

Scattered Activities

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Mira Bernabeu
 Heath Bunting
 Daniel García Andújar
 Juan Fernando Herrán
 Jan-Peter E. R. Sonntag
 Eulàlia Valldosera

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APEX



Mira Bernabeu

Inner Circle, 1996
 Mounted colour photographs
 Variable dimensions

I have decided to focus my attention on the situation of the child in relation to his/her family. I am transposing this situation onto my own family. The two images are family portraits; the first expresses the outward image of the family and the second represents the hidden violence within.

During infancy the child is trapped in a structured family unit which varies in relation to different social situations. The child has to deal with a context that oppresses and produces a sense of guilt. During this period the child's only release is through his/her imagination, where anything is possible and nobody else can pry. In a way, the child dreams both night and day, mixing fantasy and reality. Early in life, children imagine or dream about killing, loving, and hating their parents, brothers, sisters or any member of their family. Later in life these feelings are manifested in all kinds of social situations. The family environment is where the child learns to act out different rôles.



Heath Bunting

FIXED VIEWPOINT - Counter Surveillance
 Street intervention

After a careful and detailed study of surveyed control zones of the inner city, a campaign of cctv system sabotage via optical illusion will be undertaken. The aim is to create dis-belief in the mind of security operators so that they will no longer be able to rely on the illusion of security by adding multiple versions of myself on their screens appearing in different places, not only in their own area or city but internationally. Relying on the fact that even though the latest cameras can pan and focus very effectively, they still only have a fixed viewpoint, thus making them very vulnerable to tricks of perspective. So, for instance a distorted black and white image lying flat on the pavement, either stenciled or fly-postered, can appear on the cctv monitor screen as a solid standing figure.

Daniel García Andújar

Technologies To The People Collection, 1997
 Work in progress

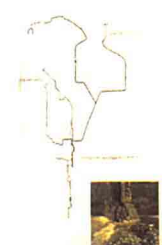
Technologies To The People® is a work in progress. It's a metaphor about the use of technologies while acting as a public provocation. I am creating a virtual company that exists only like an artist project, it operates really for the rest of society. *Technologies To The People®* works with the media infrastructure of corporate companies. *Technologies To The People®* usually sponsors art events in its representation policies.

Technologies To The People® presents for the first time part of the *Technologies To The People Collection*. During the last months Daniel García Andújar has been compiling a selection of the documents appeared in the cache of our computers. As a lot of people know, when we visit Internet pages, our computers load images, quick-time films, and other series of resources, that facilitate and increase the speed of document reading; browser technology is designed in this sense. These documents that the servers send to the cache of our browsers, are those which Daniel García Andújar has been selecting for our photographic collection.



Juan Fernando Herrán

Transformaciones Geográficas (Geographical Transformations), 1995-96
 Installation
 Cibachrome and graphite on wall surface



Rivers have been traditionally instrumental in the definition of the morphology of cities. Some European cities still show, in their disposition of blocks and streets, the places where rivers formerly flowed, determining the shape of the urban grid as well as the nature of the constructions located on their banks. London, founded by the Romans and rebuilt according to a meticulous plan after the Great Fire in 1666, is no exception. With the advent of the modern age and with diverse arguments such as salubrity or continuity of the urban grid, the switch from fluvial to mechanised land transportation or land speculation, some of the main rivers and most of the minor tributaries were canalised and integrated into a subterranean network of sewers and drains. In the installation *Transformaciones geográficas*, the artist focuses on the river's course as a testimony of the geographical circumstances that played an important historical rôle during the earlier configuration of cities. Yet this subterranean network is also a hidden reflection of the visible city, just as cemeteries - 'cities of the dead' - witness an underground essence. If in Europe the sewer network was used as a shelter in times of war, in some of our present cities the same thing occurs, with homeless people threatened by the social 'cleansing' phenomenon, an aberration of contemporary urban society. The exhumation of the city's entrails is also a provocative act, one that emphasises the underworld which preceded us, lies under our feet and that we refuse to accept as an integral part of our urban landscape.

Jan-Peter E. R. Sonntag

modern minimal disco 4, 1996
 Sound sculpture

In a central place in the exhibition space/white cube, there is a small steel pedestal; dangling over it, a set of headphones. To put on the headphones, the visitor to the 'modern minimal disco' first has to climb up onto the pedestal. Now exposed as a viewer of the exhibition amidst the exhibits, he/she is acoustically immersed in a paradoxical experimental space.



