

Hans Ulrich Orbist

I would like to start by thanking the organizers, and particularly Ery Camara for inviting me to speak here.

I was thinking this morning about the first month of the year 2002, so I thought it would be nice to start with two palindromes by Swiss artist Andre Thomkins, "*oh cet'echo*". The palindrome, you can read it in both directions and it gives you the same sentence: "*Oh cet'echo*". The second palindrome is by Guy Debord, the title of his movie and his book in Latin "*in girumimus nocti et consumimur igni...*" standing in Latin for "at night we move in circles and consume the fire", which is also great piece of Cerith Wyn Evans. *In girum imus nocti et consumimur igni...* I kind of thought it's nice, evolutively during 2002, to find as many palindromes as possible and I hope there would be some palindromes I could find here in Mexico. I would like to dedicate this speech to Francisco Verela, the Chilean scientist who died in Paris last year. Francisco Verela, who is crucial for my concept of exhibitions, and whose work is crucial for everything I'm basically going to talk about today, which are several issues: On the one hand the notion of research and knowledge production in relation to exhibitions. Basically, the question of how far an exhibition can actually produce alternative forms of working with knowledge, or different forms of working with knowledge, taking as obviously point of departure such exhibitions as Lyotard's "*Immateriaux*", the "*Immateriaux*" show Lyotard curated for Centre Georges Pompidou in the eighties, and sort of asking what that could mean in the present, how an exhibition could function as archeology of knowledge, how an exhibition can introduce also notions of research not only in terms of creating spaces for those moments of research but also obviously "time". I think it all very strongly a question of time.

Second topic: self-organization. I want to explore today a little bit, issues of self-organization in relation to exhibition making-systems, Self-organization in the sense of Exhibitions being process that are bottom-up much more than top-down. Issues that have to do with maybe the exhibition triggering process which go beyond the initial predictability. And these whole issues of self-organization have been extremely important in urbanism and architecture since the sixties. People such as visionary urbanism Yona Friedman and Cedric Price have brought it very early into reflection about the state of architecture and urbanism from the late fifties onwards, but very strangely this notions have been quite absent from curatorial discourse. I think it's important and interesting to basically think what it could mean in a relation to curating, to question this idea that maybe a show is no longer this idea of imposing a master plan but maybe just very simply triggering process of self-organization or enabling process of self-organization. To use this definition of curating of Sarat Maharaj which I like very much, who recently in

a discussion said he prefers the definition of a curator as an enabler. I also like the definition of Blanchot where one could define curating as an infinite conversation (*une conversation infinie*).

Maybe another definition of curating, which in relation of this idea of the curator as a trigger is interesting, is the definition given in the early 20th Century by French critic, historian, curator (he made many things) Felix Fenon. At the very beginning of the 20th Century he defined curating as a kind of building of pedestrian bridges, triggering dialogues not only between these practitioners but between these practitioners and other, lots of different communities, and I think this definition of the pedestrian bridge seems also interesting to me. Now, maybe a little bit more about self-organization and research, and I'll then give you a few examples of exhibitions where both this notion of self-organization and research, evolutive research, play a certain role. I was actually thinking this morning which kind of example of self-organization I would like to give, and I could obviously start out with newer scientist Wolf Singer and his wonderful text about self-organization and the city. One could also start out with Pear Bak, the scientist who wrote the book "How Nature Works" where he defines self-organization. But I decided, because of time constraints, to just quote a little bit out of a more general introduction to self-organization which the very recent book written by Steven Johnson is called "Emergence". Johnson opens this book "Emergence" about self-organization with a very interesting quote from Lewis Thomas from 1973. In this quote of Lewis Thomas there are four points which I think are interesting in relation to exhibitions:

Most of all we need to preserve the absolute and predictability and total improbability; that way we can keep open all the options. And I think this whole notion of unpredictability is very relevant in relation to exhibition making now. If classical exhibition history emphasized order and stability, I think now we see fluctuations and instability. For example, looking at non-equilibrium physics one finds different notions of unstable environments. I think it's interesting to actually raise this issue in relation to the organizing of an exhibition by combining uncertainty and the unpredictable with the organization of an exhibition, which obviously in itself is a paradox. Instead of certitude, the exhibition then express connective possibilities. This raises questions of evolutionary displace and ongoing life of exhibitions, so this idea also states that an exhibition doesn't have a clear beginning and a clear end, the moment it starts.

