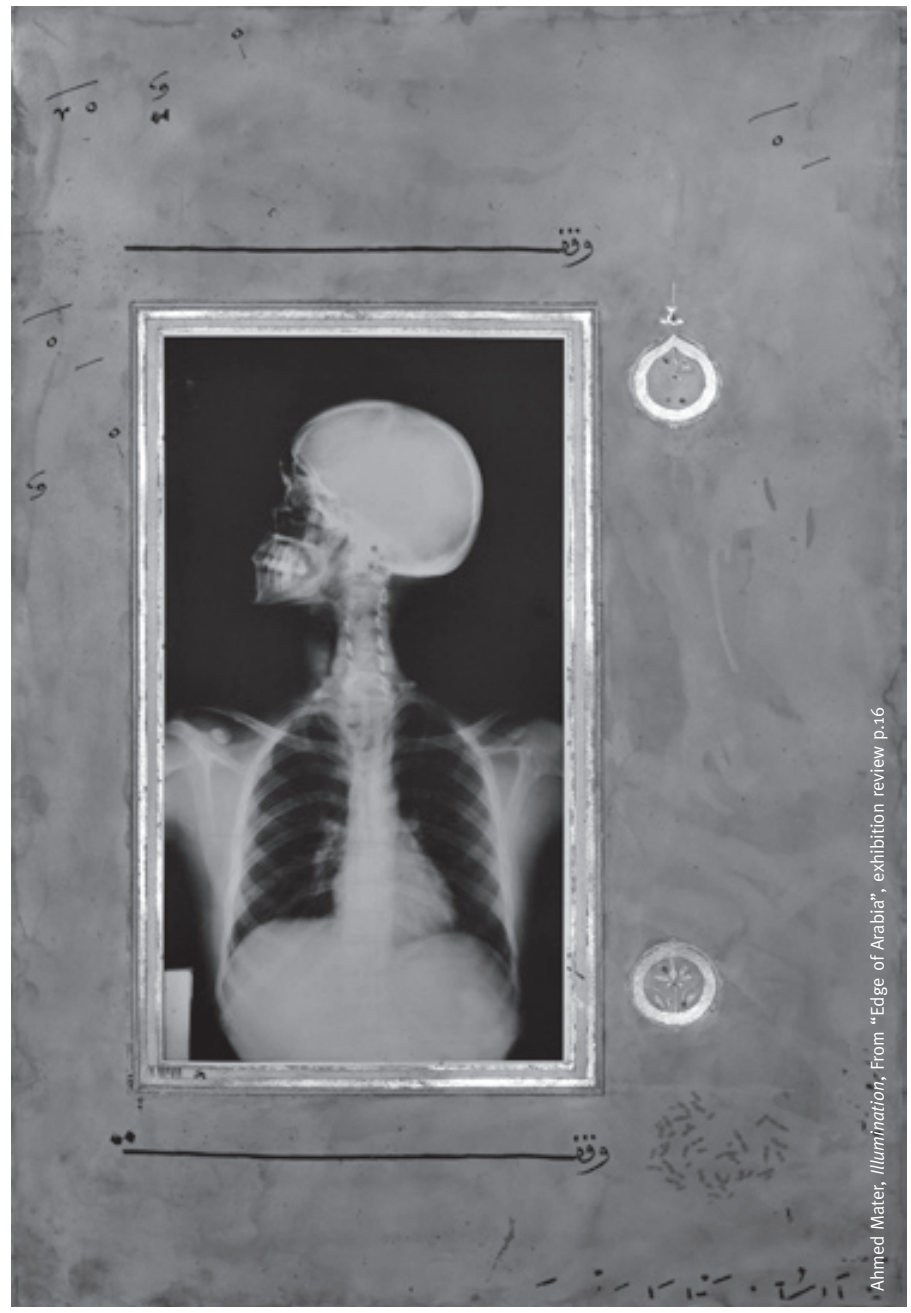
There have been two apparently fertile subjects for promoting public discussion of alternative ways of life in recent years: the environment and third-world poverty. The environment as a political cause, although having the potential to radically question the relationship and priority between humans and the earth, has a tendency to focus on the second of these terms, and derive proposed changes to our way of life from the demands of the planet or environment. Third world poverty in its very formulation also has a tendency to be thought of as an *external* problem: one that calls for charity, or aid, rather than directly for a change in behaviour. What both of these political causes lack is a direct consideration of the status of man himself: of what is important and what is not. This seems to be the question that is harder and harder to pose in a direct fashion.

A further phenomenon is perhaps the underlying cause of this problem: the increasing crisis of the state as an effective institution of governance. The international or transnational character of the most pressing political issues of our time is well known under the rubric of 'globalisation', and the inadequacy of the state as a political construction for dealing with these problems is increasingly evident: be it the financial crisis, the environment or terrorist threat. The dominance of multinational corporations over the nation-state is also well-known. What is perhaps less highlighted is that with the losing of relevance of the state and the lack of immediate successors, the context in which we pose the political question of "our" way of life is increasingly lost or complicated. This has perhaps most dramatically been the case for the Marxist left which no longer has the State to kick against, but all critics of our contemporary way of life are equally posed with the difficult problem of the level at which to situate the critique. The deliberate frustration of the possibility of critique is perhaps the numbing core of what is often named 'neoliberalism', and effectiveness of its dissolution of all alternative platforms the cause of the present feeling of vertiginous urgency.

The global recession that we are entering at once makes the stakes higher and might create conditions in which the question of what is really important can once again be posed profoundly. The International Labour Organisation recently predicted that an additional 20 million people are likely to be unemployed by the end of 2009, and the number of people living in extreme poverty will increase by up to 40 million. The hardest hit will certainly be economically underdeveloped countries, but one obvious consequence of the global recession is that the social question will again be high up the agenda in large parts of Europe and Northern America, where poverty will be much more visible *on our streets, amongst people like us*. That will either provoke a reflex turning-inwards and a new protectionism, or a turning-outwards and a profound re-appreciation of the social implications on a global scale of the way of life we presently buy into and aspire towards. There is nothing that makes the first of these outcomes inevitable and unavoidable, but it is the most likely result if we leave the currently dominant ideology unchallenged. The second outcome will only be realised by the urgent transnational engagement of activists, thinkers, artists and citizens to make it possible.

Although the task of dealing with the social implications of a global recession looks likely to remain largely the competence of the nation-state, the reflection on the implications of our way of life must necessarily take place at a transnational level if it is to have genuinely *political* consequence. The financial crisis has given a new impetus to the consideration of reform of the World Bank and IMF, the G4 has grown to a G20. Each of these provides a newly active political level in which the status quo will either be tacitly reaffirmed or can be challenged. Amongst relevant international institutions, the European Union, despite all appearances, has a particular importance for challenging the status quo. That it is the largest trading bloc in the world and also the largest donor of humanitarian aid gives the EU a global significance which it has yet to learn to fully assert, but what is crucially important is that the EU is unique amongst international bodies in having a certain claim of democratic representation of its peoples. It thus potentially provides a unique political horizon in which the status quo can effectively be called into question by the people themselves.

It is with these considerations in mind, amongst others, that European Alternatives launches its ChangeUtopia! series of events throughout Europe, starting with the question of poverty in a global world. We must make sure the economic crisis does not presage an imaginative crisis which would be more catastrophic because more terminal, for it would nullify our capacity to find alternative ways of carrying on.



Ahmed Mater, *Illumination*, From "Edge of Arabia", exhibition review p.16

DEMOCRACY BEY

A PUPPET AND HIS EMPIRE

Despite the possibility for a popular election, it looks likely there will only be one candidate for the post of President in the new European Commission named next year –the incumbent Barroso. Why? The answer is a mix of spinelessness and myth.

BY NICCOLÒ MILANESE

When pressed on the political form of the European Union in June last year, the President of the Commission - Jose Manuel Barroso – after much flustering around and reference to 'unidentified political objects', made the comparison with empire. Previous empires, he said, 'were usually made through force, with a centre that imposed a will on the others.' The EU, on the other hand, is unique in being the 'first non-imperial empire': 27 states which have freely chosen to pool sovereignty. 'We should be proud of it, at least, we in the Commission are proud of it', he concluded somewhat childishly.

The European Union Empire will have its largest ever elections in June next year for the European Parliament, and in November 2009 a new Commission takes office. Yet at this moment it looks likely the only candidate for the new President of the Commission will be none other than Jose Manuel Barroso. The same Jose Manuel Barroso who has presided over three negative referendum results, has done nothing to resolve Europe's identity crisis, and most recently had his Financial Stimulus Plan slapped down unceremoniously by national finance ministers. The same Barroso who is unpopular with most European political parties.

Then is the EU Empire undemocratic, like historical empires? Not according to its formal rules, at least with regard to choosing a President of the Commission. Although the President of the Commission is chosen by the heads of the 27 nation-states acting as the European Council, they present their choice to the new Parliament for approval. Furthermore, the Lisbon Treaty which 25 nation states have ratified adds that the Council should make their choice 'in light of the results of the European elections', thus opening the possibility for European political parties to go into the elections with a candidate for Commission President.

"The European Socialists did not nominate any candidate at their congress, which is a little like the Labour Party not nominating a candidate for Prime Minister in the British elections because the polls are against them."

So if most political parties are unhappy with Barroso, how come he is the only candidate? The answer is in part manipulation on the part of some heads of state and naivety on the part of others, but is ultimately the result of spinelessness on the part of many European politicians.

Most of Europe is controlled by conservative governments, and this is unlikely to change before the next Commission is selected. The majority of heads of state have already expressed their support for Barroso. This is utterly undemocratic manipulation, against the spirit of giving more democratic importance to the European elections that the majority of them have signed up to in the Lisbon Treaty. In addition to conservative heads of state, the heads of state of three countries governed by Socialists have also given him their support: those of the UK, Spain and Portugal. According to the European socialist Enrique Baron Crespo, Zapatero gave his backing to Barroso out of "wanting to be polite". If this is true, it is utterly naive. But in itself all this decides nothing: the parliament must approve the candidate.

Nevertheless the European Socialists seem to have already decided it is a lost cause, and no high-profile Socialist is willing to risk their reputation in running against Barroso. Thus the European Socialists did not nominate any candidate at their congress, which is a little like the Labour Party not nominating a candidate for Prime Minister in the British elections because the polls are against them. The socialists are not alone: the European Liberal Party also decided not to put forward a candidate; the Green Party is even running an anti-Barroso campaign, but it is not offering an alternative candidate because it does not think there is any chance of winning.

Some members of the conservative European People's Party, to which Barroso belongs, have expressed dissatisfaction with his Presidency, but it seems entirely unlikely that the party will nominate anyone else, or even that anyone from the party will dare challenge him, at their congress in the New Year.

Such spinelessness from the political parties and their members is completely irresponsible. The most basic demand made of them is to provide a political choice, and the present legislation of the European Union actively encourages them to provide this choice. Whatever the naivety or machinations of heads of state, the parliament has a duty to assert its own importance and it has the powers already to do this. Under the Lisbon Treaty the Parliament would get more co-decision making powers with the Council, but its member parties must lose their spirit of deference if those powers are to have any significance.

The European Commission is one of the most powerful executive organisations in the world and controls the most powerful trading block in the world at a time of global economic crisis. Even though it is not the legislative power of the Union, the presenting of only one candidate for the post of President of the European Commission reinforces the hegemonic idea that

ONO THE NATION

there is no choice available over what policies to adopt in the face of this crisis. Judging by their actions, this is a situation ours heads of state seem entirely content with. It is also, we can only imagine, a situation that the thousands of corporate lobbyists who stalk the corridors of Brussels are rather happy to live with.

It is the myth of the inevitability of the direction of the European Union that must be broken. There is nothing inevitable about Barroso being the only candidate for President of the Commission, just as there is nothing inevitable about the direction or failures of European policy. The appearance of inevitability is a montage created when political machination meets political cowardice, a political cowardice that seems presently endemic in Europe. If we persist with the analogy of an Empire, it is nonsense to place Barroso or anyone else in the position of Emperor. Rather the entire construction seems to be under the hypnotic influence of a myth of its own autonomous logic. In the non-imperial empire, as it turns out, it is not force that imposes an emperor, but fear which makes the "empire" itself into a puppet. ■

DANIELE ARCHIBUGI: THE GLOBAL COMMONWEALTH

Archibugi has recently advocated a new cosmopolitan politics. He lays out the key features of his project.

