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approved version of the following Dissertation:**

Working Around:

**Lea Lublin, Marie Orensanz, Mirtha Dermisache, Margarita Paksa
and the Active Spectator, 1968–1983**

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**Working Around:
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by

Julia Watt Detchon

Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of
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Dedication

For Deborah Detchon Dodds, my aunt Debby

Acknowledgements

This project began with a leap and a move to Austin, Texas in 2014, where I found Professors George Flaherty and Andrea Giunta had created in the Center for Latin American Visual Studies a thriving and supportive community of scholars of Latin American art history. It was a new experience for me. I had been working in museums that described their collections as “encyclopedic” and yet showed little interest in collecting, exhibiting, or engaging with the complex histories of art from the Americas. I am grateful to have landed in a graduate program with such a storied role in the history of my field, in an institutional environment with rich collections and resources committed to research on the region, and with faculty who work hard to make sure those resources support students. In every year of graduate school, the Center for Latin American Visual Studies supported me through funding, opportunities for academic and professional development, friendship, mentorship, and intellectual exchange. I thank George and Adele Nelson for keeping that community alive. I thank them also for friendship and support in the form of thoughtful advice, well-timed words of encouragement, and many, many letters of recommendation. Back at the Blanton, I benefited from two years of mentorship by Beverly Adams, and am grateful for her investment in this undertaking and in my career. At the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, another true gem of the university, I appreciate the interest and assistance over the years from committed librarians and archivists, particularly Dylan Joy.

This project has changed in shape and scope since planting the earliest seeds of its questions in the testing ground of my master's thesis. Early ideas were rehearsed in seminars given by Ann Reynolds, Cherise Smith, Adele Nelson, and Naomi Lindstrom, as well as in the Permanent Seminar on Latin American Art, where Eddie Chambers is a faithful interlocutor. I acknowledge their work, which precedes mine, and the questions they have asked, which opened the space for my own. I am grateful for the questions they have posed to me. Finally, in Austin, where my personal life was deeply entangled with my intellectual life, I had the fortune to land among a truly special family of irreverent scholars, disciplined thinkers, generous collaborators, fellow travelers, sitters and sippers. I am grateful to Phillip Townsend, Jana La Brasca, Jessi Di Tillio, Deirdre Smith, Francesca Balboni, and Thomas Edwards for years of friendship in its many forms.

In fits and starts, this project allowed me to travel and to benefit from the generosity of people around the world. I am grateful to Andrea Giunta for opening her home and her connections to me in Buenos Aires, as well as to the scholars and artists who have taken the time to share their experiences and guide my path over many years: Isabella Crosse, María Amalia García, Mariana Marchesi, Cintia Mezza, Elda Cerrato, Marta Minujín, Ana Gualtieri, Laura Isola, and Mariano Lopez Seoane. I appreciate the knowledge and enthusiasm shared by archivists at the Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Fundación Espigas, Institute for Studies on Latin American Art, Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires, Museum of Modern Art, New York, Universidad Torcuato Di Tella, and Tate Britain. Each of the four artists covered in this dissertation – Marie Orensanz, Lea Lublin, Margarita Paksa, and Mirtha Dermisache – has changed my

thinking, sometimes in areas far removed from the study of art and art history. Each bravely pursued a complex, uncompromising, and sometimes controversial artistic vision, from which I have learned a lot about integrity and persistence. I especially thank Marie Orensanz, her daughters Mercedes and Rosario, and Nicolás Lublin, who have shared their time, their tea, their memories, and their archives from Buenos Aires to Paris.

In addition to the immaterial forms of sustenance and support I have acknowledged above, this research was made possible by the Jacqueline Barnitz Graduate Endowment, the Tinker Foundation, a Fulbright Fellowship, and the Social Science Research Council's International Dissertation Research Fellowship, with funds provided by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Toward the end of this process, I got a job at the site of one my archives, which allowed me income and access to research materials, as well as *la perruque*, the moments of opportunity which graduate students become experts in seizing, as de Certeau writes, "on the wing." I thank Inés Katzenstein for the many opportunities that have arisen at the Museum of Modern Art.

My proposals for those grants and my plans for this project were frustrated by the coincidence of my arrival in Argentina with the arrival of a global pandemic. I am grateful to my family, who in addition to believing in what I had set out to do, took me in when closing borders left me, for a while, with nowhere to go. Many things changed during the dilated, limbo-time of quarantine, including my relationship to timelines, the people I had to rely on, and the institutions I was physically capable of accessing. I thank the ILS librarians who enabled research from afar, particularly during the summer of 2020. As some borders reopened and Argentina's did not, instead of the research I had planned in

Buenos Aires I did research in Paris, London, New York, and Washington, D.C. For me, this raised questions about the production of knowledge in and about Argentina. My access to archives in the cultural “centers” of the global north, and my reliance on the information contained therein, risks reproducing a structure of knowledge production that has looked from north to south from colonialism to the Cold War.

Indeed, every one of my experiences with Argentina, from the study abroad program on which I first visited in college, to its representation in the museums I worked in after, to the area studies programs established at the University of Texas, to the foundations funding my travel and research grants, to the very categories under which this dissertation will be filed, has been mediated by the political interests of the United States in Latin America over the course of the twentieth century. It is difficult to study this period from abroad and not see my own work as a continuation of the colonial power structures established over the several centuries before it. Or, put another way, not to feel like Don Diego de Zama, the beleaguered but unaware agent of colonialism in Lucrecia Martel’s film *Zama*, fumbling around in a world where nobody cares about his ordering criteria. I do my best in another language but often expect people to speak mine. My goals to bring more visibility to Latin American art in the museums and academies of the United States often come into conflict with my beliefs about where, how, and by whom this work should be seen and interpreted. As Shifra Goldman once wrote, “it has taken years of travel, research, and self-retraining to reconfigure my understanding so that I might be able to contribute to the discourse (a process that will never be complete); to come face to face with my presumption in seeking to present the history, iconography, and interpretation of

Latin American culture from without. This is done with the full consciousness that I speak in an intellectual alliance with, not instead of, the voices from Latin America, many of whom are my friends and colleagues.” I am grateful to friends and colleagues in and from Latin America for their intellectual alliance.

I wrote early drafts of this dissertation in the summer of 2020, stranded at my parents’ home outside Washington, D.C. Helicopters circled above. Some of the things the pandemic laid bare, immediately, were how tight the rubber band of income inequality had been pulled; how shared investments in truthful information, expertise, and institutions had worn away; how an already-threadbare social safety net could not hold; and how everyday life belied cultural fantasies of postracial progress. In the summer of 2020, people defied the threat of infection and took to the streets to demand, in addition to the end of extrajudicial killing of and violence against Black people, a different kind of redistributive future, in which investments are made in people and communities – in needs like food, shelter, education, and healthcare – rather than in the policing of property rights. This history of dictatorship, of art as a form of analysis of power structures and of resistance to domination, began looking like a lesson turned back around as democracy teetered in the United States. Writing this dissertation, I found myself noting the ways these women survived, found ways to make art and to make communities, and admiring the ambition and commitment with which women in Argentina continue to fight for democracy. In other words, this is not a history that needs me – we need it. Like Don Diego de Zama, we are marooned in a threatening, unwelcoming world that we ourselves helped create.

Abstract

Working Around:

Lea Lublin, Marie Orensanz, Mirtha Dermisache, Margarita Paksa and the Active Spectator, 1968–1983

Julia Watt Detchon, PhD

The University of Texas at Austin, 2023

Supervisor: George Flaherty

This dissertation studies four women artists working between Buenos Aires and Europe in the 1970s: Lea Lublin, Marie Orensanz, Mirtha Dermisache, and Margarita Paksa. During the military dictatorships of that decade, artists developed conceptual tactics – including performance-based works, coded uses of language and environmental installations – to critique the regimes in power. At the same time, the Centro de Arte y Comunicación, an interdisciplinary gallery established by Jorge Glusberg in Buenos Aires, championed conceptual art from Latin America, presenting the work of Lublin, Orensanz, Dermisache, and Paksa alongside North American and European practitioners. This dissertation compares some of the conceptual tactics developed by these artists during the Long Seventies in an effort to highlight their contributions to the convergent histories of feminism and conceptualism in Argentina. Connected by the ambitious international agenda of the Centro de Arte y Comunicación, and by personal friendships, Lublin, Orensanz, Dermisache, and Paksa each made work that responded to shared experiences of political and gendered domination while adapting nimbly to the specific cultural environments of Europe and the Americas. I therefore give careful attention to *how* their aesthetic strategies functioned across

these varying environments. My analysis of these artists' work, in its many forms, proposes a reading of conceptual art that hinges on the fundamentally reconfigured relations between artist and viewer taking place at the time. Focusing on "active spectatorship," rather than on its dematerial or linguistic qualities, this dissertation locates conceptual art's criticality in its reliance on viewers that enter into it as embodied process. By opening not just the interpretation but also the creation of art to collaboration, I argue, these artists aimed their critique at the level of everyday life.

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Introduction

Calórico. Construcciones en poliéster y vinilo, an exhibition of immersive sculpture (or perhaps sculptural immersion) by Margarita Paksa, opened at the Galería del Centro Argentino por la Libertad de la Cultura in Buenos Aires in October 1965 [fig. 0.1]. As its title suggests, the work consisted of imprecise, organic structures made of polyester and vinyl tubes snaking through the gallery in a jungle of pop-molecular forms. On the walls, curved mirrors further distorted views of the space, adding a layer of reflective or virtual mediation. The work dominated spatially, engaging with its viewers in a way that seems to critique institutional conventions of display. Strange, claustrophobic photographs document the obtrusive forms, blocking figures and distorting the camera's depth of field. In one, Paksa herself stands out of focus against a wall, dwarfed by the globular red mass and its tendrils, looking up timidly as if they were about to consume her. The images make clear that *Calórico* is not something you can view at a contemplative distance in a quiet, white cube. It is not something you can view at a distance at all; your relationship to it might be constantly evolving as you move through it, and it may indeed be viewing you. With *Calórico*, Paksa extended the spatial awareness of minimalist sculpture to provoke consciousness not only of architectural space, but social space. Its occupation of the gallery invites artist and viewer into dialogue. The social relations elicited and exposed by her work become the work itself.

Other photographs, this time in black and white, document the festive opening of *Calórico*; Rubén Santantonin, Charlie Squirru, Dalila Puzzovio, attendees from what Miguel Brascó once called “la vanguardia *pop-hip-op-mao*”¹ – the social and artistic circles

¹ Miguel Brascó, “La manzana loca,” in *Claudia* 137 (October 1968): 144-147. On the *manzana loca*, see “La Plaza San Martín, y su aire de alta bohemia,” in *Análisis* 421 (April 8-14, 1969) and Laura Podalsky, *Specular City: Transforming Culture, Consumption, and Space in Buenos Aires, 1955-1973* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004).

that rotated through the Bar Moderno and the cultural institutions of the “manzana loca” – drinks in hand, cigarettes in mouth, squished cheerfully against the gallery walls and between the wobbling ligaments of sculpture [figs. 0.2–0.3]. An invitation to the “cocktail inauguración,” designed by Edgardo Giménez, renders a smiling Paksa, perched on a chair with an empty one beside her.² “Everyone came,” Paksa recalled years later. “[Alfredo] Rodríguez Arias, [Juan] Stoppani, León Ferrari, absolutely everyone came to my show. That was the consecration for me, because they had accepted me, they had accepted that strange work, some constructions that were really an environment, as it became known later, and today would be called an installation. That exhibition meant, for me, entrance to the Di Tella.”³

To this work – or more precisely, to this party – Paksa can trace her institutional recognition and acceptance, listing the male artists and cultural brokers whose presence permitted her entry. Interestingly, an exhibition elsewhere brings her into the fold of the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella, the artistic heart of 1960s Buenos Aires. In some ways, Paksa’s is an unusually frank acknowledgement of the power of that institutional recognition both in terms of her career (then) as an artist and her place (now) in art history, summed up by her recent obituary in the newspaper *Clarín*: “After her arrival at the Di Tella Institute, Paksa established herself as a pioneer of conceptual art.”⁴ It also demonstrates that the

² *Margarita Paksa. Calórico: Construcciones en poliéster y vinilo*. Exh. cat., Buenos Aires: Galería del Centro Argentino por la Libertad de la Cultura, October 28–November 5, 1965

³ “Cuando la presenté, vinieron todos: Rodríguez Arias, Stoppani, León Ferrari, absolutamente todos vinieron a mi muestra. Esto era para mí la consagración, porque me habían aceptado, habían aceptado esa obra extraña, unas construcciones que en realidad eran una ambientación, como se conoció más tarde y que hoy se definiría como instalación. Esta muestra significó para mí la entrada al Di Tella.” Laura Buccellato, *Margarita Paksa* (Buenos Aires: Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires, 2012): 35. In an unpublished interview with Buccellato, Paksa recalled, “Vino Samuel Paz y le gustó mucho y de ahí ya me invite al Di Tella. Entonces ahí entré al segundo paso que era *Más allá de la geometría*” (“Conversación con Margarita Paksa y su tiempo histórico,” n.d). All translations are the author’s unless otherwise noted.

⁴ “Tras su llegada al Instituto Di Tella, Paksa se erigió como una pionera del arte conceptual.” “Murió Margarita Paksa, pionera del arte conceptual en la Argentina,” *Clarín*, July 6, 2020.

institution was not just a space of display or pedagogy but also a social world, a subculture, a club that shared a specialized language and new ideas, a portal to an international network of mutual recognition and exchange.

I begin with Paksa's description because this is in some ways a project centered on institutions: not so much on institutional histories as on their role in bringing people – primarily artists, but also curators, critics, theorists, and interdisciplinary thinkers of all kinds – together. It is the goal of this dissertation to historicize and theorize the work of four women artists – Lea Lublin, Marie Orensanz, Mirtha Dermisache, and Margarita Paksa – through their participation in a singular institution, the Centro de Arte y Comunicación (CAYC), which took on the Di Tella's central role in the 1970s. However, my focus on CAYC functions primarily as a device for analyzing together the separate but interrelated art and careers of these four artists. By linking shared formal and conceptual approaches across their work, I aim to demonstrate how they shaped the emergence and refinement of conceptual art at CAYC, in Argentina, and globally. But my interest in their participation at CAYC is also oriented toward developing an analysis that attends to the ways their art operated in space – in the institutional space of CAYC, in a repressive political environment in Argentina, in the neocolonial and Cold War structures of the international art world – and to the ways women artists specifically negotiate the distribution of power in space. These four artists developed critical stances within and against a broad spectrum of discursive contexts by insisting on a plurivalency of interpretation and ambiguity of experience that is not commonly afforded to work by women artists. Recognizing this necessarily antiauthoritarian positionality, as I will argue in the pages that follow, complicates, if not undermines, the histories of these institutions as well as larger discourses of conceptualism and feminism.

WHAT IT WAS POSSIBLE TO DISCUSS

If the institution's recognition of these four artists – their presence in the archive – is the device that brings them together here, it is also their conspicuous absence from institutional histories that has motivated my research. Researching the CAYC for a master's thesis, I kept a running list of women artists who appeared literally in footnotes. Of course, Dermisache, Lublin, Orensanz, and Paksa were not the only women who exhibited there, and others appear often in collaboration and comparison: Elda Cerrato, Marta Minujín, Liliana Porter, Dalila Puzzovio, Mercedes Esteves, Graciela Carnevale, and Ana Kamien are nearby stars in this constellation. My aim is not merely to recuperate their central roles in this critical historical moment – to move them up from the footnotes – or to re-write a history of CAYC, though I do feel that work continues to be necessary and I do aim to nuance the all-male stories usually told. I am more focused on the moment of “consecration,” the moment that Paksa describes as acceptance of her work, because it delineates the shifting and socially-consensual bounds of what might be called a “movement” taking shape. Indeed, with the emergence of conceptual art in the late 1960s, the sociality of a work like *Calórico* – that is, the social relations elicited and exposed by the work – came increasingly to define the work itself.

Setting aside for a moment the promiscuity of the term, it is clear that the self-reflexivity and self-criticality that characterizes even the most loosely-defined conceptual art began at this time to demand more than just a revision of the traditional role of artists or the acceptance of more women among their ranks; this art questioned the very nature of subjectivity. I therefore believe that looking at the work of four women artists at this historical juncture can tell us something new, and more complex, about the widespread shift in aesthetic strategies that have been grouped, using theories of “dematerialization” and “administration,” together into a historiographic container – a “movement without a

medium” – called conceptual art. I also believe, to reverse the equation, that looking at conceptual art can tell us something new, and more complex, about women artists at this moment; that is, about the widespread shifts in gendered relations that have been grouped, in various parts of the Western world, together into a historiographic container called feminism.

The confluence of feminism and conceptualism is inflected by many other features of the social and political terrain, and as the dates in my title suggest, my analysis takes place during a period bookended by dictatorships in Argentina. The first, the military regime known as the *Revolución Argentina*, installed General Juan Carlos Onganía in a coup d'état in 1966. The authoritarian-bureaucratic state established under Onganía organized itself primarily in opposition to Peronism and, by extension, to the threat of communism. Its economic policies aimed at privatization and hobbling the Peronist labor movement, while reactionary social policies ended university autonomy; banned “hippies,” “immoral” fashions, and “decadent” behavior; and censored political and artistic speech.⁵ This increased cultural and economic pressure came to a head in confrontational events such as the *noche de los bastones largos* (1966), the violent repression of a university reform movement that led to faculty purges, and the closure of *Tucumán Arde* and *Experiencias '68* (1968), exhibitions containing art perceived as critical of the dictatorship. A combination of cultural efflorescence, the radicalization of aesthetics and politics, and the slow creep of authoritarianism characterizes this first period.

⁵ The history of Peronism haunts my discussion of politics in this period. But fully accounting for Juan Domingo Perón, his politics, and their intersection with Cold War-era alignments of “right” and “left” would be far beyond the scope of this project. For a longer political view, one starting point is David Rock, *Authoritarian Argentina: The Nationalist Movement, Its History, and Its Impact* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

This was also precisely the moment Lublin, Paksa, Orensanz, and Dermisache, all born between 1929 and 1940, began experimenting with the traditional media they had learned in art school, exhibiting locally and internationally, and coming up against the limits of what they could do in Argentina. A brief sketch of their biographies reveals overlapping trajectories at the macro- and micro- levels: parents who immigrated from Europe to Buenos Aires in the early twentieth century; middle-class upbringings in the boom years of Argentina's postwar economy; artistically inclined or supportive parents; access to secondary art education at the national beaux-arts schools; social circles that gathered at the Bar Moderno; and participation in the salon and premio system, which sponsored travel and training in Europe.

Lea Lublin was born in 1929 in Brest, Poland to Jewish parents who moved to Floresta, in Buenos Aires, when she was two. She trained at the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes Prilidiano Pueyrredón, graduating in 1949, and then with Gustave Singier at the Académie Ranson in Paris. Returning to Buenos Aires in 1956, Lublin's first solo exhibition was at Galería Van Riel in October 1958. The following year, she received a grant from the Fondo Nacional de las Artes to live in the jungles of the province of Misiones, where her paintings, which she showed in the 1962 exhibition *Motifs de la jungle*, transitioned toward a highly expressive, aggressively gestural, neo-figurative style. In 1964, she returned to Paris, sharing a studio and hosting *asados* on the outskirts of the city with painters Antonio Seguí and Rómulo Macció [fig. 0.4]. Her paintings in the early 1960s achieved commercial success, and she participated in the Salon de la Jeune Peinture and Salon de Mai at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris as well as in the Premio Braque and Premio Di Tella exhibitions at the Museo de Arte Moderno, Buenos Aires. Her son, Nicolás, was born in Buenos Aires in 1967, and they moved permanently to Paris the following year.

Margarita Paksa was born in 1933 in Buenos Aires, to Hungarian and Austrian parents, active socialists who spoke German at home. If her father didn't take her artistic ambitions very seriously, her mother, with whom she shared a ceramics studio, was supportive. She enrolled in the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes Manuel Belgrano in 1949, and later in the Escuela Superior de Bellas Artes Ernesto de la Cárcova to train in sculpture. While in art school, Paksa participated in student reform and protest movements, taught art classes for children, and met her husband, Osmar Cairola, whom she married in 1958. Her sculptures in the 1950s were largely formalist exercises in marble and clay, though by the early 1960s she worked increasingly with iron [fig. 0.5]. She began participating in salons and premios in 1954. In 1963 she, too, received a grant from the Fondo Nacional de las Artes to travel to the interior of the country, a trip she described as having a substantial impact on her material experimentation. Her first solo show, of informalist iron sculptures, was at Galería Riobóo in 1964. Her first son, Leandro, was born in 1960; her second, Sergio, in 1962. In 1966, she participated in two exhibitions with Lublin: *Homenaje al Viet-nam*, a group show denouncing United States foreign policy in Vietnam and Latin America at Galería Van Riel, and, a few months later, in the Anti-Bienal in Córdoba (discussed in chapter 1).

Marie Orensanz was born in 1936 in Mar del Plata, Buenos Aires Province. Her father had immigrated from Ansó, a town in the Spanish Pyrenees. In 1952, her family moved to Buenos Aires, and in 1953 made an extended trip to Europe. Back in Buenos Aires, she began training in the studio of Emilio Pettoruti in 1954 and, in 1961, with Antonio Seguí [fig. 0.6]. In 1962 and 1964 she returned to Europe, staying with Seguí and his wife in Paris, where she encountered two people she had known in Buenos Aires: Patrick Audras, who would become her husband, and Lea Lublin. She began participating in salons and premio exhibitions in 1963, when she also had her first solo show at Galería

Riobóo. Her early paintings were gestural, telluric, and abstract, though she maintained, as Paksa did, a figurative drawing practice that imagined grotesque scenes of violence and cannibalism. These figures eventually made their way into pop neo-figurative paintings in the mid-1960s before she transitioned toward more concrete abstraction at the end of the decade. In 1965, her first daughter, Maria, was born, and that year, already pregnant with her twins Mercedes and Rosario, she traveled with her family around Mexico and the southwestern United States. Upon her return, she participated in the 1967 Premio Braque and Premio Ver y Estimar exhibitions (discussed in chapter 1) alongside Margarita Paksa.

Mirtha Dermisache was born in 1940 in Lanús, Buenos Aires Province. Her mother was a pianist and explored, with her daughters, crafts and painting. Dermisache trained first as a teacher, and then in art education at the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes Manuel Belgrano. She later studied drawing and painting at the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes Prilidiano Pueyrredón and the Escuela Superior Ernesto de la Cárcova [fig. 0.7]. Sometime in the 1960s, Julia Pomiés writes, when Dermisache was “between the ages of twenty and thirty, she married Carlos Donnelly; they split and weren’t together during her thirties and forties. In her fifties, they remarried.”⁶ In the mid-1960s, Dermisache participated in pedagogical and experimental theater, performing in Celia Barbosa’s play *Ultra Zum!!*, *15 hechos en un solo acto* at the Di Tella in 1965. She studied philosophy, and in 1968 took a job teaching art at the Instituto Nere-Echea, a primary school founded on the principles of experiential learning of Alexander Sutherland Neill’s Summerhill school.⁷ In 1968–1969, she traveled in Europe and Africa, a trip that she described as consolidating the thinking

⁶ Julia Pomiés, “Mirtha Dermisache: El mensaje es la acción,” in *Un Mismo* no. 105 (March 1992): 49.

⁷ In comparing the history of critical pedagogy to participatory art, Claire Bishop describes the Summerhill school as the “historic avant-garde” of education. Founded by A.S. Neill in 1921, Summerhill continues to operate on the basis of self-organized anarchy, with voluntary attendance at classes, no punishment for swearing, and rules established in collaboration with the pupils at a weekly meeting. See Bishop, *Artificial Hells* (London: Verso, 2012): 267.

around her *grafismos* (discussed in chapter 2), which she had published for the first time as a book in 1967. She experimented with computerized and musical graphic notation in the late 1960s. While she continued publishing, she did not exhibit her books as art until the CAYC exhibition *De la Figuración al Arte de Sistemas en Argentina* in 1971.

All four artists participated in the activities of the Di Tella in the 1960s and the CAYC in the 1970s; each responded differently to the evolving political conditions and aesthetic tides of those decades. By the end of the Onganía dictatorship, Lublin and Orensanz had left Argentina permanently, while Paksa and Dermisache remained. While the year 1968 is often historicized as a point of art historical rupture in Argentina, marking the end of an effervescent period of formal experimentation and the beginning of a period of more direct engagement with political action, less scholarly attention has been given to the early 1970s, especially as a continuation of the late 1960s. Even during the optimistic interlude of several years of restored political freedoms, both spectacular and clandestine violence continued. The military returned to power in a final coup d'état in March 1976, formalizing its campaign of state terrorism under the name Proceso de Reorganización Nacional. During this final civil-military dictatorship, the state forcibly disappeared around 30,000 people. However, as sociologist Sebastián Carassai documents in his social history of the era, “many of the elements that composed this industry of death – assassination, kidnapping, ‘placement at the disposition of Executive Power,’ systematic torture, and even the forced disappearance of people – had already been present in the preceding period.”⁸ In a letter to her editor in Belgium, a year into the dictatorship, Dermisache wrote,

⁸ Sebastián Carassai, *The Argentine Silent Majority: Middle Classes, Politics, Violence, and Memory in the Seventies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014): 153. On the human rights abuses of the military dictatorships, see *Nunca Más: Informe de la Comisión Nacional sobre la Desaparición de Personas* (Buenos Aires: Eudeba Editorial Universitaria de Buenos Aires, 1984). On the usage of the term “dictadura cívico-militar,” see Ana Soledad Montero, “‘Dictadura cívico-militar’: ¿qué hay en el nombre? El debate sobre la participación civil en la última Dictadura argentina y sus ecos en el presente,” in *Estudios Sociales* vol. 62 (June 28, 2022).

“I ended 1976 with the following medical diagnosis: total mental and physical exhaustion...Many people have gone or are leaving. Soon there will be no decent humans left. With each person who leaves, a little part of myself leaves.”⁹

The very spare historical sketches dotting this text aim only to emphasize the continuity of violence – both symbolic and physical – on the part of the state both within and without dictatorship. It appears in the archive in the form of a warrant to inspect the Di Tella’s premises or the court proceedings of the obscenity trial brought against Lublin for her painting *Blanco sobre blanco* (1969).¹⁰ But as Dermisache’s letter suggests, there was much more of *it* going around: it shaped mass culture and mobility, institutional support, interpersonal relationships, the art that could and could be not be made, the layers of an always-shifting affective economy – as Ann Reynolds has written, “what it was possible to discuss...and what could be assumed and therefore remain unsaid.”¹¹ If histories of class struggle and the Cold War, women’s liberation, and conceptual aesthetics can be told separately elsewhere, they are inextricable here. How, then, to read conceptual art at the intersection of gendered and political domination?

It is this very intersection that can tell us much about how power operates. This dissertation brings into dialogue a range of aesthetic strategies – performance and installations, writing and drawing, and experimental video – by four very different artists. None of these artists set out to make feminist art or conceptual art (and some object to the terms). What unifies their diverse works is the everyday, lived experience of power distributed in space. I have not set out to prove, for example, that Paksa’s *Calórico* is

⁹ Guy Schraenen, “A Transatlantic ‘Affair,’” in Pérez Rubio, ed., *Mirtha Dermisache: porque ¡yo escribo!*, 42.

¹⁰ “Intimación de mejoras,” May 29, 1968; “Sobre una causa por delito de obscenidad” (unknown newspaper, n.d., MAMBA archive).

¹¹ Ann Reynolds, *Robert Smithson: Learning from New Jersey and Elsewhere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003): xii.

secretly a feminist work of art, or even that conceptualism emerged in Latin America to resist political oppression. I aim, rather, to elaborate the look and feel and lived experience of these conditions and the ways in which they are continually shifting in time and space. How did it feel to be an artist in Buenos Aires in 1968 versus 1972 versus 1976? How did it feel to be a woman in Buenos Aires versus Milan? What could you say in Buenos Aires in May 1968 versus Paris in May 1968? How did Dermisache, Lublin, Orensanz, and Paksa adapt tactically to these shifting conditions? How is power enacted materially in space and how can we identify feminist practices through an analysis of space? Of course, these questions are not limited to these four artists, or Argentine artists, or even women artists. I hope to develop methods here that might be applied to work by the many male artists showing interrogative conceptual art alongside them at the CAYC, and to artists working in other contexts.

INSTITUTIONS

As Paksa showed, art is inseparable from its social world; not just from the abstract forces of society and state but also from the community of friends, fans, and fellow travelers who think it is interesting or share motivations or message or methods. Over time, the entanglements of affect and affinity brought together by institutions change shape, and the social constellations that once revolved around them exist only in the archive as traces, to use Foucault's term, "which, in themselves, are often not verbal, or which say in silence something other than what they actually say."¹² A critical reading of the institutional

¹² Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976): 7.

archive attends to these silences in order to understand, however partially, what is not there and why.

Scholarship on Latin American art has emphasized the active role of cultural institutions in determining both the material and discursive supports of art that was always shifting between national and transnational, historical and historiographical frames.¹³ Andrea Giunta has demonstrated how institutional efforts to internationalize Argentine art were tied to the country's opening to global capitalism. In the absence of more developed market economies driving the production and circulation of new art, the values of newly-established Museums of Modern Art as well as private initiatives like the Di Tella and the CAYC played an (self-consciously) outsized role in determining the relationship between terms such as “modernism” and processes such as “modernization.”

Though its lifespan for the most part predated the years framing my study, the Di Tella is the paradigmatic art institution of this kind in Argentina. Founded in 1958 as the nonprofit foundation of manufacturing magnate Torcuato Di Tella, and conceived initially to promote his private art collection and disburse an annual prize to Argentine artists, the initiative expanded when a representative from the Rockefeller Foundation proposed establishing a center for advanced musical training for Latin American composers. The critic and curator Jorge Romero Brest, who had just resigned from the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, was hired to organize the arts program, and along with Roberto Villanueva and Alberto Ginastera established the Institute's three centers: the Centro de Artes Visuales (CAV), Centro de Experimentación Audiovisual, and Centro Latinoamericano de Altos

¹³ On the role of institutions, see Andrea Giunta, *Avant-Garde, Internationalism, and Politics: Argentine Art in the Sixties* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007); Ana Longoni and Mariano Mestman, *Del Di Tella a “Tucumán Arde”: Vanguardia Artística y Política en el '68 Argentino* (Buenos Aires: El Cielo por Asalto, 2000); María Amalia García, *El arte abstracto: intercambios culturales entre Argentina y Brasil* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno, 2011); and more recently, Adele Nelson, *Forming Abstraction: Art and Institutions in Postwar Brazil* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2022).

Estudios Musicales. From its location on calle Florida 936 [fig. 0.8], the CAV hosted performances of experimental music and theater as well as exhibitions ranging from pre-Columbian art to Picasso to the “new tendencies” of Julio Le Parc, Romulo Macció, Luis Felipe Noé, Jorge de la Vega, Ernesto Deira, León Ferrari, and Antonio Seguí. It became well known for hosting happenings, such as Marta Minujín’s *La Menesunda* (1965), and the performances associated with the *Experiencias* series. If the youth (counter)culture housed at the Di Tella was treated by the conservative arts press as decadent and frivolous, by the late 1960s it also began to be seen on the left – particularly by the activist artists known as the Grupo de Rosario – as bourgeois and politically suspect.¹⁴ In 1970, financial strain and increased pressure from the Onganía dictatorship ended the Di Tella’s moment of cultural predominance.

As the Di Tella was waning, a new institution, seeking to extend its spirit and legacy, was waxing. Founded by the critic and businessman Jorge Glusberg in 1969, the Centro de Arte y Comunicación replicated the interdisciplinary structure and internationalist aspirations of the Di Tella.¹⁵ In October 1970, it opened a gallery space nearby at Viamonte 452 [fig. 0.9]. The next month, press releases went out advertising “Arte Conceptual: Una exhibición organizada por Lucy Lippard y Jorge Glusberg,” CAYC’s name for 2,972,453, the third in Lippard’s series of numbers shows.¹⁶ Much as it had at the Di Tella, this new art requiring “the active participation of the spectator,” and

¹⁴ John King, *El Di Tella y el desarrollo cultural Argentino en la década del sesenta* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de Arte Gaglianone, 1985): 110.