Second point, we can recognize change, realities occurring, this whole idea of process, something which already at the beginning of the 20th Century, through Alexander Dorner, entered museum practice, this idea that the exhibition is about this process and the certainty permanently being challenged by the process.

Third, the exhibition has "a life of its own", this idea that an exhibition, in a life-like way, evolves.

Fourth point, the trouble is that the flow of information, that the flow in general is mostly one-way. We are all obsessed by the need to feed information in as fast as we can, but we lack sensing mechanisms for getting anything much back. And I think this raises the whole issue, not only of exhibitions as complex dynamic systems, but as complex dynamic systems with feedback loops. And in this sense it is also interesting to re-read certain cybernetic ideas of Heinz Von Foerster. And this obviously also leads us to the question of time.

The idea then of an exhibition more than a question only of space, being the exhibition a pet-on in time, an exhibition actually constructing many different models of temporality resisting the homogenizing forces of globalization. The curator eventually disappears, which I think is a very important idea. Questioning this idea of the master plan obviously also means that one questions this idea of the curator being present throughout the process as a pace-maker, as already Marcel Duchamp told in his very first museum exhibition in the United States...maybe I have to explain this a little bit more: Duchamp was invited by the legendary curator Walter Hopps, at the time Director of the Pasadena Museum. I interviewed Hopps a few years ago about this Curatorial practice and he told me this wonderful story that Duchamp told him everyday whilst they were installing his show: “the curator should not stand in the way”. And I think that still remains a very important issue. Starting from the emergence self-organization one could then also obviously go a little bit into Pear Bak, whom I mentioned initially, and his concepts of self-organized criticality. “Actually the tendency of systems with many components to evolve into a critical state way out of balance where minor disturbances may lead to events called avalanches”. This idea that actually eventually and exhibition could trigger some kind of butterfly effect in a Pear Bak way seems also interesting to me.

Maybe we can start with the slides, I just wanted to show you a few concrete exhibition examples, exhibitions through space and time, open learning systems with feedback loops.

First of all “Do-it”, it actually all started with a coffee-house discussion with Christian Boltanski and Bertrand Lavier, which happened around '93-'94, and where we discovered this small how-to manual instruction for a Singer *machine a coudre*, for a sewing machine. And it was basically the question of how one could conceive an exhibition out of very partitions and instructions and how-to manuals and where one would not organize a tool of this exhibition, we would just publish a small booklet and then the exhibition would somehow self-organize itself, it could happen anytime, anybody could basically realize this partitions or instructions. Ever since the very beginning, the opening in '93 of “Do-it”, the exhibition has never had a closed artist list. Whenever the exhibition takes place in a city, it involves local research, it involves local curators who actually bring in their own artist list, so the artist list permanently grows and constitutes an archive of instructions, of how-to manuals, which little by little will become a book and also a web site. I will just show one concrete example of how it's realized through different moments.

This is the instruction of artist Felix González-Torres, and I'll show you a few realizations of this instruction. This is the realization in Bogota...at Crambrook in the United States...in Paris...in Bangkok...in Palo Alto...in Lagenfurt...in Nantes, and again in Bangkok in another version. So, basically if you want to see the most recent realization of this Felix González-Torres piece, and many other projects, it's on display right now, as Guillermo said, at the Carrillo Gil Museum where the exhibition was actually curated by Pamela Echeverría. (next slide)

The online version will start in a few weeks on e-flux (www.e-flux.com) as a specially developed new project with instructions for home use, and an archive section with interviews, etc. where the evolutive exhibition can be followed.

Another question where we were asking ourselves this issue of not only self-organization but also research, and evolutive research, was “Cities on the move”. This idea that throughout the nineties, and that’s a very practical issue, one could actually observe that the time of research for an exhibition became smaller and smaller. At the beginning of the nineties, when I was asked to curate a show, very often I had two or three years to prepare, I had two or three years to constitute a research, to work in a team, and to have the exhibition happen. Throughout the nineties, with most exhibitions this time of research went actually down to about six months, maybe even sometimes four or five months. So with “Cities on the move” we actually decided to develop an evolutive research with an exhibition, which would be an exhibition as a city, so the exhibition would not be representing the cities, but the exhibition as a performative space, as a city, and it was about the incredible dynamics of architecture, urbanism, in Asian cities in the nineties (next slide), starting out in Vienna with the display of Young Ho Chang, a Chinese architect, who defined actually the exhibition as a *chantier*/construction site. It means the exhibition not as finished result, but the exhibition as a construction site, which became a metaphor for this whole show, where actually each participation of each artist, of each architect was a kind of a temporary autonomous zone. So the artists were not invited to propose a project which would be a final project, but the artists were invited to propose a process which over the tour of the show, throughout the different cities, would evolve. It would go far beyond the time frame to go into details, but here you can see, for example, the mini Video Festival of Dominique Gonzalez Foster, that wherever the exhibition went, her Festival grew. All the hundred projects of the show were like this, they were temporary autonomous zones within the exhibition, which also means that the curator no longer necessarily has control over the full artist list.