Europa: The idea of a global government is an old idea with a long history. What aspects of the contemporary situation do you think make it more realisable or important?

Daniele Archibugi: You are perfectly right that the idea is very old. Before the 16th century the idea of cosmopolitan citizenship was more associated with the individual and less associated with the sociological conditions of a global citizenship, but starting from that point the idea starts to be related to political developments, and to a new condition which we might call a kind of globalisation. This poses the question of the connection between the new social conditions and new institutional devices. It is very difficult to think today of an action that does not have some important overlaps with other communities, and everything apart from political institutions has been globalised: the economy, the financial markets. One of the challenges of our age is to bridge the social, economic and cultural dimensions of globalisation with a political dimension.

"we need global institutions open to the participation of citizens"

Europa: Your book makes frequent mention of democracy. Do you share the concerns of those who discern a democratic regression, from reduction in social rights (labour protection, etc.), to the emergence of a new kind of right wing populism?

DA: Democracy is always in a bad state, and this is somehow its strength. You are quite right that some social and political rights seem to be in decline. But this is not the only story; we have seen an increase in civil rights, racism for example is taken much more seriously. What worries me most is the growing inequalities of income. Regarding populism and racism, I think that this a typical case where we see that a democratic society, even where it is very internally coherent, might have some irrational components, precisely because it does not manage to integrate the others. This phenomenon typically happens in periods of crisis, in periods of uncertainty, in which values are questioned. This shows that democracy is not itself necessarily a desirable system unless it is tamed with something else, which is cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism is a school of thought, or we might even say a school of practice, which helps democratic societies to learn to deal with the other. The other can be the immigrant, the refugee, the gypsy; even when they are living within our own societies. This is the challenge of our age.

Europa: Would you agree with Balibar's formulation of the state of affairs as a kind of European Apartheid?

DA: Yes, I agree with Balibar on that. Balibar stresses the political component, I would like to also stress the normative side. One problem is to provide a decent standard of living for the so-called "28th European nation", ie. the immigrants in Europe. But then we also need to manage the problem of migrations. Migrations are one of the most unfair problems occurring at the moment, not just for the European societies, but also for the societies of developing countries. It is generally the more entrepreneurial sectors from developing countries that come to Europe. There are two ways you can address the issue. The first is to say ex post 'I provide to these people equal rights once they get to Europe'. I think this should be done. But the second solution is to find some management of the problem, contributing on the one hand to the development of the societies from which migrants come, and on the other regulating the migration flows to make them fairer.

Europa: You argue that to move to a commonwealth of global citizens we have to go through a paradigm shift comparable to the shift to representative democracy. One of the most commented aspects of that shift was the birth of ideologies. The moment you have political parties with their different programs, you have different interpretations of the past, of the present and different programs for the future. How do you analyse the loss of ideology in contemporary politics, and the modifications of ideology when moved to a global level?

DA: There are two different aspects to be taken into account. The first is the substance of politics. This requires the willingness of citizens in taking part in political activity. Citizens are willing to do so when they see there is a point. If they don't see it, because the traditional channels of representation have dried up, then they don't participate. Alternative channels of representation have not been provided. It was wrong to expect that these channels would be provided through a top-down process – that has never happened in history – rather these channels are created from the bottom up, when the people ask for something more. Now, the cosmopolitan democracy I advocate allows a variety of different ideological components; you can imagine that there would be two major ideological visions. One would be the socialist vision, which says we should combine cosmopolitanism with redistribution, with providing more public goods in areas such as the environment, security and so on. And another, equally cosmopolitan vision, would be closer to the traditional liberal position. What worries me is that the liberals do not advocate the creation of global institutions in the same way as the left does. That is contradictory, because they are very much in favour of, for example, free market, but they do not advocate global institutions to match them. They try to create a global society without global democratic players.

Europa: Do you think the contemporary economic crisis suggests any possibilities for the appearance of global governance?

DA: It has already happened in a very limited way. The way the financial crisis was managed was true global governance. All countries knew very well that they couldn't sort out the financial crisis alone, and they coordinated between themselves very, very quickly. It is telling that when key economic interests are concerned, the G2, G4, G7, G20 manages to be effective. When we have to deal with other equally important issues such as the environment, genocide in Congo, or a tsunami, the resources available are lower, the response is slower and much less effective. Maybe these countries have the wrong priorities. I assume that global institutions in which citizens would have their voices heard might go towards changing that. ■

Daniele Archibugi's latest book is The Commonwealth of Citizens, Towards Cosmopolitan Democracy

Photo by Brigita Ercegovic

TRANSNATIONAL

TOWARDS A COSMOPOLITAN ALLIANCE

Beyond tribal journalism, for a polyphony of minds.

BY LORENZO MARSILI

Photos by Brigita Ercegovic

Today a magazine can only be international in its composition and cosmopolitan in its emotion and desire. What must arise is a wayfarer, an eternal vagabond, running the world after a scattered tribe of minds. The magazine must be let to fluctuate between the seas. But this fluctuation is not a 'visit'; the journal does not 'land' in a country to speak of what it sees. It is no longer the time for the simple presentation of culture and politics beyond nations. No, the magazine lands to refuel on ideas, be they ideas of the immediately near, of the distant, or of that which does not set foot on any ground. It is not a transnational *presentation* that is at stake, not a global survey that is sought after. But a cosmopolitan alliance.

But perhaps this is an impossible stance. After years of integration, despite investments and calls for its creation, even a European public sphere has not yet emerged. And to think just our distance from a cosmopolitan paradigm – how many European magazines still have most of their board from a single European nation! But the public sphere today has stale air. It is weighted by its *hubris* of unity, its tentacular reach, its closure. (An example of that closure – and of its beauties – comes from the last surviving artistic product on Italian television: Blob. Blob cuts a selection of brief television sketches and edits them into gems of irony and insight. Irony and insight that can only be drawn out *from within*, when the whole concatenation makes sense to us, when the faces are familiar, the stories known.)

But it is not necessary that a sphere of publicity be entirely familiar to every visitor. On the contrary; this space can contain unseen perspectives, can dislocate and disrupt; presenting alterity, it becomes the factory of an unknown. What does this mean? It means that we must forego the conception of a public sphere as an enclosed cluster of assumptions, as a place where everyone feels intellectually at home, where the vocabulary employed, the themes raised, the reasoning followed—all strike one as familiar, as daily bread, as the halo of maternal society. And what in its place? A field of overlapping commitments. A field of overlapping interests, of overlapping languages. Of overlapping, struggling ideas.

But perhaps this is a politically suspicious stance . For in such an open space of possibility, amidst the cacophony of one thousand languages, how can the opportunity for engagement arise? Do we not edge dangerously close to an elitist cultural production, one that juggles a plurality of thoughts, browsing through a market of ideas where nothing is ever bought? (But first—the role played by localised publications is invaluable, and in no way replaceable; loci of discussions that focus on particular struggles, be they for the precarity of labour or for the plights of the environment, or perhaps on the scholars of wisdom or those of letters, are and remain the necessary meeting point of all those pursuing a common effort.) And so, how can a cosmopolitan magazine be *political*?

But must an answer to this question really come from *somewhere else*, must it be *created*, or is it not perhaps already amongst us? Let us ask it again: For in such an open space of possibility, amidst the cacophony of one thousand languages, how can the opportunity for engagement arise? But have we not seen just the attempt to *practically* forge such a political space in the past ten years? What was the movement for an alternative globalisation if not a space of global polyphony? These are not the most popular times to chant its praises. But what is the lesson that

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it has taught, and that most likely it will continue to teach in the years to come? That global participation can be stimulated around local struggles; that a tribalistic understanding of commitment – commitment to what touches *me* – can be left behind. And at the same time that the plurality of local struggles can come together, producing a critical mass that demands nothing short of *another world*. And what are the latter two statements if not the clearest definition of the political task of a cosmopolitan publication? To stimulate a compassionate response, which means to *move*, regardless of geographical distance. And to articulate the emergence of a world to come from no privileged vantage point, from no urban centre, but through shifting geographies of thought.

And there is more. A cosmopolitan magazine becomes political the moment it ceases to be alone. The moment its concert of voices enters in direct relation with – and in this relation, dialectically, it also finds itself – with others. Exchanges of activisms. Exchanges – and here is a further, crucial political dimension, - that enable to surpass one's own *constituency*, one's own group of the converted, and that open a vision to and for society. And these can only be exchanges that stretch into public space, that *occupy*, with drums and trumpets, the sphere of publicity. Exchanges that both found and represent a political consciousness beyond borders. An example? The joint transnational publication and dissemination of statements, invectives, positions, pamphlets, or announcements, that appear simultaneously in the streets, cafés, galleries, universities, work places of cities across nations.

For the crucial task of magazines is to advance a political-cultural project. A project must not mean a blind adherence to a single position, membership of a single party. But creation and reformulation of the categories that govern our society. A project that is as broad and open and polyphonic as the transnational project sketched. And then—to allow for that project to emerge and be articulated, to grow and evolve and assume the shapes of history.

The hands of editors must be black of ink and commitment. ■

EUROPEAN MEDIA

We need courageous investment and less arrogance.

BY CHRISTIAN MIHR

In December 1998 the European daily *The European* died a media death. *The European* was founded by the legendary (and notorious) British media magnate Robert Maxwell amid the euphoria that accompanied the tearing down of the Iron Curtain in a bid to realise his dream of a European daily newspaper. In business terms the project was a flop from the start. Launched in 1990 with a print run of a quarter of a million, this innovative newspaper project was originally intended to have multi-lingual sections for sales on the European Continent. But that never happened.

Media colonisation

Today real transnational European journalism is still a phenomenon for elites. Yet for most people in Europe everyday life has already had a European dimension for some time – they just haven't always noticed. Many different national discourses exist in a state of "simultaneity of the non-simultaneous" (*Gleichzeitigkeit der Ungleichzeitigkeit*), to quote the philosopher Ernst Bloch, even if the big media concerns colonised Eastern Europe in the early 1990s, long before any East European country became a member of the EU: the Swiss *Ringier* group is already doing good business in Hungary, Romania, the Czech Republic and Slovakia; likewise the German *WAZ* group in the Balkans. In many cases they serve to foster national resentments: the newspapers of the German Springer concern in Poland and Germany, for example, are engaged in stirring up negative emotions against these countries' respective neighbours; while the biggest Bulgarian newspaper *24 Tschassa*, also owned by the German *WAZ* concern, in 2007 conducted a smear campaign (known as the Batak affair) together with other Bulgarian media against the art historian Martina Baleva. In an exhibition catalogue Baleva had explored Islamic stereotypes in Bulgaria. Nationalists saw this as calling into question some facts concerning the Battle of Batak between the Ottomans and the Bulgarians – an important event of Bulgarian national history – and even sent Baleva death threats.

The case of the former Latvian foreign minister, Sandra Kalniete

"Many different national discourses exist in a state of "simultaneity of the non-simultaneous"

also showed that the Western public sphere is still having a hard time adjusting its picture of an Eastern Europe marked by Soviet-style communism to today's more complex reality, and that a pan-European public sphere is still illusory. In 2004 – just as the EU was expanding eastwards – Kalniete compared the Stalinist regime to the Hitler regime and stated at the Leipzig book fair that fifty years of European history had been written without paying any attention to the experiences of Eastern Europe. Many Western politicians put her in her place, saying that only the Holocaust, not the Gulag should be cited as a negative experience in the founding myth of a unified Europe.

English as a lingua franca

Whether one likes it or not, English remains the European lingua franca, and there is no real multilingual European journalism. Viewer and readership figures for European media lag behind political integration. At the same time, the way people use the media is changing world-wide, with the behaviour of users rather than content increasingly determining the character of the media. With the exception of the *Financial Times* there is not a single European newspaper that can claim to report from Europe for Europe. On the magazine market the only publications that can be said to be aimed at a European public are the monthlies *Le Monde Diplomatique* and *Lettre International*. And in the field of television *euronews* and *eurosport* together with *arte* and *3sat* are the only bi- or multi-lingual channels of any significance. But even these do not represent any real competition for national public television stations or for the news outlets of *CNN*, the *BBC* and *Deutsche Welle*.

