

Camnitzer expresses a conflict of identity in this and other writings and communicates it in a succinct way in his work *Paisaje*, which leads him to dissect the art history of Latin America in his writing and curatorship, renegotiating the genealogies of conceptualism and reclaiming the discourse of diaspora as his own and not as the exclusive domain of a postcolonial theory formulated on the colonial legacies of the British, French and Belgians in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean—colonial structures that remained in place until the second half of the twenty century. In his historiographical revision, we can read a call to specificity lost in the logic of multiculturalism and its subsequent curatorial strategies, which I mention at the beginning of this talk. Camnitzer, for example, locates the beginning of Latin American conceptual art in the figure of Simón Rodríguez, Simón Bolívar’s mentor. Surely an audacious gesture and one that affirms this search for specificity. In this way, his work proposes at the same time a site for resistance and an antidote against the (quite diffuse and often insubstantial) models built by the curatorial strategies of the (intellectually) void era.

Ceci N’est Pas Une Biennale

JOSÉ ROCA

1. Rules and Possibilities. In *The Pleasure of Architecture* Bernard Tschumi said: “If you want to follow the first rule of architecture, break it.” Something similar could be said about curatorship. There are no parameters that can be applied to all cases, only intentions and desires. It is preferable to be congruent with the development of a project than consistent with a hypothetical “*Should be.*”

2. An Exhibition is Not an Encyclopedia. Unlike the encyclopedist, a curator can’t include all the examples that illustrate a concept—only those that s/he finds and that are available. Curatorship creates a fiction from those fragments. When recognizing the impossibility of completeness, the only thing left is to try to suspend the visitor’s disbelief when facing a set of small pieces from a puzzle without a model. As Douglas Crimp said, quoting Eugenio Donato’s in *On The Museum’s Ruins*, museums are based on the acritical fiction that it is possible to represent the universe from its fragments. An exhibition creates a believable fiction, or at least one that we want to believe.

3. An Exhibition is not a Library. If I want to read I go to the library, where I can acquire in-depth information...and I don’t even have to do it while standing.

4. An Exhibition is Not an Archive. If I want to do a research, I go back to the aforementioned library. Archives in an exhibition context either become pure image (which at times is ok, although not having access to the documents is frustrating), or become pure curatorial rhetoric (which is wrong and also frustrating).

5. An Exhibition is Not a Movie Theatre. If I want to go and see a movie, I go to the movie theatre, where I can sit in the dark, and the noise (usually) comes only from what is being projected. Aside from very few exceptions, feature films do not belong in the exhibition space.

6. A Biennial is Not a Museum. Based on Art History’s orthodoxy, the Museum aspires to truth. A biennial is not grounded on a mountain of facts—it is sheer speculation.

Let us not aspire to Truth, only to beautiful half-truths, or to lies that resemble alibis: believable, useful and adorned with a veil of suspicion.

7. A Biennial does Not Document. If the work happens in time, or out of the physical boundaries of the exhibition site, it should be left there to live (and die). Nothing is more frustrating than an exhibition presenting material that documents performances, actions, ephemeral works and works in situ presented as a reminder of what we couldn't experience. Unless it was conceived as a work in itself, or unless it has a particularly significant contextual value, documentation belongs in an archive, not in an exhibition.

8. Chronicle of a Death Foretold. Every biennial is a fight lost in advance, because it is impossible to include all countries, all regions, all media, all sexual orientations, all ethnicities, etc. No matter what you do, someone is always left out. Starting from this ontological impossibility, you aspire to a beautiful failure: as Harald Szeemann signals, the latter is one of the poetical dimensions of art. Apollinaire said that architecture should aspire to offer a beautiful ruin to Time...

9. Multicuity. Place 20 immigrants freshly arrived from different countries in a container. Ask them to engage in a productive conversation. This is what a biennial aspires to. And sometimes it achieves it.

10. A Biennial is Not a World Fair. Therefore, it shouldn't have the imperative of an egalitarian geographical representation. More so, given that today's notion of the regional often makes more sense than a blurry and controversial idea of the nation. Does a Basque artist feel comfortable representing Spain at the Venice Biennale? What State should an artist from Ramallah represent?

11. A Biennial Shouldn't Just be a Biennial. Most biennials are worried about creating a spectacular event, concentrated in time and space. And when the Great Exhibition ends, they go into a sort of hibernation for the next two years. A biennial should find ways of extending its action in time, and in that way fight back the post-biennial depression suffered by host cities. A way of doing this is to understand them as a space for creating infrastructure, establishing poles of action that activate the local scene in the periods between each biennial.

12. A Biennial is Not an Art Fair. Artists shouldn't be isolated in their own space as if they were stands in a commercial art fair. Their works should be in a spatial dialogue, and the resulting text is what we call curatorship.

13. Dramaturgy. Just as the theatre, the exhibition space shows a work for an audience. The difference is that in the theatre the spectators are motionless. An exhibition is not a list of works or artists, but a bodily experience: the way in which this experience happens in space should be studied. Where do I come in? What do I see? What do I hear? What is the visual cornerstone of every movement? A memorable exhibition is conceived in the mind, composed in space, and experienced with the body.

