

THAT OF THE OTHER (THING) AT THAT OTHER MOMENT
CHAPTER TO CHAPTER, A WAY OF SURVIVING

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Neither Sancho Panza nor his own sweet Dulcinea could convince Don Quijote that his reality was any other than the one specific to his situation. Neither globalism nor sophisticated communications networks take our local realities away from us.

Today Puerto Rico is a country with one of the most advanced technological infrastructures in the Caribbean and Latin-American region.

In spite of having one of the highest-percentages of voter participation in the election process, we continue to exist as a “colony”.

Sticker made by artist Inés Aponte featuring the picture of a woman taken from the Maja brand of soaps and cologne (from Spain). The following is written on top of it:

Maja ‘colonia’¹ and soaps residue of the first colonization, in disuse today because of its strong smell, incompatible with the second colonization’s fashions...”

In general, on the island as well as abroad, little is known about the current situation of Puerto Rico’s contemporary art.

SOME HISTORICAL FACTS

SPACE: 100 miles X 35 miles (continental Puerto Rico)

LOCATION: Caribbean (even when our neighbors don’t believe it to be so), offshore US

TOPOGRAPHY: An island within an island (playpens)

GOVERNANCE: US protectorate (free associated colony)

MILITARY: Bombing without bombs (the best target range)

POLITICAL STATUS: A democratic colony (democracy without representation)

TIME: Today

RACE: Historic conglomeration (by Laura) Burundanga (Luis Pales Matos)

A WAY OF LIFE: Latin (live and let live)

ORGANIZATION: Americanized but in Spanish

ECONOMY: Parasite of the United States

HABITAT: Consumerism

LANGUAGE: Spanglish

CITIZENSHIP: Free Associated American Citizen

PHILOSOPHY: ZERO-risk zone (A risk –free/ risk-adverse life)

OCCUPATION: Minimalist (beauty pageants, pop-music stars and athletes define, in many people's eyes, what Puerto Rico is).

HOLIDAYS: Everyday except working hours

PRIDE: Beauty and flavor (beauty, boxing and music)

ART: Monumental erections; in December 2001, 15 million dollars were allocated to erect monumental public sculptures, 2.5 million were allocated to the museum, while it is difficult to raise funds for contemporary art production.

GUDING PRINCIPLE: A land of fascinating contradictions. It has been hard for us to convey the message that contemporary art is indispensable to both the country's economic development and cultural evolution.

Chemi Rosado Seijo's project *PARA TV* comes closest to living in the poetics of Puerto Rico, as it deals with approaches regarding the difficulty of conveying a message. A one-minute recording made off Puerto-Rican television, edited and the shown again on TV.

General apathy, institution's social control and the lack of training of critics and art professionals have contributed to the underdevelopment of contemporary Puerto-Rican art. After the first generation of visual artists in the 1950s, only rarely have explosions occurred or issues been questioned. The circumstances that had been created did not last, unfortunately, and either dried up or were superseded. Finally, from 1995 to the year 200, the necessary conditions arose for a strong generation of young artists to form a critical mass which is now beginning to crush and confront this apathy, not allowing this mood to continue.

A group made up of artists, intellectuals, professionals and dilettantes has formed, believing that ART is an industry that researches and develops new projects acknowledging the specificity of the present time as key element of research. *M&M's* mission is to fight against anything that might hinder or stand in the way of this industry's growth.

M&M's projects: who are we?

1. ARTISTS whose ideas and projects form a starting point. (We are attending the SITAC in order to produce an Edmée Feijoo project.)
2. TEAM: Tito replacing Luisa-who some of you knew in PR 02 and who has left us to direct the program *jóvenes en riesgo* (youth in danger), unaware that she will soon have to organize an “adults in danger program” -, Chemi (an artist) and I.
3. The always-present NETWORK of volunteers and collaborators who share ideas and respond to the needs of the moment.

M&M was formed as a work in progress, reinventing itself with each new project. Our platform is based on research and acknowledging specific situations.