¹⁵ A few of the more comprehensive histories of CAYC to date include Maria Jose Herrera and Mariana Marchesi, *Arte de sistemas: El CAYC y el proyecto de un nuevo arte regional, 1969-1977* (Buenos Aires: Fundación OSDE, 2013); Daniel Quiles, “Between Code and Message: Argentine Conceptual Art, 1966--1976” (Ph.D., City University of New York, 2010); Luis Camnitzer, *Conceptualism in Latin American Art: Didactics of Liberation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007); and Jorge Glusberg, *Del Pop-Art a la Nueva Imagen* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de Arte Gaglianone, 1985).

¹⁶ GT-20, “Arte conceptual: Una exhibición organizada por Lucy Lippard (EE.UU) y Jorge Glusberg,” November 28, 1970.

which Glusberg himself later theorized as “arte de sistemas,” characterized the works made and shown at CAYC. In the first two years in its gallery space, CAYC hosted solo exhibitions of Joseph Kosuth (July 1971), Dennis Oppenheim (August 1971), Mel Bochner (April 1972), and Sol Lewitt (August 1972), in addition to group shows featuring Ed Ruscha, Robert Morris, Allan Kaprow, Eleanor Antin, Agnes Denes, and Lawrence Weiner. In 1971, following a visit from the Polish theater theorist Jerzy Grotowski, Glusberg organized an all-male roster of artists who would work collectively under the name Grupo de los Trece, a reference to the thirteen rows of Grotowski’s “poor theater” [fig. 0.10]. The group developed collaborative working methods that combined elements of therapy, under the supervision of the radical “anti-psychiatrist” David Cooper, with utopian and anti-capitalist organizational models.¹⁷ Moreover, the Grupo de los Trece was an enactment of Glusberg’s interest in systems theory, itself a reduced model or living system, “replacing individual action with collective perception, with shared purposes...with a reciprocal dependence that allows its members to help each other, acting as a unified organism that has a structure, direction, intensity, and a limited number of variables that determine the speed of movement and the sense of the group.”¹⁸ Like the works they produced, the Grupo de los Trece sought to examine the conditions of its own production.

If Glusberg’s CAYC replicated the international ambition of Romero Brest’s Di Tella, it did so in a changed ideological climate, and his canny use of collectivist rhetoric

¹⁷ According to Glusberg, in its early stages the Grupo de los Trece worked for four months with Cooper, who began by carrying out an exhaustive analysis of the group’s “internal problems”: the anxieties of each of its members, their interpersonal motivations, and also the relationships between art and capitalism, between cultural revolution and dominant political ideologies, and between viewers of art and models for a new society (“David Cooper con el grupo de los trece,” in *El grupo de los trece en Arte de Sistemas*, December 1972-March 1973, n.p.).

¹⁸ GT 195, “El grupo de los trece expone en su casa e inaugura el 15 de diciembre,” June 12, 1972.

contrasts with the individualistic spirit of experimentation championed by the Di Tella. While Romero Brest made tactical use of terms such as “pop” and “happenings,” Glusberg appropriated the vocabulary of structuralism, Marxism, and structuralist Marxism to link his artists as a group and promote them internationally.¹⁹ His participation in the international circulation of conceptual art was predicated largely on defining and packaging a regional conceptualism in postcolonial terms: “at the moment, there are more links between Paris and Buenos Aires, Bogotá and New York, or São Paulo and London than between sister cities. In São Paulo, Argentine art is unknown, and in Buenos Aires, we don’t know any more about Brazil than Portinari,” he wrote in an early newsletter.²⁰ In addition to traveling surveys, these newsletters – called *gacetillas* by Glusberg, who nearly always signed them²¹ – became the primary vehicle by which CAYC consolidated its place in international art circuits. Throughout CAYC’s existence, the numbered *gacetillas* retained a consistent, single-page, typewritten graphic design on yellow paper, embodying the kind of “open system” Glusberg theorized and entering the archives of foreign institutions through the guerilla tactics of mail art. The approach was not for everyone; the artist Luis Camnitzer, who had exhibited and then broken with the Di Tella, wrote,

Stressing a formalist approach, at least initially, CAYC overlooked the importance of the politically oriented conceptualism that was taking place under its nose (as exemplified by 1968’s *Tucumán arde*). Not only did CAYC play into the hands of cultural homogenization (mostly based on imported prepackaged values), but it also tried to assert its importance in this task by carpet-mailing world. Promotional material was incessantly sent to all individuals with some

¹⁹ With the term “structuralist Marxism” I refer primarily to the writings of Louis Althusser, who is frequently cited in CAYC materials (see, for example, GT-129, GT-166, GT-508).

²⁰ “Hasta el momento, hay más vinculaciones entre París y Buenos Aires, Bogotá y Nueva York o San Pablo y Londres que entre ciudades hermanas. En San Pablo se desconoce el arte argentino y en Buenos Aires no conocemos de Brasil más que a Portinari.” GT-37.

²¹ It is well-known that Glusberg did not write many of the texts bearing his name. The journalist Ramiro de Casasbellas was one of his ghostwriters.

degree of power in the international cultural scene, and CAYC became a caricature of solicitation.²²

Camnitzer's characterization of CAYC's approach as "formalist," and therefore politically vacant, is a crucial counterpoint to my argument, and I will return to it. For the moment, though, I stress the volume of written material produced by CAYC, which has become the institution's lasting material form and which constitutes the primary archive of this project. The *gacetillas* are the documents that sought to write CAYC into a history of art from which it knew it was being excluded in real time. They are documents that needled their way, knowingly and uninvited, into the hegemonic institutions that attempt to write that history (aside from the Benson Library at the University of Texas, one of the largest collections of *gacetillas* in this country lives in the archives of the Museum of Modern Art in New York).

"The document," Foucault writes, "is not the fortunate tool of a history that is primarily and fundamentally *memory*; history is one way in which a society recognizes and develops a mass of documentation with which it is inextricably linked."²³ If CAYC was not going to be included in the history of conceptual art alongside Kosuth, Bochner, and Lewitt, its documents would be there, waiting to be recognized and reorganized in new series of relations. However, to continue alongside Foucault,

the problem that now presents itself...is to determine what form of relation may be legitimately described between these different series; what vertical system they are capable of forming... in short, not only what series, but also what 'series of series' – or, in other words, what 'tables' it is possible to draw up.²⁴

This dissertation uses these institutions as a device for assembling the separate but interrelated work of four artists; they are the "series" of the "series" of CAYC. But because

²² Camnitzer, *Conceptualism in Latin American Art*, 248.

²³ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 7.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

institutions are also social worlds, the space these artists share in archives testifies to something more than the fact that they participated in many of the same group exhibitions: it catalogues several decades of parties and openings; applying for the same grants; working with the same curators and publishers; traveling and living between Argentina, Europe, and North America; relationships born out of overlapping practices, shared or conflicting politics, competition, affection, expediency, rejection, exile, solidarity, mutual support [fig. 0.11]. These institutional histories – the armature and accretion of relationships – do not appear so readily in the archive. They are, as much as the works of art produced and exhibited within them, the subject of this dissertation.

My analysis of the work of Dermisache, Lublin, Orensanz, and Paksa, focused as it is on how power plays out spatially and socially, draws from critiques of everyday life – the demystification of the experience of ideology at the level of a walk through the built environment or an interpersonal interaction. Thinkers such as Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, and Angel Rama have established the city as the paradigmatic context of everyday life, a semantic system expressing and determining the social relations of production. For Rama, it is the letters themselves – the deployment of (colonial) power through lettered culture – that structure and maintain the city: “the lettered city acted upon the order of signs.”²⁵ De Certeau maps the lived experience of “the ordinary practitioners” of the city, “whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban ‘text’ they write without being able to read it.”²⁶ Of course, there is not just one kind of “ordinary practitioner,” nor one kind of city-text. As Doreen Massey writes, “spaces and places, and our senses of them (and such related things as our degrees of mobility), are gendered through and through.”²⁷

²⁵ Ángel Rama, *The Lettered City* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996): 17.

²⁶ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984): 93.

²⁷ Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994): 186.

Marguerite Feitlowitz has investigated how the civil-military dictatorship intervened on language as a form of terror, imposing new meanings on words and burying their alternate senses to cover up, obfuscate, and confuse.²⁸ Texts including Lefebvre's *Critique of Everyday Life* (1947) and *The Social Production of Space* (1974), Raymond Williams' *The Country and the City* (1973), and Lauren Berlant's *Cruel Optimism* (2011) provide models for the analysis of ordinary things, like objects and affects, and the ways in which they can be used to make do or work around global flows of gendered, economic, and political power. It is from this tactical sense of the term "workaround," in addition to its suggestion of both labor (*el trabajo*) and art object (*la obra*), that I draw the title of my project. The works studied here are engaged in decoding these semiotic systems through the experience of subjects particularly sophisticated at negotiating the microphysics of power in spaces public and private, discursive and material, perceived and conceived: women.

A NOTE ON TERMS AND THEIR STATE IN "THE LITERATURE"

I have built this project around two terms to which the artists at its center would certainly object (though probably to different degrees): feminism and conceptualism. Both have been made identifiable as movements and discursive formations ("isms") by decades of scholarship and debate about what they "are" and "aren't," particularly with respect to the geographic and historical specificities of Latin America. I acknowledge (and celebrate) the ongoing revision and contestation of these terms, though I do not aim to take a position on the present limits of their utility or meaning. I use both tactically, to borrow the methods of the artists studied here, and as a kind of shorthand that, while it is reductive, makes

²⁸ Marguerite Feitlowitz, *A Lexicon of Terror: Argentina and the Legacies of Torture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

readily legible the larger historiographical landscape in which this project intervenes. I use them to refer to the (supposedly) cohesive representations produced by the North American and European academy, delineated by date ranges, “waves,” and classificatory criteria. But, as de Certeau writes, “the presence and circulation of a representation (taught by preachers, educators, and popularizers as the key to socioeconomic advancement) tells us nothing about what it is for users.”²⁹ I do not mean to imply that the terms “conceptualism” and “feminism” were either unknown by nor entirely imposed on these artists and their milieu – indeed I hope to demonstrate that they were active participants in shaping the meaning and critical deployment of such categories from their beginnings. However, like the artists, I use these established discursive “products” to the extent that they locate the work in the vocabulary of my “discipline” while hopefully developing a kind of “secondary production hidden in the process of [their] utilization.”³⁰

“Conceptualism”

Scholars have debated the applicability of the term “conceptual art” – as defined through a kind of triangulation of theories put forth by Lucy Lippard and Benjamin Buchloh, writings by artists like Sol Lewitt, and the critical anthologies that have amassed on top – since its consolidation in the late 1960s.³¹ Major revisions by scholars such as Camnitzer and Mari

²⁹ Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xiii.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ A bibliography of these debates might include Ursula Meyer, ed., *Conceptual Art* (New York: Dutton, 1972); Gregory Battcock, *Idea Art: A Critical Anthology* (New York: Dutton, 1973); Benjamin Buchloh, “Conceptual Art 1962-1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions,” *October* 55 (Winter 1990): 105-43; Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1997); Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson, eds., *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999); Michael Newman and Jon Bird, eds., *Rewriting Conceptual Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 1999); Michael Corris, ed., *Conceptual Art: Theory, Myth, and Practice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Carmen Ramírez worked to contextualize the term by identifying a shared ideological positionality or political function for Latin American conceptual art (“ideological conceptualism,” or as Camnitzer prefers, *Conceptualism*), critiques that have come to dominate its reception and even its materiality and forms of visibility.³²

The term was in use in written materials produced by CAYC as early as 1970.³³ It is clear that Glusberg deployed the term as a kind of catchphrase or watchword meant to signal CAYC’s participation in the “new tendencies” falling under its aegis around the world. For Glusberg, the term was basically interchangeable (or at least overlapped) with his term “arte de sistemas.”³⁴ Both, among other terms, referred to the shift from traditional notions of authorship associated with painting and sculpture to the more critical methods of creation made possible by new technologies of communication. Glusberg wrote in 1971,

Systems art includes the latest trends in art from the second half of this century: art as an idea, ecological art, poor art, cybernetic art, art of proposals, political art, will be grouped under the term systems art; they are the apparently different concerns of vanguard artists who are preparing to investigate the entry of man into the 21st century.³⁵

³² Miguel A. López and Josephine Watson, “How Do We Know What Latin American Conceptualism Looks Like?” in *Afterall* no. 23 (April 1, 2010): 5–21. On “Latin American Conceptualism,” see Mari Carmen Ramírez, “Blueprint Circuits: Conceptual Art and Politics in Latin America,” in *Latin American Artists of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1993): 156-167; Barnitz, *Twentieth-Century Art of Latin America*; Simon Marchán Fiz, *Del arte objetual al arte de concepto: Las artes plásticas desde 1960* (Madrid: Ediciones Akal, 1988); and Camnitzer, *Conceptualism in Latin American Art*.

³³ GT-20, from November 1970, suggests that Glusberg originally titled Lippard’s exhibition at CAYC *Arte Conceptual*. Lippard objected; her copy of the *gacetilla*, in the Archives of American Art, has the word “title” noted and circled. See chapter 2.

³⁴ As Herrera is careful to point out, that term shifted in meaning over the years, and in later Glusberg discourse was re-signified and was associated exclusively with the Latin American “problematic.” Herrera and Marchesi, *Arte de sistemas: El CAYC y el proyecto de un nuevo arte regional, 1969-1977* (Buenos Aires: Fundación OSDE, 2013).

³⁵ “El arte de sistemas incluye las últimas tendencias del arte de la segunda mitad de este siglo. Arte como idea, arte ecológico, arte pobre, arte cibernético, arte de propuestas, arte político, se agruparán bajo el termino arte de sistemas; son las inquietudes aparentemente distintas de diferentes artistas de avanzada que se aprestan a investigar la entrada del hombre al siglo XXI, donde el arte – como consecuencia del cambio social y la automatización que aumentará el ocio – podrá no llamarse así, se convertirá seguramente en uno

His term was deliberately open and malleable, with a close English-language analog in Jack Burnham's "systems aesthetics," which also stressed the role of technology in "liquidating [the artist's] position vis-à-vis society."³⁶ It might better compare, however, with "arte no-objetual," the term coined by Peruvian critic and CAYC-interlocutor Juan Acha several years later as way to deemphasize the art object relative to the "collective aesthetic subjectivity" it mobilized.³⁷

Concepts of administration, information, ideology, deconstruction, and dematerialization are all relevant to the work I discuss here, though they are also insufficient in accounting for what I argue is both the radical potential and the constitutive element of conceptual art: the opening of the process of creation, or more precisely, of completion. In this dissertation, I develop an operative definition of conceptual art that hinges above all on a structural realignment of the relationship between artist and viewer. As such, my focus on the democratized relations engendered by participation aligns more closely with Umberto Eco's "open work" and Roland Barthes' "death of the author."³⁸ In his 1962 text *The Open Work* – a text that was widely read at the Di Tella and the CAYC – Eco describes a "standard situation" of encounter with a work of art:

We see it as the end product of an author's effort to arrange a sequence of communicative effects in such a way that each individual addressee can refashion the original composition devised by the author... In this sense the author presents a finished product with the intention that this particular composition should be appreciated and *received in the same form as he devised it*. As he reacts to the

de los ejercicios espirituales básicos de las nuevas comunidades." GT-55, "Arte de Sistemas en el Museo de Arte Moderno inauguración 19 de julio 19 horas," July 1, 1971.

³⁶ Jack Burnham, "Systems Aesthetics," in *Artforum*, no. 24 (September 1968): 30–35.

³⁷ See Juan Acha, "Teoría y práctica no-objetualistas en América Latina," in *Ensayos y ponencias latinoamericanistas* (Mexico City: Trillas): 183-199.

³⁸ Eco lectured at CAYC on August 13 and 14, 1970, introduced by Argentine semiologist Eliseo Verón; his lectures were titled "Articulation of visual codes" and "Who must be the protagonist in artistic practice." Barthes also appears in several *gacetillas* on the work of Hervé Fischer, who exhibited at CAYC in 1975.

play of stimuli and his own response to their patterning, the individual addressee is bound to supply his own existential credentials, the sense conditioning which is peculiarly his own, a defined culture, a set of tastes, personal inclinations, and prejudices.³⁹

The structural critique of the “sequence of communicative effects” as conveyors of stable meaning from artist/author to viewer/reader was a project taken up not just by conceptual artists but also by theorists from Barthes to Bertolt Brecht to Louis Althusser to Jacques Lacan (to preview a few names to come). Some saw this process of revelation – of mapping the structures of signification and exposing the fallacy of the individual addressee’s subjectivity – as potentially liberatory. Conceptual art as it is discussed here revealed itself to be an unstable conveyor of meaning, suggestive but subject to change depending on, among other factors, “a defined culture, a set of tastes, personal inclinations, and prejudices.”⁴⁰

It is my argument that this redefined web of relations between artists and viewers, objects and institutions – a disruption of the unidirectional flow of information from one to the other – constitutes an inherently political critique. In an environment of political repression, which relies on semantic as much as spatial control, opening up the process of signification to ambiguity and even feedback is potentially destabilizing. This kind of horizontal, rather than vertical, process might recall LeWitt’s famous declaration, five years later, that “in conceptual art the idea of concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand the execution is a perfunctory affair.”⁴¹ But I argue here

³⁹ Umberto Eco, *The Open Work* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962): 3.

⁴⁰ Eco writes that this “search for *suggestiveness* is a deliberate move to ‘open’ the work to the free response of the addressee. An artistic work that suggests is also one that can be performed with the full emotional and imaginative resources of the interpreter.”

⁴¹ Sol Lewitt, “Paragraphs on Conceptual Art,” in *Artforum* 5, no. 10 (Summer 1967).

that the execution is not perfunctory: it is the unruly space of transmission, the very site of critique; it is the work itself.

It is here that my definition comes up against Camnitzer's opposition of "formalist" conceptual art with politically oriented conceptualism, a dichotomy that in some ways replicates Marta Traba's equation of dematerialized practices with cultural imperialism. Camnitzer's removal of the term "art" strips the autonomy of practices associated with conceptualism. As Karen Benezra writes, the absorption of radical practices under the expansive term "global conceptualism" brings them into alignment with supposedly nonpolitical or autonomous art, rather than allowing them to pose questions about what art is: "Rather than showing how...the Di Tella Institute in Buenos Aires might have played a determining role in the way that artists questioned the autonomy of the artwork, the expanded field of conceptualisms effectively naturalized these same gestures as art, paradoxically, by identifying them through the supposedly political, rather than formal, valence of their antiformalism."⁴² I do not treat the two as opposed to one another; I argue that conceptual art's critique of subjectivity is already political.

One of the implications of my argument is that the depoliticized treatment of "formalist" or "analytical" strains of conceptual art emanating from North America and Europe ignores the politics of a critique of language, and that recognizing this inherently anti-humanist or (here) anti-authoritarian gesture might allow a reading of conceptual art from the United States as more socially engaged than its historiography has allowed.⁴³

⁴² Benezra, *Dematerialization: Art and Design in Latin America* (Oakland [C.A.]: University of California Press, 2020): 7.

⁴³ Maurice Berger, writing on Adrian Piper, elegantly sums up the way minimalism has been framed as incompatible with politics, as "the endgame of formalist abstraction in dance, painting, and sculpture, the culmination of modernism's art for art's sake ethos." Despite the adamantly apolitical stances taken by artists such as Yvonne Rainer, Berger reads ideology in their formalist sensibility, a move I hope to replicate. "What aspects of the political issues later explored by these artists," he asks, "issues such as gender and sexual roles, class, cultural patronage, the institutional hierarchies of the art world, and race and

Another is that the history of conceptual art in Latin America need not engage with this dubious teleology of art historical movements, and could find alternate sources for these reformulated relations – in the embodied and participatory impulses of concrete poetry, for example, rather than minimalism. Indeed, I began this introduction with *Calórico* because, in addition to anticipating much of the art in the chapters to come, it is a slightly uncomfortable fit with the descriptor “conceptual.” On the other hand, it embodies the more capacious definition I hope to develop by bringing together aesthetic strategies of reformulated social relations. In this and all the works described here, the active spectator enters into and completes the work.

“Feminism”

Like the debate around the applicability in Latin America of a term as heavily determined as conceptualism, the many and sometimes conflicting identifications of the term feminism weigh on its use here. While there was an organized women’s movement active in Argentina during these years, these four artists were not card-carrying members.⁴⁴ “I was interested in making art broadly about inequality, not just about women,” Marie Orensanz once told me.⁴⁵ Nonetheless, she experienced gendered discrimination as an artist (prompting her to change the spelling of her first name, from Marí, to make it more clearly feminine) and made work directly addressing her position. Lea Lublin, as she moved

racism, were already inherent in the minimalist ethos?” See Maurice Berger, *Minimal Politics: Performativity and Minimalism in Recent American Art* (New York: Fine Arts Gallery, University of Maryland; distributed by Art Pub, 1997).

⁴⁴ On artists, such as Maria Luisa Bemberg or Alicia D’Amico, who participated in organized feminist activism, see María Laura Rosa, “El despertar de la conciencia. Impacto de las teorías feministas sobre las artistas de Buenos Aires durante las décadas del ’70 y ’80,” in *Artelogie*, no. 5 (October 2013) and, more recently, “Questions of Identity: Photographic Series by Alicia D’Amico, 1983–86,” in *Art Journal* 78, no. 1 (January 2, 2019): 66–87.

⁴⁵ Marie Orensanz, interview with the author, March 29, 2019.

between Buenos Aires and Paris, negotiated very different cultural attitudes and levels of personal engagement with feminism, ultimately adopting the psychoanalytical approaches of French feminists and incorporating them more explicitly in her work. But while the personal engagements of each artist with the gendered critiques and social movements suggested by the term “feminism” are relevant, especially to the social tissue of my analysis, I do not seek to claim them for an art historical category called feminist art. Rather, I aim here to develop a feminist framework of analysis in order to understand the convergent historical specificities of conceptual art made by women in and out of dictatorship.

My methods follow the connection that Orensanz makes – and that speaks to the specific coincidence in Argentina of gender- and class-based liberation movements – between feminism and anti-authoritarianism. As Jean Franco and others have pointed out, artists and writers in Latin America have often approached feminism as inextricably linked to other political struggles, rather than as a discrete set of problems of concern only to women.⁴⁶ In her book *Feminismo y arte latinoamericano*, Giunta writes that “the feminists of the end of the 1960s and 1970s saw the personal as political,” yet in a “situation of politicization driven by the urgency of the popular struggle and the socialist and revolutionary transformation of society, this understanding of the political had limited scope.”⁴⁷ This is not to say that women did not bear special forms of patriarchal domination both under right-wing military dictatorships and in left-wing revolutionary groups. Whether these four artists sought to engage with feminism (or, for that matter, politics) or

⁴⁶ See Jean Franco, “From Romance to Refractory Aesthetic,” in *Latin American Women’s Writing: Feminist Readings in Theory and Crisis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996): 226–38.

⁴⁷ Andrea Giunta, *Feminismo y arte latinoamericano* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI Editores, 2019): 79. She adds that a personal and embodied approach to politics gained strength when these revolutionary projects and the models of subjectivity that they forged came into crisis in the late 1960s and 1970s.

not, I believe the critiques embedded in their work continue to speak to the ways in which gendered and political power interacted in Argentina in the 1970s. More recent historiographical revisions have begun to account for these specificities. The 2017 exhibition *Radical Women*, of which Lublin, Orensanz, and Paksa were a part, used feminism as a point of departure from the aforementioned “ideological conceptualism,” a framework that has emphasized, as curator Cecilia Fajardo-Hill wrote, the “heroic, political, and even militant, leaving little space for those forms of conceptualism and experimental art that embrace more subjective interjections and both broad and intimate personal and political struggles.”⁴⁸ Of course, ideology penetrates the shared and the intimate, the personal and political, and it is in these registers that I search for resistance – both quiet and loud – to patriarchy.

Considering feminism and conceptualism in light of each other illuminates the stakes of their mutual investment in deconstructive critique. Applying feminist tools of analysis to conceptualism as I have sketched it above, I argue, brings out its essentially antiauthoritarian stance. The open spirit of the works discussed here, at once collaborative and ambiguous in their execution and interpretation, allowed for a kind of jamming or occupation of physical and discursive space. This is perhaps most clear in the illegible, text-based works of Mirtha Dermisache, which I will discuss in chapter 2, and which formulate a self-conscious obfuscation of the semantic structures ordering meaning. It is through this kind of strategic occupation – of institutions, of labor, of markets, even of language – that these artists resist domination in many forms. Even if identifiable strains of feminist discourse or activism do not ultimately emerge from their work, feminist

⁴⁸ Cecilia Fajardo-Hill, “The Invisibility of Latin American Women Artists,” in Giunta and Fajardo-Hill, *Radical Women*, 25.

analysis nonetheless provides critical tools for understanding spatial and discursive forms of resistance.

My approach thus complicates histories of Latin American art that, as I sketched above, link conceptual critique with political protest. I do not aim to neutralize the political content or function of Latin American conceptualism – indeed I hope to open up the category by framing “the political” as something that is embedded in the very dematerialization and openness of all conceptual art. Likewise, I locate the feminist critique of these artists’ work not in its content but in its inseparability from their lived experiences under civil-military dictatorship and their resistance to the naturalization of its gendered ideology. For these artists, feminism and conceptualism intersect in a critique of art’s unilateral transmission of meaning by leaving open the possibilities for plurivalency and ambiguity.

CHAPTER STRUCTURE

My objective here is not to provide a monographic or even comprehensive account of the life and career of each artist (this work has already been done), nor is it to survey a landscape of conceptual practices by women in Argentina, Latin America, or globally. This project is first and foremost comparative, cutting across their careers to read works alongside each other.⁴⁹ It falls somewhere between the wide-angle view of a survey and

⁴⁹ “Comparisons,” Micol Seigel writes, “obscure the workings of power.” And while it is true that my analysis brings art objects, institutions, and even cities into comparison, I do not seek to diminish the dynamics of exchange or relations of power that define them. In fact, it is those very dynamics that I make my subject, for example, by speculatively transposing the cultural products or material conditions of life in Paris and Buenos Aires onto one another. Considering Seigel’s critique also calls into question my use of the term “international,” which refers here, somewhat period-specifically, to the organization of the world (and especially the art world) through “the hermeneutic preeminence of nations.” The identifications and alignments of these four artists reflect the precise moment of breakdown of that organization into transnational connections beyond national borders. On the politics of this method, see Seigel, “Beyond

the narrow focus of the monograph, perhaps closer to a series of case studies, though the cases are methods rather than artists or objects. In the three chapters that follow, I group together works by all or some of the four artists according to shared aesthetic strategies of performance and installation, writing and drawing, and experimental video. As will become clear, all of these practices overlapped, and I move synchronically among them, with the order of chapters following a loose chronology of external events between the years 1968 and 1983. Each chapter maps the intersections of Dermisache, Lublin, Orensanz, and Paksa with each other and with the institutional histories playing out in the final years of the Di Tella and the heyday of the CAYC through their participation in key exhibitions. Each toggles between a close look at the aesthetic strategies themselves, the institutional context in which they were presented, and the conditions of everyday life to which they responded. My analysis of the latter two depends heavily on the (sometimes-contradictory) documentation of CAYC activities in exhibition catalogues and *gacetillas*, as well as the cultural coverage and discussions about art taking place in Argentine newsweeklies (often with center-right editorial boards) such as *Primera Plana* and *Análisis*. In so doing, I hope to reconstruct some of the material and affective conditions in which these works were made and circulated, rubbing my own comparative impulse up against their shared initial formats.

Chapter 1 looks at early installation- and performance-based practices of Paksa, Lublin, and Orensanz roughly between the years 1968–1971. It approaches these strategies of spatial intervention through the changing scopic relations of the modernizing city, defining the role of the active spectator more narrowly as the viewer-*voyeur*, the agent of the one-way look. Paksa's *Comunicaciones* (1968), Lublin's *Mon fils* (1968) and *Fluvio*

Compare: Comparative Method after the Transnational Turn," in *Radical History Review* 91 (Winter 2005): 62–90.

subtunal (1969), and Orenszanz's *La Gallareta* (1969) were immersive, interactive interventions that brought viewers into a more active and reciprocal relationship with art that might (as we have already seen with Paksa's *Calórico*) look back, or even rely on the presence and participation of a viewer to come into being. They represented structural thinking about subjectivity and social relations that was formative for CAYC, which established its identity at home and abroad through the group exhibition *De la figuración al arte de sistemas en argentina* (1971).

In chapter 2, I examine the relationship between material and discursive space in the writing and drawing practices of all four artists. Between 1969–1972, both the urban environment and the space of the page were policed and transformed. Looking at language as an ordering system in both realms, I narrow my view of the active spectator here to a viewer-reader of spatial texts, asking what kind of subject might emerge from an active relationship with the systems of the page. Beginning with the radical forms of writing undertaken by Dermisache during this period, I then turn to a series of drawings by Orenszanz which incorporate ordering systems such as text and the grid. I also consider a text-based work by Lublin, a series of questions about how representation encodes ideology, and a group of cartographic drawings by Paksa, who had committed herself increasingly to political, rather than aesthetic, action. I track the emergence of these shared strategies, and the ways their implications shifted, by following the CAYC exhibition *Art Systems in Latin America*, which included work by Dermisache, Lublin, and Orenszanz and traveled in Europe from 1974-1975. For each, language was an (unequal) system that, through strategies of appropriation and displacement, could restructure the relationship between between artist-author and viewer-reader toward mutual collaboration.

Chapter 3 turns to an increasingly evident interest of Glusberg's and institutional role for the CAYC during the years of Argentina's final civil-military dictatorship, 1976–

1983: the development of experimental video in Argentina. As a new technical support, discourse, and international community of exchange, video art offered many possibilities for opening up horizontal networks of collaboration and image exchange. Following the itinerary of the International Open Encounters on Video, initially organized by Glusberg to accompany the European tour of *Art Systems in Latin America*, I meet Lublin in Paris in 1975, where she was expanding her theories on the inscription of image in space through a series of videos associated with the project *Interrogations sur l'art*. I then return with Glusberg to Buenos Aires to consider Paksa's video-poem *Tiempo de descuento* (1976) before concluding with Orensanz's video-portrait *Límites* (1978). These experiments reveal shared interests in structural investigation of the medium, its potential for new forms of communication, and as another support for the redefined relations I elaborate throughout this text. In this chapter, I frame the active spectator as a viewer-collaborator, a participant in a nascent field of social and technological experiments. The promise of early video arose from the new forms of connectivity, new spaces and relations articulated by a connected world, even as the flows of information were constricting in Argentina. Demystifying the process by which people become images – and involving viewer-collaborators in that process – might, once again, have promised to shift the unequal relations of looking. Lublin, Paksa, and Orensanz's works dot the timeline of a crucial period in the early history of video art, just as they index the final phase of the social and political era that brackets this project. Throughout each chapter, the shifting collaborations between artist and active spectator allowed the works to function as strategies for understanding and critiquing the conditions shaping their subjectivity.

A week after Lea Lublin died, in 1999, Marie Orensanz published a letter addressed to her in the newspaper *Página 12*. To my dear Lea, she wrote, “how to make you known among those who did not know you? How to make those who didn’t know you remember you?”⁵⁰ I read, in her question, a methodological invitation to interpret the art of artists who did know her, alongside her own. In the pages that follow, I hope to situate her work, and the others’, in histories both public and personal, international and intimate, geographically- and gender-specific, affective and material, attuned always to the shifting relations of power.

⁵⁰ “¿Cómo hacerte conocer entre quienes no te conocieron? ¿Cómo hacer que te recuerden los que no te conocieron?” Orensanz, “Una carta, no despedida.” *Página 12* (Buenos Aires), November 23, 1999: 29.