To invite to invite to invite? The chain is beautiful. The next project, which grew directly out of “Cities on the move”, is “Mutations”. “Mutations” (Guillermo also mentioned it in the introduction) is an exhibition, which I co-curated with Rem Koolhaas, Sanford Kwinter and Stefano Boeri. We tried actually to define this exhibition as a research on mutations of the city. It basically included the module of Harvard research of Rem Koolhaas. It included this Uncertain States of Europe project of Stefano Boeri. It included a research on America by Sanford Kwinter, and my research which was about rumors and the sound of the city. So, opposed to “Cities on the Move”, which was a research, a two-three year of research on the visual culture of cities, the interdisciplinary research on the visual culture of cities, “Mutations” developed into again a two-three year research of the visible city. So, I invited artists, architects, all kind of practitioners, to basically submit projects which recorded sounds of cities, which worked about sounds of cities, about urban noise, and in the second part also rumors, rumors and this idea of contamination and distribution of rumors through the city.

As composer and artist Justin Bennet says, these two things are obviously very related, rumors and the sonic city. In Bennet’s work, rumor is what constitutes the background noise or ambiance of a city. “One can best listen to this in a high building or in a park overlooking a city. The sound of the street below and the surrounding area is picked up by a moving microphone. The recording explores the different

resonance of various spaces". So basically Bennet describes here how he records sound in the city. And little by little through the participation of different artists, the exhibition became a growing sound archive of the city.

On the following slide, the exhibition display of the rumor city project at TN in Tokyo, designed by Kazuyo Sejima. The visitors were invited also add rumors about the city, something which particularly in Tokyo, being a rumor city, developed into a very feverish activity. (The next slide, please). Here you see the presentation of the partisans, of the open partisans of the artists, of their sonic city project in a kind of a sonic space. (Can we have the next slide, please?) And here you see the installation of Stefano Boeri's Uncertain States of Europe and Rem Koohaas' Harvard Project (next slide). Both exemplary projects of transdisciplinary research and collaboration between researchers and students who are all co-authors of the project.

"Laboratorium". A few words "Laboratorium". I think somehow, as I already mentioned from "Mutations" and also from "Cities on the Move", this idea of the exhibition being an ongoing research, so these shows are learning systems something which also became important for "Laboratorium", which Barbara Vandelinden and I curated in Belgium; (next slide). An exhibition where we constituted the think tank of Luc Stills, the scientist; Carsten Hoeller, the artist and philosopher and historian of science; Bruno Latour the artist; Mat Mullican and others, and through this think tank we developed actually an exhibition which would question or basically bring into visibility different artists' and architects' and scientists' laboratories through tables, table experiments so to say; (next slide). Basically in the exhibition, you had like these hundred tables with all these different experiments, there were open laboratory-days discussions, a book machine by Bruce Mau. So, basically it was all about this question of the process, about what is the meaning of a laboratory, how does the meaning of the laboratory change, what is the significance of the current mutations to the workplace of the scientist and to the studio of the artists, etc. And this gain is a project, which hasn't ended yet. It is a project which now will go into its second phase, and will then develop into a new form of table top experiments, which is something in close collaboration with Bruno Latour, asking this issue of different practitioners remaking actually in public an experiment. This whole question of the exhibition and knowledge production led also to a couple of projects where we ultimately would drop the exhibition altogether. And from those projects I don't have any slides because there is no slides to show, but I still want to mention them: which are actually coffee break, a brainstorming. And these were projects which were realized from '95 onwards, it's a whole chain of a series of projects which I'm realizing.

