

allows painting to speak, taking it to its final abode, to the limit of what it can say. By doing so, he shifts aesthetic attention from the sphere of the recognizable to the sphere of poetry; he bestows all-new qualities on the canvas and the image, related to the ways in which materiality itself is experienced.

Mario de Vega (Mexico City, 1979) returns to a singular intervention resulting from a forceful action inspired by *The Aesthetics of Disappearance* by Paul Virilio—a French philosopher who has worked on numerous contemporary art exhibitions. Under his direction and according to his plan, the Museum of Accidents was opened in Japan in 2000—affirming that human beings invent their own relationships with time in order to thus pave the way for the creative potential of the unseen and the power of absence. Virilio also speaks about the phenomena of aesthetic surprise, from which one can deduce that the aesthetics of disappearance rejuvenates the adventure of appearance. De Vega presents the work *Match* in a similar fashion, evoking an event that has or has not occurred, in which the site intervention is apparent in the attempt to modify appearances.

Mario de Vega's work *Match* is in keeping with the bases of the expressive device known for over thirty years as “action art.” The intention of action art is to appropriate life through any kind of action that has a conscious and elaborate aesthetic intention; it can be rooted in the expression of subjectivity, in a reflection on philosophical matters, with an ecological conscience, a social or individual identity, sexuality, politics, etc. In action art, part of reality itself is a work of art, which is not merchandise, it is not bought or sold, it isn't an object to be contemplated or appropriated: it is a human act that is carried out in a determined time and space. Different every time, full of present life. It happens in reality, not like a representation but like life itself.¹

At the end of Modernity, the structures within artistic conception expanded; based on that central idea, the art object's degree of concentration becomes even more “introjected,” even announcing the object's own probable disappearance. Indeed, the main elements of artistic expression would become historic burdens, planes of consciousness, social and political quotas, or simply scenarios. The exercise of site-specific installations refers particularly to those constituents. The space and what remains following the aesthetic action stand as testimony to the tide in which artists become submerged, under the *Aesthetic of Disappearance*. Addressing the pyknolepsy and epileptic forms so suited to contemporary urban societies, Paul Virilio affirms that human beings invent their own relationships with time, to thus admit the creative potential of the unseen, or the pre-conceptualization typical of the adult sphere. The powers of absence, added to the phenomena of “aesthetic surprise” renew the appearance of form. These are the fundamentals of a large part of today's art.

¹ To learn about the far-reaching effects of Mario de Vega's work *Match*, see Rubén Bonet's note in *Replicante* 11 (2007).

Q and A with the artist Carla Zaccagnini

First of all, I'd like to thank Ivo Mesquita for inviting me to participate in SITAC, and all the organizers for their efforts to ensure that the event runs smoothly and that we enjoy our time in Mexico. I'm going to talk about some recent projects. I was amused when Allan said he was going to talk briefly about his recent projects—from the last ten years. I'm going to talk briefly about some recent projects, but from the last two years. I think it is a question of scale. There are three projects that I've worked on with people who are knowledgeable about some area of interest to me. These projects were done in collaboration with people from different fields.

The first is called *Museu das Vistas* (Museum of Views). I began planning it in 2002, but I did it for the first time in 2004. It has been done four times thus far. It is a project done in collaboration with police artists—professionals who sketch the faces of suspects or missing persons when there is no recent photograph available. If someone assaults or robs you, you go down to the station where you describe the person, and the police artist sketches a portrait of that individual so they have something to go on in their search. What I thought was the most interesting aspect of these professionals' expertise was not so much the sketch itself but that they knew how to make someone describe something: their ability to make you *reimagine* a prior image which was stored in your memory but is somewhat blurry.

The first time I did the project was in Puerto Rico in 2004. On that occasion I was working with the police artist Roberto Echeverría. The idea was the following: one person describes a view to the sketch artist, who draws it on carbon paper to create a record of the project. I still haven't decided what to do with the copies—there are probably around two or three hundred of them. It would be interesting to exhibit them but for now they stand as a record, which is clearly missing a piece. They are blue carbon copies, meaning that the original is missing. I'm interested in the fact that they give the sense that something is absent. This project could be taped, and the video could be presented with the audio description as the image gradually takes shape. But I think that in this case, one would get the impression that one was viewing the actual work, when in reality, the work consists of the dialogue between two people: the person describing the scene and the sketch artist who is drawing it. A dialogue: a relationship that exists only during that encounter and which cannot be communicated.