M&M projects is a non-lucrative venture which we have used as a tool and as a work space to rally situations which strengthen contemporary Puerto-Rican art production; according to the situation's needs, it becomes an accomplice to a group of local artists and to the series of conversations and dialogues with a few other non-local artists. It could also be seen as a bridge between different projects, exploring the present and allowing *graffiti*; it reexamines what has been overlooked and always keeps the door open to speculation, allowing itself to dwell upon moments of connection.

M&M has no fixed structure and its description constantly changes: from alternative space to idea lab to agit-prop center (AGIpro), the latter the brainchild of artist Beatriz Santiago. From November (2001) to January (2002), an 8 X 68' hallway was our headquarters. We are now moving to Fortaleza 302, a warehouse which will house several artists' studios among other things. As the catalyst for a place without a “place”, we have organized overlapping, open, accumulative events-keeping away from the closed-minded approach to funding and design-such as the recently –begun project *Fónico*, in which one initial group of artists was later joined by another group , leading to a series of “outspreading” layers that intertwine questions , doubts, theories and situations based on the specificity of history, on the context of a building and the many uses to which it had been put until then. It was an intense, weekend-long workshop/residence at the former Concepción el Grande Hospital, which is now in the process of becoming the new School of Visual Arts. The *Fónico* project continued with postcard distribution, on the internet and in conversations and debates. It is now followed by *A/IS*, a project by Edmée Feijoo whose first stage came about in *Fónico* and which aims to progressively accumulate a series of “cacophonous” experiences, developing a kind of archaeological specimen by taping groups of people, each person equipped with his or her own Walkman, singing his or her favorite song, all at the same time. We managed to do a recording (for the SITAC) thanks to Guillermo Santamarina and Ex-Teresa Arte Actual.

We would have liked to present as part of the documentation a sound project-that we heard about one month after that Sunday-by Claudio Chea, whose sound study was made in reaction to the activity of Sunday the 28th; however, after rereading my baroque presentation, I

thought it would not do him justice. All the sounds in the piece are from recordings of the building where the event was presented. It does not make use of the presented projects' sounds or noises besides those of the talk/conference.

The integrity of ideas-while autonomous, independent projects are created-opens new spaces beyond traditional agendas, opening new paths for their presentation.

Puerto Rico '00 (parenthesis on the City) was and continues to be an essay on the moment's specific circumstances and the complex visual culture surrounding us. A non-restrictive space that prompted a transformation of local discourse, creating a dialectic/symbiotic interaction and remaining committed to our immediate surroundings, with the vulnerability and elasticity of present time.

The opportunity afforded by a warehouse in San Juan's historic core (today a space occupied by AGIpro and studios) was the trigger for bringing together a series of project by (both local and foreign) artists and curators using public squares, stores, bridges and other alternative and institutional spaces. Turning the initial research into an essay on bilateral ties which led-and we are making sure that they continue to lead-to genuine alternatives in the (local, restricted and limited) context and also to a complicity with each (local or foreign) individual in his or her research.

Before my presentation, I gave Edmée a text I had written at the end of *Puerto Rico '00* and asked her to read it during the conference when she felt it to be timely. She read and though for a moment I did not know what was happening, thinking I was hearing the simultaneous translation without my headphones, I include it here as a reference for this memoir (as Appendix A).

At this point I would like to continue by including a brief conversation that "head" and took part in:

Regarding one of the points in *Manifiesto-Ing*, Tristan Kobler says:

"Culture defines us by what happens. Producing is what is left, it follows the next one after."

A comment is heard:

"Socrates was accused of 'being guilty of trying to penetrate, with an infidel's curiosity, earthly and heavenly secrets, of turning an evil cause into a good one and teaching other, related things.'"

Gavin Wade "concludes":

"Maybe art can change the world. Not the whole world or at least not in one go. But in small parts, bit by bit, a moment at a time. Parts adding up to larger parts. Larger parts becoming shared goals. Shared goals becoming structures to connect disparate endeavors."

Some whispers:

Indifference or giving up on curiosity perpetuates censorship;

Others:

[Better said,] we constantly practice the dissimulation that perpetuates censorship by feigning indifference;

Others:

[Or to be more direct] we sheathe censorship in apathy, in the lack of opportunity or of space devoted to the present time and swaddle it in indifference.