Chapter 1: Experiences of the Viewer-*Voyeur*, 1968-1972

The word “experience”...is used with a defined intention, to indicate that they are not static “works of art” – finished and definitive – but projects of dynamic creation for the viewer. It is about another attitude, which goes beyond the mere contemplation of painted or sculpted images: it is about alerting the viewer to what is in sight and what perhaps he does not pay attention to, in order to intensify his contemplation until he himself lives with the greatest intensity, becoming conscious of his position in the world.

Jorge Romero Brest, “Experiencias 1968,” May 23, 1968⁵¹

INTRODUCTION

There is a scene in Jacques Tati’s film *Playtime*, first released in December 1967 in France and March 1968 in Italy, in which Tati’s befuddled protagonist Monsieur Hulot visits an old army buddy at his modern apartment. Lit from the inside as night falls, the gathering in the glass-paned, ground-floor living room is filmed entirely from the sidewalk outside the building. The apartment’s large picture window, its curtains left open, becomes the window display of a department store, with Hulot and his hosts modeling the niceties of modern living for passersby [fig. 1.1]. Hulot’s friend sits him down, dims the lights, and turns on a television built into the interior wall, just as the camera backs up to reveal the same, but mirrored, routine underway in the apartment next door. A moment later, the camera backs up again to show a few more apartments, arranged on top of them identically in a grid, in which the same domestic stages are set. As the building’s inhabitants gather

⁵¹ “La palabra “experiencia” origina interpretaciones distintas y hasta puede ser redundante su empleo, ya que toda obra de arte implica una experiencia del creador, destinada a provocar otra en el contemplador. Aquí, sin embargo, se usa con intención definida, para indicar que no son estáticas “obras de arte” – terminadas y definitivas – sino proyectos de creación dinámica para el contemplador. Se trata de otra actitud, que va más allá de la mera contemplación de imágenes pintadas o esculpidas: se trata de alertar al contemplador acerca de lo que tiene a la vista y en lo que tal vez no repara, para que intensifique su contemplación hasta vivir el mismo con la mayor intensidad, tomando conciencia de su posición en el mundo.” Jorge Romero Brest, “[Experiencias 1968],” May 23, 1968.

around their televisions, Tati plays with the illusion that they are actually watching each other: when a woman in the apartment on the right touches a man's bruised nose, the people next door recoil and cringe; when he begins taking off his work clothes, Hulot's friends on the left shoo their young daughter from the room. A gag about propriety and privacy gets amplified as the shot widens, as we watch them watching each other from within neatly stacked boxes of light, each its own television on display. The modernist architecture of the building – a machine for living where “everything communicates”⁵² – has reorganized the spatial behavior of its occupants, prying open their everyday lives as spaces of visibility and consumption. As Kristin Ross has written, discourses of communication attended this reorganization, providing not only a vocabulary for understanding processes of modernization but also functionalist techniques for living.

A key ideological concept like ‘communication,’ for example, began to refer in mid-century not only to the dawning of the new information technologies but to the ideal spatial arrangement of rooms in modern suburban homes; it was also the title of the leading journal of the day devoted to advances in structuralism. The word communication was everywhere – and yet the experience of communication itself, be it understood as spontaneous expression, reciprocity, or the continuity necessary for reciprocity to exist, was precisely what was in the process of disappearing under the onslaught of merchandise and the new forms of media technologies.”⁵³

The television screen had become the defining spatial unit of everyday life, structuring the relations between family and friends, neighbors and strangers, oneself and others. We become what we behold, as Marshall McLuhan wrote, amplifying and extending ourselves through insurgent technologies, giving rise to new structures of feeling and thought.⁵⁴

⁵² “Tout communicant” Madame Arpel proudly announces about the living spaces of her home, a pastiche of modernist architecture, in Tati's *Mon Oncle* (1958).

⁵³ Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995), 6.

⁵⁴ See Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964).

The following March, in Buenos Aires, an article in the newsweekly magazine *Análisis* ran a photograph of what could have been the other side of Tati's apartment sequence [fig. 1.2]. Taken from the inside of a store window looking out, the image shows a small crowd of men on the street, gathered directly in front of the window and transfixed presumably by a television positioned just above the camera. Titled "The Lives of Others," the article accompanying the photograph explores the new scopic relations structured by the city. It describes the groups of headline-watchers that gather outside the newsrooms of *La Nación* and *Clarín*, the curious bystanders who peek through wooden scaffolding to watch heavy machinery and masons building skyscrapers, the tourists who stop to watch pancakes being made through a bakery window. Every corner of the city contains a spectacle: "There are restaurants like the Nobel Grill – Corrientes and Libertad – where you eat looking at others from behind the window. There is a planetarium that reconstructs the sky for space-snoopers, plazas (Lezica, San Martín, Constitución, above all) that are paradise for exhibitionists. There are open windows for the use of voyeurs, waffle shops to ponder advances in cybernetics, low balconies, neighborhood lattices, curtains, peepholes, and businesses where shopping is a secondary rite."⁵⁵ Consumption has been shifted from buying to looking; when everything is for sale, shopping is an afterthought. Awash in the appliances of the modern, mechanized home – refrigerators, washing machines, televisions produced by industrial manufacturers like Siam Di Tella – consumers set out into the city with new and reconfigured desires. "Currently, televisions proliferate in Buenos Aires, so

⁵⁵ "Hay restaurantes como el Nobel Grill – Corrientes y Libertad – donde se come mirando a los demás tras la vidriera. Hay un planetario que reconstruye el cielo para husmeadores espaciales, plazas públicas (Lezica, San Martín, Constitución, sobre todo) que son el paraíso de los exhibicionistas. Hay ventanas abiertas para uso de voyeurs, wafflerías para cavilar acerca de los avances de la cibernética, balcones bajos, celosías de casas de barrio, cortinados, mirillas y negocios donde comprar es un rito secundario." "La vida de los demás," *Análisis* 416 (March 5, 1969): 36–38.

that the respectable passerby can see the same things they see at home, but much better,” the article reports.

The rearrangement of desire by new technology and the new desire *for* technology converged in the fashion for closed-circuit television, often displayed in shop windows.

Some (such as the one used by Siam on Tucumán and Florida) record the image of the spectators themselves. Others adhere to the medium, dressing it with their own programming; Los Gobelinos, for example, maintains eight televisions in its windows that release images designed by TV Florida from the sixth floor of its building. There, with two cameras that are on from 2:00 to 8:00 p.m., Alberto Constantino Jr. and his small team broadcast material from Channel 11 and La Prensa. “Police and sports news attract much more than official and institutional news,” Constantino points out. “Anyway, our actual audience is about 50 people per device, mostly men of course. Now we are going to try to attract a female audience with special programming.”⁵⁶

The article positions closed-circuit televisions as a more interesting, perhaps spontaneous, alternative to the planned programming of television at home. Viewer-*voyeurs* could step out into the public space of the street to take in the more immediate, live flows of images of people – perhaps even themselves – on screen. Like the neighbors in *Playtime*, these users of the city test its newly televisual spatial relations, alternating between private, viewing subjects and public, viewed objects. Crucially, as Alberto Constantino rather offhandedly noted (but the images accompanying the article make plain), these viewer-*voyeurs* are men. The reorganization of social space – as indexed in the anecdotes of this article, in the playful critiques of Tati’s film, and in mass cultural forms around the world – was taking place along gendered and political lines as well.

⁵⁶ “Algunos (como el que utilizaba Siam en Tucumán y Florida) registran la imagen de los propios espectadores. Otros adhieren al recurso aderezándolo con programación propia y así Los Gobelinos, por ejemplo, mantiene en sus vidrieras ocho televisores que liberan imágenes pergeñadas por TV Florida desde el sexto piso de su edificio. Allí, con dos cámaras que funcionan de 14 a 20 horas, Alberto Constantino hijo y su reducido equipo transmiten material de Canal 11 y La Prensa. ‘Atraen mucho más las noticias policiales y las deportivas que las oficiales e institucionales – puntualiza Constantino; de todos modos, nuestra audiencia real son 50 personas promedio por cada aparato, la mayoría hombres, por supuesto. Ahora vamos a tratar de atraer audiencia femenina con una programación especial.’” Ibid.

The article in *Análisis* continued, “‘Of course I would like to see the masons work or sit in a plaza,’ Cristina Lucero complained, in her miniskirt” – a miniskirt which was illegal as of 1966.⁵⁷ “But once we stopped with my sister to see a construction site where they were laying the foundations and the workers who were looking at us from below yelled so many obscenities that we had to leave.”⁵⁸ As a final example, the reporter cites a young woman named Dora Milisi:

She is 33 years old and has a daughter who she takes daily to the carousel in Plaza Constitución, although “it also does me good to go out, to look at the plaza, the people and everything, even there are also ugly things. I am separated and sometimes I am afraid of coming alone with the baby, but I have no other escape, we live in an interior apartment. At least with the carousel we go out a bit, the baby entertains herself and plays with her friends. I hardly have any friends. I hardly know any of the ladies here, so I sit looking at the plaza while the baby plays and I find myself watching the people passing by. One learns by going out a bit, one learns.”⁵⁹

Cristina’s experience of trying to participate in the city’s scopic economy, summoning her own subjectivity by objectifying men at work, is rebuffed through their harassment. For

⁵⁷ “Claro que me gustaría ver trabajar a los albañiles o sentarme en una plaza,’ plañe Cristina Lucero desde su minifalda, pero una vez nos paramos con mi hermana a ver una obra en la que estaban haciendo los cimientos y los obreros que nos miraban desde abajo nos gritaron tantas barbaridades que tuvimos que irnos.” Ibid. For a truly bizarre account of how this law was enforced, see “Mujeres a disposición de su señoría,” in *Análisis* 376 (May 1968), which discusses the ruling of a judge in Santa Fe: “Vistas las exageraciones en la exhibición de su desnudez en que incurren públicamente algunas mujeres, con el pretexto de la conocida moda de la minifalda, que constituyen infracciones al artículo 65 del Código de Faltas, ellas deben ser reprimidas con toda severidad. Por tanto: toda mujer que exhiba exagerada e indecorosamente su desnudez en lugar público o accesible al público, como ser plazas paseos, bares y colectivos, debe ser procesada y puesta a mi disposición.” The article also discusses “la preocupación expresada por el ministro de Educación de Francia, Alain Peyrefitte, a comienzos del actual año lectivo: “Estoy firmemente en contra de la minifalda, no solo por su dudoso gusto sino porque constituye un elemento perturbador para la enseñanza.” A photograph illustrates the “problem.”

⁵⁸ “Tiene 33 años y una hija a la que lleva diariamente a la calesita de la Plaza Constitución aunque ‘a mí también me hace bien salir, mirar la plaza, la gente, que sé yo, de todo aunque también hay cosas feas. Yo soy separada y a veces me da miedo tener que venir sola con la nena, pero no tengo escapatoria, vivimos en un departamento interno. Por lo menos con la calesita salimos un poco, la nena se entretiene y juega con sus amiguitas. Yo casi no tengo amigas. De las señoras de aquí no conozco casi a ninguna, así que me siento mirando hacia la plaza mientras la nena juega y me pongo a mirar a la gente que pasa. Una aprende saliendo un poco, aprende.” “La vida de los demás.” *Análisis* 416 (March 5, 1969): 36–38.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

Dora, entering into the public exchange of gazes is worth the risk of encountering “ugly things.” The “interior” space of her apartment is isolating, insufficiently visual. Separated and lacking friends, she concedes that it does her as much good as her daughter to sit in the plaza “looking.”

Despite its slightly patronizing treatment of Dora, the *Análisis* article channels the bemused curiosity of its subject, the viewer-*voyeur*, as well as his enthusiasm for the technologies producing new social spaces around him. It does not consider the rather obvious-seeming extension of the commercial expansion of visibility into the shifting relations between citizen and state. Just a few weeks later, an in-depth report on cybernetics and policing staged just such a scene of “modernization” [fig. 1.3]: two police dispatchers sit at technically equipped desks, wearing headphones and dwarfed by large screens displaying maps of the city, divided by precinct. They are, the caption indicates, who responds to the “revamped” radioelectric command, reachable by calling 101 from any telephone. Part of “a total renovation of the communications equipment of the Federal Police, with high frequency VHF-UHF systems,” these “electronic police,” along with the “IBM electronic brain that works there,” take in information on criminal activity in real time in order to deploy the newly-professionalized force of “200 patrolmen to watch over the city.”⁶⁰ Like the functionalist architecture of Tati’s apartment building, the city’s police bureaucracy has been streamlined (indeed it had been federalized by the military government) in order to better surveil its precincts. Though the “investigation” does not raise questions about accountability for the police’s new techniques, it notes right in the same caption that of the “200 patrolmen to watch over the city; 100 of them [are] not

⁶⁰ “Cibernética contra el delito,” *Análisis* 421 (April 8, 1969): 14–18.

identifiable.”⁶¹ Patrolling the city in unidentifiable automobiles, the modern police were – as much as the modern skyscrapers under construction and the modern displays in shop windows – remaking the visual relations of the city.

This analysis of *Análisis* is meant to sketch some of the contradictory currents of modernization in Buenos Aires in the late 1960s: conservative social policies declared, but enforced unevenly, by a military government; more women in the workplace; a “sexual revolution”; youth culture; divorce; miniskirts and sexual harassment; Siam appliances and expanding consumerism; a flourishing artistic and literary avant-garde art; structuralist thinking; neoliberal economic reforms aimed at attracting foreign investment; the near-simultaneity of the euphoria for technology and its cooptation by the police state; the pervasion of the language of communication and “the installation, thanks to technology, of a kind of neutral, consensual norm in social relations.”⁶² These are just some of the material and discursive forms that structured feeling and experience – the historical sensorium, perhaps – of this time and place. One of the aims of this chapter is to consider how the gendered and politicized spaces of the modernizing city – spaces I will later define using the term “televisual” – transformed subjectivity through relations of looking.

Sexual harassment and police surveillance are but two ways in which the act of looking brings subjects forcibly into being.⁶³ This chapter will focus on critical aesthetic

⁶¹ Ibid. The only police representative quoted in the article is then-retired Evaristo Meneses, notorious for supervising the plainclothes Robos y Hurtos unit in the early 1960s. Several of Meneses’s officers, such as Juan Ramón Morales and Rodolfo Almirón, were key figures in the Triple A, formed mainly by federal police. The spatial metaphor the federal police used for the unmarked patrol cars was “conformar un cinturón de seguridad.”

⁶² Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*, 192 (“Lefebvre saw structuralism as a sociological phenomenon – that is, as a particular logic of the social at a specific moment in the history of capitalist modernization”, a moment marked by political immobilism and the consolidation of systems”). With the term “historical sensorium,” I refer to Lauren Berlant’s theorization of how aesthetically mediated affective responses can exemplify a shared historical sense. See *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

⁶³ Here I extrapolate from the scene Louis Althusser imagines in his 1970 essay “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” in which the call of a policeman, and the moment of turning to respond, produces the

responses to subjectivity as it was imagined and felt at this historical juncture. It brings together four works of art that share tactics of performance and spatial intervention in order to critique the relations of looking and the ideological production of subject in space. By constructing immersive, interactive installations, Paksa, Lublin, and Orensanz brought viewers – traditional agents of one-way looking – into a more active and reciprocal relationship with art that might (as we have already seen with Paksa’s *Calórico*) look back, or even rely on the presence and participation of a viewer to come into being. Using their own bodies, they demonstrated the political charge of their very presence and, inviting participants to do the same, made visible the power dynamics at play in the gallery and beyond. “Performativity,” Maurice Berger wrote, “is the infiltration of performance into the social and cultural sphere, an infiltration that is never less than meaningful, never less than ideological...in its foregrounding of the viewer as an equal player in the aesthetic experience, and its creation of phenomenological games in which the self is explored through unscripted, temporal interaction with external forces and objects.”⁶⁴ The performative tactics employed by Paksa, Lublin, and Orensanz expose the mechanics and contingencies of subjectivity, contesting the repressive recognition of the one-way look. This, I will argue, is where political and feminist critiques intersect in their work – in “a performativity that searched not for truth (woman as ‘muse’) or absolutes (the ‘essence’ of

subject: the subject must be first recognized by the law (surveilled by an unmarked police car or harassed by a man on the street), and only then, by internalizing that power, can she recognize herself and be recognized by others. Althusser, whose popularity in Latin America in the 1970s made him a frequent theoretical touchstone for artists and CAYC-affiliated intellectuals, provides one vocabulary for understanding the stakes of looking in the ideological production of space. See “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” in *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays* (Monthly Review Press, 1971), 121–176.

⁶⁴ Maurice Berger, *Minimal Politics: Performativity and Minimalism in Recent American Art* (Baltimore, New York: University of Maryland, Fine Arts Gallery, 1997): 15-16.

woman) but for the female body in relation to social forces, identity, feeling, power, and temporal experience.”⁶⁵

This chapter begins with *Comunicaciones*, Margarita Paksa’s contribution to one of the last group shows held at the Di Tella Institute in May 1968. It will then slip across the Atlantic to another May 1968, where Lea Lublin was “occupying” the Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris with her newborn son in performance called *Mon fils*. Returning to Argentina, to the provincial town of Santa Fe, it will consider another work by Lublin (and another collaboration with the Di Tella), a televisual installation irreverently titled *Fluvio subterrenal*. And it will close with another view of Santa Fe, through Marie Orensanz’s first installation, *La Gallareta*, shown briefly at a gallery in Mar del Plata before being closed by the police in February 1969. These works, all made between 1968-1969, index the final chapter of the Di Tella as the institutional home of the Argentine neo-avant-garde and the founding of the CAYC in its place. Each formulates a critique of power by inviting people into a participatory critique of space.

MARGARITA PAKSA

In 1967, Jorge Romero Brest reorganized the annual Premio Instituto Torcuato Di Tella from its traditional salon format to broaden its scope of recognition.⁶⁶ Renaming the

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ The Premio Instituto Torcuato Di Tella was established in 1960 with the dual intention of funding Argentine artists to travel and study abroad while bringing international artists into the local scene. In 1967, the fifth Premio ITDT exhibition (of works by Sol Lewitt, Robert Morris, Jules Olitsky, and Leon Polk Smith, among other New York-based artists) anchored the *Semana de Arte Avanzado*, a week of concurrent shows including *Experiencias Visuales 1967* at the Di Tella and *Estructuras Primarias II*, curated by Jorge Glusberg and also including Paksa, at the Sociedad Hebraica. In 1968 and 1969, the Di Tella continued the exhibition under the simplified name *Experiencias*. See Romero Brest, *Arte en la Argentina: últimas décadas* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1969) and Andrea Giunta and Laura Malosetti Costa, *Arte de posguerra: Jorge Romero Brest y la revista Ver y Estimar* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2005).

exhibition *Experiencias '67*, he hoped to shift the emphasis from objects to “attitudes,” using the term to highlight the experimental approach of the artists shown. Rather than awarding a cash prize, he gave each invited artist a stipend of 70,000 pesos and free use of the gallery. Alberto Cousté, the art critic for the newsweekly magazine *Primera Plana*, described the resulting exhibition as assertively anti-aesthetic, “that is, that the new aesthetics would have to be traced to the pure relationship between the elements arranged by the artists, an intellectual task that is entrusted to the viewer” without the help of “a catalog or instruction manual to go through the show (that is, a pamphlet or sign that indicates the correct reading of this mostly unknown language).”⁶⁷ In spite of his concerns that the “correct reading” of the works would be lost on unsuspecting viewers, he singles out a sensory experiment by Margarita Paksa as among “the most precise and prolix pieces of the whole group (although these cease to be virtues).” Paksa described the work, titled *500 W 4635 KC 4, 5, C*, as a technological environment, made with the engineer Fernando von Reichenbach of the Di Tella’s Laboratorio Electrónico. For Cousté, technology represented not only the shared formal language on display in *Experiencias '67* but also the critical potential of an anti-aesthetic response to the immersive nature of technology culture. Calling the artists “los hijos de McLuhan,” he quoted the spatialized thesis of the “technological prophet”:

As our proliferating technologies have created a whole series of new environments, men have become aware of the arts as “anti-environments” or “counter-environments” that provide us with the means of perceiving the environment itself. Today, technologies and their consequent environments succeed each other so rapidly that one environment makes us aware of the next.

⁶⁷ “Es decir, que la nueva categoría estética habría que rastrearla en la pura relación entre los elementos dispuestos por los artistas, como una tarea intelectual que se encomienda al espectador.” Alberto Cousté, “Plástica: Los hijos de McLuhan,” *Primera Plana* 246 (September 12, 1967): 53.

Technologies begin to perform the function of art in making us aware of the psychic and social consequences of technology.⁶⁸

Cousté's review suggests he was skeptical of art's ability to "liberate" man from his immersion in an environment saturated by technology, though he seems to concede that the spectator will be involved, wittingly or willingly or not. "I am never going to do a closed, individual work again," Margarita Paksa tells him. "I am interested in an open work. It's been a while since I fooled around with my irons, with expression."⁶⁹

By the following year, as Romero Brest indicates in the essay quoted in this chapter's epigraph, the term "experience" had come to encompass not just experimental "works of art" – finished and definitive – but projects of dynamic creation for the viewer." *Experiencias '68*, which opened on May 14, 1968, convened as a collective, transformational project aimed at producing a critical spectator: "It is about another attitude, which goes beyond the mere contemplation of painted or sculpted images: it is about alerting the viewer to what is in sight and what perhaps he does not pay attention to, in order to intensify his contemplation until he himself lives with the greatest intensity, becoming conscious of his position in the world," Romero Brest wrote in the catalogue. It was perhaps his success in producing active spectators that made *Experiencias '68* a turning point in Argentine art history; it was *their* contributions to a work by Roberto Plate, in the form of graffiti, that drew the attention of the municipal police. Plate's installation, which recreated a (nonfunctional) public bathroom stall in the gallery, quickly accumulated obscenities, or what Director Enrique Oteiza, relaying the incident to the Ford Foundation,

⁶⁸ This quote is from McLuhan's introduction to the second edition of *Understanding Media* (10). Cousté translated and abridged it; here I reproduce the original English text that Cousté used for his article.

⁶⁹ "Nunca más voy a hacer una obra cerrada, individual. Me interesa una obra abierta. Hace rato que no me regodeo con mis hierros, con la expresión." Cousté, "Plástica: Los hijos de McLuhan," *Primera Plana* 246 (September 12, 1967): 53. "Mis hierros" refers to her early minimalist sculpture in iron and steel.

called “typical literature of the genre well known in Buenos Aires.”⁷⁰ A policeman assigned to guard the work briefly became a participant himself before the work was censored on May 22 [fig. 1.4].⁷¹ On May 23, the other participating artists removed their works in protest and orchestrated a public act of destruction on the street in front of the Di Tella. The action was accompanied by an open letter, the *Declaración final de los participantes en las Experiencias '68*, signed by participants, such as Margarita Paksa, and supporters, such as Marie Orensanz. It read, “This is the third time in less than a year that the police have supplanted the weapons of criticism with the criticism of weapons, taking upon themselves a role they shouldn’t have: that of carrying out aesthetic censorship. From what we have seen, this is not only about imposing their own point of view on fashion and taste, with absurd haircuts and arbitrary arrests of artist and young people in general; they are trying to do the same thing with the work of these artists.”⁷²

⁷⁰ Enrique Oteiza to Harry E. Wilhelm, Buenos Aires, June 10, 1968. Typewritten letter. Archivos Di Tella, Universidad Torcuato Di Tella, Buenos Aires. This comment came even after the gallery had “cleaned” the bathroom several times. Oteiza’s report documents a relationship between the Di Tella and the Ford Foundation that is emblematic of Alliance for Progress cultural policy.

⁷¹ The sexual and political statements, which included anti-Onganía slogans, led the police to remove Plate’s work, while the rest of the show was permitted to continue. Giunta notes that Jacoby’s and Jorge Carballa’s explicitly political works (as Oteiza mentions in his letter, Carballa’s addressed Vietnam) were not censored, but that “[i]n this case, what had been censored, beyond the works themselves, was the response of the public.” Quiles extends Giunta’s argument: “Precisely in masquerading as a functional unisex bathroom—rooms in the institution to which specific people are directed and not others— but actually admitting both sexes, Plate’s space became appropriate for transgressive, metaphorically scatological exercises of free speech. *Sin título*... introduced unwelcome language into the institution. This was facilitated by a compartment erected within the gallery where one was shielded from view and thus allowed to express prohibited sentiments. The state then intervened, revealing its monopoly of power over public language, even that of a cultural institution” (“Between Code and Message,” 157). This power was somewhat undermined by the closure of the case, documented in an internal memo to the Di Tella board, in which the police concede the impossibility of identifying the authors of the inscriptions found on the censored work (Memorandum to M.T. Marzana, Guido Di Tella, T. Sozio and G. Clutterbuck, August 2, 1968. Archivos Di Tella, Universidad Torcuato Di Tella, Buenos Aires).

⁷² “Declaración final de los participantes en las Experiencias '68,” in Inés Katzenstein, *Listen, Here, Now! Argentine Art of the 1960s: Writings of the Avant-Garde* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2004): 291-294.

Comunicaciones (1968)

In spite of the attention drawn by Plate's installation, Jorge Glusberg, covering the exhibition as the arts columnist for *Análisis*, once again singled out Paksa as the exhibition's paradigm, the artist who "offers the most representative work that can be seen this time at Di Tella."⁷³ Paksa's contribution to *Experiencias '68* was a work that grouped multiple components, or channels, under the *au courant* title *Comunicaciones*. In the corner of a gallery, she laid out a spare, 12 x 24-foot rectangle covered in a layer of sand [fig. 1.5]. In the sand were the imprints of bodies, an index of a "body action" performed by Paksa and her partner, the painter Osmar Cairola. Intended to be performed once a week, the action was photographed before the opening of the exhibition and reproduced in *Primera Plana* [fig. 1.6].⁷⁴ Facing the sandy area, two leather chairs convened behind a low pedestal equipped with a Winco record player and set of headphones [fig. 1.7].⁷⁵ Available for listening was a double-sided 33 RPM vinyl record, one side marked with a blue spiral on the label, and the other a red spiral.⁷⁶

⁷³ Jorge Glusberg, "Di Tella: El Vacío relleno," *Análisis* 376 (May 27, 1968). I think it is safe to assume this went to press before the exhibition was closed, since no mention of the events is made in Glusberg's article, even as much of the rest of the magazine is dedicated to denouncing Onganía and censorship.

⁷⁴ Photographs show a couple, dressed in black stockings, performing the action at the start of the exhibition. In her plans, Paksa stipulated that this action would be documented, at least once, and photographs would be reproduced in the mass media. It appeared in issue 282 of *Primera Plana* (see Alberto Cousté, "Di Tella: La sangre llega al río," *Primera Plana* (May 21, 1968). The exhibition was scheduled to be open May 14-June 12, 1968 but was closed on May 22.

⁷⁵ Margarita Paksa, "Proyecto Realizado: Comunicaciones," in *Proyectos sobre el discurso de mi* (Buenos Aires: Fundación Espigas, 1997): 74-80.

⁷⁶ The record's design, made by Di Tella's graphic design department, references the radiating lines of op art, by 1968 a worldwide phenomenon in advertising, fashion, and industrial design. On the relationship of these aesthetics to state-organized projects of modernization – especially of technological infrastructure – in Latin America, see George Flaherty, "Responsive Eyes: Urban Logistics and Kinetic Environments for

On the blue side, titled “Santuario del sueño,” a soft bell chimes periodically over the voice of a man describing the details of a room: “There are four walls, floor and ceiling. Four walls, floor and ceiling. We enter an environment that has: four walls, a floor and a ceiling. Four walls, floor and ceiling.”⁷⁷ The monotonous and repetitive description suggests perhaps the *nouveau roman*’s subordination of narrative to detailed, administrative description of subjective experience. It also brings to mind, with the spinning spiral of the record label, a cliché of hypnosis (prevalent in popular culture if not in therapy): the “eye-fixation” technique of lulling a viewer into relaxation.⁷⁸ In a 1967 proposal for the work, Paksa described the text as “an obsessive, circular description of the room...an ambiguous message that could only come to have meaning for me, and is capable of introducing the audience member/listener to the void, nothingness.”⁷⁹ It is circular, perhaps even “obsessive,” but it is also vague, and could describe nearly any room. Is it a description of the present, the room in the gallery where the listener sat, or another, anterior interior suggested by its title? “The angles are curved. It is a visual infinity. There is a bright spot. There is only one bright spot,” the voice continues in a hypnotic monotone, seeming to depart from pure description and enter a dream-space:

the 1968 Mexico City Olympics,” in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 73, no. 3 (September 2014): 372–97.

⁷⁷ Paksa, *Comunicaciones*. Vinyl recording. Buenos Aires, 1968. Some audio from both sides of the record is available online through the Centro Virtual de Arte Argentino (http://www.cvaa.com.ar/04ingles/01sigloxx_en/05_36_conceptual.php).

⁷⁸ The current definition of hypnosis, published by the American Psychological Association, presents interesting parallels in terms of Paksa’s objectives: “Hypnosis typically involves an introduction to the procedure during which the subject is told that suggestions for imaginative experiences will be presented. The hypnotic induction is an extended initial suggestion for using one’s imagination and may contain further elaborations of the introduction. A hypnotic procedure is used to encourage and evaluate responses to suggestions. When using hypnosis, one person (the subject) is guided by another (the hypnotist) to respond to suggestions for changes in subjective experience, alterations in perception, sensation, emotion, thought or behavior.”

⁷⁹ Paksa, “Proyecto Realizado: Comunicaciones.”

The eyelids
The eyelids are heavy, heavy
The eyelids are heavy, heavy
Now we enter a huge balloon
A huge white balloon
A huge white and transparent balloon
There are no longer four walls, floor and ceiling
Only a huge balloon
We go down a well
It's a very deep well
Far, each time farther
Above only a bright spot remains
Far, each time farther

The infinite architecture (or the infinitely dull description of the architecture) of the sleep sanctuary collapses into a further interior realm, a space that is distant, deep, dark, and much more difficult to visualize.

The reverse of the record, labeled with a red spiral, is titled “Candente,” a “hot” counterpart to the cold or analytical description of the blue side. The sounds of heavy breathing, a light moan, and a faint giggle identify a couple having sex. “Designed to energize the senses...it is presented as a singular message, easily understood by anyone from the West or the East,” Paksa wrote.⁸⁰ The sounds present themselves as a universally legible document of something that has already happened – perhaps in the sand nearby, where Paksa and Cairola had rolled around [fig. 1.8]. But this cannot be quite what they had done, staged as their performance was for the press. The nondescript sounds of a man and a woman do not necessarily implicate Paksa and her partner, either; like the published photographs, they are “evidence” of a purported event, reconstructed and visualized by the viewer. Presented with a dearth of visual information, though, the viewer here is more of a listener, experiencing in her mind’s eye – and through whatever other physiological responses the sounds of a couple having sex mobilize – a work in imagined, rather than

⁸⁰ Paksa, “Proyecto Realizado: Comunicaciones.”

material, space. It is a work that cannot exist outside this space of transmission; indeed, as Romero Brest noted above, it is *created*, dynamically, by both artist and beholder. Beholding, or experiencing, is an act that goes beyond contemplation, toward living “with the greatest intensity, becoming conscious of one’s position in the world.” The collaboration into which Paksa invites her beholder involves a process of affective identification, an extra-discursive way of sharing a (supposedly “easily understood”) message.

Paksa’s initial proposal maps the components of *Comunicaciones* temporally, as “sequences” organizing the transmission of “messages as well as the relationships that exist between the sender, the code used, and the receiver in a dematerialized whole” [fig. 1.9].⁸¹ The dematerialized message hovers between the past of the sender and the future of the receiver, waiting to be caught in the web of a code. Its material traces – bodies recorded on vinyl, on film, in sand – lead the viewer-listener backwards through this sequence of transmission, like a game of telephone, toward the unrepresentable affects that attend sleep, sex, “the void, nothingness.” Furthermore, her proposal reveals that she had staged a still-earlier sequence, unseen but encoded by the description on the record’s blue side:

In the studio of the architect Osvaldo Giesso, I built a small white room that had the particular feature of having dihedral angles, curves. It is located in the upper part of the studio, and access to the room is via a short stairway that has a rail of polished brass to brace the figure who ascends. The shape of the room allows a person to sit down or lie down; it can be used for relaxing, introspection, sleeping, or love.⁸²

⁸¹ Buccellato, *Margarita Paksa*, 84. Paksa cites Pierre Restany’s use of the term: “Quería hacer una obra que trabajara en el imaginario del espectador, que no fuera un objeto, algo palpable, sino totalmente virtual, desmaterializado o – como bien dice Restany – *desmaterializado*.” See Introduction for a discussion of the valences of this term.