Internet projects

On the Internet, by contrast, there are a number of projects trying, via journalism, to create a European public sphere and at the same time to build bridges between old and new media and between East and West. Often these overcome language barriers, offering their products in several languages. Of particular importance here are www.eurotopics.net, www.n-ost.de, www.euranet.eu, www.eurozine.com, www.signandsight.com, www.tol.cz and www.cafebabel.com. Especially promising are press review projects like eurotopics.net, which allow immediate feedback to national newspapers: everyday, eurotopics.net records the debates conducted in the newspapers, magazines and blogs of all the EU countries plus Switzerland and appears in four languages – English, French, German and Spanish (and will shortly be translated into Polish as well). None of the projects mentioned has so far proved to be commercially viable, however. All of them are funded either out of public money or by foundations.

Structural problems of the European public sphere

It is not sufficient simply to teach journalists about European issues, for the European public sphere also suffers from a structural problem. In practice the emergence of a European public sphere is hampered on a daily basis by language barriers, national publics and as a consequence national news organizations. We need media organizations that have the courage to invest in the (admittedly expensive) translation of the content of foreign media and to justify the exchange of information on European issues and between journalists not only on the grounds of saving costs.

For the transnational European public sphere being constituted in the Internet, alliances between classical journalism and participatory media projects like blogs and platforms of the type offered by www.cafebabel.com are important too. It is time that both sides abandoned their arrogant attitudes, for if they were to do so, we could benefit both from the specialist knowledge that the numerous bloggers (who are also consumers of news) hold on local events and special subjects and from the professional abilities of conventional journalists who by way of research, evaluation of sources and analyses navigate their way through the sea of information. ■

Christian Mihr is a journalist, working for the NGO "Network for Reporting on Eastern Europe n-ost" and there as a Senior Editor of eurotopics.net.
The opinions expressed here are not necessarily those of eurotopics.

PARADIGMS OF

CULTURE AND THE EUROPEAN UNIFICATION PROCESS

Europe has reached a stage where its cultural dimension can no longer be ignored.

BY STEVE AUSTEN
AND KAROLINA NOWACKI

Since 2004, the European Commission has launched various initiatives to promote the notion that European citizenship only can develop through means of cultural action. This idea however is not new.

In earlier years, citizenship, as a product of the implementation of human rights, came to the forefront of political cooperation between the two political blocs; the so called West and the socialist arena including the Soviet-Union. This finally resulted in the Helsinki agreements and the instalment of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE). This development - nowadays known as The Helsinki Process - was a caesura in post-war times.

It had taken some time: the idea of a European security conference was already introduced in the 1950s by the Soviet government.

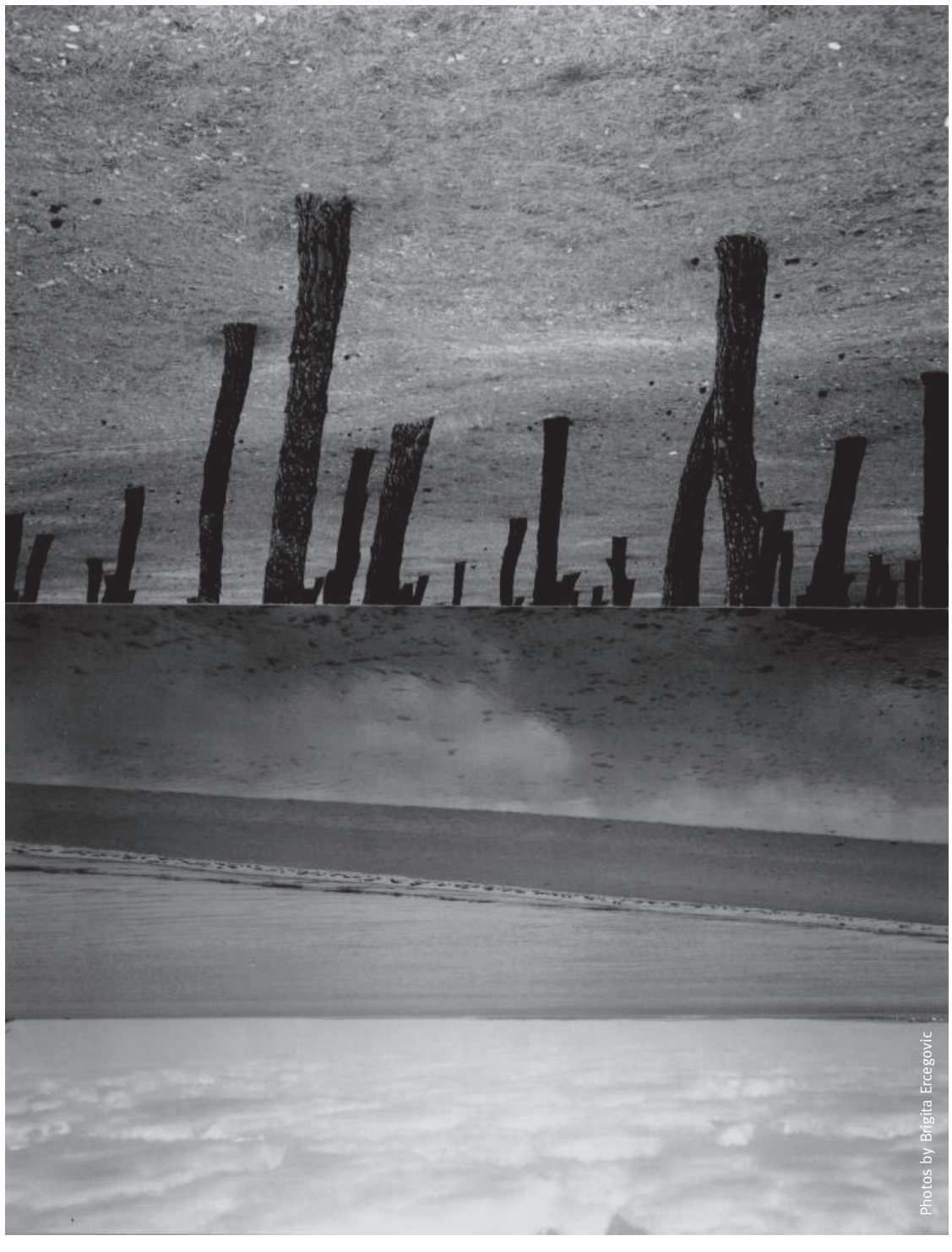
NATO agreed on further talks no earlier than the late 1960s. NATO insisted on bringing in humanitarian questions such as the free movement of people and information throughout the Eastern Bloc. By that time general human rights were not explicitly taken into account. Their role started to grow with the course of the actual process after 1973.

In the Blue Book, the final recommendation of the Helsinki consultations of June 1973, it was suggested to organise the three main subjects in the so-called Baskets for Security, Economy and Humanitarian Questions. The equality of the baskets of the Helsinki Final Act presented culture as an actual means to overcome political barriers. Culture was slowly allowed to descend from an ideological platform and became a more practicable notion.

The power of the symbolic to instigate reality enabled the widening civic movement to secure civil and human rights by intervening with the actual political process as well as supporting its achievements from bottom-up.

Artists and intellectuals took the initiative to take the Final Act as a guarantee of their civil, human and cultural rights and measured their current condition against the background of these agreed rights. Hence the follow-up process was dominated by efforts of securing these rights both from political as well as from civil perspective. Eventually, both efforts blended in and served the improvement of the whole situation on both levels.

Two aspects became more and more important: firstly, the need for a confident citizenship, and secondly, the importance of culture for a peaceful unification process that on the one hand tries to bind individuals, not only countries, together and in doing so achieves the most valuable results.



Photos by Brigita Ercegovic

In 1985 the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe held a cultural forum in Budapest that was meant to guide the efforts of the third basket and find solutions to improve contacts and exchange between the European peoples. It can be seen as a turning point in regard to the significance of culture for politics.

"The power of the symbolic to instigate reality enabled the widening civic movement to secure civil and human rights."

As spokesperson of the delegation of the Federal Republic of Germany at the official forum, Günter Grass, presented his proposal to open up "the actual borders in the minds of people" by installing a pan-European cultural foundation. At the same time his fellow writers and intellectuals were discussing similar issues with invited artists and intellectuals from Hungary at an informal gathering, called the Unofficial Writers Symposium, in a local pub. Of course there was a fruitful and permanent exchange of ideas between the two gatherings.

Finally Grass had to accept that the official congress refused his proposal, thanks to the vetoes from the USA and Romania.

This situation showed clearly to all artists and politicians involved that the exchange of ideas is one thing, the implementation of practical and innovative proposals another. This notion however did not stop the involved artists continuing their endeavours, but more and more without involving the political decision-makers. The idea became common that artists, intellectuals and cultural institutions can do a lot to enhance civil society even without the consent and approval of the political class.

One of the very first attempts to prove this approach was the European Artists Forum in Amsterdam in 1987. Günter Grass accepted the invitation to discuss his Budapest proposal again, this time with artists and intellectuals from all over Europe, without politicians. With 28 artists and intellectuals from 20 European countries it could be seen as a major platform for the voice of the cultural world. This platform was called "Gulliver" and was a first attempt to develop a European, non-governmental, informal and independent working group as a platform for the exchange of ideas between individual Euro-

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pean artists and intellectuals on essential issues for the future of European culture.

Over the years, Gulliver slowly transformed into a more advanced instrument of international co-operation, exchange and mobility by being integrated in a huge cultural network that not only links the distinct Gulliver members to each other but also to their birth place in Amsterdam as a permanent activity of The Felix Meritis Foundation (since 1988). This NGO grew with the years and outlasted the actual Gulliver body that subtly merged into this overwhelming entity formulating the foundation of a far bigger context than anyone could practically strive for: a real European civil society.

The latest attempt to foster the ideas of Helsinki is the civil initiative "A Soul for Europe" that started its activity in 2004. This time the initiative came from a politician: former president of the Federal republic of Germany: Richard von Weizsäcker. The Soul for Europe Initiators define the European process as a cultural process. The notion of citizenship must be the leading one. Facing the dull reality that the EU so far has not been very successful in promoting citizenship and culture as the key-element in the unification process, they strive (in the spirit of the Helsinki Final Act) to link cultural bottom-up movements with policy making top-down processes.

In only a few years, intellectuals, cultural operators, scientists, artists, pupils and students, as well as politicians, local, national as well as European, have joined the Berlin process to stimulate the upcoming generation of Europeans to take our future in their hands. At the same time it promotes the idea that civil society has to be fostered to shape and influence the political decision-making process to make Europe a place which will develop from a union of member states into a union of member states and citizens. To place the ownership of Europe in the hands of the citizens themselves, cultural organisations and artists again have to take the lead. ■

WHY A BOMBING OF POEMS?

Some notes for the continuation of a poetic intervention

BY CRISTÓBAL BIANCHI

Bombing of Poems is a performance in which cities that have experience aerial bombing in the past are now bombed with poems. The performance consists of dropping one hundred thousand poems printed in bookmarks from an aircraft over cities raided during military confrontations. The bookmarks are released at night and, as in the case of a real bombing, without previous warning. The poems are printed in two languages and they are by both Chilean authors and poets native to the bombed city[1].

Until now, the performance has been carried out in three different places: the government palace of Chile, La Moneda, bombed by Pinochet on 11 September 1973; the city of Dubrovnik (Croatia), shelled on 6 December 1991 by Serbian and Montenegrin forces; the city of Guernica (Basque Country, Spain), which suffered the first Nazi air-bombardment on 26 April 1937. In the next few years we expect to carry out this poetic event in the cities of Berlin and Dresden (Germany), Warsaw (Poland), Belgrade (Serbia) and Nagasaki (Japan).

Five Notes to Bomb Cities with Poems

1. The Ambivalence of the Poetic Event.

The nature of the poetic event that is triggered by the Bombing of Poems is double and ambivalent: the recall of the horror of the historical event – the real bombing of the city – is interrupted by the opening up of another moment which makes possible unpredictable effects. This openness is necessary to give room to an alternative response to the relation between poetry and war and the destruction of cities during warfare. This openness is a potentiality to create relations rather than set up a discourse about them. This takes place not only in the public realm, but also in what Rancière calls "the capacity of the anonym", an operation based on a principle of equality that "makes anybody equal to everybody". As well as revisiting a traumatic historical event, all potential spectators create their own stories as witnesses.