The second time I did this project was in São Paulo, in the Vermelho Gallery. The artist working with me there was Tamara do Espírito Santo. She was also an art student. I made some improvements to the project in this case, because in Puerto Rico I realized that by having the two people facing each other, the artist was seeing

the scene as he drew it, while the person describing the scene was looking at it upside down. This was a problem because the two people didn't have the same perspective. So I made a kind of portfolio that allowed them to sit side by side, seeing the drawing from the same perspective and constructing it together. The third time the project was presented was in Valparaíso, Chile, with the sketch artist Larinka Lobos. The fourth time was in Florianópolis, southern Brazil, and the sketch artist was named Cassius Clay.

What interests me most about this project is how the drawing can be dismantled into different stages in the process: how you reconstruct the image or in some way recover what is in your memory, and how that is translated into a drawing. How you try to find the right words to describe the scene you are remembering, and how the other person recognizes in those words something that he has seen before, something he can draw, and how he retranslates those words and transforms them into images. There is something very powerful about that relationship. I once tried describing a scene for the artist, and a strange thing happened, because you may think you remember a place very well—it's usually a place to which you have some kind of emotional attachment. Of course, you think you have a very clear memory of it, because it is a place you constantly revisit in your memory. But once you begin to describe it, even though you may recognize the scene in your head in the words you say, and though you may recognize that the drawing depicts what your words are describing, there is something that is never quite complete—something is always lost. I find this gap so interesting: this thing that is always lost, despite the proximity between the person describing the scene and the person drawing it.

The second project I would like to talk about is from last year, May 2005, for a program of contemporary art exhibitions curated by Ivo Mesquita in the Pinacoteca or state art museum of São Paulo. The Pinacoteca is the oldest museum in the city, about a hundred years old, and its collection is almost exclusively from the nineteenth century. It also has some very fine pieces from the twentieth century, but that isn't the focus of the collection. Almeida Júnior is very well known in São Paulo as the first painter to have captured the local light and archetypes. He didn't copy European painting, but rather used European painting techniques to portray the local reality. There is an 1889 painting by him entitled *Saudade*, which means something like longing or nostalgia. They say that this word has no translation in other languages—I'm not sure if that's true. It shows a woman looking at a photograph in the light from a window. The painting is displayed on the second floor, and I found a way to show it on the ground floor, in a space called the Octógono, a central octagonal courtyard used for shows of contemporary art. It is a very unusual space, because it has exposed-brick walls, a white marble floor and an eighteen-meter-high glass ceiling. It has large windows or openings through which you can glimpse the ground floor from the second floor. The challenge was to use a series of mirrors to transport the image of *Saudade*

through the windows to the ground floor. I began by making a study of which paintings from the second floor could be used for this project.

Of course, I couldn't have done this alone: Renato Curi helped me develop the whole project. He's a photographer by education, but for years he has been working with artists to help them solve certain problems. I also worked with two other people named César and Pizza. César is an architect, a genius of spatial geometry. He builds temporary structures for events—metal structures that are covered with tarps in case of rain at a concert, etc. . . . Pizza installs artworks and is an artist himself. He's also an urban alpinist, so he was a big help with this project. The dialogue between the two was very funny to witness, because one of them was sure that precise calculation would achieve the best results, while the other kept saying, "Let's just hang the mirrors and see what happens." Of course, both were right, because we needed the calculations but we also needed a bit of what is known in Portuguese as *jogo de cintura* [literally, hip or waist movement], which in this case meant a certain amount of permissiveness to make adjustments on the spur of the moment. The calculations were a guide, showing us approximately where the mirror had to go, but the final adjustment always had to be visual.

What I like most about the Cathedral are the pendulum and the white marble which demonstrate just how crooked the building is. So when installing the work at the Pinacoteca, we put together a structure with the help of carpenter's plumbs and a complex drawing on the ground. In the end, we hung a huge mirror from the ceiling in the room where Almeida Júnior's nineteenth-century paintings are on display. From there, the image passed through a window and was reflected by a mirror hanging from the Octógono, then by a third mirror, and finally by a very small mirror, only fifteen by twenty centimeters, where you could see the image of the painting. It looked so tiny, as if you were seeing it from a fifty-four-meter distance—which was the exact distance from the painting to the final mirror. A line on the floor showed people where to stand to be able to see the painting, but when you looked in the fourth mirror, you would see different parts of the building before finally finding the painting.