⁸² Paksa, “Proyecto Realizado: Comunicaciones.”

Though Paksa left the room open in its use, she limited the possibilities by making it too small (and perhaps too curved) to stand up in. Raised above the studio and accessible by stairs, the room's curves suggest it may be the "santuario del sueño" described on the blue side of the record. Her suggestion of "love" as another use for the room implies that it may also be the site of the recording on the red side. In this sequence, Paksa notes that the code is architectural – she has constructed a material environment that expresses, however partially, her originary message. Like the work's other sequences, its inaccessibility calls attention to the forms of its mediation.

Interestingly, both the coverage of the work in the press at the time and its current treatment in art historical scholarship largely ignore the centrality of sex to the message being communicated.⁸³ In his review of the exhibition for *Primera Plana* (which did, as Paksa hoped, reproduce a photograph of the body action), Cousté agrees that the work is "without a doubt the culmination of the exhibition, and perhaps one of the richest works in meaning that the Buenos Aires avant-garde has offered."⁸⁴ But he mentions only in passing that the "Candente" side of the record "is presided over by the amorous gasps of a couple, and annuls or balances the first."⁸⁵ This slightly euphemistic phrase – "los jadeos amorosos

⁸³ Jorge Romero Brest's 1969 book *Arte en la Argentina, últimas décadas* describes the work as consisting only of the record, which according to him was for sale as an edition: "Se concretó en un disco que puso en venta y que el público compró discretamente: en una faz denominada 'Santuario del sueño' describía una imagen visual y táctil con repetición rítmica de pocas palabras; en la otra faz, denominada 'Solo me importa el amor,' se describía un coito por medio de voces de hombre y mujer, murmullos, silencios y respiraciones compartidas. De tal modo realizó una investigación 'con espacio y tiempo abierto,' como ella decía, a la par que producía una obra en masa por la reproducción multiejemplar del disco. A nadie se le escapó la intensa poesía de nuevo cuño que tal 'experiencia' produjo" (110).

⁸⁴ "El trabajo de Margarita Paksa (un long-play denominado *Comunicaciones*, seguido de una pista de arena donde semanalmente estampara la huella de su cuerpo) es, sin duda, la culminación de la muestra, y acaso uno de los trabajos más ricos en significados que haya ofrecido la vanguardia porteña.." Cousté, "Di Tella: La sangre llega al río," in *Primera Plana* (May 21, 1968).

⁸⁵ "La segunda faz ("candente") está presidida por los jadeos amorosos de una pareja, y anula o equilibra la primera." Ibid. I have found this phrase repeated in Buccellato, *Margarita Paksa*; Jorge Glusberg, *Del Pop-Art a la Nueva Imagen* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones de Arte Gaglianone, 1985); and María José Herrera,

de una pareja” – is often repeated in secondary literature, and works to reduce the potentially radical evocation of Paksa’s sexuality to a countervailing gesture, a “hot” metaphor which functions chiefly to “balance” the “cold.” But the recording (which is presumed by all writers to be of her) actually implicates her body in a more performative way even than rolling around, in person with her partner, in the sand. It also pushes the limits of public acknowledgement, and moreover communal experience, of a woman’s sexuality.⁸⁶ Comparing the work to Carolee Schneemann’s film *Fuses* (1965), art historian Daniel Quiles writes that “Schneemann’s manipulation of film stock and editing in *Fuses* served to enhance the expressive qualities of the material that had been recorded, while Paksa’s production of a record and clinical measurement of viewer interaction with that indexical trace of the intimate act evidences a desire to filter corporeal experience through structural analysis.”⁸⁷ However, following the viewer-listener’s experience of *Comunicaciones* in reverse sequence, I would invert Quiles’s claim to argue that Paksa’s use of structural analysis delimits what can be said about her sexuality rather than filters or obscures it. To critics then and now, even a seemingly literal (non-“expressive”) audio recording of Paksa having sex reveals mediation, not content.

What could anyone say about the content, anyway? The morality campaigns orchestrated by Onganía articulated the anxieties that a more frank and visible sexual culture – especially as it applied to women – had produced in the 1960s. As historian

ed., *Exposiciones de arte argentino 1956-2006. La confluencia de historiadores, curadores e instituciones en la escritura de la historia* (Buenos Aires, Asociación Amigos del MNBA, 2009).

⁸⁶ On the relationship between the “sexual revolution” and dictatorship in Argentina, see Isabella Cosse, *Pareja, sexualidad y familia en los años sesenta: Una revolución discreta en Buenos Aires* (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno Editores Argentina, 2010) and “Cultura y sexualidad en la Argentina de los 60’: usos y resignificaciones de la experiencia transnacional,” *E.I.A.L.* 15, no. 1 (2006): 39–60. For a more contemporaneous source, see Julio Mafud, *La Revolución sexual argentina* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Américalee, 1971) or the cover story in *Análisis* 422, “El amor de los jóvenes” (April 15-21, 1969).

⁸⁷ Quiles, “Between Code and Message,” 150.

Valeria Manzano has written, the midcentury project of modernizing Argentina in the image of the well-developed countries of the Western world “entailed the location of the nuclear, ‘well-integrated’ family at the center of the social organization. In this vein the middle-class family constituted the ideal of respectability and stability that the country needed in order to prevent social chaos and cultural decay, the decay that Peronism allegedly represented.”⁸⁸ If in the first half of the decade women had opened up a discursive space that acknowledged the possibility of sex for pleasure rather than reproduction, the militant Catholicism of the second half of the decade reacted to curtail this excess, linking the new sexuality with political radicalization and the spread of Communism. It is for this reason, Manzano notes, that the morality campaigns of the 1960s “and the discourses and representations that informed them are central to understanding the brutal repression of politicized youth in the 1970s.”⁸⁹ Scholars such as Diana Taylor have illuminated the highly sexualized form of authoritarianism that developed in those years, not only to differentiate along sexual lines “good” from “bad” women, but also to specially target women physically and discursively as a way of breaking down the social fabric.⁹⁰

The dictatorship of the late 1960s consolidated what Julia Kristeva has described as “the complicity of the family, the State and the religious discourse” in ensuring socio-symbolic unity – that is, in disallowing (“murdering”) free expression of the drives in order

⁸⁸ Valeria Manzano, *The Age of Youth in Argentina: Culture, Politics, and Sexuality from Perón to Videla*. (UNC Press, 2014): 441. Incidentally, the visibility created by psychologist Eva Gilberti’s televised “advice” on sexual education, Mariano Plotkin argues, became crucial in the popularization of psychoanalysis among the middle classes.

⁸⁹ Manzano, “Sexualizing Youth: Morality Campaigns and Representations of Youth in Early 1960s Buenos Aires,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 14, no. 4 (2005): 436.

⁹⁰ The civil-military dictatorship of 1976-83, Taylor writes, glorified the feminine – particularly through images of the patria or motherland – and targeted active women who resisted or transgressed their assigned role in the social drama. This imagery enabled the military’s sexualized forms of torture and systematic assault on the reproductive organs of female prisoners held in captivity.

to organize and make efficient capitalist economies of production and reproduction.⁹¹ Behavioral policing and censorship, as we have seen, established socio-symbolic ensembles and their limits. Paksa's irreverent deployment of breath and laughter, the personal but recognizable *chora* of the disorganizing energies of the body, prod at those limits.⁹² This is the radical, transgressive power of art, Kristeva argues: "That drives and the pleasure element can infiltrate into the social ensemble, and that they exist only through it and against it, is the claim that art makes against religion."⁹³ Art's ability to contest the unity of the sign derives from the rhythmic register, from its mobilization of the semiotic, defined by Kristeva as the affective space of signification "in which the linguistic sign is not yet articulated as the absence of an object and as the distinction between real and symbolic."⁹⁴ It is this space that Paksa's various levels of mediation refer back to – it is this unspeakable register that is the work's content.

It is not that *Comunicaciones* evades the symbolic realm in favor of the semiotic (even as the semiotic resists or exceeds the symbolic order, the two are always entangled and imbricated in language); indeed, the work is comprised of various symbolic technologies. However, Paksa layers them temporally, a scaffolding of sequences built over something unrepresentable, supporting and subverting the symbolic operation by bringing bodily rhythms and forces into the signifying process. "This type of relation

⁹¹ See Julia Kristeva, "Signifying Practice and Mode of Production," in *The Edinburgh Magazine* 1 (1976): 65. Religion, she writes, serves an expurgatory function, channeling this excessive expression "of what is uncapitalizable in expenditure" in order to free up capitalist economies of production and reproduction.

⁹² "Discrete quantities of energy move through the body of the subject who is not yet constituted as such and, in the course of development, they are arranged according to the various constraints imposed on this body – always already involved in a semiotic process – by family and social structures. In this way the drives, which are 'energy' charges as well as 'psychical' marks, articulate what we call a *chora*: a nonexpressive totality formed by the drives and their states in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated" (Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, 35).

⁹³ Kristeva, "Signifying Practice and Mode of Production," 65.

⁹⁴ Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, 36.

makes it possible to specify the semiotic as a psychosomatic modality of the signifying process,” Kristeva writes, recalling Paksa’s intent with “Candente” “to energize the senses,” or perhaps with “Santuario del sueño” to introduce “the void, nothingness.” If in the midst of a reactionary dictatorship female sexuality could not be spoken, it might be mobilized through the productive dialectical discord between the semiotic and the symbolic.

In an interview years later, Paksa remembered that Romero Brest worked to dissuade the police from censoring the work by arguing that it was erotic but not pornographic, perhaps instrumentalizing this very discord, or at least the tenuous distinction between referencing and showing.⁹⁵ In *Camera Lucida*, Roland Barthes examines photography’s investment in socio-symbolic unity, using it to probe the very distinction Romero Brest made about Paksa’s work. Pornography relies on unity, he writes – it is “unary,” it does not vacillate – while “the erotic is a pornographic that has been disturbed, fissured.”⁹⁶ In this space of fissure, between what can be organized in language and its inevitable excess, Paksa redistributes the rules of symbolic exchange. By foregrounding the codes that mediate an authorial message, she opens the work of art to a spatial and temporal experience of collaboration that is inherently antiauthoritarian. Indeed, Kristeva argues that “a signifying practice that gives a privileged role to the semiotic process through which the rules of symbolic exchange are redistributed cannot but find itself aligned with political experiences and social movements that contest existing relations of production.”⁹⁷ Privileging this semiotic critique, as we will see in the work of

⁹⁵ Buccellato, *Margarita Paksa*, 86.

⁹⁶ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981): 41.

⁹⁷ Kristeva, “Signifying Practice and Mode of Production,” 69: “Thus, at all times and in all modes of production, poetic language is necessarily the place of inscription of the pleasure elements left unsatisfied by the relations of production and reproduction, or by the ideologies which claim to represent them.”

Lea Lublin, begs a reevaluation not only of the stability of the viewer's relationship to the artist and work of art, but also to the supposed socio-symbolic unity of everyday life.

LEA LUBLIN

On the cover of *Primera Plana* 282, the issue that ran photographs of Paksa preparing *Comunicaciones*, a couple walks arm in arm toward a highly saturated, hot-pink Casa Rosada, the seat of Argentina's executive branch [fig. 1.10]. They are nearly matching in floral tops, wide leather belts, and black bottoms – hers a miniskirt over pink stockings that rhyme the building's psychedelic neoclassical portico – and shaggy mops of dark hair cut the same length. Nearby, a young father takes his child's hand as he toddles across the Plaza de Mayo, the civic core of Buenos Aires. In wavy block text, the headline asks, “Revolución: ¿sí o no?” Referring to the cover story – a roundtable debate among political commentators – the question permeates nearly every page of news and cultural coverage in the magazine, particularly a section combining reporting on the ongoing student occupations of Columbia University and the Sorbonne. “This is, in the end, one of the main reasons for the disturbances that plague Europe and the United States; tired of getting everything they want, students are faced with the insoluble problem of not having problems,” the article reports snidely. If the revolutionary spirit of Latin America served as a model for student activism in France and the United States, the reverse was by no means necessarily true of the middle-class readers of magazines such as *Primera Plana* and *Análisis*, even if they were critical of the military dictatorship. The accompanying

images emphasize disorder; one photograph of a neoclassical façade (this time the columned dome of the Panthéon-Sorbonne), taken from a medium remove, echoes the composition of the magazine's cover [fig. 1.11]. This time, however, the people walking toward the somber architecture are uniformed police and the foreground is littered with detritus. A porcelain toilet, torn from the wall and beached in the middle of the street, salutes the building with its upturned seat. This is the “after” scene to the cover's optimistic “before,” the cautionary image of the excesses of modernization.

Lea Lublin had traveled intermittently between Buenos Aires and Paris to see and study art after finishing her formal training. In the 1950s, studying with Gustave Singier at the Académie Ranson, she befriended the circle of artists marrying leftist politics and figurative painting at the new Salon de la Jeune Peinture, where she exhibited from 1953-1956.⁹⁸ When she returned to Buenos Aires that year, she found commercial and critical success, participating in group exhibitions such as Romero Brest's Premio *Ver y Estimar* and the Premio Braque. Around the time of her 1963 exhibition *Bestias y Explosiones* at Galería Riobóo, however, Lublin decided she could no longer sell her paintings to collectors who used them to decorate bourgeois apartments and decided to abandon painting. She later recalled,

When I was painting in the early sixties, I already had my ear to the problems of society, but I soon realized that, with this medium, the message would never be transmitted... if I was completely fascinated by what was going on in the world, it seemed to me impossible to remain confined to the studio making beautiful paintings. The problems of society, which I consider in all my propositions, have

⁹⁸ On the Salon, its politics, and its relationship to the Atelier Populaire, see Sami Siegelbaum, “The Riddle of May '68,” in *Oxford Art Journal* 35, no. 1 (March 1, 2012): 53–73. In 1956, Lublin returned to Buenos Aires, where she lived until 1964. According to her biographer for the Centro Virtual de Arte Argentino, “Durante esta época se relaciona principalmente con círculos de escritores que incluyen a Oliverio Girondo, Ernesto Sábato y Rafael Alberti.”

led me to search and find on every occasion the necessary means to denounce and unveil the illusions, the lies and travesties.⁹⁹

In 1964, she returned to Paris [fig. 0.4]. Like Paksa and Orensanz, she began to move away from painting by experimenting with new materials, trading the canvas for acrylic panels.¹⁰⁰ For a series titled *Ver Claro*, from 1965, she appropriated images that had taken on iconic status, covering the paintings like the *Mona Lisa* with glass and inviting viewers to squirt and clean them using a motorized windshield wiper attached to the frame [fig. 1.12]. Perspectival devices painted in bright colors over the glass windshields draw attention to how the images have structured ways of seeing; how the “already-archaic” aesthetic values of “a modern Western culture born of the Renaissance,” as art historian Isabel Plante has written, are reproduced in mass culture and become the banal images of everyday life.¹⁰¹ The series is significant because it established Lublin’s spatial and

⁹⁹ “The Screen of the Real: Interview with Lea Lublin by Jérôme Sans (1995),” in Stephanie Weber and Matthias Mühlhng, eds., *Lea Lublin: Retrospective* (Munich, Snoeck, 2015): 199. On her early paintings, see Aldo Pellegrini, *Lea Lublin: Pinturas 1963* (Exh. cat., Buenos Aires: Galería Riobóo, August 27-September 9, 1963). Lublin’s show at Riobóo was immediately preceded by Marie Orensanz’s first solo exhibition at the same gallery.

¹⁰⁰ Lublin’s least-studied works are these early paintings on acrylic. She exhibited them in a solo show at Galería Bonino in 1968; many no longer remain. A 1967 portrait of Otto Hahn, titled *Ottocritique*, is discussed in Isabel Plante, “Representations (and Dissemination) of Sexuality. Lea Lublin amid Local Censorship and International Circulation” (*Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos*, October 2017). Glusberg connects the multiple perspectives explored in paintings such as *Ottocritique* to Lublin’s later “penetration of the image.” It is interesting to note the active role the plastics industry took in promoting the use of acrylic as a support, sponsoring exhibitions such as *Plástica con plásticos* (1966), and, as discussed in Chapter 2, *Materiales. Nueva técnicas y nueva expression* (1968). Lublin exhibited her work *Blanco sobre blanco*, discussed later in this chapter, in a stand sponsored by the company Acrilicos Paolini at the Exposición Panamericana de Ingeniería in 1970.

¹⁰¹ Isabel Plante, “Between Paris and the ‘Third World’: Lea Lublin’s Long 1960s,” in *Artl@s Bulletin* 3, no. 2 (February 21, 2015): 50. In “The Screen of the Real,” Lublin recalled, “At the primary school I attended in a working-class district of Buenos Aires, the portrait of General San Martín, who alongside Bolívar was one of the great liberators of Latin America, reigned over the classrooms. A true icon dedicated to the ‘Father of the Nation’, the liberator in the struggle against the Spanish; Spain, the colonizer of South America, was called ‘Mother of the Nation’. This patriotic Oedipus, who led me to draw these battles of liberation on the blackboards...It took me years to realize that these images were painted in a crypto-Napoleonic style. In fact, after having spent several years producing pictures, I believe that these early childhood events sparked my determination to completely abandon the system of representation and to understand the laws of the system that govern it.”

participatory methods for analyzing the generation of a discourse of images – the process whereby images become signs, obscured by their associations and identifications until they are no longer visible.

1966 was a year of groundbreaking exhibitions. Lublin showed *Ver Claro* works in the Salon de la Jeune Peinture and the Salon de Mai at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, as well as in *Opinião 66* at the Museu de Arte Moderna de Rio de Janeiro and the Festival Americano de Pintura in Lima [fig. 1.13]. A rarely discussed work in the series is a performance, *Happening patrio: invitado de honor Manuel Belgrano*, which Lublin staged on the first floor of a furniture store in Córdoba for the Primer Festival Argentino de Formas Contemporáneas (also known as the Anti-Bienal or Bienal Paralela) in October of that year. The Anti-Bienal, to which Paksa also contributed, is remembered as one of the first collaborations between the Rosario group and the Buenos Aires-based artists affiliated with the Di Tella, a precursor to politically engaged actions, such as *Tucumán arde*, to come.¹⁰² But Lublin's happening, carried out in a city known for student activism just four months after Onganía's coup, clearly anticipates some of their structural and political critiques. Romero Brest, who had opened the exhibition, led a procession around the space, handing out flags and ribbon rosettes as speakers played the patriotic songs commonly sung in Argentine grade schools. As Plante points out, the parodic parade critiqued not only the military's jingoistic mobilization of national symbols and the biennial's corporate conservatism, but also gently lampooned Romero Brest's role as

¹⁰² My research suggests Paksa participated in both the Anti-Bienal and the real biennial (the Tercera Bienal Americana de Arte, sponsored by Industrias Kaiser Argentina and juried by Alfred H. Barr Jr., Arnold Bode, Sam Hunter, Carlos Raúl Villanueva and Aldo Pellegrini). She was also an early participant in *Tucumán arde*. For more on the Anti-Bienal, see Quiles, "Between Code and Message," 161, and Guillermo Fantoni, "Tensiones hacia la política: del Homenaje al Vietnam a la Antibienal," *Sisi*, vol. 1, no. 2 (1990): 37. Art historians and the artists involved have debated whether the performance-based works shown at the Anti-Bienal constituted the first "happenings," while the term was right there in Lublin's title.

ringleader of the national avant-garde.¹⁰³ Meanwhile, in Buenos Aires, Romero Brest had just convened the annual Premio Di Tella exhibition (the last of its kind before *Experiencias*), juried by the critics Lawrence Alloway and Otto Hahn. A year later, Lublin and Hahn's son, Nicolás, was born.

Mon fils (1968)

Lublin moved permanently to Paris with Nicolás in 1968, setting up a studio of her own on rue Marcel Sembat [fig. 1.14]. But in early May, the two were “living” in the Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. For that year’s Salon de Mai, Lublin had submitted a work she called *Mon fils*, outfitting a section of the gallery with a crib, some clothes, diapers, and toys. Each day during exhibition hours, Lublin played with seven-month-old Nicolás, changed his diapers, sang lullabies, and chatted with visitors, exhibiting the gendered “work” of her everyday life. Like the *Ver Claro* series, *Mon fils* raises questions about the processes by which representation – in the form of circulating images, language, and spatialized practices – produces social subjects defined by sexual difference. By submitting her everyday life to public scrutiny in the art museum, she measured the discursive and ideological structuring of her subjectivity, the meanings produced by her body and baby in space. While the work is often read in the context of the strikes and occupations happening just outside the museum, I argue that it builds a more complex, and relational, critique of how socially-produced concepts of motherhood and the everyday functioned in Paris and

¹⁰³ Plante, “Between Paris and the ‘Third World,’” 54.

beyond. Instead of focusing exclusively on the well-studied events of Paris, I would like to position her feminist gesture in a more hybrid context, considering how it might have functioned relative and in response to the Argentine May 1968.

Above Nicolás's crib in the museum, Lublin hung an acrylic panel painted with colorful, schematic images of his face surrounded by the bunnies printed on his bedding [fig. 1.15]. The repetition of images, as well as the shadows produced by a distance of several inches between the panel painting and the wall, emphasize an optical effect of motion and a sense of shifting emotion on the (four iterations of the) baby's face. At the bottom of the painting, Lublin reproduced the bars of the crib, grounding the image in its surroundings – its proximity to the real crib – while creating an illusory or imaginary space floating above it. The crib itself, set against the wall and beneath the painting, acts as a kind of vitrine or display case, inviting viewers to approach and peek inside. This was not a recreation of Lea and Nicolás' domestic environment but a *mise-en-scène*, a self-conscious positioning of the work of motherhood in front of the backdrop of the work of art – as Lublin later put it, a simultaneous presentation of “the real, the everyday, and its representation.”¹⁰⁴

The simultaneity of the everyday and its representation suggests a gesture of claiming-as-art in the tradition of the readymade. In an interview, Lublin remembered, “the previous year, my great joy had been the birth of my son and I said to myself: the best thing

¹⁰⁴ Janie Gras and Simone Raskin, *Histoires d'elles*, no. 10 (March 1979): 13.

for me to do is to displace a moment of my everyday life to an artistic space, the Museum.” But as her friend Catherine Francblin pointed out, while Lublin’s act of displacement followed Duchamp’s logic, her strong emotional attachment to the “object” introduced (via a dedicatory title) in place of art was “diametrically opposed to the feelings of indifference aroused by the bottle rack.”¹⁰⁵ That is, her “work” – her son – is the opposite of a readymade: he is something *she* made. Lublin exploits the tension between indifference and attachment through the performativity of *Mon fils* – the artificiality of the set-up in the museum, the fun she seems to be having in its documentation, the “great joy” with which she described it [figs. 1.16–1.17]. It is not the baby that she claims as her work of art, but motherhood as a deconstructive process involving mother and child, their surroundings, and the participation of the public.

This is a tension that Duchamp acknowledges in a discussion of *Bicycle Wheel* with Arturo Schwarz in the 1960s: “It still had little to do with the idea of the Readymade. Rather it had more to do with the idea of chance. In a way, it was simply letting things go by themselves and having a sort of created atmosphere in a studio, an apartment where you live.”¹⁰⁶ The idea in Lublin’s performance of “simply letting things go” reveals the phallogentrism of a monotonous or repetitive theory of the everyday. Indeed, she creates a lived “atmosphere” in which she demonstrates the impossibility of just letting the wheel spin with a baby, while still allowing her life to play out, making visible the labor behind

¹⁰⁵ Catherine Francblin, “Lea Lublin and the avantgardistic model,” in *Lea Lublin: Retrospective* (Munich, Snoeck, 2015): 98.

¹⁰⁶ Arturo Schwarz, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969), 442.

the production of “the everyday.” At the same time, there are important components of this performance of labor that are either left undocumented or were deliberately elided: was Lublin breastfeeding the baby in the gallery? What was the acoustic intervention on the space when he babbled or cried? Or the olfactory experience of the performance as she changed his diaper? How did she feed herself or rest during museum hours?

Mon fils has received scholarly attention from feminist art historians who tend to position the work somewhere between Mary Kelly’s *Post-Partum Document* and Mierle Laderman Ukeles’s *Washing/Tracks/Maintenance: Outside*, both from 1973.¹⁰⁷ Ukeles does, in her *MANIFESTO FOR MAINTENANCE ART 1969!*, articulate a similar position with respect to the everyday, writing:

I am an artist. I am a woman. I am a wife. I am a mother. (Random Order). I do a hell of a lot of washing, cleaning, cooking, renewing, supporting, preserving, etc. Also, up to now separately, I ‘do’ Art. Now, I will simply do these maintenance everyday things and flush them up to consciousness, exhibit them, as Art.¹⁰⁸

While Lublin’s displacement of private labor into the public sphere invites a critical appraisal of *el trabajo* as if it were *la obra* – applying the ways of seeing structured by the

¹⁰⁷ The work has figured in survey exhibitions such as *WACK! Art and the Feminist Revolution* (2007) and *Radical Women* (2017). However, Lublin presents problems to a historiography that relies heavily on a teleological distinction between an earlier “wave” (with which she was contemporaneous) of feminist art centered on representations of an essential female identity and a subsequent “generation” (which she preceded but was more closely aligned) concerned with theory. Kelly echoes Lublin especially in her performance of motherhood as an interdependency between herself and her child, presenting the Oedipal conflict and separation from the mother’s perspective. Kelly, who was a member at the time of a London women’s group dedicated to examining the sexual division of labor, described her work as mapping the differences between “my lived experience as a mother and my analysis of that experience.”

¹⁰⁸ Mierle Laderman Ukeles. “Maintenance Art Manifesto,” 1968. In a close parallel to Lublin’s performance, the second part of Ukeles’ *Manifesto* proposes an exhibition titled “Care,” for which she proposed living in the museum with her family for the duration of the exhibition.

public sphere to the private – it also reverses the analysis to question what, exactly, is producing the distinction. As performance scholar Shannon Jackson writes, the non-productive labor of maintenance – cooking, cleaning, child-rearing – performed in the museum offers a way of reconsidering problems such as the divisions between art and life or medium and support “precisely by showing how wide, varied, and unquestioned such forms of support could be. Maintenance is a structure that exposed the disavowed durational activity behind a static object as well as the materialist activity that supported ‘dematerialized’ creativity, a realization that called the bluff of the art experimentation of the era.”¹⁰⁹ Lublin’s displacement exposes how the invisibility of domestic labor permits the myths of both art as an object and the ideologically-neutral space of its presentation.

If Lublin’s mobilization of maternity demonstrates how the “production” of public space relies on private labor, it also studies the results: that space, like images, is contingent and value-laden. In her notational essay “Image Process I,” which she began writing shortly before *Mon fils*, Lublin begins, “My works analyze the image process by means of its inscription into space. Space is considered as a permanent medium of transformation. It is unlimited, anonymous. Circumambient perceptions or pictorial impressions contemporaneously determine and annihilate it.”¹¹⁰ After detailing some of the ways in which space acts on or conditions an image, which she terms an *image index*, she concludes, “in these spaces of separation or distance-space that are transited and traversed,

¹⁰⁹ Shannon Jackson, *Social Works: Performing Art, Supporting Publics* (New York: Routledge, 2011): 88.

¹¹⁰ Lea Lublin, “Image Process I” (Paris, 1967/68). Reproduced in translation in *Lea Lublin: Retrospective* (Munich, Snoeck, 2015): 323-324.

the viewers perceive/read the work while integrating themselves into the language process.” Indeed, Lublin shows, the image itself is being produced there, in the space before and around its viewers. It indexes its surroundings as it comes into being, just as Lublin’s infant son not only learns to use language but is at the same time constructed by language. The art museum, a monument of the symbolic realm, houses the ongoing codification of ideology, the naturalization of values and norms that masquerade as socio-symbolic unity, or common sense.

Art historian Catherine Spencer has compellingly situated Lublin’s “occupation” of the museum amid the occupations occurring around Paris, even as she highlighted “the left’s lack of sustained engagement with the operation of gender constructs and sexual difference, and moreover with the ingrained sexism of the May movement.”¹¹¹ I contend, though, that *Mon fils* can tell us more about the ideology of the public sphere – the way it naturalizes and obscures the labor of motherhood – if we consider where Lublin was not; that is, how it would function differently elsewhere. Even after she moved to Paris, she continued making and exhibiting work between South America and Europe for much of the next decade. Following Plante, I locate the political efficacy of Lublin’s critiques in her nimble adaptation to changing cultural environments, such that “her movement back and forth between Europe and the Americas yielded an artistically productive flux that can be registered in her artworks themselves.”¹¹² It is this sense of flux – a mode of addressing

¹¹¹ Catherine Spencer, “Acts of Displacement: Lea Lublin’s *Mon Fils*, May ’68, and Feminist Psychosocial Revolt,” *Oxford Art Journal* 40, no. 1 (March 1, 2017): 65.

¹¹² Plante, “Between Paris and the ‘Third World,’” 49.

both her current political economy and the one she left behind – that Lublin shares with many Latin American artists of the 1960s-1970s, and that leads me to a speculative comparison around the question: how might *Mon fils* have functioned in the political economy of Buenos Aires, 1968?

It is not impossible to imagine *Mon fils* as part of the almost-exactly contemporaneous *Experiencias '68*, alongside *Comunicaciones* or, perhaps more analogously, Oscar Bony's *La familia obrera*, a “displacement” of a working-class family who sat on view in the Di Tella gallery during exhibition hours. But it is not quite possible, either, given the (spottily applied) moral logics behind the military's censorship. In this context, Lublin's mobilization of motherhood might act as a somewhat more radical displacement of private work onto the public sphere. If, as Spencer notes, “by performing the privatized act of childcare in a public realm, Lublin linked her own quotidian experience with that of the wider society, in a way that uncovered its communal political potential,”¹¹³ that political potential might feel significantly more threatening to the stability of Onganía's regime than to de Gaulle's. On the other hand, even as students aligned with ascendant guerilla groups, the tone of *Primera Plana*'s reporting demonstrates that there was not necessarily cultural consensus among the middle class on revolution in May 1968.¹¹⁴ Lublin's critique of labor would likely imply an affinity or association with

¹¹³ Spencer, “Acts of Displacement,” 71.

¹¹⁴ For a study of middle-class attitudes on revolution and social violence in this period, see Carassai, *The Argentine Silent Majority* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

the revolutionary left even as she pointed out the servile role that women played in its struggle. In all likelihood, this work could not have been exhibited in Argentina.

Imagining *Mon fils* in Buenos Aires helps to highlight the political significance of the claimed body in public space. The everyday affective environment of a military dictatorship belies – perhaps in sharper relief than the May movement in Paris – the myth of the public sphere as neutral and open to all. Two years later, Lublin had her own brush with censorship while exhibiting a painting, *Blanco sobre blanco*, at a trade show, the Exposición Panamericana de Ingeniería, in Buenos Aires. As in *Ver Claro*, Lublin superimposed popular imagery – this time of a couple having sex – onto two panes of acrylic separated by gap to produce the illusion of movement [fig. 1.18].¹¹⁵ Responding to complaints from exhibition-goers, police covered *Blanco sobre blanco* with newspaper, later confiscating the work and bringing obscenity charges against Lublin [fig. 1.19]. Plante attributes the forceful response to *Blanco sobre blanco* to its audience,

individuals with ‘good morals’ who found themselves moving and shifting in order to see a couple in an imagined sexual act; an almost voyeuristic activity that was considered indecent. We should add to this active willingness required from the spectators the high public visibility of the work, given that *Blanco sobre blanco* was not shown in an exhibition space visited by a more or less restricted public, but a massive fair.¹¹⁶

This raises another possible speculative displacement: what would the response to *Blanco sobre blanco* be if it were shown in a more private gallery setting? Or if it were shown outside of Buenos Aires? Indeed, after successfully appealing her three-month prison

¹¹⁵ Plante argues that the image references the poor quality of sketches from popular romance comics of the time, such as *Intervalo*, *Fantasia* or *El Tony*.