2. Artist as Pacifist Perpetrator?

Exchanging bombs with poems using a military machine and military strategy (the air bombing), the poet becomes a soldier (a pilot of the aircraft) using a weapon of another type: five hundred kilos of printed poems. Even though the audience is free to pick up the poems (and to read and share them), this act of affirmation operates as an 'imposition' by the military dispositive: when the sky is used to launch unusual objects, the poetical intervention becomes an act of supremacy and the options to avoid its potential effects are narrowed. Therefore, as the historical aerial bombardments were urgent acts within warfare, this new urgency of cultural affirmation realized by the artist recalls an activism where cultural production is a form of non-violent resistance.

3. The Importance to affirm Poetry after Plato and Adorno.

Plato expelled the poem and the poet to organize the republic, Adorno advocated the silence of the poem in front of the horror of destruction. In a way, both have illustrated the necessity of drawing a frontier and evict the work of art from the most significant issues, namely politics and barbarism. However, the demand for silence as an aesthetic response became a requirement for response itself. Thus, the affirmation of poetry re-situated the written word as a practice able to create symbolic interruption and an exchange of passions. When the poem uses a military machine as an allegorical tool, this is usurped from the political and military class to create an opposite effect. Rather than produce rubbles and injuries, the operation seeks to activate and multiply the forces embodied in poetry. The 'development of an exclamation', as Valery says.

4. Being Naïve as a Tactic to Confront the Hypocrisy of the Political Class.

It has been said that the Bombing of Poems is 'politically correct' and 'naïve'. Some reports have said that their authors endure a sort of 'megalomania'. I maintain that to run a work of this type is vitally necessary to deal with the diverse range of layers that constitute cultural and political institutions. Because of the ambivalent nature of the poetic event, each participant perceives a different meaning shaped according to his interests and concerns. A clear dislocation between words, actions and motives operates in the process. The potentiality of the poetic event cannot be reduced and controlled by the hypocrisy that circulates amongst the actors and the artists involved.

5. Assume the Potentiality Grounded in the Non-Event.

At a recent conference a German student in the audience urged me to consider that "Germany doesn't need such a performance right now". Given the evident controversies existing between a city and its historical destruction, it is pivotal to consider that a possible Bombing of Poems may become a non-event. The outcomes of such a refusal are varied; the first one is to recognize that a city and its citizens may not be ready for a poetic event like the Bombing of Poems; this means that the gesture of launching poems is too brief and impressive, considering the sensibilities and amount of discourse still in the process of being articulated. In this sense, to assume the non-event is to enter in a waiting process. The role of patience in public art is crucial. And this waiting process could be accompanied by the following thought: these cities were able to prevent being bombed for a second time. ■

FOOTNOTE

1. The authors of this performance are a group of artists that work under the collective name 'CasaGrande': an active platform that has developed a series of publishing projects and art actions related to poetry and the intervention into public spaces. CasaGrande has worked on three main projects since 1996 including the publication of a magazine that changes its format every issue: giant posters installed in underground stations throughout Santiago (Chile), the sending of a DVD to the library of the International Space Station, and public performances including the series Bombing of Poems.
More information:
http://revistacasagrande.blogspot.com/
e-mail: cristobianchi@gmail.com

INTERVIEW WITH ALFREDO JAAR

INTERVIEW BY EVA ODDO

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

▶ **Eva Oddo: What do you think of the European Union and how do you see its future?**

Alfredo Jaar: I have always seen the EU as a potential model that has never been fully realized. It is a utopia that became a quasi-reality. I have always felt the potential was enormous, as a model of community. In fact the EU is the largest donor of humanitarian assistance in the world. Some significant progress has been made in certain areas, for example regarding the common currency, the euro, it has been interesting to see how we finally have a counterweight to the US dollar and its hegemony. But when you realize that the EU generates more than 30% share of the world's gross domestic product, you ask yourself why is it such a minor, ridiculous influence in world affairs? The incapacity of the EU to articulate and promote a common foreign policy, to have a voice in world affairs of a certain weight is truly frustrating. The EU has never fulfilled its responsibilities according to its relative geopolitical weight in the world. This is really a domain that the Americans dominate fully, and until now no one has been able to challenge them. The world would be in such a different state if the EU had a voice. On the other hand, it is undeniable that we have freedom of movement of people, goods, services and capital but at the same time, how many doors have been closed? Visit Italy to look at how the immigration issue is being played out, or ask an African businessman trying to penetrate the EU market and you will hear a catalogue of frustrations.

EO: Moving on to the artist: do you think the artist has any responsibilities?

AJ: Absolutely. Artists are human beings, and every human being has responsibilities. Artists are an integral part of society, and within society we are very privileged because artists have been blessed with time and resources to think, to speculate, to dream about different worlds, better worlds. This privilege comes with a responsibility, to respond to what surrounds us, and to suggest models of thinking about society and about the world, and that's what the best art does. The best works of art take you to places you have never been - I'm referring to mental places -places where we create new models of thinking, and new possible ways of seeing the world. And that's a tremendous responsibility.

IT IS DIFFICULT
Spazio Oberdan, Milano
3.10.2008 – 25.01.2009

Muxima, 2005
Digital video, color, sound
Duration: 36 minutes
© Galerie Lelong, New York

EO: While I've read your art described as 'political' art, I think I've read that you describe it as 'moral', or 'morally-engaged' art.

AJ: No, I do not accept any of these labels. All art is political. It is impossible to do anything in this world that does not have a political reading. It is impossible to make a gesture that does not at the same time incorporate aesthetics and ethics. I always quote Jean-Luc Godard, a filmmaker that I admire, when I am asked this question, when he said that "it may be true that one has to choose between ethics and aesthetics, but it is no less true that, whichever one chooses, one will always find the other at the end of the road." This is the reality that we face as artists and as cultural producers: we are always confronted with the issue of ethics and aesthetics at the same time, and they have to be incorporated not only in the way we do things, but also in the final articulation of our ideas in the works. When art does not do this, it is just decoration, it is part of another world, the world of decoration and design, which has other, different objectives. You have decoration on one side, and you have art on the other side, and art for me has always been about critical thinking. But that doesn't mean we must leave out poetry. Poetry is an essential element of art. We could even say that there is no art without poetry, and there is no art without politics.

EO: Do you think art has changed the world, and if so how? And in the future do you see art changing the world, and how?

AJ: Well, can you imagine a world without art? In the answer to this question you will find the answer to your question. What would the world be without art, without culture? As Nietzsche said, "Life without music would be a mistake." And you could paraphrase him and say: Life without art would be a mistake. Just take a look at around us, look around the city, look around the world – what would it be if there was no art and culture around us? Art and culture are essential elements of contemporary life, of life. Life is unthinkable without it. Art does greatly change the world, and as an artist I have always said, even with the risk of sounding naïve, that I want to change the world. I became an artist because I was unhappy with the state of the world, I am unhappy with the way it is now, and I want to change it. Now, I change it one person at a time – it is a very slow process, it's a very modest change, but we can touch people, we can inform them, and we can move them to action. In that sense I am Gramscian. Gramsci was an extraordinary intellectual of the 20th century, and an inspiration. He really believed in culture's capacity to affect change, and it is difficult, sometimes it seems futile, but culture and art have definitely changed the world, and as the world becomes even more complex and difficult, the more art's potentiality will be realized, culture's potentiality can be realized. The spaces of art and culture are the last remaining spaces of freedom.

EO: And how do you see the state of the contemporary art world?

AJ: The world of contemporary art has an image problem, which is of course ironic. The image circulated by the media with vicious vulgarity and spectacle, and it is a circus image of a few so-called art stars and a lot of money. Honestly, this has nothing to do with the world of contemporary art. The world of contemporary art is not monolithic; it is a network of systems. In one of these systems you have thousands of artists looking for meaning in life, in society, working with communities, trying to creatively expand their horizons. In another system you will find thinkers and intellectuals and dreamers discussing issues that affect society and the world, and producing papers and documents and publications and participating in lectures and

"All art is political. It is impossible to do anything in this world that does not have a political reading.."

debates, and expanding models of thinking. Contemporary art is film, theatre, music, poetry, dance, visual arts, which makes you think, makes you cry, makes you feel, and makes you act in the world. Where is that image of contemporary art in the media today? It just doesn't exist. The media makes a spectacle out of it, and it is quite sad.

EO: Do you think part of the artist's role is public intervention? For visual artists, for example, it is not staying within the confines of the exhibition space, but going out onto the street?

AJ: Personally I have felt the need to get out, and that is why I have divided my work in three main areas; only one third of my time is spent working in the so-called art world, in museums, galleries and foundations. Because this art world is so insular, I have tried to reach out to a larger audience, and that is why I have created more than fifty public interventions around the world, outside of the confines of the art world. In these projects I work with different communities, removed from the art world, and I confront myself to real life problems, from real life people, and these confrontations,

"I became an artist because I was unhappy with the state of the world. I am unhappy with the way it is now, and I want to change it."

these exercises in reality, keep me real, keep me grounded, and inform my practice as an artist within the art world. The third part of what I do is teaching. I direct seminars and workshops around the world where I exchange ideas with the younger generations, I share my experiences and I learn from their own experiences, and their own dreams. I would say that teaching is probably the most political of all three. But they are all three very important, and all these practices inform me as a professional and as a human being and make me complete.

EO: Have you seen the recent Cildo Meireles exhibition (at the Tate Modern, in London, until January 11th, 2009)? I recently read a quote of his, which said: "In some way you become political when you don't have a chance to be poetic. I think human beings would much prefer to be poetic." Would you like to comment on this?

AJ: Yes, I have seen the exhibition. Cildo has managed to look at the world poetically, and to create poetic assemblages, poetic environments, poetic installations and poetic objects. And they all have a political content – it is unavoidable – but the poetry of his constructions is overwhelming, and joyful. In contrast, I feel that my works have tilted more towards the political. Of course, they have a poetic element, always, but in that difficult balance between the poetical and the political, my works have been more political, I think. It has been more difficult for me, I am afraid, to contain my rage. In the works, for example, dealing with the Rwandan genocide I could not contain my rage, and so the political overwhelms the poetical. Cildo has been able to contain himself, or perhaps has confronted situations of less urgency than mine, and has been able to create explosions of poetry. It is an admirable exhibition from an admirable artist.

EO: Given the result of the most recent US presidential elections how do you view your 1989 work *The Fire Next Time*?

AJ: When I created that piece, I was living in New York and I felt race relations in the city were incredibly fragile, and it was a way for me to express that, and to express my shock, and sadness about the state of race relations in the country. When I moved to the United States in 1982 I expected to find a racially harmonious country where the civil rights movement had accomplished everything that was supposed to be accomplished, but I was shocked to discover that the reality was different. Almost 20 years later we have come a very long way. The results of the US election are an extraordinary sign of progress on that level, but a lot more needs to be done. What you see at the political level is not happening at the street level, and definitely not happening in wealth distribution, access to capital, access to education. But I think it is an extraordinary event that has the potential to change the United States – it has already changed it – it has the potential to change it greatly, from inside, and its image in the world, its relationship to the rest of the world.

IT IS DIFFICULT
Hangar Bicocca, Milano
3.10.2008 – 11.01.2009

(above)
Untitled (Water), 1990
Six double-sided lightboxes with twelve color transparencies, thirty framed mirrors
Lightboxes: 102cm x 102cm x 20cm each, mirrors: 30cm x 30cm x 5cm each
Overall dimensions: Variable
© The artist, New York, and Galleria Lia Rumma, Milano

(below)
Geography = War, 1991
Five lightboxes with color transparencies, 100 metal barrels, water
Lightboxes: 102cm x 102cm x 13cm each, barrels: 91cm high, 61cm diameter
Overall dimensions: Variable
© The artist, New York, and Galleria Lia Rumma, Milano

EO: What is your impression of the direction of contemporary politics?