The third and final project I'm going to talk about was presented this month in Assenede, a small city in Belgium. The show was entitled *Cité-Action* and lasted five days, concurrent with a local jazz festival. The show took place in different locales: all the artists visited the different cities before choosing one in which to develop their projects.

I found a little street where the local government is buying up all the houses to tear them down, so they're all abandoned, because the government can only buy two per year. They buy the houses and close them up, and so they just stand empty. I was intrigued by how many things had been left behind in the houses: I don't know why people leave behind their furniture, clothing, cups, plates. . . . thousands of things. It was an odd sensation, like a crime scene. I thought of Pompeii, of a war—it looked like the people had had to escape in a hurry, when that wasn't actually the case.

I chose two of these houses for the project. I asked two archaeologists to survey all the different objects in them, and in particular, to look for similar objects in the two houses. I wanted to work with archaeologists in this case because I wanted to find out about the inhabitants' tastes and customs. The work of an archaeologist, as I see it, is to recover objects and use them as a basis for imagining the civilization that produced them. This is why I was interested in a dialogue with them. We completed the survey, finding a number of objects that were present in both houses: chopping boards, teacups, coffee cups, plates, sheets, black slippers, flower vases, coffee, combs, chairs, letters, photographs, porcelain clowns, cleaning products, fans, etc. I displayed all the documentation so people would have an idea of the process, of the survey that had been carried out and what the houses looked like on the inside, and then be able to compare these sets of objects as if in a defective mirror: the things found in the first house on one side, and the things found in the second house on the other. The result was not attractive—it looked like a church bazaar in a poor neighborhood—but I really enjoyed doing this project, and it made me think about a lot of things.

I'm currently working on a project that involves nineteen people, which I think may be too many. I'm publishing two books for it. This is basically what I wanted to show you, so we can move on to some conversation.

Guillermo Santamarina That was Carla Zaccagnini. Mircea Cantor will be the next presenter, but first I would like to get some questions about Deepak's and Carla's presentations. So when the computer is ready, we'll return to the table.

Mircea Cantor I'm going to show some of my films, video works, and maybe I can also burn a CD.

GS I would like to get some of the public's questions about Deepak's and Carla's presentations. When the computer is ready, we'll return to the round table. Are there any comments?

Participant Hello. My comment is regarding the work involving the [sketched] scenes. I have a doubt concerning how we can achieve a new reinvention or representation of a meaningful space that is a very personal point of reference for an individual, because to reach that new result we have to go through a process of restructuring all the space's symbolic references. Specifically, it makes me think of a person who comes to you for a reproduction of a certain scene, and that scene contains a whole private universe for that person. So, I see the process by which the sketch artist re-creates all the symbols that conform the physical idea as a transition that is more like a process of translation than one of representation. So, my question is whether you agree that these forms of representation using this vehicle, or this medium—in this case, the sketch artist, but it could also be software or some other kind of tool—could be linked to the notion of translation.

CZ Yes, the idea of translation is something that interests me very much. That's why I get a little lost when I'm listening to the translation, because I want to know how

they're translating my words. When I was walking up here, I had the idea of collaborating with the translators, asking them to translate certain words in an impertinent or insolent manner... And yes, I do see a relationship with the notion of translation, and I think it would be very different if software were used. Something unusual happened in Puerto Rico. There was an Englishman, and he started describing the interior of his grandmother's house to the sketch artist. The house had a fireplace. He came to me afterward, saying, "That was odd. The thing that he had the most trouble drawing was the fireplace. Of course, we're in Puerto Rico. How many times in his life do you think he's seen one? So there's a problem of translation and also of interpretation. Every representation is in a sense an interpretation of the subject.

Participant Hello, Carla. I would like to know about *The Book Project*.