Euro Trash with Hardcore Soul
 Proceeding from the 'raum Arbeiteri' (space works) I made for conventional exhibition situations, I developed **modern minimal disco** as a consideration of the extreme stimulation and excessive physical experience that House and Techno raves offer, and for precisely that receptive context and the associated sound system quality. And so I realised **modern minimal disco 1** as a special area/installation-cum-performance for the mass rave 'Teutonic Techno Temple' organised during the *Making Wave Festival* in San Francisco in 1995. Whereas at raves this excessive body feeling - body music - is based primarily on the constancy and physical power of a rapid beat, over which the rhythmic and melodic patterns run, the body of the **modern minimal disco** visitor is swallowed up by a continuously and endlessly accelerating space. Over the special headset and pedestal used in **modern minimal disco 4**, the sub-frequencies are now transmitted to the receiver as vibrations, as pure waves of pressure, palpable components of the quickening impulse. The receiver isolated in this way becomes part of the work and is transformed into an observing exhibit.

Eulàlia Valldosera

Shelf for a Hospital Bathroom, 1992
 Created for HOSPITAL HUMAN MATERIAL, a project shared with M. Theunissen and T. Dröge

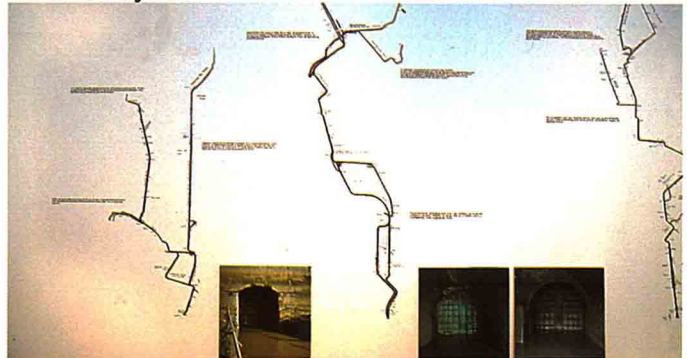
Luminous installation
 Wall (4.5 m. length x 2.3 m. height)
 Light-projecting slide projector
 Cupboard, mirrors, shelf
 Cleansing products and medicines
 Clothes with aluminium protheses
 Child's potty



The mirror-door of a small bathroom cupboard reflects a beam of light and projects it parallel to the wall on which a series of objects are displayed. Their lay-out is apparently arbitrary and yet depends on a meticulous logic, that of the physical behaviour governing light. It is an objectual journey similar to that of a closed circuit of energy. The position of each object with regard to the following one functions as a pure means of containing a material which is both intangible and alive: light ... *Shelf for a Hospital Bathroom* can be seen as an ironic metaphor for that which is corporal. It begins with the head: the small cupboard containing medicines. It continues with the spine: shelving with packages of toiletries arranged according to their increase in size. The extremities: garments hollowed out with protheses which allow light to circulate inside them. In these, the pulse of energy in the form of light has inverted the interior-exterior balance. At the end, the child's potty gathers up the final twinkle.

Nothing is intelligible excepting in relation, we do not exist in isolation and our experience is not wholly random, this and this and this and so on. I believe that all there is forms a single whole; however, our experience is finite, we see only fragments.¹ The phenomenon of 'globalisation' has operated a dramatic change in the relationships established between individuals - and in those that these maintain with their surroundings - due, to a great extent, to the invisibility of the subjects holding power and making decisions, as well as to the growing complexity of the events that produce effects on a worldwide or universal scale, a fact which in many cases leads to feelings of frustration and impotence before the impossibility of defining personal individual behaviours. Nevertheless, and in spite of the complicated distance between the effects and the causes imposed on us by such an interconnected reality, certain free zones, expressive voids, do exist that not only inform of the possibility of other forms of relationships but resist that single direction proposed by a way of thinking that values economic factors to the detriment of the social and spiritual values of any given community.

The city...