AJ: I am always amazed at the simultaneous presence of contradictory winds in the world. On one hand you have what just happened in the United States, with its extraordinary potential, in a progressive direction, and then you have the phenomenon of Berlusconi in a country like Italy, where you can actually observe some fascist winds all over the country, and you wonder: how is that possible? How, why do societies, communities, move to the left or to the right simultaneously? What is it in human nature that make us behave in so contradictory ways, and if you look at Europe you will see some fascist spots on the map, and some progressive spots on the map, and they struggle against each other. And we, as citizens, are confronted with these realities, and we have to decide our path, and we will decide our path based on the education we have received, on the influence of our parents, on the influence of the milieu in which we live and grow, and on our personal convictions. But I am always amazed at this, all these possible paths, contradictions that we face in our daily lives, and that is why I always quote Emile Cioran, a Romanian poet and writer that I admire deeply, who wrote about his normal state of mind, as always being "simultaneously happy and unhappy, exalted and depressed, overcome by both pleasure and despair in the most contradictory harmonies", that is how I feel today, when I look at the world, when I read the papers, and I am always hoping that the balance will shift one day towards social justice. ■

ALFREDO JAAR'S COSMOPOLITAN CHALLENGE TO INSTITUTIONALISED INDIFFERENCE

North and South, overdeveloped, developing and developmentally arrested worlds must be made part of the same present.

BY PAUL GILROY

Europe's modernity was made and maintained by violence. Its initial energy came from the conquest of people pronounced alien and inferior. Its dynamism would be sustained by the consolidation of colonies and empires. Gradually, Capital ordered that divided and precarious arrangement into a system of national states and trans-national markets. Today, it is neither polite nor fashionable to point out that the idea of race was a fundamental factor in making those arbitrary divisions appear natural and historical as well as scientific and inevitable.

Now, the circuitry of power is shifting away from the Atlantic. We all face environmental and political catastrophes that do not respect national borders. Those changes place us under new obligations. We have to find new ways of understanding our predicament as a planetary phenomenon. We must assemble the social and ethical tools which we will need if we are to dwell peacefully with each other in a sustainable manner that recognizes global interdependence and admits the force of our common claims upon the imperiled earth. Our humanity is at stake.

The suffering born from that destructive and exploitative system has been given a voice and a face not by government but in cultural creativity. An urgent conversation about the future of our world is being led by artists rather than by politicians, journalists and academics. Everyday cultural spaces—by no means only powerful museums and galleries-are places where new imaginative habits are being acquired, affirmed and refined. The pleasures of being exposed to difference can be discovered in art's precious, convivial corona. That contact with alterity need not mean loss and jeopardy even in circumstances where security is imagined to derive from absolute sameness. Freed from the pressure to encounter ethnic and racialised difference as exotica, we can face up to the ordinariness of plurality. Hopefully, that emancipatory contact will help to cultivate the cosmopolitan virtues of attentiveness, perspective and proportionality.

After the Nazi genocide was acknowledged as an epochal event, artists began to ask what varieties of creative practice would comprise an appropriate response to the scale and character of its horrors. They struggled to answer the ethical demands that were imposed by a commitment to preventing the recurrence of mass murder and related crimes against humanity. Those problems-and the various mid-twentieth century answers offered to them-redefined the imaginative boundaries of European culture which was in need of repair. The ethical and aesthetic dilemmas involved

generated a battle of ideas which was swiftly recognized as part of a larger political, philosophical and moral problem. They were connected to debates over theodicy, over the complicity of European civilisation with racism and fascism, over the role of technology and debased, instrumental reason, over the timeliness of lyric poetry, indeed over the validity and shifting character of western culture. In the shadow of catastrophe and trauma, survivor testimony and contested memory, art had to be salvaged and made anew. In novel, perhaps in redemptive forms, it would contribute to a revised definition of what Europe was and what it would become in the future. Art alone could reacquaint Europe with the humanity from which it had been estranged.

The post-1945 reaction against fascism fostered the emergence of a new moral language centered on the idea of universal human rights. These innovations combined to ensure that the legacy of humanism and the category of the human were pending in Europe's reflections. However, the bloody history of colonial rule and of the bitter wars of decolonization that followed it were never registered in the same deep manner. Mid-century Europe's reflexive exercises were certainly well-intentioned but they stopped a long way short of a properly cosmopolitan commitment to understanding the history of the Nazi period in the context of earlier encounters with the peoples that Europe had conquered, sold, exploited and sometimes sought to eradicate.

The historical continuity between those histories of suffering was ignored and dismissed. Similarly, the broad, human significance of the awful events proved difficult to grasp. But the continuity between those two extended phases of terror, one temperately European, the other torridly colonial, has become fundamental in our postcolonial time. Perhaps Europe cannot remember its imperial and colonial history without learning too many painful and uncomfortable things about itself and about the uneven development of its civilisation. The prosecution of colonial wars allowed no distinction between civilian and soldier. The Geneva conventions did not apply and weapons of mass destruction could be used upon primitive people without any great objection.

"Jaar's interventions exemplify what might be called a responsible worldliness."

Western culture remains disoriented by troubling news of the comprehensive manner in which its civilisational claims were compromised. To make matters worse, postcolonial peoples began to appear inside Europe's fortifications. Their presence revealed that Europe was unable--just as Aimé Césaire had prophesied long ago--to resolve the two great, interrelated difficulties to which its modern history had given rise: the colonial problem and the problem of class hierarchy. Post-colonial settlers who came to clean up and reinvigorate Europe after the anti-Nazi war have gradually had their rights of citizenship circumscribed and withdrawn. Refugees, asylum-seekers, undocumented and unwanted denizens now comprise a newer caste of infra-human beings who have found the conspicuous benefits of loudly-trumpeted human rights hard to access. Those people are certainly here, mostly because Europe was once where they came from, but the door to recognition and belonging is being firmly blocked off. They experience not just racism and xenophobia but a mode of simultaneous exclusion and inclusion which confines them to a twilight life of rightslessness.

Cosmopolitan, contemporary art like Jaar's has offered a welcome therapeutic response. Firstly, this oppositional art says that the idea that European development bears a precious and unique telos cannot be sustained any longer. Secondly, it suggests that the old view in which Africa was outside of history and devoid of historicality, has crumpled before the postcolonial challenges of simultaneity and accountability. Thirdly, it says that those who dwell inside the grimy citadels of overdevelopment must acknowledge the way their fates are connected to the lives of people in the global South whose misery and insecurity conditions post-scarcity plenitude and security. This focus on the inter-relational does not generate another Manichaean script. Pockets of that desperate South are now lodged inside the North and vice versa. This is no longer a black and white world.

Somehow, North and South, overdeveloped, developing and developmentally arrested worlds must be made part of the same present. Living sustainably and with minimal conflict, means being prepared to be accountable to one another. Jaar rises to this challenge and his interventions exemplify what might be called a responsible worldliness. They are tacitly premised upon a critique of the indifference to the suffering of others which has been institutionalized in the overdeveloped countries. He does not approach that suffering as if it were the exclusive cultural or experiential property of its victims. He boldly takes the responsibility to acknowledge these wrongs on to his own shoulders and invites us to do likewise. His hostility to institutionalized indifference is profound enough to invite a daring return to the disreputable problem of common humanity. This is no rerun of the old cosmopolitanism based upon extending hospitality. National states are hemorrhaging. They leak people, ideas, technology and resources into each other. A

Carlos Vergara
Cacique de Ramos, Carnival Series, 1972/76

(left)
Rio Branco, Carnival Series, 1972/76

for both:
Fuji photograph paper in silicon metacrilat over dibond, printed in 2008
100cm x 150cm
Edition of 7

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restorative re-engagement with the notion of common humanity may help to stabilize this situation. However, it can only succeed if is conducted in explicit opposition to racial hierarchies, civilisationist conceits and neo-imperial exploitation.

For some time now, Jaar's tricontinental projects have endeavoured provocatively to place Asia, Africa and Europe's first colony, Latin America in the official world picture. It is not only that he has indicted the malign unevenness of official media coverage and challenged its implicit geography. He has moved beyond the basic problems of omission and restorative inclusion and towards a different kind of inquiry altogether. This aspect of his work is aimed at the forms of power that flow from the control of images and from their eventful, contested reception by anxious viewers who want to know how to respond to the terrible things they can see, but do not know how, or what to do. They are not assisted in their quest for ethical probity by a media culture and a consumer mood that promote collusion and dignify a culture of indifference which is fatal both for its abject objects and its disoriented receivers.

"An urgent conversation about the future of our world is being led by artists rather than by politicians, journalists and academics."

Jaar's pieces return to these fundamental themes of controlling images and responding honestly to disturbing and demanding information in impossible situations. He has integrated an oblique but bitter commentary on these features of post- and neo-colonial power with a series of blunt enquiries into the responsibilities of artists as well as the plight of willfully innocent gatherers and transmitters of information. He promotes reexamining the rules and codes that govern the recognition and representation of the Others whose presence secures the border around us. Their appearance in our news-scapes, on our screens should not boil down to a choice between trivialization and betrayal. The artist's efforts to assimilate and humanize these mutes might, he suggests, become both honest and authentic. That difficult prospect involves breaking up the dyad of victim and perpetrator and supplementing those narrow roles with a spectrum of other possibilities: denier, bystander, witness and perhaps in certain limited circumstances even saviour. This imaginative expansion requires ethical effort and it does not remain the artist's singular responsibility for long. In Jaar's hands, it opens slowly into a necessarily painful consideration of where witnesses, spectators and audiences stand in relation to the traumatic and depressing events that now compose the agenda of global news as it tracks our planet's commercial and political upheavals. The Rwandan tragedy which has occupied him so consistently, dropped out of that dubious programme for a number of the reasons outlined above. The clouds passing over a place of memory become a transient marker not only of the space of death but of the ambivalent conundrum of honest shock and human shame.

The growing inequality between the overdeveloped world and the rest threatens to compromise the ground on which a resurgent understanding of common humanity will eventually have to be erected. Other deeply uncomfortable words like "accountability" and "responsibility" help to specify Jaar's humble engagement with the humanity of the other people who have been locked out of the promises and pathologies of overdevelopment. He offers compelling elements of a countermedia that might connect their everyday life to ours.

Filtered pseudo-news flows ceaselessly from the frontlines. The media is saturated by the strategic outpourings of a burgeoning PR machinery. In the process, politics and public culture have acquired an unrelenting tempo which is not conducive to any open engagement with suffering, immediate or remote. Jaar applies the same humanising tactics wherever he is. They start from a refusal of complicity with existing patterns of seeing and being seen. He will show you neither the homeless of Montreal nor the charnel houses of Rwanda. Yet the presence of both is publicly marked, announced in other more demanding ways that break the polarity between those who chose to communicate horror and suffering in ways that will never be sufficient and those who refuse that task, opting instead to shock and to interrupt. That modernist dilemma is re-staged repeatedly but it is now accompanied by a distinctive commitment to working through the constraints of the colonial past. It is that resolution which breaks the melancholic spell cast all over Europe by the desire for a return to the greatness that vanished with departed imperial prestige. It is there too that Jaar extends Fanon's famous invitation to the sometime beneficiaries of colonial domination "wake up, put on (your) thinking caps and stop playing the irresponsible game of sleeping beauty." There is no kiss bestowed here. The flashes of light and flame are his inducements to that belated awakening. ■

This article is an edited extract of an essay in SCARDI, Gabi and PIETROMARCHI, Bartolomeo (eds) (2008) Alfredo Jaar: It Is Difficult, Vol. 2, Mantua, Italy: Edizioni Corraini
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SANDRO MEZZADRA INTERVIEWED

Migrants are here to stay, and their number is bound to increase in the next years: their practices and their struggles will play a key role in any attempt to imagine and build a "positive notion of European citizenship".