Autonomy, inciters, doers, accomplices are words which forthrightly provide a space for work. Thus, we once again involve ourselves, and I adopt that/this space for production beyond that of chronicling: an autonomous production that does not claim to “inhabit” (in the sense of sleeping or occupying) the present time but rather acknowledges the latter and actively speculates, acts, wavering constantly between uncertainty about the upcoming project and the presentation of annotations about already existing situations.

This challenge of researching , annotating and making becomes an equation which, though it seems totally logical and simple, breaks into pieces like puzzle when it is put into practice, as it depends on the situation of each moment, on each context and each place. To ignore this dynamic, whether out of convenience or censorship or out of an ingenious combination of both, leads to a paralysis within the territory, gumming up rather than greasing the trigger that allows us to act.

I must absolutely remind myself, in the face of so much manipulative bombardment, that contemporary art is the art of today/now, and that we must experience it in this precise context. Artists are sensors that feel and underline those situations that in most cases are diluted in the hustle and bustle of development, of the great economic powers, of powerful social conditioning, of apathy and inflexible government policies. *M&M's* projects sees it as necessary to claim this constantly mutating “space”.

That simple, logical initial equation would be closer to being one to which there is not concrete answer (iteration) but rather an infinite number of them in constant interactive circulations that allow us to reach closer to the process and thus, to “space” itself, where this constantly revised formula’s dynamic leads to a dismantling paradox that exposes us to the risk of not having a known end, which in turn keeps us close to the now and present time, it is then that we understand that each situation is a temptation to be used for a project and our main concern focuses on the purpose of this temptation.

This risk, created by the restless space triggered off by that unknown, is what gives us our reason for being and leads us to formulate a series of “essays” that in some way allow an agenda in transit towards broader research.

Will we continue to resist a space of production given the uneasy uncertainty of what is unknown? Will we allow ourselves to be accomplices to a project though it might expose us to risk?

Will we continue to use the space and the occasion/situation as an opportunity for production?

I would like to conclude by sharing some notes that nourish that personal (vulnerable) variable on which this presentation's title is based: *that of the other (thing), in that other moment: Present time (sketch).*

THAT where you get lost but find momentarily

IS THAT

THAT OTHER which does not exist but which you find

IS THAT OTHER (THING)

CONVERSION that obsesses and thus becomes TANGLED UP

ENTANGLEMENT that can be felt and CONSUMES you

CONSUMption (WITH HIS/HERself)/(CONSUBmission (WITH HIS/HER mission)) that is adulterated and turns into

CONSUMERISM

And it is THAT/THAT OTHER (THING), ONLY in THAT OTHER moment

Caused by the drift of that labyrinth,

Where we find familiar noises

Far from daily circus

Gathering new landscapes of information.

And it is that we then hear the noise that space and time emit

ENTANGLING the mystery of THAT OTHER moment

Allowing itself the return to perplexity

And it is THOSE OTHER shared occasions,
THOSE OTHER found moments
THOSE OTHER lost places
That obsess
That allow

And turn into THAT
OF THAT OTHER
Only in THAT OTHER moment...

LANDSCAPES OF INFORMATION

Essay=Mapping
Image= Noise
Noise = Signs
Signs = Boards
Bulletin Boards = Suggestion
Suggestions = Alternatives
Alternatives = Questions
Question = Existence
Existence = Life
Life = Sequence
Sequence = Rhythm
Rhythm = Speed
Speed = Everyday
Everyday = Moments

Moments = Instances
Instances = Actions
Actions = Time
Time = Space
Space = Freedom
Freedom = SEARCH

Search is nothing but the possibility of the question...
Space is nothing but possibility of search...

Reference Material

Call for Submissions sent Wednesday December 12, 2001 at 7:49 p.m.

For those of you have had a chance to read the abstract on the next forum as well as those who have not, I would like to ask for your collaboration in a situation:

The specificity of the present time and its realization beyond its own utopia = action

The space provided by each situation for production is what interests me specifically. Participating in a panel is too uninvolved. Using this space for experimentation is a more direct approach, and also an occasion to develop a second a third stage to the project Edmée Feijoo recently begun, *Aislamiento/Incomunicación Sonora* (Sonic Isolation/Lack of Communication), since this forum calls for the participation of a group (which in her research would be the sample/control group*).

