

THE PERIPHERY OF OUR EYES—DISPOSALS AND PLATFORMS FOR DIALOGICAL ART

works they indict.”²⁰ But others complained that, despite the effectiveness of its negative critique that “would put an end to what had been a damaging genre for a national cinema and industry,” *Agarrando pueblo* failed to offer a productive alternative for the development of that industry and, worse yet, threatened to stigmatize any future attempts at cinematic social critique.²¹ Mayolo responded by arguing that while images of poverty had been justifiable within militant cinema, the commodification of poverty had made these images redundant to a public whose consumption of them was characterized by a sado-masochistic pleasure, or even indifference. Also problematic had been a tendency within certain instances of militant cinema itself to import models of critique from other Latin American countries (especially Argentina and Cuba) without adapting them to the specificities of a local context. Just as the best examples of militant cinema had attempted to critique economic exploitation from the position of those exploited, *Agarrando pueblo* intended to measure the reactions of the personalities behind those clichéd representations of *pornomiseria* in a work that questioned the very distinction between documentary and fiction.²²

If this film succeeded in denouncing the accumulation of obscene images of poverty and underdevelopment that had proliferated in cinema for almost a decade, it also broke with the assumption that social critique would necessarily find its most appropriate form in the genre of documentary filmmaking by implying that even the most well-intentioned attempts to faithfully represent a social problem are always already mediated. If *Agarrando pueblo* succeeded in contributing to the imminent collapse of the surcharge industry, it also provided a positive impulse to the development of fictional cinema in Colombia. In subsequent works by Ospina and Mayolo (produced individually rather than collaboratively) social injustice was represented via fictional characters such as sanguine landowners or their incestuous offspring and the image of the vampire became a constant—an idea that resembled Osvaldo de Andrade’s notion of anthropofagy (cannibalism) but in an inverted and negative form.²³ Most surcharge films were eventually banished to the archives of the national cinematheque, where the film stock slowly deteriorated as historical amnesia about this decade of Colombia film gradually set in. What did survive this history, however, was the idea of *pornomiseria* as a useful critical category, because as long as the structures that produce and, in turn, consume the obscenity of poverty remain in place, there will be ample opportunities for its exploitation. ●

²⁰ Alberto Vides, ‘Agarrando premio’, *Diario del Caribe* [Suplemento], June 18, 1978, p.6.

²¹ Oscar Jurado, ‘Agarrando pueblo y Cuartito azul’, *Cuadro*, no.6, 1978, pp.2–3.

²² The last scene of *Agarrando pueblo* is an informal interview conducted by the filmmakers with Londoño.

²³ According to Haroldo de Campos: “*Antropofagia* is the idea of the critical swallowing up of the universal cultural heritage, elaborated not from the submissive, reconciliant perspective of the ‘good savage’ but from the disillusioned viewpoint of the ‘bad savage,’ the white-man eater, the cannibal.” Cited in Catherine David, “The Great Labyrinth,” *Hélio Oiticica* (exh. cat.), Rotterdam: Witte de With, 1992, p.252. While de Andrade’s idea of anthropofagy sought to resist and transform a situation of cultural dependence, Mayolo and Ospina used images of cannibalism to represent the structures of exploitation that determine social relations in Colombia.

DIAS & RIEDWEG

Our comprehension of ourselves as artists is coupled with our self-identification as members of the general public—as part of the many functions and mechanisms of the public arena. We also see our main responsibility as contemporary artists as a need to question perception (including our own) about the mechanisms that affect and give form to public space. Rather than changing things directly, we encounter people and situations, always trying through different scenarios to question and review the perception of context and situation.

Encounters take the form of *sensorial workshops* or *staged encounters*, which allow us to meet different people in different contexts, and develop a dialogue that focuses on issues that position a particular group of people within society in general. We try to design concepts that allow this focus of debate to expand, through the use of the moving image, into the general public.

Our work is very much process (and therefore performance) oriented, but it also achieves a level of representation, which most often consists of video installation. However, these scenarios are not meant to be a final “product” or “result”, but rather, a further step in which the dialogical form of art that we seek to develop is taken from the initial audience to a broader sphere of resonance: the general public. Video installations are often shown in exhibitions to further communicate the subject matter of each project to anonymous individuals.