Europa: In many European countries the policy towards immigration is getting tougher, and the financial crisis is already being used as a powerful justification for these policies. European legislation is also getting tougher, especially with regards to extra-European immigration. How do you see these developments?
Mezzadra: Although I am not at all excluding the importance of other factors (political, cultural, etc) I do think that the current crisis plays a key role in the toughening of European migration policies and in the increasing hostility towards extra-European migrants. Even one of the most "progressive" European governments, the Zapatero government in Spain, proposed repatriation programs for migrants as soon as the first signs of the crisis became apparent in the construction sector, which had employed thousands of migrants in recent years. The point is that the current crisis is not a mere "financial" crisis, it is a deep, global crisis of the whole economic system. And in such cases, the consequences for migrants tend to be negative: just think of the early 1930s in the US, when the start of the "New Deal" was accompanied by the deportation of half a million Mexican immigrants, together with many of their US-born sons and daughters. Or think of the *Anwerbestopp* (the end of recruitment of foreign "guestworkers") and of the attempt to repatriate many immigrants in Western Germany after the crisis of 1973…
On the other hand, the economic system and the labour market work in contemporary Europe in a fundamentally different way than in the heyday of the so-called "Fordism". "Labour shortages" and in general the demand of migrant labour are much more flexible, punctual and elusive than they used to be. It is therefore reasonable to think that each attempt to seal the borders will be accompanied by a series of exceptions (for careworkers, seasonal workers in agriculture and other sectors, etc.). And that the migration regime in Europe will evolve toward the adoption of ever more sophisticated and complicated systems of filtering and selection. Current developments and discussions in the UK on the new points-based system are symptomatic in this sense.
Migrants are here to stay, and their number is bound to increase in the next years: their practices and their struggles will play a key role in any attempt to imagine and build a "positive notion of European citizenship".

Europa: Do you think that the increasingly cosmopolitan composition of many European towns and cities (particularly in the west of Europe) lends itself to the construction of a new form of emancipatory politics, one that goes beyond issue-specific concerns and has a transnational dimension?
Mezzadra: No European metropolis could exist, produce, or even be "competitive" on the world market without the "hybrid" and cosmopolitan composition of its population, of its culture, of its styles of life, and of course of its labour market. This is a crucial point in my opinion, and everybody is aware of this in Europe: even current configurations of racism do not aim at assigning different populations to different territories, they rather aim to regulate, to "manage" as European rhetoric would have it, the intersection of their bodies within a single territory.
To put it in a rather schematic way: the heterogeneity of European population corresponds to the proliferation of heterogeneous devices of control, domination and exploitation, which are continuously disarticulating and re-assembling the very shape of citizenship in Europe. It is a question of political agency to transform European citizenship into a space of heterogeneous practices of freedom and equality.

Europa: You have recently questioned the idea (with reference to Mouffe and Laclau) that genuinely new political movements can be constructed on the basis of an equivalence between different particular demands and have suggested that we might need instead to think of a relation more akin to translation between different heterogeneous groups and their struggles. If we adopt this approach, how do we avoid colluding with the dispersion and disintegration techniques employed by the organs of power – which have an interest in keeping political demands heterogeneous and contradictory – and generate a sufficiently cohesive alternative idiom of resistance?

"We need variable geometries of struggle, of active involvement of heterogeneous subjects, actors and movements."

Mezzadra: It is an important question, which directly relates with what I was just saying on the heterogeneity of practices of freedom and equality. Let me say, first of all, that while I have been critical towards Mouffe and Laclau in some of my recent writings, I do acknowledge the importance of their contributions to the rethinking of a critical theory of emancipatory politics in the last two decades.
The problem with the concept of *equivalence* is that it tends to reproduce existing political forms – first of all the state – as the center and unsurpassable horizon of politics. To summarize and simplify what should be a long and complicated discourse: the subject of articulation between different particular claims according to the logic of equivalence is structurally a kind of "transcendent" subject (be it the party, be it the state). It is not internal to the movements that produce the claims. In my work I try to explore the productivity of the reference to the concept of translation to imagine a new kind of political subjectivity and political action. I am trying to take more seriously the issue of "difference" and to frame the construction of the *common* through a continuous and never ending process of invention of a new political language, as well as of new forms of organization and even institutions. This is a process that traverses the heterogeneity of social struggles without sacrificing their specific claims to the logic of equivalence but at the same time without confining them to their specificity and to the logic of identity politics.

Europa: Etienne Balibar, with whom you have entered into considerable dialogue, has repeatedly stressed the importance of developing variable geometries for the European Union. How do you assess European neighbourhood policy in this regard, and in particular the use of offering a road to membership of the EU as bait? Does the recent relaunch of the idea of a Mediterranean Union present any new paradigms for Europe's soft-power approach?
Mezzadra: I do agree with Etienne Balibar about the importance of developing variable geometries for the European process. But I think that these variable geometries must be first of all variable geometries of struggle, of active involvement of heterogeneous subjects, actors and movements. The variable geometries of the European Union tend to build different degrees of internality and externality to the European space to which precise relations of power correspond.
Migration has been key to the whole process of the Eastward Enlargement of the European Union. Candidates had to adapt their legislation and their migratory politics to the "European standards", what did not mean in the first place "human rights" but

On Movement: Sandro Mezzadra and the

BY NADJA STAMSELBERG

Reflecting on the notion of movement, which strategically crops up every time the multitude needs a definition, for instance when the concept of multitude needs to be detached from the false alternative between sovereignty and anarchy calls for its definition. Leaving it undefined, Agamben claims, risks compromising our choices and strategies. He argues that the primacy of the notion of movement lies in the becoming unpolitical of the people. The movement becomes the decisive political concept when the democratic concept of the people, as a political body, is in demise. Democracy ends when movements emerge. Furthermore, if by democracy we mean what traditionally regards the people as the political body constitutive of democracy, no democratic movements exist.

But then why do we keep using the concept of movement? if it signals a threshold of politicisation of the unpolitical, can there be a movement that is different from civil war? or in what direction can we rethink the concept of movement and its relation to bio-politics? Potential answers can be found in Mezzadra's proposal to name migration as a social movement. The movement can find its own politicality only by assigning to the unpolitical body of the people an internal caesura that allow for its politicisation. For Schmitt, this caesura consists in the identity of species, i.e. racism. Analogously, the internal caesura, which allows for politicisation of the social movement of migration, is the practices of exclusion the migrant and the refugee are subjected to. The appellation of migration as a social movement can be found throughout Mezzadra's body of work. In his call to re-address migration, one is invited to move away from the manner in which immigrants have been confronted in recent years. Despite referring to the immigrant situation in Italy, which resulted in a critique


Photo by Brigita Eregovic

politics of migration

of the Bossi-Fini Law, the relevance of his observations transcends not only the Italian, but also the European sphere. Perceived as a weak subject, hollowed out by hunger and misery and in urgent need of care and help, the immigrant as Mezzadra describes him/her is an easy prey for a paternalistic logic that ascribes him/her to an inferior position, thus denying him/her any possibility of becoming a subject. The obverse face of this perception of the migrant is the emphasis of the right to difference, which characterises the multicultural understanding shared by most of the political and social Left. In view of this view of the Left, which depicts migrants as simple objects, dragged along and overwhelmed by the global mobilisation of capital, and in view of the naturalistic metaphors of the dominant public discourse, the need to revise the migration rhetoric becomes imperative. Through the prism of semantic appropriation, the migrant becomes as hazardous and in some cases deadly as the occurrences that initiated his/her exodus. Having escaped the objective causes, the migrants are subsequently objectified. As they become objects themselves, divorced from any subjective and personal dimension of being, they are subjected to a crude generalisation, numbering and classification implicit in the mainstream treatment of migratory processes. Ascribing these views to a lack of focus on the subjectivity of migrants, Mezzadra proposes to utilise the concept of what he aptly terms *right to escape*. Emphasising the subjective dimension of migration, Mezzadra claims, does not mean assuming the Anglo-Saxon position of considering a migrant as a rootless, nomadic post-modern subject freely crossing the boundaries between cultures and identities. For him, what constitutes the paradigmatic status of the migrant's condition lies in instances of transformation that regard not only migrants.

However, practices of exclusion, which correspond to objectivisation of migration, politicise migration as a movement, inevitably raise the question of whether subjectivisation of migration thus depoliticises it. Should we indeed read this trajectory as depolitisation, or as an invitation to interpret differently the concept of the political and the concept of democracy, and to try and articulate both concepts via the notions of gift and singularity?

the building of detention facilities and the cooperation in the European regime of border control and deportation. And you cannot talk about the project of a Mediterranean Union without taking into account and closely analyzing the whole process of "externalization" of the European border and migration regime. As for instance Ali Bensaâd has recently written, the attempt to involve ever more neighbouring and even distant countries in the management of migration towards Europe corresponds to an attempt to "delocalize" Europe's tensions outside its borders. And this really works as a kind of "bait", since the cooperation in the field of migration and border control is becoming one of the fundamental conditions for any kind of further cooperation.

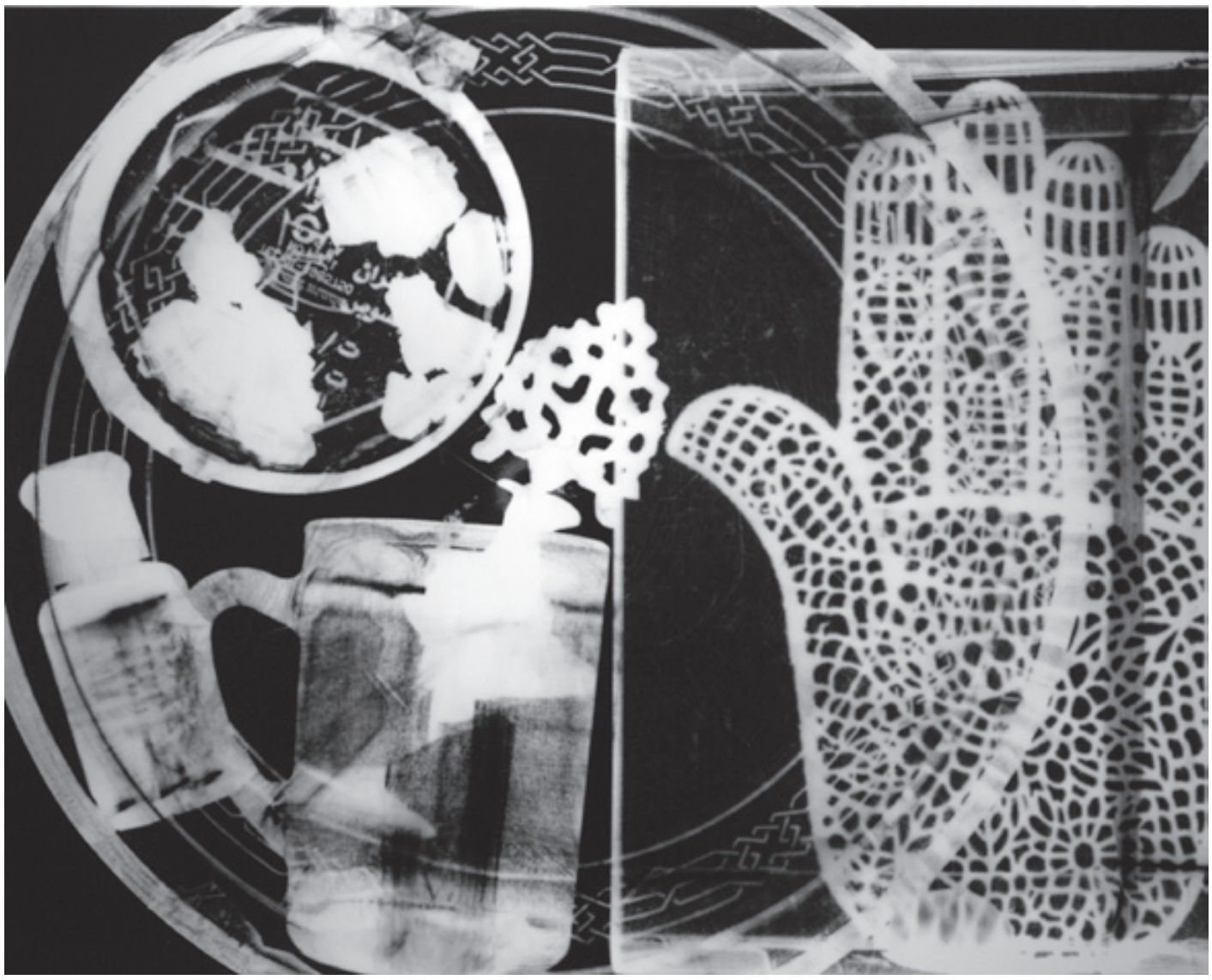
All this said, I remain convinced that these processes (European enlargement, neighbourhood policies, Mediterranean Union) open up fields of potential political experimentation well beyond the actual shape they take. But the condition for a positive and productive experimentation is the deepening of networking and exchange processes between movements and struggles. Many experiences are developing in this direction: although they are still small and limited, I do think that they are crucial in showing the vital necessity of new kinds of transnational and transborder emancipatory politics.