What are we asking for?

Your participation. We will ask everyone forming part of the SITAC to bring their Walkman and favorite song (if you do not have one we can lend you one, but right now we only have cassette Walkman).

Fifteen minutes or so to make the recording (by the sample/control group = SITAC participants).

What is this about?

A/is (Aislamiento/Incomunicación Sonora) by artists Edmée Feijoo plans to undertake cacophonous research for development of an archaeological specimen.

It consists of the creation of a package of four recordings. Are of twenty people simultaneously singing their favorite song while listening to their Walkman. They will be made in various countries.

The first recording was made in Puerto Rico (the *Fónico* project) and proposes three additional initial recordings. Two recordings with groups of people in two different countries and one recording of a control group that does not come from any specific place.

This forum is an opportunity to record a group that is not circumscribed by any specific country and could function as a control group (*NOTE: "control" used as a scientific term in experiments and not referring to our social condition.)

I sympathize with Gavin Wade whose project Quick Response Unit (QRU) posits an open plan expecting concrete work, in transition towards a more important role, making it imperative that the curator and the artist make sure this role come about.

NOTE: Due to the non-reaction to the initial call for submissions sent by e-mail, Edmée Feijoo taped the speakers and is currently translating the recordings into scores, hoping to give them to a symphony orchestra so the latter may play them all at the same time (work in progress).

Appendix A

Text read by Edmée Feijoo simultaneously during the conference.

I do not know if it was the breeze or the suffocating heat of our fortification
Which made it constantly impossible for us to grasp the situation
Or the seasonal discomfort refreshed by the constant support
Of the group in question that gave us strength
And introduced a dialogue from illusion to reality
Both realities-the familiar and the unknown,
Fused-were in an essay that worked.
Fusion caused by collective adrenaline
Responsible for our resistance to such suffocating heat.

A constant which in turn showed us the alternative of Transformation.
Neither on Tuesday, nor on Friday nor on Sunday did our fortification remain the same
A situation that in turn caused a uncomfortable/comfort of anxiety.
That it was no longer an illusion but a reality.

Reality remembered today,
Because of the gleam of the shirt soaked in sweat
Of some of the great Conspiracy's members: Guillermo,
Or of that seasonal tantrum of resignation where Vanesa and her three friends deserted the heat
But were upon their return the only ones to leap into the puddle
To hang that exhibition, whose weight was indeed expressed by the classifying name: Endurance.

Or simply contemplating the passer-by, who because of Jorge's bombardment,
Was captured by some parachutes and then presented as one more product for sale

Given his/her particular situation.

Or the “weight” of sound, ONLY began and simultaneously ended. THE MICROPHONE which in a stumble
In that blackout got its cable disconnected.

Or the opportunity for dialogue with that stowaway

Trying to avoid the interruption

Of such a magical moment as was the metaphor of that illustrative character’s death.

Chuchita the boxer at dusk on the great bridge at the mouth of San Juan bay.

Or the temporary disconcertion of Doña María (a passer-by in the street) who was anxious since

She could not locate the whereabouts of Raimond and Carolina with their exchange kiosk (THE Museum of the Street)

To give it a token of her passion for plastic flowers for its decoration,

Because the dollar was ruled out as a means of acquisition.

From Raúl’s coordination, the best at receiving our guest accomplices

To the unconscious help of the Electricity Company Office impelled by Antonio’s spirits

Turning on our lights at the right time

To the physical therapy at times when the body can succumb to fatigue; injecting it with another

Dose of adrenaline

By jumping off that special diving board into the lagoon,

Which Chemi turned into everyone’s pool

And today still urges us to embark on a new expedition.

ConSUumption

(withHIM/HERself)

ConSUBmission

(withHIS/HERmission)

¹ A play on words: the Spanish term *colonia* means “cologne” and “colony”. (Tr. note)

² *ARTE, ARTESE, ARTESE*, a play on words meaning either “art, eat you fill” or “art, get fed up.” (Tr.note)