Juan Fernando Herrán. Transformaciones Geográficas. 1995-96

In 1956 Guy Debord proposed *the theory of drift* among the diverse situational procedures as "a technique of uninterrupted passage through varied milieus". The author proceeded by stating that "the concept of 'drift' is inseparably linked to the identification of certain effects of a psychogeographical nature, and to the affirmation of a ludic-constructive behaviour, as opposed to the classical notions of journey and stroll".² Between the years 1995 and 1996 Juan Fernando Herrán produced the work *Transformaciones Geográficas* (Geographical Transformations), a route - materialised in texts, drawings and wall images - along one part of the subterranean network of drains and sewers in London that updates the feeling of drift in the scope of the contemporary metropolis. In the intentional discovery of an underground network the city acquires the characteristics of a map of the mind, of a peculiar chart that retrieves a lost intangible and silenced memory. To Foucault we owe the profound analyses of how power controls individuals by means of a spatial organisation in cells and of how such a division and spatialisation prevails in urban planning; invisible zones that usually degenerate into ghettos rely on the consent of the authorities and often on the silence of the inhabitants. The revelation of the hidden sediments of history favours the setting in motion of critical mechanisms able to build bridges between past and present, while showing the keys of future developments.

The family ...

The family cell conforms the basic structure of any given socio-economic organisation, and the bonds founded in its bosom generate a web that spreads out in a spatio-temporal framework of infinite features. The family, the initial territory of experience, constitutes the essential reference of any autobiography as it refers us to a principle defining a clear 'here and now', from which the first

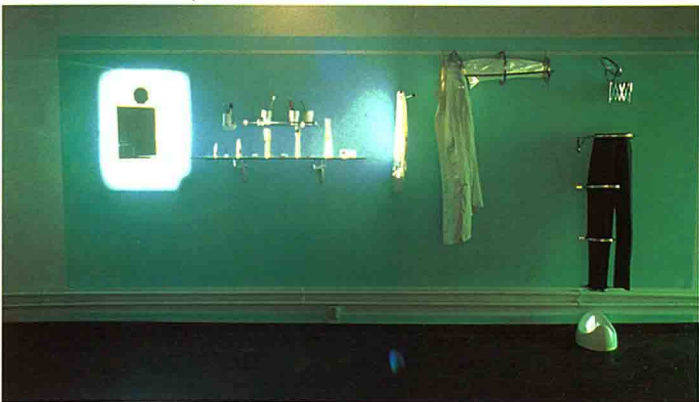


Mira Bernabeu. Inner Circle II. 1996

relationships evolve destined to occupy a significant place in our memory. As Mira Bernabeu reminds us in his work Inner Circle I & II, the child begins life under the strict watchfulness of his elders in this complex network of "pleasures-powers" implied by the aforementioned structure. Despite the specific and certainly scarce achievements of determined social policies designed to eliminate the terrible traits of everyday fascism in the private sphere, a certain strategy of the political and religious powers survives, albeit slyly, that attempts to maintain a productive family model, one which is economically profitable and which pursues other formulae of relationships susceptible of endangering the global balance of the system. The ramifications of these coercive policies spread out in all directions, penetrating the social network and slowing down more radical proposals of integration and adaptation.

The inhabited space ...

One of the most visible effects of 'globalisation' in the sphere of everyday life is passive participation in the mass phenomena of a world transformed into show-biz, and filled with objects dispossessed of their condition of witnesses, which have become commodities and incorporated, in the process, their immediate obsolescence. The standardisation of spaces inhabited by mankind interrupts personal memories leading to the disappearance of interior beliefs and heritage. The works of Eulàlia Valldosera and Jan-Peter E. R. Sonntag pose alternatives to the growing isolation of mankind as regards the objects and spaces of his surroundings - ruled by the idea of service - by means of unveiling in and through them a live potential as a territory towards which the subject is extended.



Eulàlia Valldosera. Shelf for a Hospital Bathroom. 1992

"Things do not exist outside of ourselves, in exterior measurable space, as natural objects (*ob-jecta*) for use and exchange, but on the contrary they open the original *place* from which only the experience of exterior measurable space can be made possible, in other words they themselves are subject from the start to prehension and com-prehension of the *topos-outopos* in which our experience of being in the

world resides. (...) Like the fetish or the game, things do not exactly occupy any place because their place is located on this side of objects and beyond man, in an area which is no longer either subjective or objective, personal or impersonal, but where we suddenly find ourselves before that x apparently so simple: man, the thing."³