Europa: In your article The Right to Escape, published in 2004, you write that the subjectivity of a migrant must be placed at the centre of attention. In your opinion has this become more common practice since you wrote the article?

Mezzadra: It is difficult to generalize on such a point. "Public discourses" are diverse and profoundly heterogeneous in Europe: it's hard to compare Sweden and Italy when you look at the way in which migrants are represented in the dominant public discourse.

Nevertheless I would tend to say that common characteristics have emerged within what we can very roughly call "European public discourse" in the last years. The increasing securitization of the public discourse has been for instance one of these characteristics, along with the rise of a certain "Anti-Islamism", particularly after September 11, and the bombings in London and Madrid. We could go on for a long time mentioning "negative" characteristics… But at the same time, even in a country like Italy, there have been, paradoxically as it can seem, contrasting developments, pointing in the direction of an increasing acknowledgement of the legitimacy and structural character of migrants' presence: attention is given to forms and practices of "vernacular multiculturalism", as well as to the subjectivity of the "second generation", which is a relatively new phenomenon in this country. After all, the "public discourse" is itself a battlefield, and one must not be exclusively pessimistic when looking at recent developments in the field: but the battle has to be fought everyday. And it is worth doing it! ■

ISLAMISM IS THE NEW RED?



Four years after the Madrid bombings, there is still no consensus on how to understand Political Islam in Europe.

BY JOSHUA CRAZE

The Rotterdam Imam El Moumni, whose preaching so shocked Pim Fortuyn, uses a language that would not seem out of place in an American Evangelist Church to make a moral appeal which would equally seem at home on the Christian right: homosexuals are sick and in need of treatment. Both Church and Mosque alike feel that they are among a small number of true believers in Godless societies.

Yet, despite this seeming proximity, the same Imam claims that it is these Churches that are part of the Crusader's imperialist project – equally, Christian Evangelists group Muslims and the multicultural (secular) left together when they diagnose society's ills.

If there seem to be strange bedfellows today, it is because we still do not have any real idea of what the bed is, and correspondingly who is lying in it; over four years after the Madrid bombings, there is still no consensus about how to understand Islamism in Europe.

This uncertainty is made manifest by the terms we use: political Islamism, political Islam, Islamo-fascism, or just plain old Islam. Each term refers to a different object, and yet we tend to lump them together, or hope that our definitions will somehow be adequate to the situation in which we find ourselves.

A European Islamism?

In the aftermath of Madrid, and the regime-change that was seemingly affected, a popular line of argument linked these attacks to the situation in the Middle East. In such an argument, violent attacks in Europe become the extension of a strange foreign policy acted out in the name of those oppressed by American (and often by extension, European) imperialism. It was, indeed, the explicit motivation of the Madrid bombers to protest Spanish troop deployment in Iraq and Afghanistan.

One approach to understanding European Islamism would be to take the claims of the Islamists themselves seriously; to share a vision of the world in which the dar al-Islam (land of Islam) is fragmented by migration, globalisation and military interventions, and in which actions in Europe act to support a deterritoralised Islam.

According to Olivier Roy, one of the most prominent analysts of Islam, what such an approach would miss is the specifically European aspect of Islamism. If we look to European history, what we will see is that:

"The far left in Europe today has abandoned zones of social exclusion.... a 30-year old, in France, who would have joined the proletarian left, the Maoists or *Action Directe*, who, in Italy, would have joined the *Brigate Rosse*, who, in Germany, would have joined the *Rote Armee Fraktion*, this young person no longer has the opportunity to join left-wing movements, and if he or she wants to fight the system, and use violence, he or she has only one role model: and that is bin Laden, or the local Islamist networks, or his or her friend."

The inheritance of failure

There is much to suggest such a viewpoint has some merit.

We are in Egypt. It is 1952. Following the coup d'état that brings Nasser to power, Sayyid Qutb, one of the most influential Islamist thinkers of the last hundred years, is made the "tribune of the revolution". Over the next six years Qutb made a series of radio broadcasts in which he sets out a vision of the revolution as the first in a series that will lead to the unity of all the Muslim nations.

The eventual separation between the socialism of Nasser and the radicalism of Qutb - which was soon followed by the collapse of socialism and the rise of Islamism – should not obscure the links between Islamism and socialism as political ideologies. Theoretically, both Qutb and Mawdudi – the influential Pakistani thinker – took the notion of the vanguard from Marxist language.

If the vanguard for Lenin is the party – that force that will ensure the movement from an existent political world in which the proletariat do not recognise the situation of oppression in which they find themselves - then, for Mawdudi and Qutb, the vanguard is used to ensure the movement between a world in which politics and religion are com-

Edge of Arabia

Edge of Arabia is a pioneering attempt to expose new currents in Saudi Arabian visual arts to an international audience, and is the first major exhibition of contemporary Saudi art in London. It presents the work of 17 artists from across the country, both male and female, who address a range of global political issues as well as their relationship to the Islamic faith, issues surrounding self-image, and the history of their regions of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is often presented in Europe as a homogenous country of highly traditional cultural practices. What emerges is a highly diverse set of cultural subjectivities which all have a startlingly modern sensibility which in some places even displays irony. The exhibition will be regarded as a landmark beginning for international understanding of the complex relation between modernity and religious custom in what is often a very private kingdom.

Brunei Gallery SOAS, London, closed 13th December

pletely separated, and the world to come, where religious virtue and political power will be inseparable.

Political Islamism failed, and what we see today in Europe, according to Olivier Roy, is structurally different. Among the videotapes and internet articles of those who argue for violent attacks on Europe, there is no thought, unlike for Sayyid Qutb, of taking state power. There is instead an insistence on the duty to perform individual actions, without thought for the practical political consequences. It is most of all this emphasis that means trying to understand Islamism in Middle Eastern terms is flawed.

The links that Roy sees between the radical left and Islamism go past ideology. There is also a similarity of situation: both movements emerge after a failed attempt to ensure passage to a virtuous state (the GIA in Algeria, Communism in Russia), both emphasize individual actions, both act in an international space constituted by a deterritorialised community, and, whether this community is the *ummah* or the global proletariat, the space is conveyed, paradigmatically, by the media.

But there are problems with Olivier Roy's account. The argument is narrowly functionalist: it assumes that there is a need for revolt in society, and that now merely the names have changed.

As an account of the far left, this account fails. The Rote Armee Fraktion was largely composed of the alienated bourgeois, and did not ever enter zones of social exclusion in order to abandon them. More importantly, the comparison misses the differing ways people understand the violence that they use. Why Islamism? The question is almost nonsensical to the framework Olivier Roy creates: what he sees is history repeated.

If we look to the justifications that are given, the personal videos made, the constant invocations of duty, the sudden appearance of violence outside of formal political parties, then it is clear we cannot understand them in terms of politics. If we can understand them at all, then it would seem to be as an ethical duty, something one takes upon oneself as an individual, outside of any political or religious structure. In a space outside of politics, we are left with a particularly deadly form of ethics. ■

European Alternatives launches Saudi Arabia project

Over the first sixth months of 2009 European Alternatives will be working in partnership with a wide range of Saudi Arabian and UK organisations on a joint project to promote the building of longstanding civil society relations between the two countries, to promote cultural exchange. This project, which will be launched in Jeddah and Riyadh in January, will be presented at the London Festival of Europe in May 2009, and again in Saudi over the summer.

PERFORMACE ART IN LATIN AMERICA: TANIA BRUGUERA AND LORENA WOLFFER

Women artists in Latin American have been at the forefront in promoting an art that is at once introspective and socially engaged.

BY JOSEFINA ALCÁZAR

Performance art emerges in the second half of the twentieth century, a period characterised by a strong disrespect for artistic boundaries. The artists of the vanguardist movements of the fifties and sixties erase the distinction between high and low culture and move beyond traditional divisions between artistic forms, creating an essentially interdisciplinary art form. They defend the inseparability of art and life, an heritage of Dadaism that gains in strength over this period. The opposition between creating subject and created object becomes ambiguous, the relation between creator and spectator is turned upside down. From another angle, the growing mercantilisation of art is strongly questioned. The work of art, previously considered as the unique fruit of the imagination, is now compared to mass production. Contemplation, the traditional gate of access to art, is identified with the fetishised gaze in front of a shop window. All this pushed artists to disarticulate the traditional manner of understanding art, developing alternative methods of production and distribution. New means of presenting the works were sought: artists left the concert hall, the theatre, the gallery, the museum, and all the other places usually assigned to the aesthetic experience, in search of a new space. A return to Duchamp favours a self-reflexive art, where an idea takes the place of an object. The process of conceptualisation and creation gains primacy, culminating in a de-materialisation of the artistic process.

"The transgression of a hypocritical and regressive morality has been a fundamental theme for performance art."

With the abolishment of 'the work of art', preoccupations for style, quality and permanence – traditionally all essential elements of art – are erased. The artist, says Joseph Kosuth, must first and foremost be judged according to his method and capacity to question the nature of art itself; art, able to address the spiritual interests of man, can be conceived to replace philosophy and religion.

Performance art has a number of predecessors, and it is impossible to establish a vertical structure to illustrate the point of origin of this artistic form. Its origins are many and interlaced, extending in a rhyzomic[1] horizontality. The germs that gave birth to performance art lived in the spirit of the age, so that we find its manifestations in Japan as much as in Brazil, in the United States as in Vienna, in Mexico as in Spain. In a nutshell, it could be said that performance art embraces a complex and heterogeneous range of live art, crossing artistic and disciplinary frontiers in search of new vocabularies, new spaces and new materials to create experiences that emphasise the process of creation and conceptualisation instead of the product, making of the artist's body its raw material.

TANIA BRUGUERA (Cuba)

A cardinal point in Latin American performance art is the ritual component. The recuperation of indigenous traditions, a reference to religious ceremonies or shamanic acts, are all commonly found aspects of this art; the question of identity is often approached in relation to ethnocultural roots. Many artists retrieve an ancestral imaginary and cosmology, where the body is presented in its relation to the supernatural; this is particularly the case in the performances of artists from Cuba, Brazil, Mexico and Venezuela, who maintain a strong link to their past. These artists summon a sacred space in which to incorporate elements of mystic significance, such as blood, earth, water, flowers, candles or copal [a type of resin]. In Cuba, for example, "the presence of African culture, through the different ethnicities introduced over almost four centuries of slavery, has profoundly affected religious practice, dance, musical expression, as well as popular culture and plastic arts[2]".

"Bruguera explores her social and cultural context, she analyses the problems of power, migration, memory, or guilt, converting them in the central theme of her works. She turns art into critical reflection"

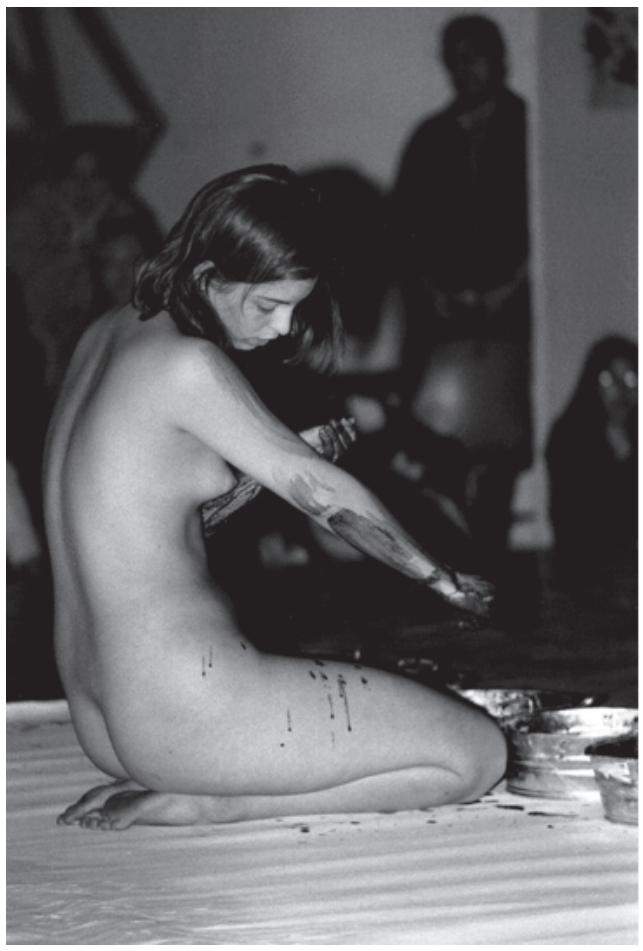
Within the field of art inspired by ritual, Tania Bruguera stands out for the force of her work, which recuperates rituality through her intimate and personal experience while relating it very subtly to the political context. Born in La Habana, Cuba, in 1968, Tania has held numerous exhibitions and performances since 1986. International recognition arrives with the series of performances *Rostros Corporales* ["corporeal faces", 1982-1993], conceived as a homage to the mythical Cuban-American artist Ana Mendieta. Bruguera here departs from the name of a performance realised by Ana Mendieta in 1982, and carries out a reflection on migration, identity, and the sense of belonging.

