Is there no remedy other than to replace the detached member, bandage it and immobilize it? Anyone who has dislocated an elbow, a shoulder or a finger knows that *dislocated* also means *free* and submitting only to its own oscillation, however painful that may be. We need to understand, then, that dislocated spaces are not spaces of autonomy and absolute rejection: we refer not so much to a secession or a separation as to the resistance to or sabotage of any functional articulation. However, the fact that these spaces, these limbs, have not been completely amputated does not mean that their displacement was a delicate process: it is possible that the reason they are out of place involves a memory of incredible violence. But despite the torture that has been inflicted, a *dislocated space* still remains close to its original position, though no longer linked to the rest of the political body. It has been separated from the general context of its culture, and has ceased to have any connection to general cultural politics. But is there anything to be gained from dislocation?

The most recent Spanish dictionary has fully incorporated the Anglicism *dislocado*. In other words, the definition has been expanded to include the following meanings: "To twist an argument or reasoning, to manipulate it by taking it out of context," or "To make someone lose their strength or composure."[3] However, it seems to me that with this solution, we have incurred *a terrible loss*. In 1999, when I ran indignantly to my *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española* in its still current nineteenth edition, published in 1970, to discover that *dislocado* was in fact a foreign use of the language, I discovered the following pearl of wisdom:

> **Dislocar**: (from the Latin *dis*, negative, and *locare*, to place). Tr. To remove a thing from its place, usually referring to bones and joints. // 2. fig. *To provoke vehement enthusiasm or desire*.

All that remains now is to dislocate ourselves *at once*.

Translated by Michelle Suderman.

[3] Real Academia Española, *Diccionario de la lengua española*, 22nd ed., vol. 4 (Madrid: Real Academia Española, 2001): 564.

The Museum as a Work in Progress

Bárbara Perea

I find it highly appropriate to discuss MUCA Roma at a round table on dislocated spaces, if we take that to mean a cross between cultural management and art practices designed to move away from the notion of the Museum as a *repository of objects* and also to oblige cultural institutions to constantly reinvent themselves insofar as those very art practices, public practices and current theories demand more dynamic positions and strategies.

MUCA Roma itself emerged as a dislocated member of its parent institution, the University Museum of Sciences and Art (Museo Universitario de Ciencias y Arte, or MUCA) on the National Autonomous University of Mexico (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, or UNAM) campus. Its proposed function was to give the UNAM a presence in a culturally significant part of Mexico City, with the idea not only of staying in touch with the local art scene and influencing it, but also of enabling it to respond more quickly to the demands of art practice and the cultural medium.

Thus, it is possible to speak of dislocation on a number of levels here: not only that of MUCA Roma's condition as a cell of its parent institution, but also in the sense of it being oriented toward a more permeable and fluid museum space, like a temporarily autonomous zone that questions traditional ways of making and interpreting art. As a laboratory, battlefield and *tabula rasa* that attempts to erase discursive lines based on generational, stylistic or historic criteria, MUCA Roma seeks to define itself based on a destabilizing, playful and subversive action focused on the constant questioning of what is understood by the terms *contemporary*, *public*, *artist* and *museum*. It may be a not-for-profit public space, but it is immersed in a world with close ties to the market.

Its openly anticuratorial nature puts artists with dissimilar positions and from different places on equal terms, making this space a redoubt, a safe haven in the Roma district, intended as a response to Mexico City's more officializing spaces of national and international Art History, and thus providing a counterpointed interpretation of art practice—a kind of discursive and creative *emergency room,* based on trial and error.

And with sirens wailing because, let's face it, the art practices and strategies outlined in this round table's synthetic description—collaboration, interdisciplinarity, site-specificity, works in progress, interventions—turn cultural management into an extreme sport only suitable for adrenaline addicts. Indeed, as art strategies are expanded to make room for something besides the traditional finished product that can be exhibited in a gallery, there comes a need to revise current practices among management, curators—I guess among critics, too—as well as in museum models… Only then may we speak of intervention and site-specific art—not only as strategies of artistic production, but at an interpretive level where discourses are generated: for example,

curating site-specific art and interventions, as in the case of *inSite* or the *Havana Biennial*. Similarly, we can speak of cultural management *in the expanded field*, and as a kind of *negotiation table* that brings together different agents from inside and outside the medium depending on the requirements of each project.