In *Shelf for a Hospital Bathroom* the alternation of lights and shadows that illuminate and project objects place transformation in that "third area" of which Agamben speaks of, that region of experience in which events take place. From her early works, Valldosera has taken her own body as both a measure and a receptacle of exterior reality, and through the body's relationships with architecture, objects - and in her latest works with other bodies - she has explored notions of sexual identity, love, illness or death. The use of her naked body, pierced by ordinary objects related to personal hygiene or illness, she completely opposes the ideal of the body as a source of health, vindicating illness and healing as a means of restoring the person's links with his or her surroundings. In *modern minimal disco 4* Jan-Peter E. R. Sonntag proposes that visitors should submerge themselves "acoustically in a paradoxical experimental space", a space of continuous and infinite acceleration. In this work Sonntag intervenes in the individual's mechanisms of perception, subverting the way in which he or she receives the exterior acoustic signals via the transmission of sub-frequencies functioning as vibrations that literally occupy and spread all over the body of the receiver. The artist suggests another type of body music, and offers a space to be felt individually in a totally different context: the body transformed into sculpture inside an exhibition hall.



Jan-Peter E. R. Sonntag. modern minimal disco 4. 1996

... and technology.

The phenomenon of 'globalisation' has run parallel to the development of technoscience and nowadays nobody is oblivious to the fact that the important revolution produced in information technologies has resulted in a radical metamorphosis of the concepts of time and space, motivated by the great *multiplying factor* of these technologies with enormous consequences affecting forms of relation and communication. From neighbouring positions yet divergent mechanisms - sabotage and irony, respectively - Heath Bunting and Daniel García Andújar put forth a critical glance both at the technological medium itself and the society in which this medium acts.

Heath Bunting's activism - or *an-artivism*, according to his own denomination - is manifest in work that attempts to establish connections, gateways between cyberspace and the street, creating in both elements of friction and simultaneously proposing new modes of subjective participation and experience. Former graffiti artist of the walls of London, Bunting has become a *flâneur* strolling equally along the super-highways of information and the streets of any given city, raising the issue of new modes of presence by means of the postal service, the telephone, fax or e-mail within the reach of the majority. The efficiency of his sabotage campaigns is based on the simplicity of procedures which nevertheless introduce themselves with unwonted strength in the systems of power.



Daniel García Andújar. Technologies To The People. collection. 1997

Daniel García Andújar's project entitled *Technologies To The People*[®] poses a global criticism of the fallacy implied by the belief that technology will be the base of a fairer and more democratic world. Although certain prophets of technological goodness have declared that the main inequality will be a generation issue, it is obvious that the countries with a higher number of *connections* are located in the super-developed areas of the world. Even if in recent years there has been a strong increase in the utilisation of technology in peripheral zones, remote from traditional centres of power, the gap is still enormous and there is the further difficulty that in such peripheral societies technology can create greater inequalities between the ruling élite and the large masses of population lacking economic resources.

To work in these free zones we referred to at the beginning of this text, propounded by these and other artists, does not imply either a direct confrontation with 'globalisation' or a melancholy resort towards an allegedly lost - and fragmentary - Arcadia; rather it intends to create a space for reflection in the search for other networks and circuits that extend in all the spheres of human activity in a large majority of society, the origin of which lie in experience (present time) and memory (past time) of a place or community, as opposed to the essentially future and de-territorial dimension proposed by the world's *new order*.



Heath Bunting. Visitors Guide to London. 1994-96

"The experience of art continues to be valid inasmuch as a drift, in other words, a critical and random method of the pre-existing conditions of a certain practice or sentence. The drift is the step towards the system's exterior, a step necessarily uncertain yet precisely for this reason reveals itself to be subversive."⁴

NOTES

1. Craigie Horsfield, "Conversación: Manuel J. Borja-Villel, Jean-Françoise Chevrier, Craigie Horsfield", *La Ciutat de la Gent*. Fundació Tàpies (ed.), Barcelona 1977, p. 22.
2. Guy E. Debord, "Teoría de la Deriva", *La creación abierta y sus enemigos. Textos situacionistas sobre arte y urbanismo*, Las Ediciones de la Piqueta, Madrid 1977, p. 61.
3. Giorgio Agamben, *Estancias. La palabra y el fantasma en la cultura occidental*, Pre-Textos, Valencia 1995, p. 112.
4. Leonel Moura, "Arte y comunidad", *Globalización y fragmentación del mundo contemporáneo*, Francisco Jarauta (ed.), Arteleku, San Sebastián 1997, p. 75.