In an interview realised in 1990 by Valia Garzón, Tania recalled that "what began as a simple homage took on other connotations when... towards the end of eighties a massive emigration of Cuban artists and friends took place. They all began to disappear. All the energy was leaving Cuba. Ana Mendieta was looking for the Cuba she had lost; I was looking for all that Cuba was losing". For Tania art represents the possibility of reflection, an attempt to bring an intimate and personal experience to the collective space. [3]

In 1997, Tania Bruguera began one of the most well-known and polemical of her series: *El peso de la culpa* [the weight of guilt]. The first piece of this series was realised in her house, in La Habana Vieja, as her work was not included in the 6th Habana Biennial. Her house faced the road, and she left the door open; the international public mixed with her neighbours and people from the crowded bar opposite the house. Dressed in a white dress and barefoot, Bruguera stood in front of the Cuban flag, which she had weaved herself using human hair. From her body hung a beheaded ram, covering her chest as a shield. In the flat there was a pot of earth and a bowl full of water. Tania placed some earth in her hand, mixed it with water and slowly ate it. Over the entire duration of the performance, around an hour, Bruguera was eating the earth in an attitude of resignation and resistance, with calm and rituality[4].

Tania declared that this gesture was

related to the suicide ritual of the indigenous populations of the island faced with the pressure of the Spanish invasion. Doubtlessly, the symbolism of the performance allows for several readings. For the critic José Ramón Alonso the gigantic flag confined the action in Cuba. The ram is a symbol of sacrifice, but it also expresses innocence, submission, indulgency, compassion. It is a subdued, docile body, representing the body of the artist or perhaps that of society. From another angle, "eating earth" is a Cuban expression meaning absence of economic prosperity, and here the interpretation seems straightforward. Others spoke of the purification rites associated to the imaginary of local religious syncretism, or of a way of digesting reality, or again of a way of denouncing the predatory behaviour of dominant societies[5].



Tania realises her performances over time; "the prolongation of the performance, always painful for the degree of intensity required on the artist for its realisation, transforms performance art into sacrifice... A primitive ritual that brings to light hidden cultural memories and their structure of meaning. Human behaviour becomes the means to access a truth about society[6].

Bruguera explores her social and cultural context, she analyses the problems of power, migration, memory, or guilt, converting them in the central theme of her works. She makes a social act out of her personal tribunal. She turns art into critical reflection.

LORENA WOLFFER (Mexico)

Another artist who uses her body as a source of metaphorical imagination and as a field of resistance is Lorena Wolffer, born in Mexico City in 1971. One of her first performances, realised in 1992, at age 21, is *Báñate* [wash yourself]. In this work, Lorena Wolffer appears naked, sitting to the side of jars filled with blood, which she begins to spread over her body with slow and gentle movements.

Blood, in its enigmatic symbolism, is a recurrent element in many of Lorena's performances. In Judeo-Christian culture blood receives a symbolic value and is converted in the Eucharist. The French historian

Jean-Paul Roux points out that "blood is intimately linked to images of death, but even more to those of a life that ultimately always triumphs; blood has been considered at the same time dangerous and promising, fortunate and unfortunate, pure and impure. If it has never stopped to reject and attract it is because, as all that is sacred, it is essentially ambiguous[7]."

In this work, Lorena slowly covers her chest, her arms, her legs and finally her entire body in blood, reclaiming its power as a vital element. It is well known that all bodily secretions bother and upset. Tears, which Saint Augustine calls the blood of the soul, are generally related to sadness; pus is related to pain and infection; sweat with fear, exhaustion or excitement. But of all of these the most frightening is blood. And it is precisely menstrual blood which has the strongest resonance in the human psyche; its unsettling character is further increased by it origin in the genitals of woman. In her performance, faced with the ambiguity of this element, Lorena seems to be telling us that blood cleans, purifies.

"Lorena Wolffer brings the spectator to be the voyeur of a tortured female body, while a voice in play back reconfigures the scene and converts it into a political denunciation."

In 1997, Lorena Wolffer presented a performance called *Territorio Mexicano* [Mexican Territory]. She was naked, tied up hands and feet to a chirurgical bed, while every second, and uninterruptedly over six interminable hours, a drop of blood dripped on her belly from a suspended transfusion bag.

Her body, transformed into a metaphor of the Mexican territory, was a comment on the passivity and defenceless of the majority of people faced with the pangs of the economic and social crisis of the country. By the entrance to the museum hall, converted for the occasion into an operating theatre, one could hear the speech of a North American senator discussing the role of Mexico in the fight against drug trafficking. Upon entering the room a thick white cloud made the air of the room unbreathable; at the centre was the tense body of Lorena resignedly bearing her suffering, while a voice-off interminably repeated "danger, danger, you are nearing Mexican territory".

Lorena makes use of blood in this performance, but in this occasion through its tragic aspect, its sense of suffering, of death. The blood, constantly dripping over her belly button for six hours, ended up spreading over her stomach and legs. Approaching it the spectator suddenly faced the subdued and subjugated body of a woman.

Lorena Wolffer brings the spectator to be the voyeur of a tortured female body, while hearing a tape which reconfigures the scene and converts it into a political denunciation. The senses of the spectator are pulled in opposite directions, his perception shaken.

CONCLUSION

Performance art has been a means to explore the physical dimension of the body; it is through the body that one can express sentiments of reject and of acceptance, that one can stipulate an engagement with society. We could call performance art one of the artistic forms where the "I" of the artist is most involved, and it is from this fact that comes the power of the performance.

The body becomes space of transformation and of experience, of resistance and of expression. In their exploration of the body some artists look for the exaltation of the senses; they bring the body to the its physical as well as psychological limits. and awaken them anew to life. A rite of passage, an initiation to a new state of consciousness.

In societies where even desires are repressed it has been very important to present themes considered taboo. The transgression of a hypocritical and regressive morality has been a fundamental theme for performance art. The body extends its meaning, it becomes metaphor and material, word and canvas. The exploration of the body and the search for a liberated relation to sexuality are approached through feminism, the gay struggle, the questioning of religion and the analysis of public and private behaviour, all fundamental themes of an autobiographical and intimate art of performance. ■

FOOTNOTES

1. Ryzhome is a philosophical concept advanced by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. A rhizome works with horizontal and trans-species – as opposed to vertical and linear – connections.

2. Ramos Cruz, Guillermina. (2005) "La soga invisible del arte acción", en Josefina Alcázar y Fernando Fuentes, eds.; Performance y arte acción en América Latina, México: Ediciones sin nombre, Conaculta-Fonca, Ex Teresa, Citru.

3. Garzón, Valia (1999) "Entrevista realizada a Tania Bruguera" Texto para el catálogo de la muestra Lo que me corresponde, Guatemala, Museo Nacional de Arte Moderno de Guatemala, Espacio Colloquia.

4. Pozo, Alejandra. "Cuerpos de artistas en plena acción" in Art News, No 26, http://www.universes-in-universe.de/artnexus/no26/pozo_esp.htm

5. Alonso, José Ramón. (2006) "Tania Bruguera o el arte acción como medio de reflexión", Estudios Culturales, Madrid, http://es.geocities.com/estudiosculturales2003/arteyarquitectura/taniabruguera.html

6. Sosa Fernández, Sandra. "Tania Bruguera" in The H Magazine, http://www.theharte.com/tania_brugueras.htm

7. Jean-Paul Roux, La sangre. Mitos, símbolos y realidades, Península, Barcelona 1990.

(from left to right)
Tania Bruguera, "El peso de la culpa"
La Habana, Cuba, 1997
Tania Bruguera, "El peso de la culpa"
La Habana, Cuba, 1997
Lorena Wolffer, "Báñate"
México, D.F. 1992
Lorena Wolffer,"Territorio Mexicano"
México D.F. 1997.

FEMALE TROUBLE?

The camera as mirror and stage of female projection

REVIEW BY SÉGOLÈNE PRUVOT

Female trouble is the beginning of the title of an exhibition staged this summer at the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich. Such a statement written in large font on top of the ticket desks of a large contemporary art museum immediately raises many questions in the mind of the traveller, maybe even more so if the traveller is a feminist herself:

Are females trouble? And if so – *who are they trouble for? Are they trouble for men or for themselves? Or analysed differently, the title can have another meaning: Are women troubled? And if yes, what is causing them trouble? Are they more troubled than men or are they simply troubled in another way?*

The exhibition *Female Trouble: The camera as mirror and stage of female projection* assumes that a specifically feminine trouble or one predominantly explored in artworks produced by women artists is the trouble – or the troubles – with self image and identity. Therefore, in their art, female artists more often play with their own images and use transgressed representations of female bodies, often their own body.

Too often, "feminism" is used as a label for any artwork produced by females in the 70's and 80's or simply by females in general. This was for instance the major weakness of the WACK! exhibition presented last spring at the MoMa in New York.

Inka Graeve Ingelmann, the curator of *Female Trouble*, has taken a more modest and more focused approach. And this was for the best. The exhibition focused on artists who have explored identity as a central theme. It included both artworks dating back from the 19th and early 20th century when "women discovered photography as a means of (self-) projection and enquiry" and works of contemporary artists "who, with the aid of photography and video art, examine the female image, deconstruct and redefine it".

The interview below presents Inka's approach. It starts with more explanation on this interestingly ambivalent title and continues with a reflection on feminist arts and political claims today.

SP: Why did you choose this title? Was it your intention to play with its double meaning?
Inka Graeve Ingelmann: In fact, the title *Female Trouble* has a double origin. First, it is the title of a movie produced by John Waters in 1974. This movie challenged the conventional and bourgeois representations of women and gender roles. It approached this issue in a very ironic and satirical way. This was maybe the first time it was done in such a way in a movie. *Gender Trouble* is also the title of a book by Judith Butler. Using this title links the exhibition to a specific body of previous works. However, the exhibition is not about gender but it is about issues around the feminine identity and how this was a source of inspiration for artists.

SP: Do you consider that the theme of identity is more present in artworks created by women?
IGI : First of all, one should remember that the input of women artists to visual arts is relatively recent: about 150 years. Before the beginning of the 20th century women were not allowed in the Academies of Fine Arts. Their access to recognition was almost inexistent. This was the case in Germany but probably anywhere else in Europe I suppose.

Until they used the cameras themselves, representations of women in the arts - and therefore of feminity - were those created by men. From the 1900s on, in photography, women artists reacted to this. They started to investigate and play with these traditional images of women. In that respect, female artists often used their bodies as objects to picture feminity differently, to force the explosion of traditional images. They used transgression to challenge, unlock and explore the issue of what being a woman – having a female identity and body - means.

This can be found in the works of artists such as Countess Castiglione (see pictures).

In the 70s, representations of gender roles and of sexuality started to change. Women had already acquired their say in the social and political arenas. However the issue of identity continued to be relevant to women artists. This is partly because women have a different experience of the way the others look at them and at their actions. This is a way that is specific to their sexual identity. As John Berger said, 'Men act, women appear'. It means that men are judged on what they do and on how they act, women are judged on how they look. This judgment is operated indifferently by men and by women. The need to challenge representations of feminity remains. ■

(clockwise from below)
Nan Goldin, *NY Drag Queen*
Comtesse di Castiglione, c.1863/66
Cindy Sherman, *Untitled #216*, 1989
Wanda Wulz, *Io + gatto*, 1932