CZ *The Book Project*. This was about translation. The project began in 2003, when I did a book published by an organization in Rio de Janeiro called Capacete Entretenimentos. In fact, it's a one-person operation, run by Helmut Batista. That year, he published a series of catalogues of young artists. I was three years younger then! I did a catalogue of texts: there wasn't enough money for high-quality images so I thought it would be a good opportunity to publish some texts. I picked out seven previous works, and for each one, I asked a friend—each one from a different discipline—to write a text that I would find somehow related to the work. For example, there's a text about beauty written by a psychoanalyst; a text about historic heritage by a geographer; a text about landscape history written by an art historian; one about graphic emphasis written by a Portuguese teacher, and so on and so forth.

Now I'm working on two versions of the book—one in English and one in Spanish—which will be published by the Cisneros Fontanals Art Foundation in Miami, devoted to Latin American Art. I think this is an interesting place to work on translation into different languages, because it is an institution based on a cultural translation, a transposition from one culture or representation or other to another. And also because Miami is a bilingual place: they speak a lot of Spanish and English there. There are two books: *Translated Catalogue* and *Catálogo traducido*, but they aren't translations of one another. Rather they each contain eight different texts—eight in English and eight in Spanish—written in the language in which they are published, each about a different topic. There's one text about plants transported from America and Australia to England in the nineteenth century; one about mirrors and corruption; one about ninjas and the art of disappearing... a number of different texts that will be published in these books. The idea is that translation changes the content, so the texts written in Spanish are very different from those written in English and Portuguese, so only someone who can understand all three languages will have access to those networks of meaning that I believe are connected to each work.

Allan McCollum Can I ask you a question? Sorry, I'm a little confused. Perhaps there can be a discussion or an explanation on the difference between collaboration and

interdisciplinarity—they're not the same thing, right? Actually I'm addressing the question to the entire panel, because I'm thinking about Spivak talking about interdisciplinarity in terms of competencies related to academic specialization, demand in terms of practice. In some way, removing one's own competency or stepping away from one's own competency in order to in some way join the competency of others in viceversa, an exchange of competencies. My question is: where is the exchange going on? In other words, it is one thing to collaborate with an archaeologist or a musician or a scientist and to utilize their specialized knowledge in a field. Then the question becomes: how is that particular specialist in that particular field utilizing your competency as an artist? To me this question is at the core of the discussion about interdisciplinarity and it is often masked in terms of what is going on in the other side of this interdisciplinary collaboration.

CZ I'm not sure I understand, because I'm really not sure what my competency is. **Allan McCollum** If you define yourself as a visual artist, for example, then that is your competency. I'm talking of competency in terms of spheres of specialization: you are not a musician, you are a visual artist. So that's what I mean by competencies; you operate in the culture in a particular way, you work with others to expand their language and to expand your language; the question I have is this: how are those other specialists over there expanding their disciplines? That is what I mean by exchange. It's easy to talk about one side, but what is going on on the other side? Again, referring to Spivak's definition of interdisciplinarity as using one's own competencies to embrace the competencies of others—which is also about dilettantism, in another way. I mean, the artist having a relationship of dilettantism with another field as well as the scientist having a relationship of dilettantism with conceptual art. So that is what

I mean, and I think that I'm reacting to the introduction that I found somewhat lacking in one thing: the difference between collaboration and interdisciplinarity. That is not something that has to do specifically with Carla but with the conceptual frame of the introduction.

CZ If I can say something else, I believe that asking a police artist to draw a view described by someone rather than a suspect takes him entirely out of his usual role: he uses his knowledge and experience to obtain a totally different result from what he usually does. His activities are expanded.

DA I think that what Spivak says holds true for humanity's circumstances in general but also for the artist. It is much more complicated when it has to do with an artist.

Allan McCollum I would like to say that I absolutely agree regarding academic questions. When you were presenting the artist I knew that you were in a certain sense apart from the official frame of interdisciplinarity, on a certain level, but the utilization or reutilization of materials in some way is not interdisciplinary in any traditional sense.

DA I prefaced all this by saying that I wasn't going to talk about interdisciplinarity—say, the anthropological dimension of dance—because in this sense we, as spectators, would also have ...

Allan McCollum You are talking about the retasking of materials?

DA Yes, but in the sense of the task that a material has in a culture, the translation being the decodification.

Allan McCollum In that sense, there is an analogy between how Chris Ofily uses elephant dung as a signifier...

DA I think that the use of dung in his paintings works differently than what is done by [Subodh] Gupta; it is a symbolic substance with different registers.