As an example, I will refer primarily to a project presented at MUCA Roma two and a half years ago, because I see it as symptomatic of the current condition of the museum we are referring to, and something that directly puts the traditional idea of the museum in a state of crisis.

II

MUCA Roma's vocational and mission statements do not mention the formation of art collections as one of its objectives, given that it has access to the MUCA Campus collection. We will return to this fact in the examples below, but it is important to clarify this point from the outset.

The Pedestrian Museum is a project hovering on the borderline between cultural institution, collection, intervention, work in progress, site-specific curating and action. It fulfills all the necessary requirements for any of the foregoing, but always with a wink at the public, urging it to press for a revision of the use and circumstances of those terms, and to adopt a position on how they are defined.

The strategy is simple but effective: gathering objects donated by people walking by a particular spot, thus forming anthropometric or indicial collections that provide information on the condition of the inhabitants of a place.

The project spokespersons—as well as custodians, curators, conservators, fundraisers, and above all, architects—are the artists María Alós and Nicolás Dummit Estévez, who began the project in New York, where they formed different collections by setting up in different parts of Manhattan, including Ground Zero. The objects collected are then catalogued and inventoried, and the donor is asked to sign a donation sheet, of which he or she will be given a copy.

Wearing suits and with an oddly executive and official appearance, Alós and Estévez set up to collect objects in crowded public places with heavy pedestrian traffic. With the help of a bilingual recorded message, they invite passersby to donate objects they are carrying with them. The only requirement is that each object fit into a Ziploc sandwich bag. The donor fills out the form and the object is identified with an inventory number that includes a letter code corresponding to the place where it was received. So the different collections generated by the Pedestrian Museum are an anthropological survey of the places where the samples have been taken. It is a kind of census where the answers are objects—at Ground Zero in New York, for example, one of the donations is a handkerchief containing the donor's tears; the collection gathered at the UNAM Faculty of Arts in Mexico City includes a wallet embroidered with a marijuana leaf and a small Mao paperback; in Havana, it was striking how many people donated money.

The resulting collections are displayed on panels, in rows of sandwich bags containing a wide variety of objects which range from things that represent a customs nightmare, including controlled substances and desiccated animals, to those that present interesting conservation problems—food, for the most part.

For its presentation at MUCA Roma, the Pedestrian Museum was invited to create two new collections at the UNAM campus and exhibit all the collections formed thus far at MUCA Roma. This implied containing a museum within a museum, a mirror within a mirror. In other words, a museum without a collection joined forces with a museum without a space, leaving both in equal circumstances, neither of them being more real or more of a simulacrum than the other, and both holding the necessary credentials to be able to call themselves museums. So, at the same time that there has been a shift in art status, there has been an equal shift in the institution's status. In that sense, both are works in progress.

Parallel to the Pedestrian Museum's presentation at MUCA Roma, three young artists were invited to present interventions based on the MUCA Campus collection. In one case, the result is especially critical to an attack on the institution's condition and standards. Using the statutes on how the collection is to be formed and the broad definition of *capital assets*, Frida Cano proposed that the institution's employees become part of the collection, with inventory numbers, catalogue entries with corresponding photographs, and the whole documentary apparatus required for any object registered in a collection. The piece was presented to the corresponding acquisitions committee and, ironically, was rejected.

The next project I would like to speak about is key in terms of exploring the limits of the institution and delimiting its nature as a *space for the protection and exhibition of art objects*.

The intervention *Project for MUCA Roma* by the Monterrey collective Tercerunquinto envisioned the space as a negotiation table for a prearranged occupation in which the institution agreed to function primarily as storage for objects pertaining to the informal economy that thrives in this district.

Each room of the museum was fitted with locks and chain-link fences that allowed the public to look in and see the objects stored there. The university signed a contract committing to store and protect the goods belonging to a group of street vendors.

Negotiating this project was no simple matter. It implied turning the museum into a warehouse, held in usufruct by a group of retailers whose activity was not entirely legal. The institution was naturally reticent, and the battling groups of vendors even more so.

To the radicals' joy and the authorities' horror, on the opening day of what was to be a two-and-a-half-month-long exhibition, the museum was empty, its rooms closed, its walls peeling.