¹¹⁶ Plante, “Representations (and Dissemination) of Sexuality.”

sentence, Lublin made another work, *Lecture d'une œuvre de Lea Lublin par un inspecteur de police*, which assembled photos, documentation, and press clippings on the censorship of *Blanco sobre blanco*. She exhibited it in France.

It is significant that viewers' reactions prompted censorship of *Blanco sobre blanco*, given Lublin's almost sociological approach. The performativity of Lublin's maternal "joy" – at least as it appears in photographs of *Mon fils* – suggests that her experiment in socializing her child required a public. Spencer points to a documentary image in which Lublin and Nicolás are "watched over by a middle-aged woman who, with her neat pillbox hat and glinting pearl earrings, looks the very picture of bourgeois respectability" [fig. 1.20].¹¹⁷ Standing in for both us as her audience and for a broader discursive public, it is clear that her participation is part of the work. Spencer writes, "Lublin's acute awareness of this cultural discourse around motherhood is signaled by her understanding of *Mon fils* as a means to study not only her own behavior and that of her child, but also of the visitors to the exhibition, such as the smartly dressed woman, who became implicated in the experiment."¹¹⁸ It is not difficult to imagine the smartly dressed woman as one of the "individuals with good morals" at the Exposición Panamericana de Ingeniería – what would be her response to *Blanco sobre blanco* there? Filling in Argentine audiences on Lublin's activity abroad, *Panorama* reported, "in the very French Salon de Mayo, Lublin surprised her admirers (including her ex-companion, the critic Otto Hahn) by exhibiting her son Fabricio Nicolás – in person – barricaded behind the bars of his crib."¹¹⁹ A headline in the French regional newspaper *L'Ardennais* complained simply, "She exhibits her son."

¹¹⁷ Spencer, "Acts of Displacement," 74.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ "El regreso de Lea Lublin," *Panorama* (July 29, 1969): 40.

A year later, back in Buenos Aires, Lublin wrote to Pierre Restany,

You should be aware of the violence and the outbreak of urban warfare in which we live [...] In this situation and despite everything, you enter in direct action of the urban guerilla, or continue questioning the cultural system by means of an investigation that goes to the very bottom of these structures. This is what I'm trying to do [...] My proposal is to search for a new connection between life-language-art that *at once measures and demystifies the traditional cultural structures*. Pointing out the breakup but also making the spectator enter in the heart itself of the structure of language so that the active reflection is in the end an opening towards a new way of living and thinking.¹²⁰

For Lublin, this simultaneous act of measuring and therefore demystifying operates at the level of discourse – “traditional cultural structures” take the form of images through the values that get attached to them as they circulate in space. I read *Mon fils* as a gendered critique of this process, though the terms of its critique might vary depending on the political environment in which it takes place. Though Lublin's works consistently focus her critique at the level of discourse, she does not absent her body to do so. Her body – neither entirely biological nor socially constructed, as she demonstrates with *Mon fils* – is inseparable from her work as an artist and her work as a mother. It is not autonomous, either at home or the art museum, whether performing non-productive or productive, creative or pro-creative labor. Her performance in the art museum recognizes that the naturalization of her “work” – both as a mother and as an artist – serves the interests of those structures of power, and thus by (dis)placing it in an artificial space, develops a critique that is both local and open-ended. Indeed, we could extend our analysis of Lublin's occupation of ideological space to include motherhood as an ideological space.

Crucially, the signaling gesture at the heart of Paksa's and Lublin's spatial interventions predicates a belief in a term both artists used: “active reflection.” As Romero

¹²⁰ Emphasis mine. Lea Lublin to Pierre Restany, Paris France, September 11, 1970. Archives of the Critique d'Art, University of Rennes. Reproduced in Plante, “Representations (and Dissemination) of Sexuality.”

Brest asserted in *Experiencias '68*, “active reflection is in the end an opening towards a new way of living and thinking.” This faith in the spectator – in the political potential of awakened consciousness – is both a testament to the communal, even utopian, ways of seeing and organizing in May 1968, and also remains an open question: once a spectator is “activated,” made to see the codes and structures in which she is imbricated, what does she do?

In June 1968, just a few weeks after the events in Paris, the French Embassy in Buenos Aires announced the annual Premio Braque exhibition to be held at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes. That year, perhaps with social unrest in mind, the invitation included a clause requiring participating artists to submit ahead of time “the possible existence of photos, phrases, or writings that are part of the work,” and reserved for the organizers the right to “make any changes they might judge necessary.”¹²¹ Paksa, among other artists, interpreted the clause as censorship, and declined the invitation to participate in a strongly-worded letter to the Embassy:

I am not going to go into disquisitions about freedom and censorship. The political, union, and cultural life of our country clearly demonstrates that any interference is nefarious. That interference always seeks to silence, destroy and dissolve the opinions of the most lucid, seeks to sow confusion rather than order. That authority destroys itself by exercising an act which, in its apparent strength, bears a demonstration of fear.¹²²

In response to Paksa’s call for a boycott, organizers released a statement the next day denying any attempt at censorship and claiming the new clauses were merely motivated by

¹²¹ Margarita Paksa to Robert Perraud, Castelar, June 18, 1968. Mimeographed letter. Personal archive of Graciela Carnevale, Rosario.

¹²² “No voy a entrar en disquisiciones sobre la libertad y la censura. La vida política, gremial y cultural de nuestro país, demuestra ya bien claramente que toda intromisión es nefasta. Que esa intromisión, siempre pretende acallar, destruir y disolver las opiniones de los más lúcidos, tratando de sembrar la confusión, antes que el orden. Que la autoridad se destruye a sí misma, al ejercer un acto, que en su aparente fuerza, e es una demostración de temor.” Ibid.

spatial considerations.¹²³ The conditions were not as alarming to Orensanz, who submitted to the exhibition without knowing about Paksa's objections.¹²⁴ But the denial was unconvincing to Paksa, who organized a protest of the awards ceremony the following month. On July 16, Paksa, along with Roberto Plate, Roberto Jacoby and others, interrupted the opening remarks by Museum director Samuel Oliver, throwing leaflets, rotten eggs and stink bombs. As the newsweekly *Gente* reported, "Oliver only managed to utter two words. The shrill voice of the sculptress Margarita Paksa interrupted him. She was the voice of the dissident artists, of those who had withdrawn their works arguing that the prize represented something like the infiltration of foreign interests into Argentine culture."¹²⁵ Police intervened, closing the exhibition and arresting nine people, including Paksa, who were sentenced to thirty days in jail. The show, nonetheless, went on. As Cousté wrote in *Primera Plana*, "Behind closed doors, and with an awkwardness that only the elegant French Ambassador, Count Jean de la Grandville, seemed oblivious to – an hour later he gently but vainly requested the release of the artists – the prizes could be awarded."¹²⁶ The painter Rogelio Polesello won first prize for a work based on the colors of the French flag, with second mention going to Orensanz.

¹²³ "Premio Georges Braque 1968: Aclaración." *El Jurado*, June 19, 1968. Typewritten statement. Archive of Graciela Carnevale, Rosario. The jury consisted of Antonio Berni, Samuel Oliver, Aldo Pellegrini and Jorge Romero Brest.

¹²⁴ "No sabía que hacían una manifestación. Yo no pertenecía a ningún grupo. Me parece bien, si no están de acuerdo, que lo digan" (Marie Orensanz, email to the author, January 23, 2021).

¹²⁵ "Samuel Oliver alcanzó solo a pronunciar dos palabras. La voz chillona de la escultora Margarita Paksa lo interrumpió. Era la voz de los artistas disidentes, de los que habían retirado sus obras aduciendo que el premio representaba algo así como la infiltración de intereses extranjeros de la cultura argentina." "La noche de los premios y las pinas." *Gente* 157 (July 23, 1968). See also "Escandalo," in *La Razón* (July 17, 1968); "Se entregaron los premios Georges Braque y hubo algunas manifestaciones de protesta y detenciones," in *La Prensa* (July 17, 1 1968); and Rodolfo Walsh, "Trabajadores de la cultura," in *Publicación del Órgano Oficial de la Confederación General del Trabajo* (July 25, 1968).

¹²⁶ "A puertas cerradas, y con una incomodidad de la que solo el elegante Embajador de Francia, Conde Jean de la Grandville, parecía estar ajeno – una hora mas tarde solicitó, gentil pero vanamente, la liberación de los artistas – pudieron ser entregados los premios." Cousté, "Se acabó la diversión," *Primera Plana* 291 (July 23, 1968).

Paksa later recalled that when she was released from jail, she went straight to the CGT union hall and began discussing with Jacoby and Pablo Suárez the possibilities for more direct action – perhaps a collaboration with the Rosario Group on a work addressing events in Tucumán.¹²⁷ The moment was an inflection point for Paksa, who concluded the year by declaring that she would no longer make art. I will return to argue in the next chapter, however, that rather than abandon art entirely Paksa dissolved her aesthetic practice into various forms of activism which extended the logics of participation and collaboration embedded in work that, as we have seen, aimed to provoke a critical consciousness and, in turn, produce new social realities. Indeed, the performativity with which Paksa staged her Premio Braque protest – her transgression in order to deliberately instigate a repressive response – makes it difficult to separate completely from other works that explored and contested the social constructions dictating subjectivity. Returning now to Lublin, I highlight yet another form of spatial and social intervention that sought to engage the active spectator.

Fluvio subtunal (1969)

“Two and a half years Lea Lublin was absent from Buenos Aires,” the newsweekly *Confirmado* reported, rather breathlessly, in July 1969. “In the first days of this month, Lublin made her return, activating it with the announcement of a presentation at the Centro de Artes Visuales del Instituto Torcuato Di Tella, which will take place at the beginning of September.”¹²⁸ *Panorama*, in slightly more evocative terms, echoed the news a week later: “A ship that arrived days ago deposited in Buenos Aires Lea Lublin, a brilliant member of

¹²⁷ Ana Longoni and Mariano Mestman, *Del Di Tella a “Tucumán Arde”* (Buenos Aires: El Cielo por Asalto, 2000): 112.

¹²⁸ “Los lados de adentro.” *Confirmado* (July 24, 1969).

the *plástico-criollo* clan living in France...Lea's returns – which inevitably occur during the European summer – are usually a reason for revelry in the Buenos Aires and Di Tellan artistic scenes.”¹²⁹ Alongside an image of *Mon fils*, the article brings readers up to speed on Lublin's abandonment of painting, success in Europe, and plans for upcoming collaborations with the Di Tella. “I'm no longer interested in the interior world of the painter,” she declares. “One does not have the right to burden others with their problems.”¹³⁰ Her plans included a participatory environment called *Terranautas*, exhibited as part of *Experiencias '69* at Di Tella in September. For that work, Lublin instructed visitors to remove their shoes and move through a dark tunnel with only a miner's helmet for light.¹³¹ Underfoot, a path made of earth, sand, wood and coal, various seeds, rocks, and water varied the multiple (or “poly-”) sensorial channels of experience. In a new essay, this time titled “Image Process II,” she reiterated her instructions for active spectators: “Take off your shoes. This is no more than a beginning. Choose and strike. Think. March free. Take off your clothes and think. Reflect and act. ART WILL BE LIFE.”¹³² In many ways, *Terranautas* rehearsed the extra- or supra-visual forms of representation, as well as theories of art as spatio-temporal process, that she was planning on a larger scale in Santa Fe.

129 “Una nave arribada en estos días depositó en Buenos Aires a Lea Lublin, rutilante cofrade del clan plástico-criollo que habita en Francia....Los retornos de Lea – que inevitablemente ocurren durante el verano europeo – suelen ser motivo de jolgorios en el ambiente artístico porteño y mayormente ditelliano.” “El regreso de Lea Lublin.” *Panorama* (July 31, 1969).

130 *Ibid.*

131 Guillermo Whitelow reproduces Lublin's instructions in his article “Carta de Buenos Aires,” *Art International* 14, no. 2 (February 1970): “Sáquese los zapatos; éste no es más que un comienzo; elija y golpee; piense; marche libre; desnúdese y piense; reflexione y actúe; arte será vida.”

132 “Sáquese los zapatos. Esto no es más que un comienzo. Elija y golpee. Piense. Marche libre. Desnúdese y piense. Reflexione y actúe. ARTE SERA VIDA.” Lublin, “Proceso a la imagen II: Terranautas, Instituto Torcuato Di Tella.” Buenos Aires, 1969.

“*Fluvio subterráneo* is the title I propose for my new work,” Lublin told *Análisis* in early December, a few weeks before opening another irreverently-named immersive environment, this time staged in a vacant department store in Santa Fe, to the public.¹³³ Sponsored by the Di Tella, Lublin’s new work celebrated the recent completion of the Túnel subfluvial Hernandarias, a 13-km tunnel built under the Río Paraná to link the provinces of Santa Fe and Entre Ríos. The construction of the tunnel, which had been the subject of political debate for sixty years and was at the time the world’s longest road tunnel, was a symbol of state-sponsored modernization in Argentina. A week of festivities, the “semana del túnel,” would begin on December 10. Expecting an influx of tourists, Santa Fe’s chapter of the Asociación Lucha contra la Parálisis Infantil (ALPI) had contacted the Di Tella about financing “a work of cultural significance” to commemorate the event. Having secured a vacant space on the corner of San Martín and Tucumán, Lublin envisioned a labyrinth¹³⁴ of nine sensorial zones which visitors would traverse one after another. “In Santa Fe I have tried to transform the spectator in a dynamic environment that, due to its scale, has no precedent anywhere. The inversion of reality allows the aesthetic experience to become vital, and gives us the chance to enter into a world where technology is the new complement to nature,” she told the magazine, predicting a transformational experience for visitors.¹³⁵ Technology, she suggests, was restructuring the material and social conditions of everyday life, and its uncanny appearance in *Fluvio subterráneo* – an “inverted reality” – would help map the topography of this new, mediated terrain. In a

¹³³ “Hernandarias y el ocio,” *Análisis* 455 (December 1969).

¹³⁴ Plante links Lublin’s use of this term to the labyrinths of the Groupe de Recherche d’Art Visuel (“Between Paris and the ‘Third World,’” 59), but Weber notes that unlike a labyrinth, in which there is only one way out, Lublin’s environment offered many directions of experience.

¹³⁵ “En Santa Fe he tratado de transformar al espectador en un principio dinámico, en una ambientación que por su escala no tiene precedentes en ninguna parte. La inversión de la realidad permite que la experiencia estética se transforme en vital, y nos da la posibilidad de integrarnos en un mundo donde la tecnología es el complemento nuevo de la naturaleza.” “Hernandarias y el ocio,” *Análisis* 455 (December 1969).

photo, Lublin stands outside with Santa Fe cultural organizer (and the Di Tella's Secretario de Extensión Cultural) José María Paolantonio, seemingly caught making plans, over the caption "the technology jungle."

Lublin's collaboration with the Di Tella allowed her to introduce new layers of technology to her "jungle," including a wall of television monitors streaming closed-circuit footage of visitors as they made their way through the installation [fig. 1.21].¹³⁶ I focus here on Lublin's experimental use of video recording and live transmission technologies (revisited in chapter 3) as but one part of her spatial intervention or one piece of *Fluvio subtunal's* analysis of the social and participatory dynamics of installation art. As we have seen in the new apartments and shop windows of Paris and Buenos Aires, the television was reorganizing not just the built environment but also structures of feeling, experience, and political subjectivity through new relations of looking. I read Lublin's "technology jungle" here as an elaboration of the changing material conditions of everyday life amid televisual social spaces in the modernizing city.

By televisual I refer to the values embedded in, transmitted through, and accompanying the spread of television as an instrument of the modernizing state: accommodating commercial flows and transactions; surveillance; and the transportation of information, goods, and services across great distances. Television became commercially available in Argentina in 1951 and an ordinary fixture in middle class homes between 1959-1965; in those years, the number of television sets in Argentine households grew sixfold, from 280,000 to 1.6 million, giving Argentina the highest "penetration" rate (to

¹³⁶ According to a more recent article in the Santa Fe newspaper *El Litoral* (which also reviewed the work at the time), in addition to the donated space Paolantonio and ALPI arranged funding from the provincial government, technical and installation assistance from city electricians, army labor to move sand, stones, earth, and plants, and donated televisions, fans, and other equipment from Boaglio S.A. Local artists affiliated with the group El Galpón including Jorge Cohen, Lita Francesquini, Nora Possentini, and Domingo Sahda, also helped with installation. See Lucila Fosco, "Fluvio Subtunal, una instalación del Di Tella para Santa Fe," *Diario El Litoral* (October 29, 2010).

use the industry term) in Latin America. Siam Di Tella itself manufactured televisions; an advertisement appearing in *Análisis* in April 1968 positions a new, lightweight model as a new baby held lovingly in a young mother's arms [fig. 1.22]. Perhaps especially for women, television's elision of public and private space, its closure of material and psychic distance, defined televisual relations. Cinema and cultural historian Anna McCarthy has defined televisual space through "a diffuse network of gazes and institutions, subjects and bodies, screens and physical structures," to different effects in different environments.¹³⁷ When the TV set becomes part of the family living room, she writes – reversing Tati's scene – it takes up a position within the networks of power that characterize family life.¹³⁸ Outside the home, it structures the diffuse network of gazes that position subjects as spectators. Lublin's use of video technology as form of spatial critique engages, in McCarthy's words, "the spatial complexity of the medium, its ability both to position people in physical locations and to render visible the entwined domains of content, control and consumption that define such places within broad cultural logics of space."¹³⁹ It visualizes the questions: How do people relate to each other in space, having seen or with the possibility of seeing each other on screen? How does television mediate the relationship between the state and its consumer-citizens?

In a third installment of her "Proceso de la imagen" essays, Lublin mapped out the installation as "an itinerary [*recorrido*] that consists of nine sequences divided into Zones."¹⁴⁰ The *recorrido* began at The Source, a shallow pool outside the building that was

¹³⁷ Anna McCarthy, *Ambient Television: Visual Culture and Public Space* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001): 3. The televisual's spatial and temporal ubiquity make it distinct from the visual relations established by cinematic spectatorship, which have a longer but interrelated history of public and private spatial semiotics.

¹³⁸ McCarthy, *Ambient Television*, 2.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁴⁰ Lublin, "Proceso a la imagen II."

filled with colored water and lined with reflective aluminum [fig. 1.23]. To cross, visitors stepped over cement blocks rising from the surface to reach a rubber foam ramp leading to the Wind Zone. In the Wind Zone, a “forest” of inflatable plastic tubes dangled from the ceiling, rustled by the breeze of an intermittent fan. The inflatable polyethylene plastic – an industrial material populating a strange, artificial environment – was also, as Lublin explained in an interview, chosen to encourage play.¹⁴¹ Translucent plastic allowed for reflection and refraction of images, views through and across the permeable boundaries delineating zones, and elision of the distinction between inside and outside. As a form, tubes reappeared throughout, functioning as manipulable objects, fluctuating surfaces for projection and penetration, and modes of conveyance through the work. Later, in the Fluvial Zone, visitors passed through a translucent plastic tunnel, twenty meters long and two meters wide, to reach the surrounding Nature Zone [fig. 1.24]. Water trickled through the tunnel, with a few obstacles impeding its flow. Like the Río Paraná, the tunnel that coursed below it, and the cathode ray tubes and coaxial cables connecting televisions, the *Fluvio subtunal* moved bodies, exchanged objects, transmitted information; provided new ways to experience one’s surroundings while seeing outside of them; opened the provinces to the cultural flows from the capital.

To enter the next section, the Technological Zone, participants had to first “penetrate” (now to use Lublin’s term) a transparent curtain onto which images of the workers who had built the Túnel were projected. In that zone, fifteen closed-circuit monitors streamed live footage of other visitors making their way through the rest of the work. Visitors’ opinions were recorded as they exited and broadcast over loudspeakers inside [fig. 1.25]. The monitors and speakers revealed their participation in the work,

¹⁴¹ “The Screen of the Real,” 200.

adding an element of surveillance to the otherwise playful mood. As we saw at the cybernetic police station, surveillance was critical to the state and its modernization schemes, and as a spectatorial practice would move from the screen to everyday life under dictatorship. “Spectators can observe how the other spectators behave in another zone,” Lublin explained, allowing visitors to model or modify their behaviors in later zones based on what they observed onscreen. The participation of viewers demonstrated in material terms the social construction of space through a “diffuse network of gazes and institutions, subjects and bodies, screens and physical structures.” Rather than simply deploying or displacing television, Lublin centers its structure of recording, transmission, and display but keeps the signal closed and the content banal, stylizes the monitors with colored screens, and magnifies their presence as objects. It is not quite television that her visitors encounter, and it is through this difference that Lublin illuminates the relations that emerge by foregrounding the spectatorial practices instilled by the televisual.

This is “the image” in “process” – that is, as she wrote in her first essay, its contingent inscription into space. For Lublin, video allows for a true “penetration of the image,” in which the meaning of the work is in continual flux as viewers move through it. A viewer’s experience requires other participants to be present, transforming the space and thus disrupting her projection of identifications onto the work. Having seen the behavior of other participants in yet-unseen zones on the television screens, her experience upon reaching that zone will be determined by its relationship to the others, as mediated through the screen. The “image process” describes a televisual transformation of social space, interceding in experience before (or regardless of whether) it happens.

Reviewing the work the week it opened, the French critic Pierre Restany wrote, “What is *Fluvio subtunal*? It is primarily a sociological demonstration, a systematic

working of the structures of psycho-sensory communication.”¹⁴² Indeed, the television screens offered a new form of communication among participants, one that was not verbal or proximate but nonetheless produced a closeness among strangers as they observed each other navigating an uncanny environment – part fair, part behavioral experiment, part self-contained universe. In his review for the magazine *Dinamis*, Jorge Glusberg added, “It is evident, as Marshall McLuhan has pointed out, that art is ‘cooling off,’ requiring more and more direct participation on the part of the viewer...in these *recorridos*, the observer becomes included within the work of art.”¹⁴³ Television – at once an object in space and a relationship between spaces – functioned here as a social apparatus organizing and producing linked experiences.¹⁴⁴ It is through these televisual relationships that Lublin introduces visitors to a “parallel nature”: the social space produced by television, the “technology jungle,” a space of their making. The transparent plastic tunnel that lent the work its name served as more than a metaphor for the transmission of relations and flows; Restany wrote that “it symbolizes the organic insertion of individuals into the visceral world of their own creation.”¹⁴⁵

Lest we read *Fluvio subtunal* as a utopian gesture, I return to consider its critical engagement with the ideological processes shaping television as a set of structural relations. As in *Mon fils*, Lublin’s environment staged an embodied encounter: wet and sandy feet, wind, food, leisure activities, the scents of plants and animals, the collaborative

¹⁴² Pierre Restany, “Una arquitectura de la información,” *El Litoral* (December 16, 1969).

¹⁴³ “Es evidente, como lo señaló Marshall McLuhan, que el arte se está ‘enfriando,’ que requiere una participación cada vez más directa por parte del observador. Con el retorno al principio barroco de involucramiento en el arte ambiental, en los recorridos, el observador pasa estar incluido dentro de la obra de arte.” Jorge Glusberg, ‘El Fluvio subtunal’, *Dinamis* 16 (January 1970): 58. *Dinamis* was the magazine of the Light and Power Workers trade union.

¹⁴⁴ McCarthy refers to television’s properties of spatial manipulation as “space-binding” in order to account for its shifting scales of relation (*Ambient Television*, 15).

¹⁴⁵ Restany, “Una arquitectura de la información.”

activity of creation and the passive activity of surveillance. As Plante notes, Lublin's environment remains connected to the conditions of its making by centering a dialogue between art and labor that insistently references the construction of the tunnel.¹⁴⁶ Santa Fe is a provincial city that would be profoundly changed by the Hernandarias Tunnel and its promises of modernization. The occasion for the work, its commission, its site, its materials and technologies all reflect on significant shifts of the period: in the relations among state, industry, and populace; capital and provinces; political elites and expanding middle classes; regional economies and global commerce. What is the relationship between the material conditions of modernization, Lublin asks, and the social conditions of modernity? And how do the overarching ideologies driving the "penetration" of television during this period take material form in modern Argentina? These questions emerged at the same moment in the work of Marie Orensanz, as she, too, was passing through Santa Fe.

MARIE ORENSANZ

In many ways, Orensanz's early career had paralleled Lublin's: after learning to paint in the atelier of the cubist Emilio Pettoruti, she had studied at Antonio Seguí's studio on calle Cangallo, then decamped to Europe in the early 1960s.¹⁴⁷ Seguí, she recalled in a later interview, "taught me the concept of freedom within painting. Mine has been an itinerary totally dedicated to the investigation of the essence of painting, of the essential in the

¹⁴⁶ As Plante has noted, "*La Menesunda* was marked by a Neo-Dada spirit that *Fluvio subtunal* eschewed; the former's situations were inspired by everyday life in Buenos Aires, organized in sixteen environments presented in an apparently random sequence." Lublin, on the other hand, "aspired to engage the public in analytical and historical reflection" through a structuralist critique of language ("Between Paris and the 'Third World'" 59).

¹⁴⁷ Seguí returned to Buenos Aires in 1961, after having his first child, Octavio, with his first wife, the ballerina Graciela Martínez. "Armo un taller en las antiguas salas de un club social español en la calle Cangallo, donde pintaba y daba clases a un heterogéneo grupo de jóvenes y damas" (*Orígenes: La obra temprana de Antonio Seguí*. Exh. cat., Buenos Aires: Centro Cultural Borges, 2007: 15).

gesture.”¹⁴⁸ In Paris in 1964, she stayed with Seguí (who was sharing his studio with Lublin at the time) and his wife, the dancer Graciela Martínez,¹⁴⁹ before renting a studio on rue Visconti from the collector René Drouin.¹⁵⁰ There, she participated in the *Salon des femmes* at the Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, where she won the *premio artista extranjero*. Returning to Buenos Aires in 1965, Orensanz participated in the Premio Braque and Premio *Ver y Estimar* exhibitions, both held at the Museo de Arte Moderno. In his introduction to the *Ver y Estimar* catalogue, Romero Brest emphasized the youth of the artists selected and the experimentation on display, gesturing toward the changes to come with the question, “¿No deja de ser así un premio en sentido convencional para transformarse en un dialogo?”¹⁵¹

By the time Orensanz and Paksa submitted to the 1967 editions of the Premios, just two years later, much had changed. Both were moving from figuration to geometric forms and experimenting with the spatial possibilities of industrial materials. For the Premio Braque, Orensanz submitted a triptych on acrylic and Paksa contributed two acrylic prisms, one transparent and one lit from within, whose play with materiality and virtuality would

¹⁴⁸ “Seguí me enseñó el concepto de libertad en lo interior de la pintura. Ha sido un itinerario totalmente dedicado a la indagación de la esencia en la pintura, de lo esencial en el gesto” (*María Orensanz*. Exh. cat., Buenos Aires: Artemúltiple, October 4-15, 1977).

¹⁴⁹ Martínez, along with Ana Kamien and Marilú Marini, was a pioneer of the modern dance movement Danza Actual at the Di Tella. Kamien continued their experimental performances at CAYC. Scholarship on this understudied realm of performance at both institutions is emerging; see Mara Polgovsky Ezcurra, “Mutable Bodies: Abstraction and Modern Dance in 1960s Argentina,” in *Oxford Art Journal* 45, no. 1 (March 1, 2022): 83–104. Seguí was, at this time, enjoying commercial success, and when he and Martínez moved to Paris in 1963, the Argentine press – including at least three different issues of *Análisis* – covered their community and surrounds: “Su espacioso pero rudimentario taller, un galpón en un patio de la antigua casona del científico François-Vincent Raspall en Arcueil, pasó de ser un club de asados para artistas latinoamericanos a un centro de entretenidas recepciones y gloriosas fiestas de las celebridades cultural de todo el planeta” (*Análisis* 303, 310, 462).

¹⁵⁰ René Drouin was a French designer and collector who had befriended Leo Castelli in the 1930s through their wives, Ileana and Olga, both natives of Romania. Drouin opened an art gallery, financed by Castelli, in July 1939 next to the Schiaparelli fashion house at 17 Place Vendome. Ileana later married Michael Sonnabend – see chapter 3.

¹⁵¹ *Premio de Honor Ver y Estimar 1965*. Exh. cat., Buenos Aires: Asociación Ver y Estimar, 1965.

become the basis for her series *Identidad en dos situaciones*.¹⁵² This was the year Romero Brest had reorganized the Premio Di Tella, and Aldo Pellegrini, introducing the Premio Braque catalogue, echoed his earnest curatorial tone:

The experimental nature of many of the showings presented here leaves more than one spectator in a state of instability: it doesn't feel like steady ground. But for that spectator – as well as for the creator – artistic experimentation is the best exercise with a view to the true liberation of the spirit, since he is forced to consider, without the rigidity of previous rules, what is presented to him. In the new art, the spectator is also concerned with the task of creation, he too has an active part in the process, completely different from the passive attitude in which traditional art placed him.¹⁵³

Though Orensanz did not participate in Romero Brest's reformatted Premio Di Tella of 1968, he organized another exhibition that year, *Artistas argentinos. Obras de Paris y Buenos Aires para alquilar y vender*, to emphasize the transnational cultural and commercial sphere in which the Di Tella positioned itself. For years the Di Tella had brokered the *idas y vueltas* of both artists and their artworks across the Atlantic, maintaining its currency as the home of the avant-garde in Buenos Aires by acting as a kind of agency or promotional machine for Argentine artists abroad.¹⁵⁴ And while the title of the exhibition juxtaposed nationalist categories, it is clear that the Di Tella and the artists affiliated with it – whether in Paris or Buenos Aires – saw themselves as part of a single, transnational scene. For the 1968 Premio Braque, against which Paksa had crusaded, the

¹⁵² *Premio Georges Braque 1967*. Exh. cat., Buenos Aires: Embajada de Francia, Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires, May 24-June 17, 1967; [Artes plasticas,] *Análisis* 319 (April 24, 1967): 43.; “El extraño caso del Premio Braque,” *Primera Plana* 231 (May 30, 1967)

¹⁵³ “El carácter experimental que tienen muchas de las manifestaciones presentadas, dejan a más de un espectador en estado de inestabilidad: no le parece pisar sobre seguro. Pero para ese espectador – tanto como para el creador – la experimentación artística es el mejor de los ejercicios con mira a una verdadera liberación del espíritu, ya que se ve obligado a considerar – sin la rigidez de esquemas previos – aquello que se le presenta. En el nuevo arte, también al espectador concierne la tarea de creación, también a él le corresponde una parte activa en el proceso, completamente distinta de la actitud pasiva en que lo colocaba el arte de tipo tradicional.” (*Premio Georges Braque 1967*).

¹⁵⁴ On this system, and Romero Brest's role in it, see Giunta, *Avant-Garde, Internationalism, and Politics*.

acrylic panels that had served as support for Orensanz's paintings began serving as support for sculptures. Her untitled submission was a "drawing" in black tape on two transparent acrylic panels, propped against the wall and on the floor [fig. 1.26]. In its scale and interest in space, it clearly anticipates the chunky sculptural forms, often displayed with concave mirrors, that Orensanz would call primary structures [fig. 1.27]. Nonetheless, the work earned a prize for drawing. Orensanz did not participate in the *Experiencias* exhibition at Di Tella, exhibiting her primary structures in a solo show at Galería El Taller instead, though she did sign the letter of protest in response to its closure. In September, she and Lublin both submitted acrylic works to *Materiales. Nueva técnicas y nueva expresión*, an exhibition which, as we will see in the next chapter, had its own brush with institutional overreach.