Human beings are interested in that what is not ours —what we are not, what we do not have or know firsthand. We don’t even know what we want, and yet, we want it. We are all interested in the other because it is through the other that we can mirror and reflect ourselves; the proverbial other is always very close—the very point at which we end.

Our artistic practice and daily life have been divided these past sixteen years. It unfolds in the area between the unknown territories of desire and fear—a world to be navigated. Perhaps this is why we are equally interested in documentary and fiction. Every image, in its origin, does not belong to the territory of documentary or fiction. What makes it belong to one or another territory is derived from the literature we create to support it. Any image can contain literary information, which constructs a message. An image is independent to any truth, lies, reality and representation. It must be so to be intelligible—to exist. Therefore, there is no necessity or possibility to really prove the distinction between the territories of fiction and documentary. All images are inter-territorial.

And it is precisely in this inter-territoriality—in this indefinite but existent arena—where it becomes possible to create an erotic/poetic field in which action and representation, as well as interaction and intervention, are mixed,

thus producing a release of rigid artistic categories established in modernism, enabling new experiences and new forms of artistic practices.

In working with video and film, the construction of moving image sequences can establish multiple perceptions of time and space, be it real or imaginary: it hardly matters. The same situation, the same scene, whether documentary or fiction, if filmed simultaneously by several cameras and displayed from different points of view, may well produce a sequence of images of multiple character, reinserting complexity into the narrative, and thus, building a new discourse of the “real”.

The prevalence of the peripheral eye over one focus frees the image of dogmatic ideas —of revealing the classical narrative or truth of documentary material—and extends the image into another kind of artistic experience. In its basis, every image is itself documental as much as it is fictional. What defines and classifies an image depends exclusively on the information that accompanies it. If seen as independent, any image can be documental or fictional. Even the inclusion of archival material, be it in the form of pictures or text as, may in this manner subvert material into new representations.

The use of more than one camera view attests principles of multiplicity and synchronism present in real life that traditional narrative film fails to translate. We intend to focus on a conceptual use of the recorded moving image, where reality—even archival material—becomes fiction, and where truth becomes questionable in the name relational fiction.

In the same way that using more than one camera can diversify the points of view, the use of more than one intention—of more than a single perception, of more than one creative voice, may also diversify the action and representation in the practical experience of art. Here, we try to build up possibilities of a dialogue, equally interested in the interaction with as in the representation of reality.

Every person possesses a complex and hybrid identity. Also complex are the means that determine and produce the singularity by which we identify each other, and that too differs from one person to the next. Each one of us organizes and names that which he/she sees, hears or touches through a unique system of meanings. Perception itself is an exercise of confrontation between different systems of meanings. These tensions generate the need for the creation of a poetic field, in which every world view is questionable. With the creation of this poetic field, an individual may turn his/her unique worldview into potentiality.

The dignity of every person is based, among other things, on the fact that only he/she sees the world as he/she does. That’s why it’s interesting to listen to the “other”.

We speak about when fragments replace any hope for synthesis, and the artist’s eye deliberately prefers not to see through the singular lens. We evoke the conceptual use of the camera not solely as a mean to record, but as a device to construct an element of alterity; a dialogue between the artist, the world to be seen and the viewer.

To perceive the other not just as the periphery of our ourselves is to make visible the layers of subjectivity that constitute the political space in which we live. Maybe this is the greatest contribution of technology into our lives: virtual reality philosophically confirms the force and the value of subjective relationships, which ultimately construct politics and economy in our society.

Our projects try to open up spaces in which the natural polemic that follows poetry and art turns the singularity of each individual visible, thus also making visible the dignity of each person who shares the space in which we live. Our work investigates how private psychologies affect and constitute public space, and vice-versa. We understand art as a subversion of culture in order to create a field of action where the meanings and the state of things are constantly revised.

The attempt to separate subjectivity from politicization is an old hypocrisy of the intelligentsia, which is smoothly beginning to be unmasked through continuous experimental praxis. To create resistance is not to eliminate conflict, but to recognize and respect “difference” in its most subtle and repressed forms. There is not just one globe; there are very real fragments. There is not just one history but endless, parallel narratives to be resistantly whispered. ●