14. Ecology. What is the carbon footprint of a biennial? If we take into account the artists and curators' travels, and the materials used in the production and the set-up, most biennials wouldn't pass a certification process for environmental sustainability. If some of these evils are unavoidable (nothing replaces the direct relation with the artist; no one wants skype curators or blackberry curators, who curate by ear and do not visit the studios, etc.), the approach to the set-up can attempt to be responsible and consistent. We can abandon the claim of systematically using a white cube for bi- and tri-dimensional work and a black box for videos: each work must occupy what is strictly necessary so that it can be experienced without loss. It is not necessary to hide the behind-the-scenes and paint everything white: museography can have a Brechtian approach. I prefer a creative interference to a dialogue between deaf people, each one in their drywall tower.

15. A Biennial is Not a Technology Fair. Where we go to look at the newest, the most advanced, the never-before-seen. A biennial, especially in the Third World (which generally lacks museums with large collections of contemporary art or places that show avant-garde art) must present a mixture of new projects and existing works. The local audience can appreciate important works, which the blasé spectator of the small artist world might find trite. A biennial is neither a show of new talents, nor a place where curators from other biennials might come hunting for new peripheral talent.

16. A Biennial is Not an Art School. And it cannot pretend to replace it. But it can perform an important role with regards to the training of the gaze, a function that museums perform (and a biennial is a kind of temporary museum). From its transience, a biennial can perform the function of familiarizing the audience of a certain place

with the images and discussions of its contemporary art. In 1953, The São Paulo Biennial presented Picasso's *Guernica*, and every two years, it has brought the São Paulo audience closer to the artistic movements of its time. A biennial is a temporary museum that especially benefits the vast majority of people who cannot travel to the art centers. A biennial builds a visual repertoire in time, a collection of memories that are the artistic patrimony of the community where it is inscribed.

17. Educating/Learning. A biennial can try to transcend the triad of interpretation-mediation-service that characterizes the pedagogical work in museums, instead evolving the idea of education from its own curatorial formulation. Museums always try to mediate between art and audience, attempting to facilitate this relation by proposing mechanisms that help to understand what is being presented. But art is in itself an instance of knowledge that does always go through the rational: it is also learned through the senses. Occasionally, an image is worth a thousand words; a sound, a thousand images; and a smell, a thousand sounds. We don't know which will be the device that will unleash the processes of knowledge.

18. Emergency. At the office of Diane Karp, director of the Santa Fe Art Institute, I saw a sign stating that, "There are no artistic emergencies." Art, no matter how important we think it is, does not save lives (or maybe it does, but in a metaphoric way). There are successful exhibitions whose result makes us forget that the process was complete torture. This is wrong: in art as well, the end does not justify the means. To do an exhibition can end up being a distressing, frustrating or painful situation.

19. Responsibility. Curatorship is not signed because of vanity, but just as you would sign a blank check: once it goes public, anyone can cash it, and the curator must be there to answer.

20. Community. Exhibitions are made to create memorable life experiences. I understand curatorship as the creation of a temporary community. Artists and curators enter a dialogue that happens due to a prolonged coexistence and a more or less common goal. I consider successful those exhibitions where I ended up making life-long friends. It is not that I aspire for a biennial to be a marriage agency, but it should doubtless be a moment of empathy. Working with friends is rare and art can provide that opportunity.

The Vision of the Ultimate Man The Apocalyptic Path of the Works of David Alfaro Siqueiros

ITALA SCHMELZ

1. David Alfaro Siqueiros (1898-1974) was, among his contemporaries, a modern man. An apologist of both technology and science, his political convictions led him to imagine a future of progress and social justice that would be brought about by Communist Revolution. He and his generation of painters, though living through two devastating world wars, held onto their idealistic visions of a bright future.

The architects of the mid-twentieth century were starting to imagine the future of the city and it was Siqueiros, above all, who was able to portray their visions. By the 1950's Siqueiros had had the opportunity to witness several cities from the air. In his urban paintings of the period his vanishing points evolved to give the perspective of something like hyper-cities, as cities as seen from the air. "I believe that men living in the age of the airplane cannot have, in terms of travel, the same lyrical sensitivity or the same romanticism as those men had who lived in ages before the skies had been conquered," Siqueiros wrote. For him, putting into perspective the stratospheric curve of the Earth was a way to pinpoint his perception of our planet as a "universal platform of man." This aerial view, as well as a developing cosmic consciousness, is perhaps one of Siqueiros' most original artistic visions. It is little known that Siqueiros was interested in Science Fiction, and yet in the mural of San Miguel Allende (1948), which includes a large motor running along the ceiling, he uses the convex dome of the roof to suggest a rocket in launch. In 1956 Siqueiros also painted the "Atomic Ship" which could have been what inspired Kubrick to imagine his own artistic odyssey into space.

But the famous Mexican muralist was also disturbed by what the future held in store, and thus tried to imagine what the present heralded in his paintings. Through his works he shaped images of catastrophe as intense visions of the biblical Apocalypse.

Siqueiros sketched his most intensely destructive scenes, which also happened to be key moments of technical self-discovery, while living in New York (1935-36)