El pueblo de La Gallareta (1969)

In January 1969, Orensanz was on her way back from Brazil with a friend when she stopped in the small town of Vera, in rural Santa Fe, and encountered a labor struggle at the country's largest tannin factory, owned by La Forestal Argentina.¹⁵⁵ In the nearby village of La Gallareta, the company, who was the region's only employer, had contracted with the Argentine Railway Company. The contract was set to expire in April, threatening deprivation for the people of La Gallareta.¹⁵⁶ Flyers posted around town read:

Citizens: Death will not find us on our knees, because we are the inheritance of a people who know how to fight to defend their rights. Nothing will take us away from the path we have set out for ourselves even though there are many stumbles;

¹⁵⁵ According to Buccellato, someone handed Orensanz a flyer and asked said, "Do something for us" (*Marie Orensanz*, 44).

¹⁵⁶ On the long and conflict-ridden history of labor and La Forestal, see Rodolfo Walsh, "Las ciudades fantasmas" in *Georama* (August 1969) and Alejandro Jasinski, *Workers' Revolt and Massacre in La Forestal: Unionism and Business Violence in Yrigoyen Times* (Buenos Aires: Byblos, 2013).

because instead of stopping us, they will give us the necessary push to get up with more force...There is little time we have left. In April there will be no possible solution. Now is the time! There is not a single minute to lose! Join us in this fight to preserve our ONLY SOURCE OF WORK.¹⁵⁷

In February, for an exhibition with Mercedes Esteves at Galería Primera Plana in Mar del Plata, Orenszanz reproduced the slogan of the labor organizers, taken from the flyer, as a large format poster that read, “el PUEBLO DE LA GALLARETA lucha por su única fuente de trabajo” [fig. 1.28]. She hung about fifty copies of the poster, with thumbtacks, in a band of text around the perimeter of the room. Esteves, who had cleared the gallery of furniture, piled bags of cement and sand, in reference to the industrial materials produced in Mar del Plata, in the center of the room. As in Paksa’s and Lublin’s spatial interventions, Orenszanz seemed to be setting a stage or establishing an environment that relied on the presence of visitors. Photographs show her leaning jauntily against a pile of cement bags, there not as autonomous objects but as signifiers of something else, at once occupying an incongruous space (like Lublin) and pointing (like Paksa) to events beyond the gallery.

Orenszanz’s appropriation of text from the La Gallareta flyer, and its displacement from a small, dispossessed village in the Chaco to the walls of an art gallery in the seaside resort town of Mar del Plata, perform a gesture of consciousness-raising or solidarity. It turns over the privileged space of reflection, the gallery which works so hard to hide the

¹⁵⁷ “La Gallareta ante el inminente cierre de los ‘talleres de reparación de vagones ferroviarios’
Ciudadanos: No nos va a encontrar la muerte de rodillas, porque somos herencia de un pueblo que sabe luchar para defender sus derechos. Nada nos apartará del camino que nos hemos trazado aunque sean muchos los tropiezos; porque ellos en vez de detenernos, nos darán el empuje necesario para levantarnos con más fuerza. Seguiremos luchando mientras corra en nuestras venas esta sangre roja como la sabia del quebracho que nos arrebataron, y mientras conservamos la fortaleza del hierro con que trabajan nuestros obreros próximos a quedar en la calle. Mientras algunos poderosos, destructores de pueblos, acumulan dólares, nosotros estamos amontonando incertidumbre, desolación y hambre. La insensibilidad de quienes tienen en sus manos las soluciones que esperamos conseguir, no nos arredra, ni nos duele, antes bien nos causa lástima. ¡Desdichados de los que tienen en un cuerpo vivo al alma muerta! Este es el momento en que unidos formaremos el murallón indestructible de la solidaridad. Esto sale del pueblo y es su consecuencia. Y no hay fuerza ni ambición que pueda vencerlo. Es poco el tiempo que nos queda. En abril no habrá solución posible. ¡Ahora es el momento! ¡No hay un solo minuto que perder! Únase a nosotros en esta lucha por conservar nuestra ÚNICA FUENTE DE TRABAJO.”

ideological conditions of its production, to the political speech of striking workers. As a metonym, it links their localized labor struggle to larger, class-based critiques of national and international political systems that were taking shape in New Left cinema and activism.¹⁵⁸ By making visible La Forestal's exploitation of the precarity and dependence of its workforce, Orensanz linked *La Gallareta* to forms of visibility – such as Fernando Solanas' film *La hora de los hornos*, from the same year – deploying images as critiques of power and capital across vast geographical and political distances. Like the reconfigured spatial relations discussed in the artworks here, New Left cinema sought to mobilize new social relationships, political possibilities, and affective forms of communication across delocalized constituencies. *La Gallareta* invites its viewers not merely to contemplate the formal reduction of image to text but to enter into a process of identification with revolutionary subjectivity – to begin to see one's own political and physical body in relation to social forces, identity, feeling, power, and temporal experience.

La Gallareta, however, is a text. And it is my argument that Orensanz's repetitive arrangement of appropriated text enacts another performative gesture, one that is perhaps less sectarian but no less political in its implications. The posters reveal themselves as part of an information system – they narrate their existence not as autonomous art objects but as signifiers using the vocabulary of mass communication to address an anti-humanist subject who is “subjected” by that system, produced and secured by its authority.¹⁵⁹ The displacement of the text into an art gallery highlights its status as an object, isolating the code for analysis. As I will discuss in the next chapter, in an authoritarian context language

¹⁵⁸ See Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino “Hacia un Tercer Cine” (1969) and Glauber Rocha, “The Aesthetics of Hunger” (1965).

¹⁵⁹ Here I refer again to Althusser's description of state-produced subjectivity, though the word “anti-humanist” follows Eve Meltzer in *Systems We Have Loved: Conceptual Art, Affect, and the Antihumanist Turn* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

is so overdetermined that it becomes a sign in itself, rigid in its structures and excessive in its connotational meanings. Orensanz's signaling gesture – making clear to her spectators that they are embroiled in the same systems as the faraway workers of La Gallareta – raises the question posed earlier about what becomes of an active spectator. Can an open work that implicates the active spectator in its production achieve mobilization of the masses?

The state's response to Orensanz's gesture suggests one possible answer. Police closed the gallery the day after her exhibition opened, giving the artists the disingenuous reason that, since they were women, they should have been exhibiting images of flowers. Conceptually, the censorship of Orensanz's message completes the chain of signification, demonstrating the limits of what language can actually say and who controls it. It also recognizes that cultural forms, including art, were indeed contributing to a social realignment that threatened the military's grip on government. If the uprisings that began in Paris the previous spring had not yet boiled over in Argentina, Orensanz's choice to highlight a rural labor conflict suggests that by January 1969, social tensions were simmering.¹⁶⁰ Just a few months after the exhibition, Argentina responded with its own series of uprisings, a kind of parallel 1968 beginning in April in Tucumán and in May in Rosario and concluding with the *Cordobazo* on May 29 and 30, 1969.

As in Paris, the uprising in Córdoba brought students into alliance with trade unions to strike against repealed labor protections, protest police violence and university crackdowns, and demand a return to democratic rule.¹⁶¹ As Ross has written about Paris

¹⁶⁰ Although Carassai cites the Argentine media's insistence on the *lack* of revolution occurring up until May 1969, I tend to subscribe to Kristin Ross's longer periodization of events; this was a culminating event with a long preparation rather than "a thunderclap in the middle of a serene sky."

¹⁶¹ On this charged political atmosphere, including the tradition of labor militancy in Argentina's industrial cities and its uneasy alliance with students, see James P. Brennan and Mónica B. Gordillo, "Working Class Protest, Popular Revolt, and Urban Insurrection in Argentina: The 1969 Cordobazo," in *Journal of Social History* 27, no. 3 (Spring 1994): 477-498.

1968, the reconfigured social relations that put the *Cordobazo* into motion relied on an experimental displacement that mirrors the operations of the art discussed here:

The movement took the form of political experiments in declassification, in disrupting the natural ‘givenness’ of places; it consisted of displacements that took students out of the university, meetings that brought farmers and workers together, or students to the countryside...It was that disjuncture that allowed students and intellectuals to break with the identity of a particular social group with particular self-interests and accede to something larger, to politics in the sense that Rancière gives it, or to what Maurice Blanchot has singled out as the specific force of May: ‘in the so-called “student” action, students never acted as students but rather as revealers of a general crisis, as bearers of power of rupture putting into question the regime, the State, society.’¹⁶²

In Córdoba, street demonstrations arising from a planned strike on May 29 took on a massive and popular character, with middle-class housewives and businessmen joining in the spontaneous urban revolt. When the demonstrations turned destructive, late in the afternoon on May 29, Onganía dispatched troops to occupy the city, where they were met with violence. The immediate result of the two days of occupied protest, with an official figure of twelve killed (and an actual figure of as many as sixty), was a disruption of national politics; Onganía was forced to resign a year later.¹⁶³ The long-term result, as Carassai has meticulously documented, was “a spiral of violence that did not cease to multiply and acquire new forms until the end of the 1970s.”¹⁶⁴

It is that environment of multiplying violence – its ebbs and flows, its changing forms – that underpins everyday life in the rest of this dissertation. The works and decisions made by the artists, the closure of the Di Tella and the opening of CAYC, its structures as

¹⁶² Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives*, 26. I would add, in the Argentine context, the role of liberation theology and Third World Catholicism to this mix of social actors.

¹⁶³ Brennan and Gordillo cite Daniel Villar, *El cordobazo* (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1971) for this figure. In their telling, “Onganía was henceforth nearly completely dependent on the support of the army to remain in power and, his government never able to reassert its authority after the Cordoban protest, he was forced to resign a year later” (491).

¹⁶⁴ Carassai, *The Argentine Silent Majority*, 49.

well as the explicit and implicit content of the works produced there; I do not mean to characterize these as directly causal events or reactions to the onset of political violence. I consider, however, the permeation of violence into popular culture and lived experience to be so thorough that it was both everywhere and nowhere, assumed and therefore unsaid. Carassai documents, for example, the absorption of the symbolic vocabularies of guerilla warfare into television, music, and advertising. Newsweeklies reported on the fashion for guns; a 1975 story in *Gente* ran below a stunningly symmetrical counterimage to the feature that introduced this chapter. Again taken from the inside of a shop window, it captures the enthusiastic faces of shoppers who have stopped on a city street to peruse the offerings of a gun store. They are costumed in the suits and trench coats of businessmen, the glasses and cardigans of students, even a woman with a skirt and a cigarette, pointing as if to a screen. Titled “A View from Inside the Window,” the article’s marveling tone suggests something of-the-moment, perhaps slightly scandalous but universally perceptible, about the desire for guns: “A street like any other, downtown. A shop window. It is not a fashion boutique, it is not a Prode agency. It doesn’t display lottery tickets, nor do they offer stereos, radios or recorders. On display, simply, are weapons. If you haven’t noticed, we’ll tell you: the busiest shop windows, today, are armories. Think about it. Look from this side of the window. Look at those curious faces. And reflect on why people look for a revolver, a pistol, or a shotgun, these clear symbols of violence.”¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ “Una calle cualquiera, del centro. Una vidriera. No es una boutique de moda, no es una agencia de ‘Prode.’ Tampoco se exhiben allí los extractos de lotería ni si ofrecen aparatos estereofónicos, radios o grabadores. Allí, simplemente, se exhiben armas. Es la vidriera de una armería. Si usted no lo notó, se lo decimos: las vidrieras mas concurridas, hoy, son las de las armerías. Piénselo. Mire desde este lado del escaparate. Mire esas caras curiosas. Y reflexione por que la gente busca un revólver, una pistola, o una escopeta, estos símbolos claros de la violencia.” “Una mirada desde adentro de la vidriera,” in *Gente* 513 (May 22, 1975). Prode was a form of sports betting run through agencies (licensed by the government) starting in 1971.

CONCLUSION: FROM THE CENTRO DE ARTES VISUALES TO THE CENTRO DE ARTE Y COMUNICACIÓN

Sometime in mid-1970, the Di Tella closed. Art historian Fernando Davis describes Romero Brest's project simply as "thwarted," while John King, its most thorough chronicler, points to an economic crisis at Siam Di Tella: "It was clearly the result of financial stringencies, yet many commentators point out that the Centres were a political embarrassment at a time when a bankrupt company was trying to negotiate with an economically modernizing but culturally rather stultifying military government."¹⁶⁶ Giunta refers to Oteiza's account that the Di Tella family struck a deal with the military government in which the state absorbed its debts in exchange for closing. In an interview with *Análisis* in April 1970, Romero Brest was asked, "How do you view the immediate future of the Di Tella Visual Arts Center?" and he replied,

It does not depend exclusively on me, but I would like for it to be a base of experiences of all kinds, even broader than it has been, and also interdisciplinary. Apart from this, I would like to create a center for theoretical research. In this field, we still don't know anything. Furthermore, I realize that the institution cannot continue to function as such. Because no one accepts the authority of anyone; the most that can be accepted is the exercise of ideas.¹⁶⁷

His comment seems to acknowledge that his institution, even with its capacious support for experimentation, its ability to stretch and encompass increasingly broad and interdisciplinary forms of "experience," could no longer keep pace with the theoretical shifts treating art as a form of communication nor the political radicalization of the artists associated with it.

¹⁶⁶ Fernando Davis and Ana Longoni, *Romero* (Buenos Aires: Fundación Espigas, 2010): 79. John King, "El Di Tella and Argentine Cultural Development in the 1960s," in *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 1, no. 1 (1981): 105-12.

¹⁶⁷ "No depende exclusivamente de mí, pero quisiera que fuera a base de experiencias de todo tipo, más amplias todavía que hasta ahora, y además, interdisciplinarias. Aparte de esto, quisiera crear un centro de investigaciones teóricas. En ese campo, aquí todavía no sabemos nada. Además, me doy cuenta de que la institución no puede seguir funcionando como tal. Porque nadie acepta la rectoría de nadie; lo más que se puede aceptar, es el ejercicio de las ideas." *Análisis* 475 (April 20-27, 1970), 59.

“In 1968 the revolution felt so real, so imminent, that it seemed impossible not to respond to its call,” Giunta writes.¹⁶⁸ After *Experiencias 68* and the Premio Braque, artists like Paksa had moved toward a more anti-institutional stance. She had staged her protest against Romero Brest with the help of the Frente Antiimperialista de Trabajadores de la Cultura; she had contributed to the early stages of planning *Tucumán arde*, shown in CGT union halls; and, at the end of the year, she had organized the Encuentro Cultura 1968, bringing together politicized representatives from the fields of journalism, film, art, and theater to debate the role and utility of aesthetic action. Luis Felipe Noé and Ricardo Carpani represented one group of visual artists, Juan Pablo Renzi, Roberto Jacoby, León Ferrari, and Paksa another. Journalist Rodolfo Walsh represented the CGT newspaper, Octavio Getino the filmmakers associated with Cine Liberación. In her opening remarks, Paksa acknowledged the difficulty of a politics that asks artists to unlearn the myth of their own autonomy and to achieve a unity based in expediency or necessity.

What we have to demolish, approximate, transform is Art, Aesthetics – understood as barriers that we ourselves raise to differentiate ourselves. But in reality we...with our work are implicated, contaminated, living our contradiction as conscious beings, assisting a society that we deny and proposing another to which we aspire.¹⁶⁹

Calling for unity across formal and ideological differences, Paksa stitches political commitment to art that “appropriates life.” In what could have been a brief history of the previous decade, she concluded, “Life was represented in the painting and hanging on the wall; we removed the frame, it became an object and entered the space of the room; then it

¹⁶⁸ Giunta, *Avant-Garde, Internationalism, and Politics*, 287.

¹⁶⁹ “Lo que a nosotros nos toca demoler, aproximar, transformar es el Arte, la Estética, entendidas como barreras que nosotros mismos levantamos para diferenciarnos...Pero en afán de realidad, sabemos que no podemos arrancar sectores y transponerlos a otros tan fácilmente; que nosotros con nuestro quehacer estamos implicados, contaminados, viviendo nuestra contradicción en cuanto seres conscientes, asistiendo a una sociedad que negamos y proponiendo otra a la cual aspiramos.” Margarita Paksa, “Texto del informe de Margarita Paksa a Cultura 1968,” December 1968.

occupied the building, and when it still seemed confined, it went out to the street.”¹⁷⁰ For Paksa, and others, this progression from the canvas to the spatial environment to the street attended both the ideological changes happening around her and her changing relationship to the active spectator. If she was no longer making art for, but with, her viewer, both were equally imbricated in a process of becoming aware of their position in the world. For Paksa, that process could no longer occur inside the gallery. “From ’70 to ’74 I went to work in the *villas*, in La Matanza, because it was close to my house in Castelar,” she recalled. “I told myself: ‘I am going to keep working on what I believe in,’ in closer contact with the people and by abandoning art. I went to work in the *villas* and joined a group of Peronist activists that Rodolfo Walsh had recommended to me...and I fell into the background of the Di Tella! It was as if to further dissolve any possibility of being recognized as an artist.”¹⁷¹ Whether it was corollary or causal, Paksa’s art and the Di Tella dissolved hand-in-hand.

Jorge Glusberg was personally ready to take on the scope and ambition of the Di Tella, and self-consciously positioned himself as Romero Brest’s successor. CAYC, which Glusberg had founded in 1968 under the name Centro de Estudios en Arte y Comunicación and was still without a space of its own, rehearsed its fledgling exhibition program with the show *Arte y Cibernética* at the Bonino Gallery in August 1969.¹⁷² By October 1970,

¹⁷⁰ “La vida estaba plasmada en el cuadro y el colgado en una pared; retiramos el marco, se transformó en objeto y paso al ambiente de la sala; luego ocupó el edificio y cuando aún le pareció mucho encierro se fue a la calle.” Paksa, “Texto del informe,” December 1968.

¹⁷¹ “Del ’70 a ’74 fui a trabajar a las villas, a La Matanza, porque quedaba cerca de mi casa en Castelar. Me dije: ‘voy a seguir trabajando en lo que creo,’ en un contacto mayor con el pueblo y un abandono del arte. Fui a trabajar a las villas y entré a un grupo que me había recomendado Rodolfo Walsh, de peronistas activistas...y yo caía con el *background* del Di Tella! Era como para disolver aún más toda posibilidad de ser reconocida como artista.” Buccellato, *Margarita Paksa*, 105.

¹⁷² *Arte y Cibernética* included British, US, and Japanese artists, one year after ICA London's *Cybernetic Serendipity*, and made use of IBM software and engineers from Escuela ORT. In a 1969 assessment of computing capabilities among Argentine educational institutions, researcher Aaron Finerman noted that there were fewer than 200 computers total in Argentina; that nine universities visited throughout the

just months after the last show at the Di Tella's Centro de Artes Visuales, the futuristic new CAYC gallery opened. Only a few blocks away, CAYC's address at 452 Viamonte sought to establish a sense of continuity among the community of artists based in the area.¹⁷³ But its architecture seemed to solicit someone new: the viewer-*voyeur* walking the city in search of televisual spectacle. Designed by Justo Solsona of the firm Manteola, Sánchez Gómez, Santos, Solsona y Viñoly, CAYC's boxy metal facade featured two openings: a large octagonal entrance, like the screen of a television, and, like its control, a smaller window with CAYC information, gallery hours, and an actual closed-circuit television broadcasting the activities of the gallery to passersby on the street. Inside, more technology was on display, as the octagonal frame of the entrance repeated, conjuring depth of space or soundwaves down the first-floor hallway and toward a spiral staircase leading to the galleries below [fig. 1.29]. The architectural evocation of an expanded, or multi-, media was not subtle, and a *gacetilla* announcing the inaugural exhibition underscored its centrality to CAYC's identity. Titled *Expansión del arte*, the show, "organized for the inauguration of the new CAYC galleries," was based on three hypotheses:

1. PUBLIC ART. The new art is no longer limited to classical exhibition spaces; it simultaneously uses communication media, it happens in the realms of landscape, in the city, in regions still unexplored by creativity.

2. THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE PUBLIC.

The new art takes into account the scope of the individual experience of man and his confrontation with the experience of other individuals in a new society.

country were using a total of 11 computers, and that no computer science curricula yet existed at any of them (Aaron Finerman, "Computing Capabilities at Argentine and Chilean Universities," *Communication of the Association for Computing Machinery*, vol. 12, no. 8 (August 1969): 425–431). *Arte y Cibernética* later traveled to Cordoba (September 1969); Santa Fe (September 1969); Punta del Este (February 1970); Coltejer, Medellín (May 1970); Bogotá (June 1970); Montevideo (August 1970); and La Rioja (September 1970).

¹⁷³ Also nearby were UBA and Eudeba, Bar Moderno, and the Florida Street galleries, such as Carmen Waugh, where Lublin concurrently had a solo show open (*Lea Lublin. Proceso a la imagen: Recorrido*. Exh. cat., Buenos Aires: Galería Carmen Waugh, December 1970).

3. ART AS A CORRELATED SYSTEM OF DIFFERENT DISCIPLINES.

Artist's use of physical, biological, ecological experiences.¹⁷⁴

The list could be read as an abbreviated manifesto of CAYC. With it, and with his new exhibition program, Glusberg stepped into the institutional lacuna and styled himself as an international cultural broker with the modest goal of founding the new Argentine avant-garde. If the avant-garde of the 1970s was to be “new,” Glusberg’s framing nonetheless picked up where the Di Tella left off, opening the gallery to the spatial critiques for which artists like Paksa and Lublin had become known.

A few months into its inception, CAYC held a day of “intensive discussion sessions” on the relationship between aesthetics and industry. Citing the Artist Placement Group in London, Les Levine’s Negotiable Intelligence Logistics (“an art-world version of the RAND Corporation”) and Iain Baxter’s N.E. Thing Co. Ltd., the panel visualized industrial materials, processes, and organization as new ways for artists to “communicate” with a wider world; that is, to mediate a repositioning of the social role of the artist. “Current works are conceived as a structure of information exchange; they are no longer proposed in private and secret terms but are incorporated into the viewer, the public, and rely on them,” the event’s announcement read, revealing a skepticism of autonomous production that would underpin CAYC’s working methods.¹⁷⁵ Though it lists Paksa as a

¹⁷⁴ “1. ARTE-PUBLICO. El arte nuevo ya no se limita a los lugares clásicos de exhibición, utiliza simultáneamente medios de comunicación; sucede en el ámbito del paisaje, de las ciudades, en regiones aun inexploradas por la facultad creadora. 2. LA INTERDEPENDENCIA DE LO INDIVIDUAL Y LO PÚBLICO. El arte nuevo toma en cuenta el ámbito de la experiencia individual del hombre y su confrontación con la experiencia de otros individuos en una nueva sociedad. 3. EL ARTE COMO SISTEMA CORRELATIVO DE DISTINTAS DISCIPLINAS. Utilización por los artistas de experiencias físicas, biológicas, ecológicas.” GT-06, “Expansión del arte,” September 26, 1970. On the role of this architectural firm in reformulations of social space amid the ascendant consumerism emphasized by post-Peronist governments, see See Laura Podalsky, “Architecture on the Up and Out,” in *Specular City* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004).

¹⁷⁵ “Las obras actuales son concebidas con la idea de una estructura en el intercambio de información; ya no son planteadas en términos privados y secretos, sino que están incorporadas al espectador, al público y

painter, the questions constellated by the CAYC panel track her transition from sculptor (using industrial materials such as steel) to conceptual artist and designer of useful objects (using industrial materials such as plastic).

Indeed, her work *Relaxing Egg* – acrylic handheld multiples designed to be squeezed for relaxation – use industrial materials to gently lampoon industry itself. A card accompanying the colorful eggs suggests “channeling into a tactile and visual form the full range of gestures and graphics that accompany a person while they are sitting at their desk, thinking, solving, elucidating. Its shiny and polished surface allows constant rotation in the hand, granting a gradual physical discharge that brings about relaxation” [fig. 1.30].¹⁷⁶ While the egg is directed to be used by the right hand (“una mano apta, ejercitada y sensible”), in a thank-you note Lawrence Alloway wrote Paksa, “My wife and I love your relaxing-egg. It is beautiful and playful...As a tactile object and as a visual datum the egg is equally successful. NOTE: My wife is left-handed, so she holds it with that hand (‘dexterous, practiced, sensitive’).”¹⁷⁷ The visual simplicity of the object, accompanied by a lengthy text explaining its materials and function, parodies conceptual art as much as business.

Paksa shared this deadpan criticality, and use of a material like plastic to engage critically with capitalism, with Les Levine, who, like Lublin and Paksa, spent the late 1960s building immersive, participatory environments using Mylar, wind machines, and closed-circuit televisions. Finding a champion in Jack Burnham, Levine conceived of his

se deben a él.” GT-03, “Jornadas intensivas de discusión 1970. Segunda reunión: arte e industria,” Galería Bonino, August 29, 1970.

¹⁷⁶ “Canalizar hacia una forma táctil y visual toda la gama de gestos y grafismos que acompañan a la persona en los momentos en que está sentada frente a su mesa, pensando, resolviendo, dilucidando. Su superficie brillante y pulida permite el giro constante en la mano otorgando una gradual descarga física que trae aparejado el ‘relax.’” Reproduced in Buccellato, *Margarita Paksa*, 75.

¹⁷⁷ Reproduced in Buccellato, *Margarita Paksa*, 79.

environments as “totally open systems” reliant on the contingent experience of a viewer-participant. And yet in both artists’ work there is a democratizing impulse, a turn toward serial or even disposable objects in order to undermine the market operations and visual autonomy of art. Citing Levine as “possibly the most consistent exponent of a systems esthetic,” Burnham published his germinal essay “Systems Esthetics” in *Artforum* in 1968, and Alloway followed it with “Network: The Art World Described as a System” in 1972. In the years between, Glusberg had adapted the language of systems as the primary heuristic for CAYC’s operational structure. In February 1971, he organized the exhibition *De la figuración al arte de sistemas en Argentina* to open at the Camden Art Centre in London. The exhibition’s title positions systems in opposition to figuration, a teleological outcome of increased material experimentation and interdisciplinary thinking.

A short introduction in the exhibition’s English-language catalogue, organized as a deck of loose-leaf cards, notes that CAYC is composed of “artists, sociologists, logicians, critics of art and psychologists. They intend to enhance behaviour and massive communication phenomena and the rupture of traditional forms.”¹⁷⁸ Positioning “arte de sistemas” as a formal rupture with figuration suggests that Glusberg’s use of the term was perhaps more aligned with Lucy Lippard and John Chandler’s term “dematerialization,” published in *Art International* in 1968.¹⁷⁹ But, by the time the exhibition returned to

¹⁷⁸ *De la figuración al arte de sistemas*. Exh. cat., Buenos Aires and London: Centro de Arte y Comunicación and Camden Arts Center, 1970.

¹⁷⁹ Lippard and Chandler, “The Dematerialization of Art,” in *Art International* 12, no. 2 (February 1968): 31–36. This essay traces a more formalist or object-oriented history of conceptual art that does not necessarily acknowledge the social implications of Burnham’s theory. Burnham argued that the application of a “systems esthetic” could render form secondary, allowing art to address “such concerns as maintaining the biological livability of the Earth, producing more accurate models of social interaction, understanding the growing symbiosis in man-machine relationships, establishing priorities for the usage and conservation of natural resources, and defining alternate patterns of education, productivity, and leisure.” While it is clear that this is true of the works described in this chapter, my argument extends to apply this equally to Sol LeWitt, Mel Bochner, Joseph Kosuth, or Robert Morris.

Buenos Aires, opening simply as *Arte de Sistemas* at the Museo de Arte Moderno, Glusberg explained much more broadly,

Systems art includes the latest trends in art from the second half of this century: art as an idea, ecological art, poor art, cybernetic art, art of proposals, political art, will be grouped under the term systems art; they are the apparently different concerns of vanguard artists who are preparing to investigate the entry of man into the 21st century.¹⁸⁰

Systems, to the degree they were aesthetic, were reflective of massive economic and geopolitical processes reshaping the world. This use of the term is actually closer to Burnham's thesis that "the most important artist best succeeds by liquidating his position as artist vis-à-vis society."¹⁸¹ Works such as Paksa's *Comunicaciones*, Lublin's *Mon fils* and *Fluvio subtunal*, and Orensanz's *La Gallareta* constructed these systems, enmeshing their active spectators in a range of material and embodied entanglements, an expanded understanding of environment that art would both represent and reveal.

My aim, in sketching the intersections among terms, is in part to demonstrate their alluring malleability within emergent discourses of conceptual art. If Glusberg and the artists associated with CAYC's founding found the terms useful in using art to analyze the systems that were materially and affectively shaping their lives, their North American counterparts were no less engaged with questions of power. In fact, it is not enough to say that CAYC's emergence was coincident with these debates; it was an important participant in shifting the perspective especially of North American and European critics and artists away from the narrow focus on materiality and objecthood. Lippard, who (as I will discuss

¹⁸⁰ "El arte de sistemas incluye las últimas tendencias del arte de la segunda mitad de este siglo. Arte como idea, arte ecológico, arte pobre, arte cibernético, arte de propuestas, arte político, se agruparán bajo el termino arte de sistemas; son las inquietudes apartemente distintas de diferentes artistas de avanzada que se aprestan a investigar la entrada del hombre al siglo XXI, donde el arte – como consecuencia del cambio social y la automatización que aumentará el ocio – podría no llamarse así, se convertirá seguramente en uno de los ejercicios espirituales básicos de las nuevas comunidades." GT-54, "Arte de sistemas en el museo de arte moderno," June 28, 1971.

¹⁸¹ Burnham, "Systems Aesthetics," 31.

in the next chapter) curated the second exhibition at the new CAYC space, told Ursula Meyer in 1969, “I was politicized by a trip to Argentina in the fall of 1968, when I talked to artists who felt it would be immoral to make their [object-based] art in the society that existed there. It becomes clear that today everything, even art, exists in a political situation.”¹⁸²

Glusberg’s model for *De la figuración al arte de sistemas en Argentina* was Kynaston McShine’s exhibition *Information*, an “international report” which had opened the previous summer at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and included artists such as Marta Minujín, Jorge Caraballa, the Grupo Frontera (Adolfo Bronowski, Carlos Espartaco, Mercedes Esteves, and Ines Gross), the New York Graphic Workshop (Luis Camnitzer, Liliana Porter, and José Guillermo Castillo), and Carlos D’Alessio. “If you are an artist in Brazil, you know of at least one friend who is being tortured; if you are one in Argentina, you probably have had a neighbor who has been in jail for having long hair, or for not being ‘dressed’ properly; and if you are living in the United States, you may fear that you will be shot at, either in the universities, in your bed, or more formally in Indochina,” McShine wrote. “It may seem too inappropriate, if not absurd, to get up in the morning, walk into a room, and apply dabs of paint from a little tube to a square of canvas.”¹⁸³ It is not that Glusberg’s “systems art” adapted the vocabulary of

¹⁸² Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2007): 8. As Julia Bryan-Wilson notes in her chapter on Lippard in Argentina, McShine and Lippard worked to demonstrate that information had become inherently political: “Lippard said in a lecture in 1969, ‘The dispersion of information about art and information that is art...[is] connected to radical political goals; these parallels are so obvious that they don’t have to be pointed out.’ This assertion was backed up by numerous examples of artists embracing information as a way to inject politics into art praxis, not least Kynaston McShine’s 1970s *Information* show at New York’s MoMA – a pivotal exhibition that put peace posters next to news clippings next to conceptual art projects and that included a piece of experimental writing by Lippard in the catalog” (Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers*, 137). Contrary to Lippard’s belief in the self-evident politics of information, North American art history has remembered conceptual art as a formalist exercise in structural analysis.

¹⁸³ Kynaston McShine, ed. *Information* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, July 2-September 20, 1970): 138.

dematerialization or conceptual information and applied it to his egregious social reality, because he and CAYC existed in the same social reality as everybody else.