The project was only moderately successful, and its results deviated from the initial proposal given that the "warehouse/galleries" wound up attracting only antique

dealers and Sunday painters who sold their wares at the flea market that set up on weekends just a block and a half from the museum. They were overjoyed to have their work displayed in a museum and thus achieve a strange, involuntary and vicarious legitimization. The owners of stands specializing in pirated goods, for example, were not interested in the nearby guarded facilities and installations that the university was offering them for free, despite the fact that this would allow some clearly illegal merchandise to be secured under the same conditions as any work of art.

In this instance, the university demonstrated more flexibility than we had anticipated—even more so than the skeptical groups of street vendors who had rejected what represented a merely symbolic benefit to them, if that. Now I wonder if the attempt to alter the function of the museum space was even partly successful: the museum never ceased to be a museum. Rather, it expanded its function to include the storage of objects for contemplation. Some difference! But over and above this mere simplification of a phenomenon with broader implications, what this intervention did achieve was a meeting of suspicious gazes that observed each other as if from behind barriers. The public we had aspired to attract—pedestrians and people who frequented the streets near the museum—suddenly found itself with an inverted role, exhibiting its objects for the enjoyment of a specialized public, whatever the pretext, and operating outside the legitimizing framework of an institution or artistic collective endorsed by a trade union. The fact was that art specialists were going to look at the mediocre paintings and antique junk belonging to a group of street vendors and stored in an official and public place that had blocked access to its rooms in order to store these objects. The only people allowed to enter these rooms over the space of two and a half months were the vendors. The work was clearly not about getting tangible results, but rather about a process in construction, a making-of, behind the scenes, where what was constructed and deconstructed was the relationship and exchange among artists, institution, artwork and public, as roles that are inseparable and interchangeable.

Was the so frequently cited *art status* questioned, altered or submitted to any new crisis? Perhaps the question itself is a bit naïve, but it should also be analyzed in broader terms, rather than taking the immediacy of said intervention for granted, because the final example I want to discuss provides a more direct response to the questions posed here relating to how a shift in art's modes of production, interpretation and circulation has in turn been a factor in the modification of current institutional models, which are the product of experiments like the ones discussed above. The clearest response lies in committing to a slightly different direction than ones taken before. During its eight years of existence, MUCA Roma had gone from being just an art laboratory to serving as a space for curatorial and discursive experimentation, but it was now necessary to cater to the demands of art practices that required not only a space for management-negotiation (as well as exhibition), but also clear and accessible documentary support that would respond to a growing need for free access to information. Thus, it went from the model of the museum as *work in progress* to that of the museum as *open source*, malleable and user-friendly, a collective creation with an unpredictable core of collaboration and interdisciplinarity, rather than a vertical, hegemonic structure intended to establish the bases for official histories of national art.

So, what was needed was an element favoring reflection, analysis and a closer study of the aforementioned and other projects, with a view to creating an adequate record of them as an active memoir of our work.

With that in mind, a strategic plan for the Center for the Documentation of Contemporary Art was conceived, requiring—among other things—a change of location in order to accommodate the center as the foundation and hub of the work that was being done. JoAna Morfín and Claudio Hernández—two restorers and conservators specializing in contemporary art and digital resources—were hired to carry out a diagnostics, stabilize the collection and develop the active parameters and policies regarding the acquisition of materials, as well as to generate specific tools for the collection's conservation, storage and digitalization according to international standards developed for this kind of initiative. In conjunction with the conservation and restoration team, Víctor Álvarez advanced a proposal for a Cultural Management and Heritage master's project at the Universidad Iberoamericana in Puebla, Mexico. It involved studying the Center's public in order to develop a profile of its users, as well as analyzing the condition of the collection that MUCA Roma had amassed thus far and possibilities for strategic connection to other cultural centers in the area so as to improve the dissemination, use, significance and effectiveness of the material gathered.

With this initiative, we were able to move toward a more interdisciplinary and collective focus in the construction of a contemporary art space which on the one hand, would accommodate a scientific approach—insofar as science was applied to the restoration process, and keeping in mind that MUCA Roma is the University Museum of Sciences and Art—and on the other, generate a Documentary Center model that would be applicable to other museums. This, in my view, is our clearest response to the need to document, preserve and circulate the projects generated by all the collaborators of MUCA Roma. To all of them, our deepest thanks.

Translated by Michelle Suderman.