One of them was called "Art and Brain". It was in a university context and in a context of a science lab in Germany, in...Another project was "Bridge the Gap", which Guillermo also mentioned in the introduction, which were realized last year at CCA, Kitakyushu, co-curated with Akiko Miyake under the directorship of Nobuo Nakamura. "Bridge the Gap" where we actually invited artists and architects and scientists for one week to Kitakyushu to a very, very long extended coffee break. So this idea also in Carsten Hoeller, who emphasizes the importance of moments where we stop to produce, that we inject a moment of doubt, and that is extremely important in terms of such projects that

eventually everything can happen because nothing has to happen, so as to say. And another project in this direction is our current seminar, which we do with Stefano Boeri and Molly Nesbit at the University of Venice, which is the Venice project of "Utopia". The project will continue in 2003 with an exhibition which Molly Nesbit and I co-curate together with Rirkrit Tiravanija. The topic is utopia. We have interviewed artists, architects, urbanists, writers, philosophers all over the world about the question of utopia and watching these video interviews constitutes a first part of the seminar and show the urgency and actuality of this topic for current practices. In a parallel introduction and lectures held will be a theoretical introduction to the topic.

We show some of the ways they bridge the gap between the imaginable and the real, some of the ways they present new possibilities and hope. Hope leads us to Ernst Bloch and his principle of hope. During a debate with Theodor Adorno in 1994, Ernst Bloch, pushed to the wall to state his position on Utopia, stood firmly on his present experience. He said that Utopia could be invoked whenever one was able to see "Something is Missing". Utopia itself has become less and less clear; one could say that it has gone missing, that it itself a no-place, empty rhetoric at best, the desert island of cliché.

Last point I want to talk about what does this all mean in relation to the Museum, and obviously as my main occupation is my work as a curator at the Museum of Modern Art of the city of Paris, I permanently ask myself what these different experiments can be reflected within the Museum practice, which is much slow, and which also is much more complicated to shift the rules of the game. Obviously I can give you maybe a few recent examples. One possibility I always thought was to inject laboratories into a bigger Museum, so that's what we tried with "Migrateurs" since '93, which actually is a very small laboratory for artists that can migrate in the building. Like a micro laboratory which is injected into the big institution as a kind of maybe disturbance. But obviously it is also interesting to ask oneself the question of what can it mean in relation to bigger exhibitions which we have tried with Laurence Bosse and which all has to do with the issues and paradoxes of organization in a more general way.

The situation in a museum is complex. When we try to work out how to deal with this complexity, it is important not to reduce our reflections to one single model but study several different ones, historical ones and also contemporary ones that take an experimental approach to this complexity. Toni Negri and Michael Hardt have shown that the real threat in connection with mushrooming globalization is homogenization in all areas of life. For museums that means that the concept of multiplicity, of plurality, should have top priority. The theoretical position of the writer Edouard Glissant is interesting in this connection: he envisions the museum as an archipelago. The new museums that have opened in recent years are more like continents than archipelagos. But I think it is a very interesting idea to think about the future of the museum as an archipelago. The idea of nonlinear time implicit in this concept, the co-existence of several time zone, as James Clifford called it, could adopt certain accents and mediate between museum and city. In that respect the comparison between big shows and museums is very good. These shows have demonstrated how walls can become porous, how the museum can be the city and the city and the

museum. The museum of the 21st century should not define itself as a self-contained entity but should allow encounters at any time. For Edouard Glissant, museums today are challenged to provide new spaces and new temporalities in order to achieve a mondialité that can counteract worldwide standardization.

When you try to create new spaces and new temporalities, new affiliations emerge between exhibitions and between exhibitions and between museums. Characteristic of these affiliations is that they are not determined by purely economic and pragmatic principles but rather by solidarity and situations geared towards bringing together the widest possible variety of models without making them conform to each other. And this is not only a question of the museum but also of art and the way in which its generic concepts or classifications are being transcended. It's important to explore how major institutions can be envisioned, not as homogeneous spaces but as a site that satisfies a diversity of conditions so that, let's say, the white cube, a laboratory, and a space for intimate conversation can be housed in the same institution.

The events-mania has to be arrested in order to generate a situation receptive to interesting, interlocking spaces, ranging between acceleration and deceleration, between noise and silence.

Thank you very much for your attention.

INSITE

CarmeN Cuenca and Michael Krichman

We want to begin today's presentation by thanking the organizers of SITAC for inviting us to the conference today, to share our experiences in organizing the inSITE project in San Diego and Tijuana. Forums such as this are extremely important, particularly in the context of a project such as ours, which is based in large part on the process of developing artistic projects within communities that often are invisible in terms of final product that can be exhibited. In the end, these processes are the most important aspects of what we do. Neither Carmen nor I are curators. Nor are we theoreticians, so we thought that the best presentation here today would be rooted in very specific examples of the