The catalogue for *De la figuración al arte de sistemas en Argentina*, as in *Information*, established its own informal system, allowing each of its 26 artists to make their own contributions to the slim portfolio of cards. Mirtha Dermisache, exhibiting her work for the first time, contributed an untitled 96-page text, which she posed next to in a photograph. A short bio states only, and erroneously, that she was born in Buenos Aires in 1950. A short text, probably written by Glusberg and translated by Raul Colbert, accompanies two small reproductions of Dermisache's calligraphic writing, framing them in dense, theoretical terms: "While in common language the purpose of communication is to direct the speaker's attention towards extra-linguistic reality, the artistic purpose operates directly on the signals and develops the knowledge of the relationships between the level of the 'signifying' (that is the formal organization of physical substance) and the 'meaning' (formal organization of psychic substance)."¹⁸⁴ In an alternately bemused and patronizing review of the exhibition for the *Hampstead Arts Review*, British critic Guy Burn singled out two women (of only four participating), Dermisache and Josefina Robirosa, as "rather separate from the others...loners, the artists involved with the eternal problems of emotion, illusion, and the unconscious."¹⁸⁵

Lublin's entry in the catalogue features a more substantial biography, chronicling her travels in Europe and contributions "regularly to the most significant shows, being invited to exhibit at Bienales and Galleries in Europe and Latin America" in addition to

¹⁸⁴ "Mirtha Dermisache." In *De la figuración al arte de sistemas*. Exh. cat., Buenos Aires and London: Centro de Arte y Comunicación and Camden Arts Center, 1970.

¹⁸⁵ Guy Burn, "Figuration to Systems Art in Argentina." *Arts Review* (1970): 106.

“14 one-man shows.”¹⁸⁶ Three small photographs illustrate the artist at work installing *Fluvio subtunal*, along with installation views [fig. 1.31]. A short text, clearly written by Lublin, asserts that “We are trying to substitute creation for adaptation. That is to replace cultural conditioning with the questioning of all the elements that determine the system.”¹⁸⁷ Her analysis of systems, confident use of equations and assertive “we,” and declared aim to “decondition, demystify, and deculturalize,” contrast with Dermisache’s more timid offering. Next to a photograph of participants moving through her “system,” Lublin announces that “the space-distance that separated the spectator is now the element of a new transforming relationship.” The new active spectator Lublin describes could just as well be the London museumgoer handling the catalogue. This was the new spectator of conceptual art, closing the space-distance of traditional power relations and transforming society.

¹⁸⁶ “Lea Lublin.” In *De la figuración al arte de sistemas*. Exh. cat., Buenos Aires and London: Centro de Arte y Comunicación and Camden Arts Center, 1970.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.* Emphasis theirs.

Chapter 2: The Viewer-Reader Between the Lines, 1972-1976

Its clarity, its possibility of access to the viewer-reader, are evident: conceptual art demands a direct mental reconstruction, an active participation of the viewer... The artist's activity now becomes that of a researcher, of a diver into the realm of communication. Conceptual art is interested in the environment that surrounds us, in time, in processes, in the systems interrelating the experiences of daily life.

Jorge Glusberg, GT-20, November 28, 1970

What art makes us see, and therefore gives us in the form of 'seeing,' 'perceiving,' and 'feeling' (which is not the form of *knowing*) is the ideology from which it is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art and which it *alludes*.

Louis Althusser, *A Letter on Art in Reply to André Daspre*, 1966

INTRODUCTION

A September 1968 article for *Análisis*, written by Jorge Glusberg, appears with a photograph of Lucy Lippard and Jean Clay consulting each other thoughtfully over an iron sculpture by David Lamelas [fig. 2.1]. Lippard and Clay are in Buenos Aires as jurors for the exhibition *Materiales. Nueva técnicas y nueva expresión*, sponsored by the Unión Industrial Argentina at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, and they have stepped into a sticky situation. Though they had been invited to choose the recipient of a cash prize provided by a plastics manufacturer, they arrived to find that the corporate sponsors sought to exert editorial control over the exhibition and selection process – as had happened with the Premio Braque several months earlier – and indeed had already selected a winner. Art historian Julia Bryan-Wilson chronicles Lippard's arrival in a militarized Argentina and subsequent jurying experience as “bewildering”; Lippard said, “I honestly didn't know

what to make of it.”¹⁸⁸ Channeling, perhaps, a bit of her naïveté, Bryan-Wilson writes that “the prize, ostensibly an honor of artistic quality or innovation, was an overt attempt to press art into the service of business publicity, and the incident opened Lippard’s eyes to the toxic influence of corporate patronage. In her words, ‘I was forced to confront and reject corporate control.’”¹⁸⁹

In addition to complications posed by corporate interference, Lippard and Clay faced an underwhelming selection of works. Seemingly unaware of the artist boycotts (and Paksa’s arrest) at other juried exhibitions that year, the critics expressed bewilderment also with who was not participating. Glusberg wrote, “There are notorious absences (“I would have liked to see the works of the young Rosario Group in the exhibition, I don’t understand why the *experiencias* of Pablo Suarez, Oscar Bony, and Margarita Paksa weren’t present,” complained the contrite, alarmed, nervous Jean Clay), which have detracted from the show’s lucidity and freshness, as well as its representativeness.”¹⁹⁰ Whether the exhibition was “fresh” or “representative” may have been beside the point, since Clay’s complaints make clear that he had arrived with rather specific expectations for the Argentine avant-garde: “Precisely, I wanted to come to Buenos Aires to see if Argentine artists have been able to rise above the economic fixation of underdeveloped countries on fighting against Yankee imperialism,” he told Glusberg in an interview. “What has always struck me is that Argentina has had a strong core of artists – that without friends or powerful galleries to

¹⁸⁸ Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers*, 133. Describing the significance of Lippard’s exposure and reaction to corruption and paramilitary culture in Argentina, Bryan-Wilson conflates some of the events surrounding the *Materiales* prize with the circumstances of the Braque prize of the same year, discussed in chapter 1.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ “Hay ausencias demasiado notorias (“Me hubiera gustado ver en la exposición las obras del grupo joven del Rosario, no entiendo por que las experiencias de Pablo Suarez, Oscar Bony, y Margarita Paksa no estuvieron presentes,” se quejaba contrito, alarmado, el nervioso Jean Clay), que le han restado lucidez y frescura a la muestra, además de representatividad.” Jorge Glusberg, “Premios con variaciones.” *Análisis* 393 (September 25, 1968): 42.

represent them, it has produced Lucio Fontana, the Madí and Concreto groups, and finally the Groupe de la Recherche d'Art Visuel. But I fear that, at the moment, the new groups are not integrated at a high international level, that the best ones emigrated and the rest have stopped producing avant-garde art.”¹⁹¹ For Clay (who had come, as Lippard recounts, “straight from the barricades in Paris”¹⁹²), all the good artists had either left or quit making art, and what was left to see in Buenos Aires was middling, bourgeois work reliant on, and compromised by, corporate interests. Indeed, the *non*-participation of artists such as Paksa, who they had come to see, may have better demonstrated the degree of political engagement which Clay claimed to admire in artists from “underdeveloped countries fighting against Yankee imperialism.” Glusberg, perhaps not identifying with Clay’s description of his country as “underdeveloped” or with his mythic vision of poor, individual artists working without institutional support, and thus with a hint of incredulity, asked whether Argentine artists should be making art in a “poor manner” instead. “The majority of modern art has been created by poor artists, not supported by industrialists or anyone,” Clay replied.¹⁹³

When asked her opinion on what she had seen, Lippard replied, slightly more diplomatically, ‘It’s as sophisticated as that of New York; actually, much more than Chicago, Houston or San Francisco,’ emphasizing the continuities she found in “immense works, capable of becoming public” and with earthworks in the United States. “Viewers

¹⁹¹ “Justamente, quise venir a Buenos Aires para ver si los artistas argentinos han podido salir a flote de la intoxicación económica de los países subdesarrollados que luchan contra el imperialismo yanqui. Lo que siempre me ha llamado la atención es que la Argentina haya tenido un fuerte núcleo de artistas, que sin amigos ni galerías poderosas que los representaran haya producido a Lucio Fontana, a los grupos Madí y Concreto, finalmente al Groupe de la Recherche d’Art Visuel. No obstante, advierto que, en la actualidad, los nuevos grupos no se integran a un alto nivel internacional, que los valiosos emigraron y los otros han dejado de producir arte de vanguardia.” *Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁹² Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers*, 133.

¹⁹³ “La mayor parte del arte moderno ha sido creado por artistas pobres, no apoyados por industriales ni por nadie.” Glusberg, “Premios con variaciones,” 47.

enter the experience from a completely different angle than is traditional,” she explained.¹⁹⁴ Clarifying that she and Clay were against the “necessary evil” of prize-giving, she had accepted the invitation because she wanted to see what Argentine artists were doing. She remained in Argentina, as Glusberg’s guest, for another month after the *Materiales* exhibition, where she did come into contact with the Rosario-based artists planning *Tucumán arde*.¹⁹⁵ And though she did not stay long enough to see that exhibition in its final form, Lippard has repeatedly cited the trip to Argentina, and the artists she encountered there, as the event that radicalized her work as a critic and curator and as a model for a more integrated practice of artmaking and political activism.

In Bryan-Wilson’s telling, *Tucumán arde* “represented for Lippard a situation in which artists moved fully into the realm of social justice struggles and showed her the political possibilities of collaborating with workers and unions.”¹⁹⁶ But, she notes, since Lippard did not stay to see the complex material and sensorial interplay through which *Tucumán arde* built out a performative spatial critique, she “in part misread” it – “she thought it represented the *total evaporation* of art that she had already glimpsed with some conceptual work, the absolute ceasing of art making, when in fact the Rosario Group understood their work as a collective, new form of practice meant to hold art, information, and activism in sustained tension.”¹⁹⁷ This total evaporation or (to use a word introduced

¹⁹⁴ “Los espectadores entran en la experiencia desde un ángulo completamente distinto al tradicional.” Ibid., 48. Spencer has noted, additionally, that in May 1971, the “British art historian Charles Harrison apologized to the artist Sue Arrowsmith that his CAYC show was ‘rather out in the sticks—I mean, it is not New York.’ The exchanges around 2,972,453 indicate that Glusberg was attempting to counter such inequalities and reductive attitudes, even if his approach was sometimes abrasively opportunistic” (“Navigating Internationalism from Buenos Aires,” 63).

¹⁹⁵ Pip Day, “Locating ‘2,972,453’: Lucy R. Lippard in Argentina,” in *From Conceptualism to Feminism: Lucy Lippard’s Numbers Shows, 1969-74* (London: New York: Afterall Books, 2012). There are, according to Day, conflicting accounts regarding what Lippard saw, whom she met, and where she traveled while in Argentina. Perhaps she met Paksa, who was involved in the early planning of *Tucumán arde*.

¹⁹⁶ Bryan-Wilson, *Art Workers*, 152.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 136.

by Oscar Masotta in a 1967 talk at the Di Tella) dematerialization became the primary lens through which Lippard revised her understanding of the relationship between art and its “political situation.”¹⁹⁸

If the “dematerialized” practices Lippard saw in Argentina helped her to break down the boundaries between curating, criticism, and even artmaking, it was primarily by experimenting with the idea of art as written information. Indeed, in the catalogue for McShine’s *Information*, in July 1970, Lippard’s entry appears not (as it was commissioned) in the form of a critical essay, but rather as a text-based work outlining, with detailed instructions, a game of chance to be played in the exhibition. Bryan-Wilson connects this kind of experimental writing – requiring the viewer-reader to interpret rather than the artist-author to articulate – to the Rosario Group’s juxtaposition of contradictory sources of information. As with much of the retrospective analysis of the impact of Lippard’s trip to Argentina on her work, drawing this connection tends to ignore the reasons why *Tucumán arde* needed to juxtapose contradictory texts, and the very material (not theoretical) consequences of their experimental gambit (it was shut down by the police). But what does come through, with more clarity and relevance than questions of (de)materiality and (anti)form, is the importance for Lippard of the activated spectator; the dream of art made more accessible and democratic through the reconfigured relations between artist-author and viewer-reader.

¹⁹⁸ “It becomes clear that today everything, even art, exists in a political situation. I don’t mean that art itself has to be seen in political terms or look political, but the way artists handle their art, where they make it, the chances they get to make it, how they are going to let it out, and to whom – it’s all part of a lifestyle and a political situation” (Lippard, *Six Years*, 8). For the most recent examination of the history and utility of this term, see Karen Benezra, *Dematerialization*.

Lippard's exhibition *2,972,453* opened, after some delays, in December 1970 at the new CAYC.¹⁹⁹ As with her other numbers shows, its title referred to the city's population and its structure arose from a set of instructions sent to participating artists in the mail:

1) Fill out the enclosed 4 × 6" index card with your name, birthdate, nationality, city of residence and any information (visual and verbal) you choose concerning your piece or pieces (I would like 2 or more? from each of you if you feel so inclined). The clearer the info, and the more of it, the better, since the catalog will lead a life of its own, separate from the show...

2) The works actually sent to BA by you should be 2-d, paper and/or photographs; no objects (postage is not cheap and you'll have to use airmail) and no elaborate instructions for execution there; I just don't think it would get done in time. Also, please include clear and specific instructions about how your work should be installed, packed, to whom it should be returned, and its insurance value.²⁰⁰

The twelve artists who sent work (Eleanor Antin, Siah Armajani, David Askevold, Stanley Brouwn, Victor Burgin, Pier Paolo Calzolari, Don Celender, James Collins, Christopher Cook, Gilbert & George, Ira Joel Haber, and Richards Jarden) were all in North America and Western Europe and were all "new younger artists," as Lippard wrote Glusberg, "whose work I didn't know when I did the earlier shows. You should get some interesting

¹⁹⁹ A Telex from Glusberg in the Lucy R. Lippard Papers initially says the show will open in October. In July, Lippard writes, "Dear Jorge, Where's the \$1000?" On November 13, Glusberg writes, "We have received all the works. Everything is OK. The show will be opened on November 23," though the 23 is handwritten over with 27. GT-21, which is dated November 28, announces the opening on December 4. Correspondence between Lippard and Glusberg includes disputes over the population of Buenos Aires, misspellings, misunderstandings over payment and installation, and a developing acrimony around unauthorized changes made by Glusberg to the title, content, design and printing of the catalogue. On March 28, 1971, Lippard writes, "Dear Jorge Gluzberg [sic]: I was distressed to find, when the catalogue to the show finally came, that it had not been done at all according to my instructions. What did you think was the point of asking each artist to design his own card if they were not to be reproduced exactly like that? What made you depart from the model of the Seattle and Vancouver catalogues which this was supposed to be part of? What made you think I had so carefully gotten the material together myself, typed it myself, ready to be photographed, if not to have it exactly that way? What made you add a coloured title card and discard the title card I provided? When I said for you to add a card of your own I certainly had no intention of your writing a text of your own..."

²⁰⁰ Lippard invitation letter, August 4, 1970, Lucy R. Lippard Papers, AAA.

material out of this group and you will be the first to show a more original listing.”²⁰¹ Installation photographs suggest that the materials he got were largely informational or descriptive, with little beyond size differentiating the works hung on the wall from the works in the catalogue, a set of unbound index cards with “a life of its own” which could be rearranged and read in any order [figs. 2.2-2.3]. Repeating the device of Lippard’s *Information* entry, a card listed the artists as if sandwiched into a dictionary. Pip Day argues that 2,972,453 was thus “far more radical than the two previous shows, in the sense that the exhibition itself apparently dematerialised.”²⁰²

In a *gacetilla* announcing the exhibition, Glusberg uses terms which were by then well-worn but, this time, applied toward an explanation of “conceptual art” as Lippard was using it: “conceptual art is an art of documentation, a sociological incorporation of the new role of the artist. It opens the conscience of the spectator, that is to say, it proposes the intellectual participation of the viewer-reader.”²⁰³ If the operations of conceptual art were similar to Romero Brest’s framing of “experiencias,” Glusberg’s pedantic tone and austere presentation, or the sober task entrusted to the viewer-reader, were perhaps less open in their address. A review of the exhibition in *Primera Plana* poked fun at Glusberg’s solemnity:

It was impossible at the deafening opening of the Conceptual Art exhibition organized at the CAYC by its director and the American critic Lucy Lippard, since everyone’s attention was captured by the Free Ensemble group and its

²⁰¹ Lucy Lippard, letter to Jorge Glusberg, July 17, 1970, Lucy R. Lippard Papers, AAA. Several pages of notes document her selection process and show that she considered Argentine artists but crossed them out: “from the people I’ve talked to there is not enough Argentine conceptual art to fill 20 cards, or is there?” An early *gacetilla* from May 1970 announcing the exhibition includes an incorrect list, which Glusberg may have made up.

²⁰² Pip Day, “Locating ‘2,972,453’: Lucy R. Lippard in Argentina,” 94.

²⁰³ “El arte conceptual es un arte de documentación, una incorporación sociológica del nuevo papel del artista. Abre la conciencia del espectador, es decir plantea una proposición que hace participar intelectualmente al espectador-lector; es la finalidad de su propuesta.” GT-20, “Arte conceptual: Una exhibición organizada por Lucy Lippard (EE.UU) y Jorge Glusberg,” November 28, 1970.

superstridences, warmed to an ambient temperature close to 30°. But if they did not have the entire public, at least each conceptualist work had its observer: a hairy intellectual or a critic forced to deliver a column.²⁰⁴

A hot, dark, noisy room full of hip and hairy pseudo-intellectuals, strident experimental musicians, and skeptical critics making their rounds on the Barrio Norte gallery circuit: *Primera Plana* paints a somewhat snarky portrait of the scene at the new CAYC, as well as the works selected by “miss Lippard.” “Conceptualism focuses on information, to which it attributes many virtues,” it went on. “In some ways it’s naive. No one opens their mind based on coded data. I ask: Wouldn’t an art with so many cards end up as bureaucracy?”²⁰⁵

It was precisely bureaucracy, both as an aesthetics of information and as an administrative system organizing processes and hierarchies, that was taking shape at CAYC. By the following July, when *Arte de Sistemas* opened at the Museo de Arte Moderno, Glusberg had established a typological catalogue format, similar to Lippard’s and McShine’s, that could expand, contract, and incorporate any number of artists or works as the exhibition traveled. The system extended to CAYC’s publicity, which took the form of numbered *gacetillas*, or newsletters, formatted identically to (and often indistinguishably from) the catalogues. As the *Primera Plana* article highlighted, the art and activities of CAYC circulated through the world as their own description. “In this sense,” art historian María José Herrera has written, “as never before in Argentine art,

²⁰⁴ “No pudo ser así en la estrepitosa inauguración de la muestra de Arte Conceptual organizada en el CAYC por su director y la crítica estadounidense Lucy Lippard, ya que la atención fue acaparada por el conjunto *Free ensemble* y sus superstridences, caldeadas en una temperatura ambiente cercana a los 30°. Pero si no tuvieron todo el público, al menos cada obra conceptualista tuvo su observador: un intelectual piloso o un crítico obligado a la entrega semanal.” “Un arte para archivar.” *Primera Plana* 411 (December 15, 1970): 61. This article shares a page with a report on Lea Lublin’s concurrent exhibition at Galería Carmen Waugh.

²⁰⁵ “El conceptualismo centra su interés en la información, a la cual le atribuye no pocas virtudes. De alguna manera peca de ingenuo. Nadie abre conciencias a base de datos codificados. Sobre todo si estos son tan abstrusos como para requerir una información kilométrica capaz de hacer comprender las potencias ocultas de las grafeas dadas. Pregunta: ¿Un arte con tantas tarjetas no terminara en burocracia?” *Ibid.*

literary texts, writing, and words were a vital, visual, or semantic part of the works.”²⁰⁶ Glusberg and Lippard had both shown that text was beginning to oscillate between documentation of works and the works themselves, prompting the viewer-reader to participate in the process of semantic creation, or more precisely, of completion.

In this chapter, I have shifted my name for our active spectator from viewer-*voyeur* to viewer-reader, because I will focus here on works of art that explore how she comes into being in the material and discursive space of the page. In the years after the *Cordobazo*, between 1969-1972, the Revolución Argentina policed the urban and discursive environment with increasingly repressive tactics. These years also mark the emergence of writing and drawing practices – particularly by Orensanz and Dermisache though also in works by Lublin, Paksa, and CAYC-affiliated artists more broadly – that converged with the reconfigured relations of conceptual art. Much as the spatial interventions discussed in the previous chapter sought to expose ideological systems at work by involving the active participation of the spectator, the works examined in this chapter ask their viewer-reader to decipher the systems ordering the space of the page and their role in directing the flows of power in everyday life. If the systems ordering the written and built world – language, the grid – were being used to implement regimes of domination, violence, and social alienation, this art aimed to expose how those systems operate by engaging their viewer-readers in embodied and critical modes of reading the work and the world.

I begin by surveying some of the radical forms of writing undertaken by Dermisache during this period, then turn to a series of drawings by Orensanz which begin

²⁰⁶ “En este sentido, como nunca antes en el arte argentino, los textos literarios, la escritura y la palabra fueron parte vital, visual o semántica de las obras.” Herrera and Marchesi, eds. *Arte de sistemas*, 23.

to incorporate text as part of a sustained analysis of traditional spatial devices such as the grid. Both artists pictured the world as a field of signs, even as their signifieds were becoming increasingly unstable; as such, the architectures of the page fluctuate as both literal and referential structures. Following Orensanz to Europe, I will stop to look at a text-based work by Lea Lublin, a series of questions about the discursive construction of art and women posed to the streets of Paris. There, the performative or signaling gesture points to context – to the ways in which representation encodes ideology. I track the emergence of these shared strategies, and the ways their meanings shift in different contexts, by following the CAYC exhibition *Art Systems in Latin America*, which included work by Dermisache, Lublin, and Orensanz and traveled in Europe from 1974-1975. “The Europeans make theoretical discussions of political problems,” Glusberg wrote in that exhibition catalogue, “and the Latin Americans necessarily include them in their works since they live these political problems daily.”²⁰⁷ I will conclude with a brief look at a different use of text and grid in a series of cartographic drawings by Margarita Paksa, who was experimenting with other ways to “live these political problems daily.”

This chapter does little to differentiate between writing and drawing practices, or moves fluidly between them, because I treat both as part of an extended structural analysis of the space of the page. Structuralist thinking held that subjects come into being through ordering systems. By this time, Eve Meltzer has written, “Language had become the grid through which the world was pictured.”²⁰⁸ But this ordered structuralist universe does not leave much room for the contingency of systems; for example, the ways in which language might take on new meanings and functions, the ways in which its signifiers might shift, and the consequences for subjectivity. My aim here is not to historicize “the linguistic turn”

²⁰⁷ *Art Systems in Latin America*. Exh. cat., London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, Nash House, 1974.

²⁰⁸ Meltzer, *Systems We Have Loved*, 58.

in conceptual art or politicize the use of language in art, but rather to understand what exactly, and what, to women, “language” stood for in these specific years. To paraphrase Meltzer, what was “language” in this historical moment and for these women? A closed system? A totalizing promise? A generative grammar? A subject-constituting order? A form of abstraction? A space of subversion?

If the works in the last chapter explored the production of subjectivity through relations of looking, here I hope to elaborate the ways in which a feminist or antiauthoritarian subject might emerge from an active relationship with the systems of the page. The social reorganizations taking place at the discursive level took material form in new behaviors and relationships to the built environment – the new politics of the body in space – enforced by dictatorship. Each artist treated language as a kind of readymade, an existing structure of (unequal) relations that, through strategies of appropriation and displacement, raised theoretical questions about agency and subjectivity as well as the ethical relations between producer and receiver, artist/author and viewer/reader. Moreover, each artist explored larger visual systems that organize our relationship to language. Orensanz’s investigation of the grid reveals an inherent tension in systems of visual control (both on the canvas and in the city) between their claims to objective use/unilateral messaging and the unsanctioned forms of expression they repress. Likewise, Dermisache’s “writings” from this period test the organizational limits of language, opening up an unregulated and collaborative space of meaning-making. As Lippard began to theorize in Argentina, and as I have argued throughout, it is this collaborative relationship between artist-author and viewer-reader, rather than the form or materiality of language, that is the constitutive element of conceptual art.

MIRTHA DERMISACHE

Mirtha Dermisache's moment at the Di Tella was a bit late. "It was my favorite place," she recalled, mentioning Paksa's work as some of the most important she saw there. "Not only for the exhibitions, but also for all the other activities, the experiences of theater, music, dance, and the School of Advanced Musical Studies. I participated in some of them. Finally, the director Jorge Romero Brest, who was a very intelligent and curious person...saw my books. He was interested in my work, but the Di Tella Institute, at that time, did not have the necessary financial support. Soon after, the Institute closed."²⁰⁹ The unfortunate timing of Romero Brest's attention to Dermisache's work, which she had just begun to organize in book format in 1967, meant that it did not find a champion until Jorge Glusberg, whom Dermisache remembered as her first editor, exhibited it at the Camden Arts Center in 1970.²¹⁰ On the edges of this cultural universe, Dermisache's work was modest in scale and so personal it verged on secret. She described herself as "un poco ermitaña" and worked alone. In June 1971, she wrote,

For a few months I have been thinking that in my work I am too lonely. Sometimes (as a result of this) I think that the goal (despite myself) will be something like madness (or why not? Madness). I don't even read books, newspapers or magazines. I don't study anything. Nor do I meet with groups that "do something," which seems to be very important at this time in this city and especially for the people of the "short circuit" (Barrio Norte and surroundings). They all somehow belong to "something." And I, it's not that I don't want to, but I feel like I don't belong to anything in particular. At the work level, my things are totally rejected (with some exceptions) by those who write (by those who do

²⁰⁹ "Era mi lugar preferido. No solamente por las exposiciones, sino también por todas las otras actividades, las experiencias de teatro, música, danza, y la Escuela de Altos Estudios Musicales. Participé en algunas de ellas. Finalmente, el director Jorge Romero Brest, quien era una persona muy inteligente y curiosa...vio mis libros. Se interesó en mi trabajo, pero el Instituto Di Tella, en ese momento, no tenía el sostén económico necesario. Poco después, el Instituto cerró." Rimmaudo and Lamoni, "Entrevista a Mirtha Dermisache," 8.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

not write as well ...). Of course, I haven't even mentioned this: I write...Maybe some other day I'll go through with all of this.²¹¹

There is a frustration, even resentment, detectable in Dermisache's ambivalence toward the scene, and her reluctance to be associated with a movement is something she shared with Orensanz, Paksa, and Lublin. Through CAYC, though, she had an opportunity to try belonging to a group.

Toward the end of 1971, having honed CAYC's model for group exhibitions and programs, Glusberg began exploring a systems-based method for artmaking. In September, the Polish playwright and theorist Jerzy Grotowski arrived in Buenos Aires to conduct a series of workshops modeled on the group research methods outlined in his 1968 book *Towards a Poor Theatre*. Quiles notes that the workshops initially included a large group of invitees that was later narrowed to twenty-one, and then thirteen, artists. Dermisache was the only woman Glusberg invited to be part of the final Group of Thirteen, named in homage to the thirteen rows of Grotowski's small theater. Documents from these workshops outline "técnicas de Brainstorming," artist's statements, and proposals for a shared ethics of group work.²¹² "I propose to the group that each of us express in an open letter the interests and motivations that lead us to join; so that after being read it is archived and remains as a first and independent document, or not, within the future process of the group," Alfredo Portillos suggested. Several expressed their belief, in spite of some hesitation to give up individual practices, in joining together to experiment in a critical environment outside the commercial art market. Dermisache, on a single handwritten page, enumerated her reservations:

I don't know what goals I should have.
I don't know why I joined.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² "Ejercicios de imaginación creadora." Untitled manuscript, n.d. Personal archive of Vicente Marotta. My thanks to Will Schwaller for sharing this source.

I do know that I am in it expectantly.

In the event that the other members do not accept my participation on these terms, that is to say that in some way I am an element with a negative role in the development of the group, I think it would be wise to withdraw. Otherwise I will continue in it until I feel or not my active incorporation in the group.²¹³

In the end Dermisache decided she preferred to be a guest, rather than a member, of the Group of Thirteen.²¹⁴ She remained closely affiliated, citing in particular the importance of Victor Grippo (“mi único verdadero amigo en esa época”), and formed close ties to Edgardo Antonio Vigo and Ulises Carrión, pioneers of concrete poetry and mail art networks through which Dermisache’s work circulated. Vigo, she said, invited her to participate in projects over the years, but she never accepted.²¹⁵

Even if Dermisache tended to decline invitations for group work at CAYC, the relationships she formed there propelled her career. During the civil-military dictatorship, Glusberg circulated Dermisache’s work in group exhibitions throughout Europe, traveling it where she could not and connecting her with cultural brokers such as the Belgian curator-editor Guy Schraenen, who first saw her work in *Art Systems in Latin America* at its stop in Antwerp in April 1974. But it was her relationship with the Argentine filmmaker Hugo Santiago that most profoundly affected the trajectory of Dermisache’s career. Santiago had moved to Paris in 1969 and corresponded with Dermisache regularly between 1970-

²¹³ “No sé que objetivos debo tener. No sé porqué lo integro. Si sé que estoy en él en condición espectante. En caso de que los demás integrantes no acepten mi participación en estos términos, es decir que de alguna manera sea un elemento que tenga un rol negativo para el desarrollo del grupo. Creo que sería conveniente retirarme. En caso contrario continuaré en él hasta sentir o no mi incorporación activa en función del grupo.” Mirtha Dermisache, “No se como debe ser este grupo...” Untitled manuscript, December 1971. Personal archive of Vicente Marotta.

²¹⁴ “Al principio acepté, iba a reuniones pero, después dije que yo prefería ser artista invitada del grupo y no pertenecer al Grupo de los Trece.” Rimmaudo and Lamoni, “Entrevista a Mirtha Dermisache,” 8.

²¹⁵ Pérez Rubio writes that “On the one hand, she complained that her work was not given the attention it deserved but, on the other, she never seemed entirely comfortable with the invitations she did receive.” Schraenen’s conclusion was that “Mirtha often complained that she did not have the recognition she deserved... This was partially, although not exclusively, a result of her radical attitude of refusing to participate in various projects” (*Mirtha Dermisache: porque ¡yo escribo!*, 41).

1972.²¹⁶ As she remembers it, Santiago “told me: ‘well, nobody here is going to understand what you are doing. The only one who can understand it is Jorge Luis Borges, but Borges is blind, so you don't have a chance.’ He asked me for a book to take to Paris. A year later, I received a letter from Roland Barthes and from there, the doors opened. Everyone was interested in seeing my books and my things.”²¹⁷ The importance of this letter from Barthes is hard to overstate as a framework both for Dermisache’s understanding of her own work and for its critical reception thereafter. Barthes told her, “You have managed to produce...forms that could be called illegible writing,” at once naming her abstract forms and releasing her from an uncomfortable fit with the world of drawing.²¹⁸ My point here is that, this network of advocates and interlocutors notwithstanding, Dermisache was no hermit. Indeed, I hope to establish how collaborative relationships animated all her work; she just chose to collaborate with a more diffuse public of viewer-readers, rather than fellow artists, opening up and critically engaging the page as a social and subjective space.

Turning now to look closely at Dermisache’s illegible writings, I will argue that her engagement with three textual forms – letters, books, and newspaper, among many others – conform to in order to critique the semantic structures of each genre: dramatic, drooping scripts for a series of letters, for example, or steady, uninterrupted units for newspaper print. For all these, she used the term *grafismos*. Manipulating the conventions that structure our reading of each genre, the illegibility of Dermisache’s *grafismos* is more than merely expository – it functions as an occupation of discursive space, a self-conscious

²¹⁶ Cintia Mezza, Cecilia Iida, and Ana Raviña, “Mirtha Dermisache, Life and Work 1940-2012,” in Pérez Rubio, ed., *Mirtha Dermisache: porque ¡yo escribo!*, 263.

²¹⁷ “Me dijo: ‘Bueno acá nadie va a entender lo que estás haciendo. El único que lo puede entender es Jorge Luis Borges, pero Borges está ciego, así que no tenés ninguna posibilidad.’ Me pidió un libro para llevar a París. Un año después, recibí una carta de Roland Barthes y a partir de eso, se abrieron las puertas. Todo el mundo estaba interesado en ver mis libros y mis cosas.” Rimmaudo and Lamoni, “Entrevista a Mirtha Dermisache,” 8.

