

INTRODUCTION

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Critical Studies: Art, Becoming and Participation marks the launch of the Visual Arts and Critical Studies Group, recently formed within the scope of the Arnaldo Araújo Research Centre (CEAA).

The book seeks to rehearse what may become, in the next future, a *Brute Theory*, whose territories of action remain under definition but whose company we wish to keep along future trajectories. As the singular is a collective, in this publication dispersion overrides the search for any type of unity.

Brute Theory, as a pocket of resistance to current models of academic domination anchored in profitable, efficient and, as repeatedly stated, competitive research, proposes precarious dynamics, such as risk and drift.

Therefore, and taking into account the following presuppositions:

1 - In *Art and Utopia. The Sirens' lesson*, possible relationships between artistic practice and the concepts of Utopia, Heterotopia and Dystopia are proposed. Within this context, art is perceived as a singular space of resistance and called upon in its heterotopic dimension. This also involves reflecting upon the questionable approach of the Vatican to contemporary art and the resulting, usually dystopian implications, such as the Holy See's representation at the 55th Venice Biennale.

2 – in the text *Self-Portrait II (Lost in the City)*, the author's artistic programme is grasped as a political and paradigmatic strategy. Considering the reading developed by Walter Benjamin around Edgar Allan Poe's work *The Man of the Crowd*, this strives to conceive the city as a potential space for trans-subjectivity and for the limitless explorations of the *flâneur* through a critical approach to the work *Self-Portrait II (Lost in the City)*. Between Baudelaire and Poe, the *flâneur* and the man of crime, *Lost in the City* draws combinations, deviations and dispersions.

3 – During the 1960s and 1970s the relationship between spectator and artwork underwent considerable transformations as the modernist notions of aesthetic experience, authorship and objecthood were critically dismantled.

In *Feed-back Loop: from Perception to Brain-time* and *The Screw: Between Wearing and Watching* Nuno Rodrigues analyses, respectively, Dan Graham's *Present Continuous Past(s)* and Hélio Oiticica's *Parangolés* highlighting the heteronomous dimension that underpins this critical endeavour.

4 – Following a careful exploration of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming-minor, and its development vis-à-vis the relationship to the axiomatics of capital in the form of the problem of the *minority*, *Becoming Minor, Space, Politics and Emancipation* proposes thinking on the concept of minor vis-à-vis issues of space and territory, as a practice of resistance in articulating both a micro and a macro-politics while warning against the dangers of mistaking minor for small, independent or marginal. The working hypothesis here states that a struggle for spaces of existence is a struggle for life and that defending the right to a territory also involves defending the right to participate in the invention of a world.

5 – In *Masoch, From the Figure to the Problem*, literary production is portrayed as the power to open up spaces enabling new human dimensions to emerge. In *Masoch*, Deleuze conveys how literary production entails the creation of worlds that exceed pre-existing clinical concepts and reach beyond mere biographical projection. This essay explores the exercise of literature as something that proceeds according to an opening to the world or a 'becoming-world' of the biographical.

Brute Theory seeks out conceptual approaches to authors whose programs ensue from an extreme necessity. Only those that remind us of the cynicism of Diogenes in which critique, polemics and courage constitute true sovereignty.

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