²¹⁸ Roland Barthes to Mirtha Dermisache, Paris, March 28, 1971.

obfuscation or short circuit. Like the experimental writing that so affected Lippard, Dermisache's texts resist traditional conditions of display, inviting readers to bring their own knowledge and experience to bear on an ambiguous process of meaning-making that contributes to the completion of the work itself. Unfixing the signifier from the signified, transgressing the authoritative power of logos, Dermisache's tactical use of the space of the page is not only anti-authoritarian but also builds toward a feminist critique of the gender systems encoded in language.

Cartas

Writing in *Panorama*, the critic Edgardo Cozarinsky reviewed Dermisache's work, on the occasion of her first book, in April 1970. He describes her as "a pale girl with a soft voice and thoughtful accent." Her writing, however, was rigorous and powerful, having conquered and cultivated new meaning in a space of its own. To him she "confesses ponderously,"

It began three years ago, in loose sheets... one day I felt that a kind of knot was being untied inside me, that a process was beginning whose manifestation I had not yet glimpsed. Three days later, sitting on a patio, I began scribbling on a piece of paper, like tangled balls of wool, but with separate headings and paragraphs. Then, seriously, letters. Then I decided that it was necessary to have this book bound: an arbitrary size and volume, but consciously chosen.²¹⁹

Cozarinsky, and Dermisache herself, frame her work as a deeply personal, interior form, with her *grafismos* coming from inside her body and releasing one day as the loosening of

²¹⁹ "Empezó hace tres años, en hojas sueltas... un día sentí que una especie de nudo se desataba dentro de mí, que empezaba un proceso cuya manifestación aún no vislumbraba. Tres días después, sentada en un patio, empecé a trazar garabatos sobre un papel madera, como rulos de lana enmarañada, pero con títulos y párrafos separados. Luego, en serio, letras. Entonces decidí que era necesario hacer encuadernar este libro: una medida y un volumen arbitrarios, pero elegidos conscientemente." Edgardo Cozarinsky, "Un Grado Cero de La Escritura," in *Panorama*, no. 156 (April 1970): 5.

a knot. But while it may be that one of her goals was to relate an affective dimension of language, her description suggests that it is the invention of the *grafismos* themselves – the symbolic rather than the semiotic component of language – that constituted the relationship between her body and writing practice. She clarifies to Cozarinsky that her writing is not essential or autobiographical: “it is a product, I want it independent of my person.”²²⁰ In a series of letters, or *cartas*, produced in the 1970s, she plays with the intimacies of bodily force that emerge from text arranged in this format; the signifying practices of letter writing. At the same time, Dermisache, who remained in Buenos Aires as the political environment increasingly isolated her, maintained long-term epistolary relationships with fellow travelers elsewhere. An interesting feature of the writing on Dermisache is the overlay of the feelings she expressed in these everyday letters onto the *cartas* she produced as works of art. Here, even as I attempt to disentangle Dermisache’s oblique mobilization of feelings through language, I argue that reading the two bodies of writing alongside each other reveals a different kind of index of the experiences of womanhood and dictatorship.

Literary scholars have linked the practice of letter writing with the development of modern female subjectivity, at least since the sixteenth century, through its traditions of natural and spontaneous expressions of feeling and the way its private or domestic circulation avoided encroaching on male literary space.²²¹ In her *cartas* from the early 1970s, Dermisache takes up the epistolary form in much the same way she did books and newspapers, retaining the identifiable architecture of a handwritten note – a dateline, a salutation, a body of text, and a signature – while replacing its content with calligraphic and scrawling notations. In some, such as *Sin título (carta)*, 1971, sweeping lines are

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ See, for example, Dena Goodman, “Letter Writing and the Emergence of Gendered Subjectivity in Eighteenth-Century France,” in *Journal of Women’s History* 17, no. 2 (2005): 9-37.

punctuated by tight scribbles and inkblots so imminently legible that they just barely occlude meaning [fig. 2.4]. In others, such as *Sin título (carta)*, 1970s, textual form is reduced to a repetitive series of gestures, such as a flat line or gently sloping curve [fig. 2.5]. Her message has been evacuated, leaving only the evidence of its mediation through the letter as channel.

What message might have been – what might Dermisache have denoted from within? She never conceded a layer of signification beneath her *grafismos*, choosing to engage only the forms by which the representational economy structures subjectivity. Psychoanalytic feminism, particularly the writing of Luce Irigaray, asserts this subjectivity formulated within the symbolic realm to be simply the representation of the male imaginary. That is, Irigaray writes, a woman who attempts to be a speaking subject “fails to realize that she is renouncing the specificity of her own relationship to the imaginary. Subjecting herself to objectivization in discourse – by being ‘female.’”²²² There are few clearer languages in which see this process occur than Spanish, where all nouns – all objects “of representation, of discourse, of desire” – are gendered.²²³ Spanish, the only language Dermisache knew, secured her in a masculine universe.

Like the curved mirror (*speculum*) Irigaray imagines, her *cartas* refuse the projection of denotational language, reflecting instead a disfigured male fantasy embodied in writing. Irigaray’s most visionary arguments propose that the creativity of women might open up an imaginary of their own – a new symbolic order – and she adopts a strategy of mimicry, a reflexive relation to language.²²⁴ Dermisache’s letters might similarly suggest a way of writing that transforms language. Her text is persistently embodied, both in the

²²² Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985): 133.

²²³ *Ibid.*

²²⁴ Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985): 33.

way it connotes the expressive feelings of her body as she created it, and also in the way its reception and meaning relies on relations with another.

If letter writing is a more intimate space of circulation than books or newspapers, it is nonetheless a communal activity that builds and sustains relationships across space. At the opening of *Art Systems in Latin America* in Antwerp, in April 1974, she met the Belgian gallerist and publisher Guy Schraenen. After visiting Schraenen and his family at home, Dermisache agreed to collaborate on further publications and exhibitions in Europe, and the two struck up an “enriching” and “profound friendship” mediated through letter-writing. “I developed close and amicable relationships quite naturally with most of the artists with whom I collaborated as gallery owner and publisher,” Schraenen wrote in an essay on their relationship.

My relationship with Mirtha Dermisache was probably the most intense and the most complex of these. Due to factors like transatlantic distance, the Argentinian political situation and the language problem, our mutual desire to collaborate encountered numerous obstacles. I was unable to speak or read Spanish, Mirtha spoke only a few words of French and no English at all...Additionally, the post was very slow and phone prices were exorbitant.²²⁵

The obstacles of communication, across linguistic, geographic and political distance, present another valence of frustrated meaning. In April 1975, Dermisache wrote Schraenen, “Sunny day and 24° C!!!! and the VIOLENCE goes on...I promised you that when I was back in Buenos Aires I would write to you to explain all that I felt when we were together and that I could not express. But suddenly I am unable to enclose in words these moments of the wonderful experience of communication.”²²⁶ What she could not verbalize in person while visiting Europe, she may have been able to write to him with the

²²⁵ Guy Schraenen, “A Transatlantic ‘Affair,’” in Pérez Rubio, ed., *Mirtha Dermisache: porque ¡yo escribo!*, 42.

²²⁶ Ibid.

help of a translator; and what she could not, perhaps, put into words on paper in Buenos Aires, she may have felt free to try aloud. How, then, do her *cartas* figure into this economy of intense feeling and repressed communication?

What she is able to say, and what she is not, within her transnational epistolary friendships and writing practice suggest another kind of representational lacuna. As Paksa's, Orensanz's, and Lublin's experiences with censorship demonstrated, the terms that might allow Dermisache to communicate her experience of dictatorship were shifting, perhaps disappearing. Three months later, she wrote Schraenen, "Hopelessness has stepped into our country. What can I tell you? How can I tell you?...It is very difficult and painful to tell you all this, but this is my reality..." and then, later that month, asked, "Do you still listen to the terrible news from Argentina? I think that the situation is worse than I thought. Sometimes I have the feeling that there is no sense in going on doing things. It is absurd and stubborn and, for these reasons, sterile."²²⁷ Her letters speak to the ways in which language closed in on itself in the face of totalizing violence, making personal expression a not only futile but impossible task. In addition to the self-silencing evident, later, in her *Diario*, are we to read her sense of isolation or even depression in her *cartas*?

As Dermisache's correspondence with Schraenen shows, letters can form transnational communities, reaching beyond suffocating political boundaries for release or escape. Through CAYC, Dermisache had connected with Vigo, Clemente Padín, and Paulo Bruscky, and through Schraenen, she became friends with Carrión, Henri Chopin, art historian Marc Dachy and gallerist Lilian Vincy, all of whom exhibited her work in exhibitions, magazines, and small press publications.²²⁸ In Milan, she stayed for a time

²²⁷ Ibid., 44.

²²⁸ e.g. *Luna Park, Kontexts, Doc(k)s*.

with Orensanz.²²⁹ Though letters are not public, they are neither truly private; always written for a real or imagined receiver, they become dynamic sites for the construction of the self.

Dermisache found such an interlocutor in Barthes, who first wrote to Dermisache in March 1971. In that letter, the first of others between 1971–1974, he praised her ability “to produce a certain number of forms that are neither figurative nor abstract, forms that could be called illegible writing, which lead readers to formulate something that is neither a specific message nor a contingent form of expression but, rather, the idea, the essence, of writing.”²³⁰ Years later, she remembered Barthes’ letter as a revelatory experience of understanding her own work: “It was as if he were explaining to me what I was doing. I felt that after having said ‘I write’ for so many years, someone was finally, for the first time, calling my work writing.”²³¹ In other words, having told herself “I write,” someone finally “read” her work.

Dermisache did not know Barthes at the time, so she bought a copy of *Writing Degree Zero*, newly published in translation. His so-called “Introduction to what a History of Writing might be”²³² shifts the focus of its analysis from the abstract message intended by the author of a text and toward the material presence of language in the signifier. Writing is a “formal reality independent of language and style,” for Barthes, a bourgeois myth that “binds the writer to his society.”²³³ Literary writing, for example, refers to and reproduces itself in order to remind readers that they are consuming Literature; it signifies “to the

²²⁹ Marie Orensanz, interview with the author, March 29, 2019.

²³⁰ Roland Barthes to Mirtha Dermisache, Paris, March 28, 1971.

²³¹ Rimmaudo and Lamoni, “Entrevista a Mirtha Dermisache,” 8.

²³² Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1968): 6. Prefacing the 1967 translation, Susan Sontag summarized its central claim: that “anything can be subjected to the ahistorical, apychological methods of structuralist analysis. A text does not mean only a literary text, as language is not the only ‘system of meaning.’”

²³³ *Ibid.*, 6.

reader that ‘it is well written’” and “‘places’ language, just as a label tells us the price of an article.”²³⁴ His structural analysis of writing clearly provided a theoretical support for Dermisache, as she soon began describing her *grafismos* in such terms. In her application materials for a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1971, she wrote, “They are ‘signifiers’ with no ‘signified,’ though that does not mean that they could be described as arbitrary...They serve as support, as ‘empty’ structure, so that the other, the one within, might fill each empty signifier with his own signifieds and build his own story.”²³⁵ The ramifications of this decentering of individual style and intention, which Barthes would expand in later texts, opens up the possibility that Dermisache could be writing in a way that is both personally expressive and “independent of my person.” It does not presume to convey an authorial message but rather invites, in this case, the recipient of the letter to reciprocate, “filling” the “empty structures” with meaning. Once again, even at the one-to-one level of a handwritten letter, Dermisache subverts the unilateral transmission of (overdetermined, militarized) language by leaving open the possibilities for plurivalency and ambiguity.

Libros

If Dermisache’s texts, as she claimed, are empty structures that do not set out to convey a message, what is there to “read” in them? Why make work that questions the codes of its representation, and why search for the meanings or critical charges that might emerge? Dermisache had not ultimately destroyed her autonomous authorial position – the so-called “artist’s hand” – a fact made clear by the insistent, gestural quality of her painstakingly

²³⁴ Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, 71.

²³⁵ Translated in Mezza, Iida, and Raviña, “Mirtha Dermisache, Life and Work 1940-2012,” in Pérez Rubio, ed., *Mirtha Dermisache: porque ¡yo escribo!*, 265. This translation uses “his” as a default pronoun, though the Spanish “su,” referencing “the other, the one within,” could also be translated to “her” or “its” in this sentence.

hand-drawn, though unsigned, works. In two books from 1974, one untitled and one titled *Libro No. 7*, the disciplined black scribbles and tottering lines of previous publications are replaced with smudges of purple and then dark blots of ink that water-down at the edges, bleeding into each other [fig. 2.6 and 2.7]. The smudges, which begin as dense blots at the start of each line, as if dipped into an inkwell, trail off and fade, revealing patterned ridges of negative space that are sometimes identifiable as fingerprints [fig. 2.6]. On some lines, an excess of ink or water loosens the smudge, allowing it to take a more organic or uncontrolled shape. The inkblots, dark and dense at the center as if applied with a dab of the paintbrush, are also too wet [fig. 2.7]. Though they attempt to retain the linear structure and controlled geometry of prior texts, they again get away, the excess of fluid seeping toward and connecting with neighboring dabs. Here the tonal variation gives a sense of looking at biological matter under a microscope or over a lightbox – dense cells or molecular bodies that wiggle and twitch. Red pigment on one page interrupts the gradients of purple, clouding a dense section of blots as if dripped over from above.

Unlike nearly all Dermisache's published material, these books introduce an element of organic chance and direct contact with the body. They evoke the spontaneity of watercolor painting and essentialist notions of "writing from the body." While the smudges literally index the artist's hand, the inkblots might be read as alluding to the fluids and uncontrollability of the female body, even as they struggle to maintain the semantic structures of written text. In any case they illustrate, as the literary critic Elaine Showalter has succinctly stated, that "there can be no expression of the body which is unmediated by linguistic, social, and literary structures."²³⁶ They thus expose the imposition of these structures on the body while threatening the limits of their ability to regulate.

²³⁶ Elaine Showalter, "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness," in *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 2 (1981): 338.

The ways in which these gestures exceed their semantic structures may also suggest their insufficiency to express women's consciousness. Dermisache's smudges and inkblots go beyond earlier critiques of the unintelligibility of language and the military's command over its interpretation to posit an experience that cannot be expressed through language. Showalter proposes, departing slightly from Irigaray, that "the problem is not that language is insufficient to express women's consciousness but that women have been denied the full resources of language and have been forced into silence, euphemism, or circumlocution."²³⁷ It may be that Dermisache's illegible writings enact the limits of language through her blocked ability to write (and therefore speak) within the symbolic order. However, these works seem to point to something more than limitation. They constitute a kind of direct, tactile, and uneasy form of communication that exceeds – or perhaps precedes – language. They transcribe something that has been silenced by the symbolic order, even as they attempt to conform to it. Here she returns us to the realm Kristeva describes as the semiotic, championing its ability to erupt through art and destabilize the symbolic function of language by rupturing traditional structures of grammar and syntax. As in Dermisache's deconstructive approach to writing, the revolutionary potential of poetic language, for Kristeva, derives from its "acceptance of the symbolic law together with a transgression of the law for the purpose of renovating the law."²³⁸ If she transgresses the symbolic law, Dermisache does not necessarily propose to renovate it. Her smudges and inkblots, however, seem to suggest that the affective experience of womanhood – particularly within the rigid gender roles and coercive speech

²³⁷ Ibid., 341.

²³⁸ Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, 101. In studying these terms, I benefited from Mary Green's analysis of the applicability of Kristeva's theories to Diamela Eltit's writing in *Diamela Eltit: Reading the Mother* (Suffolk: Tamesis, 2007). She argues, as I do for Dermisache here, that the politics of Eltit's writing "lie in her textual practice and that it is the language in which a novel is written, rather than the message it communicates, which generates a political strategy of protest or resistance" (15).

prescribed by authoritarian regimes – contains destabilizing knowledge and thus revolutionary potential.

So far, I have framed Dermisache's deliberate authorial passivity as part of the devolution of power associated with poststructuralism in literature and conceptualism in art. However, the form of her silence – that is, the means by which she blocks her own voice and opens up to the reader's – may also speak to the erasure of her subjectivity. That Dermisache's ability to express herself coherently may have been *taken* from her implies a more stinging critique of the structures of meaning. It may also implicate the reader in a process of interpretation that is not necessarily mutual and collaborative but might be violent or non-consensual. Moreover, Dermisache sets this encounter in private, rather than in the public space of a gallery or museum. Her books, letters, and newspapers are objects to be read sitting in a chair, at one's own pace and with the ability to close them up, start something new, or fall asleep. In the *Panorama* review from April 1970, she dismissed the idea of treating her works as discrete or autonomous objects to be hung on the wall: "If someone wants to hang one of these pages on the wall, he will have to break it, giving his gesture the sense of tearing a page from a book and putting it somewhere else."²³⁹ To show the work in an art context, in which it would accrue a new set of social meanings, would be to destroy the work. Perhaps such a stance resists the gallery, too, as site that reproduces cultural hegemony.²⁴⁰ It is a question she explored using perhaps her best-known work and most quotidian form: a newspaper.

²³⁹ Cozarinsky, "Un grado cero de la escritura," 5. See note 198 about the use of the pronoun "su."

²⁴⁰ As in Brian O'Doherty, "Inside the White Cube," *Artforum* 15, no. 3 (March-November 1976).

Diaris

In March 1972, Glusberg had formally introduced CAYC's all-male Group of Thirteen, in addition to "invited guests" such as Dermisache, Lublin and Orensanz, at the III Coltejer Biennial in Medellín.²⁴¹ The biennial, curated by Jasia Reichardt, Gillo Dorfles, and Brian O'Doherty, was covered widely in the international art press. Afterward, Reichardt stayed on for a visit to Buenos Aires, where she participated in a series of CAYC programs around the themes of art and ideology. A questionnaire, titled "Encuesta acerca de arte e ideología – Jasia Reichardt – Jorge Glusberg," hints at the next major CAYC undertaking. "What would you propose if you were asked to organize an artistic event, having a sufficient budget to hold an international festival, a biennial, or an artistic encounter in Buenos Aires?" it asks.²⁴² Dermisache, in her response, proposed a kind of anti-biennial: "I would invite artists to a meeting somewhere (in Buenos Aires). Museum, plaza, or field (must be a very large space). There would be only one condition: to appear without their works. Essential requirement. No presentation of works during the event."²⁴³ A few months later, Glusberg staged another ambitious series of linked exhibitions, this time organized around ideology. Quoting Althusser, press releases began announcing an event along the lines of Dermisache's anti-exhibition proposal.

²⁴¹ GT-124, "III Bienal de Medellín: Arte e ideología: dialogo con Jasia Reichardt y Jorge Glusberg," May 5, 1972. On the biennial, internationalism, and conceptualism, see Gina Tarver McDaniel, "Art Does Not Fit Here," in *Third Text* (v. 26, n. 6, 2012): 729–744.

²⁴² "Qué es lo que Ud. propondría si fuera consultado para organizar un evento artístico, disponiendo de un presupuesto suficiente como para realizar un festival internacional, una bienal o un encuentro artístico en Buenos Aires?" GT-126, "Encuesta acerca de arte ideología - Jasia Reichardt - Jorge Glusberg," May 12, 1972.

²⁴³ "Invitaría a los artistas a un encuentro en algún sitio de [Buenos Aires]. Museo, plaza o campo (debe ser un espacio muy grande). Habría una sola condición: presentarse sin sus obras. Requisito indispensable. No presentar obras durante el evento." Mezza, Iida, and Raviña, "Mirtha Dermisache, Life and Work 1940-2012," in Pérez Rubio, ed., *Mirtha Dermisache: porque ¡yo escribo!*, 269. Dermisache crossed out "plásticos" to modify "artistas."

Reviving the format of *Arte de Sistemas*, in which Dermisache had first shown her work in 1971, a sequel exhibition, *Arte de Sistemas II*, unfolded in several parts in late 1972. It was, like its predecessor, an international survey curated by Guillermo Whitelow and Jorge Glusberg for the Museo de Arte Moderno. CAYC hosted supplementary programming, such as experimental music and dance performances, at its Viamonte site. But the central section of the exhibition would be held outdoors, in the Plaza Roberto Arlt, as a kind of public art festival opening September 23, 1972 under the title *Arte e ideología: CAYC al aire libre*. Centering everyday life and the poetic possibilities of chance encounter, its stated objectives were to “win the street, to dialogue with the people of Buenos Aires, in an exchange that might mean mutual approach. The works will leave the elitist environments of museums and galleries to exchange and cohabitate with passers-by, with couples making love, with groups of students, with children who play in the plaza.”²⁴⁴ This exhibition was also another kind of sequel, repeating the premise of CAYC’s 1970 exhibition *Escultura, follaje y ruidos*, held in Plaza Rubén Darío. If that first iteration aimed to highlight the poetics the everyday, the politics of the everyday came to the fore this time. The phrase “win the street” suggests the heightened level of contestation over public space. The *gacetilla* continues,

In this second opportunity, the artists, feeling very close to the national problem, have wanted through this exhibition to make explicit a reality inextricably linked to the new forms of behavior that are being generated in the process in which we Argentines are living. Taking advantage of the methodology of *art as idea*, they want to promote a conceptual system through which it is possible to approach an explanation of the structure and real functioning of the system in which we live.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁴ GT-166, “Arte e ideología en CAYC al aire libre,” September 14, 1972.

²⁴⁵ GT-166-168. Interestingly, both statements make use of a loaded term: “process.” Though the “Proceso de Reorganización Nacional,” the name for the military junta’s policies under Jorge Rafael Videla, did not officially begin until the coup of March 1976, Glusberg’s use alludes to the ways in which the language of order and bureaucracy began to take on insidious meaning in a context of increasing instability.

Some works referenced recent political events, such as the recent massacre of political prisoners in Trelew; others referenced unspoken conditions of hunger and censorship.

Though she was not always listed on the exhibition's promotional materials, Dermisache collaborated with architect Mederico Faivre (who is always listed) on an installation centered around her newspaper *Diario No. 1, Año 1* (1972) [fig. 2.8]. The newspaper is formatted as an illegible broadsheet with orderly columns of dense black text. Maintaining the newspaper's architecture, Dermisache includes a recognizable banner, datelines, headlines and sub-headers, and a varied layout of longer and shorter stories. But she eliminates its informational value, leaving only a façade that exposes the performative construction of an official narrative through the press. Opening the paper reveals larger block text with more variation in size and spacing, where some columns begin to break away from their orderly alignment, bleeding into and overlapping neighboring stories. Some columns trail off at a diagonal, changing scripts and abandoning the regularity of their density and spacing, while others seem to absorb the text around them, resort to rote repetition of a single mark, or disintegrate into wispy, flat lines. In a section reserved for comic strips, what might be the dialogue remains; the pictures do not. On the back page, a diagonal line jumps between columns, connecting floating *grafismos*. A dense black rectangle hovers over the top left corner as if redacting the headline. Dermisache later described the rectangle as an allusion (the only one she ever acknowledged) to the Trelew Massacre.

A video produced by CAYC a year later shows Dermisache reading her own newspaper [fig. 2.9]. A voiceover explains, "Mirtha Dermisache has a writing of her own, which has to be decodified according to the interpretation of each reader. Dancers, film producers, graphic [artist]s can realize their actions interpreting Dermisache's papers,

letters, books, or comics.”²⁴⁶ As part of Faivre’s installation, titled *Escenas de la vida cotidiana o La gran orquesta*, the newspaper was displayed on a public bus parked near the plaza [fig. 2.10]. Dermisache reproduced its cover in the exhibition catalogue, filling her entire page and adding a typewritten note that it was “published by CAYC for the show Arte de Sistema II” [fig. 2.11].²⁴⁷ A few pages later, Faivre’s entry describes the elements of his installation: a bus, parked in the plaza, with thirty stands and newspapers and magazines of various persuasions. Visitors could enter from the front, read, and exit through the rear, “completing the work.” After the exhibition, Faivre proposed, the bus could function as a “means of citizen transport, thereby ensuring the impossibility of ending up in a museum.”²⁴⁸ In spite of the self-awareness embedded in his playfully utopian reading bus, Faivre concludes that “the socio-political and economic environment which we are in is expressed with such violence and clarity of intentions that any work that indirectly exposes their relationships is useless. (This calls into question the general utility of the exhibition and of course my own work).” Strangely, it is Dermisache’s name, and not Faivre’s, that appears on a *gacetilla* from September 14 mapping the layout of works in the plaza.²⁴⁹

Faivre’s ambivalence about his own work matches the tone of the exhibition, which hovered somewhere between celebration and indictment, block party and protest. It had

²⁴⁶ Ediciones Tercer Mundo, *El Grupo de los 13*. Berlin Workshop for Experimental Art, September 23, 1973. CAYC Archive at ISLAA.

²⁴⁷ The exhibition catalogue follows the now-familiar format, nearly identical to the *gacetillas*, with each participating artist receiving one loose leaf page. A photograph in the top right corner, with a short bio below, leaves the rest of the space of the page for a reproduction or related work. Elda Cerrato, whose entry appears alphabetically two pages before Dermisache’s, follows the format, with a bio that begins, “Painter, married, one child.” Perhaps characteristically, Dermisache forwent the photograph and bio, devoting her entire page to the newspaper.

²⁴⁸ *Arte e ideología: CAYC al aire libre: arte de sistemas II, participación argentina*. Exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Centro de Arte y Comunicación, September 1972): n.p.

²⁴⁹ GT-168, “CAYC al aire libre: Plaza Robert Arlt, Esmeralda 66,” September 14, 1972.

been delayed in response to the massacre at Trelew, and other works, such as Grippo's *Construcción de un horno popular para hacer pan*, in which he cooked and gave away free bread, or the plastic bags Joseph Beuys designed to illustrate in cheerful red and green graphics the results of a plebiscite, straddled the same line [fig. 2.12].²⁵⁰ In any case, the subtlety of Dermisache's and Faivre's discursive critique was no match for the "violence and clarity of intentions" of the municipal police, who closed the exhibition, arrested three people, and confiscated the works after two days.²⁵¹ The charges, as extensive internal and external coverage of the event documents, claimed that what had been exhibited did not fit their definition of art.²⁵² In some ways, the content of the works shown did not matter. As Mariana Marchesi has written, whether the works were "with evident political content or more abstract, the *context* sealed the meaning of the works in the plaza: the convulsive political situation in Argentina and Latin American and the possibility of an art for social change were debated in dialogue in open public space."²⁵³ It was this open debate that must

²⁵⁰ Thorough analysis of the work Beuys contributed to this exhibition is outside the scope of this project. But rich archival materials related to it remain: a text, "Organización para la democracia directa por medio directa del plebiscito," in the above-cited exhibition catalogue; the ballot, reproduced on GT-165; the plastic bags, which also appear in photographs documenting the event. Beuys was an active interlocutor at CAYC in 1972 and 1973, but I do not find evidence of him in the archive after 1973. In 1974, he met Caroline Tisdall (the critic who reviewed the CAYC show in *The Guardian* in November 1974) in London. On Beuys in Latin America, see Katarzyna Cytlak, "La Rivoluzione Siamo Noi," *Third Text* 30, no. 5/6 (September 2016): 346–67. It has been suggested that these materials were originally part of Beuys' presentation at documenta 5, which explains why they do not show a very nuanced awareness of local politics. Longoni observes that Beuys's project could have been misunderstood: his 'Dritter Weg' ('Third Way'), a system between communism and capitalism, was easily associated in Argentina with Peronism.

²⁵¹ Comunicado n° 7: "Con la ayuda de la policía, el Secretario de Cultura de la Municipalidad de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires....", n.d. This document requests the return of the confiscated works and mentions a court proceeding: "Dr. Eduardo Munilla Lacasa ordenó el levantamiento de la captura policial que pesaba sobre el director del CAYC, que se vió obligado a dejar la ciudad durante ese lapso. En una larga exposición oral cuya transcripción se agregó al expediente, Glusberg explicó en la Sala II de la Cámara Penal durante seis horas continuas, cada obra exhibida en la plaza, su contenido artístico y el carácter diferente de cada experiencia."

²⁵² See Comunicado n° 2: "Clausura de la muestra "CAYC al Aire Libre" en la Plaza Roberto Arlt," Buenos Aires: CAYC, December 14, 1972.

²⁵³ Herrera, "Hacia un perfil del arte de sistemas," in Herrera and Marchesi, eds. *Arte de sistemas*, 36.

have inspired police intervention, since the charges did not hold up in court. As a later report in the newspaper *Clarín* noted, Glusberg “had obtained municipal authorization for the show. However, the same municipal authorities later ordered its closure, justifying the measure by claiming that the expression of art had been distorted, giving it a subversive character.”²⁵⁴

In a public relations campaign that followed the exhibition’s closure, Glusberg published several *comunicados*, both of his own writing and compiling letters of support from U.S.-based artists addressed to then-president General Alejandro Agustín Lanusse. They insist that the spirit of the exhibition was purely ludic; one open letter to the newspaper *La Razón*, written by CAYC artists and signed by Dermisache, lists “proof of the exclusively artistic intention given to the character of the works shown and the events realized: games for children, elements to put together and take apart, giving out balloons, ambient music, dance performances, puppet theater, color cubes, a public assistance reminder plaque, a musical structure for children, a photography contest, a printmaking contest, etc.”²⁵⁵ Another argues that while some works contained political referents, they did not implicate the Argentine government but merely evoked the general “spirit of rebellion and imagination of Argentines,” a spirit, moreover, that the cosmopolitan CAYC artists shared with “the experimental groups of London, Prague, New York or Budapest.” Finally, one *comunicado* takes the approach of framing the censorship as a repeat of

²⁵⁴ “Había obtenido para la muestra la correspondiente autorización municipal. Sin embargo, las mismas autoridades municipales ordenaron luego su clausura, justificando la medida en la apreciación de que la expresión de arte se había desvirtuado, dándosele carácter subversivo.” “El Levantamiento de una muestra plástica no tuvo fundamento legal,” *Clarín* (December 8, 1972). Glusberg reproduced the article as Comunicado n° 8, adding the dry caption: “Funcionarios municipales estimaron de acuerdo a un oficio enviado en 100 pesos ley los daños producidos por el “CAYC” en la plaza Roberto Arlt consistentes en el cambio de un planta y el arreglo de un cantero.”

²⁵⁵ “Clausura de la muestra ‘CAYC al aire libre’ en la Plaza Roberto Arlt,” Buenos Aires, September 26, 1972.

Experiencias '68: “Although the works exhibited in the plaza had a defined political ideology, interpreting the desire for liberation of Argentine artists, none of them directly alluded to the municipal authorities or the Argentine government. What happened was that the large public that paraded through the square during the three days that the exhibition lasted (more than five thousand people per day) added captions to the walls of the plaza.”²⁵⁶ Like Roberto Plate’s bathroom stall, the premise of an exhibition held in a city plaza invited the spontaneous and disorderly participation of the public. CAYC’s desire to leave the controlled environment of the gallery space in favor of the chance encounters of the plaza might be read both as a gesture meant to undermine the exclusivity of art institutions as well as an act of resistance or even provocation within increasingly disciplined public spaces.

Dermisache’s *Diario* mirrors such a “process” of disintegrating order, whereby the insistent architectural elements of the newspaper’s front page give way to competing, conflicting, even unfinished and missing voices. The space of the page reflects the public sphere, in which chaos and order vie for symbolic space – the space of signification. In the plaza, as in the press, the state won this contest, allowing only the circulation of pure signifiers. Dermisache’s evasion of content thus functions as a critique of the dangerous exercise of reading and writing in authoritarian times.²⁵⁷ The Chilean writer and artist Diamela Eltit later described the act of writing during dictatorship as “my secret political

²⁵⁶ “Si bien las obras exhibidas en la plaza tenían una ideología política definida, interpretando los sentimientos de liberación de los artistas argentinos, ninguna de ellas aludía en forma directa a las autoridades municipales o al gobierno argentino. Lo que sucedió fue que el numeroso público que desfiló por la plaza los tres días que duró la muestra (mas de cinco mil personas por día) agregó leyendas en las paredes de la plaza.” Comunicado n° 7: “Con la ayuda de la policía, el Secretario de Cultura de la Municipalidad de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires....”, n.d.

²⁵⁷ On how this worked in journalism, see Paula Bonnet, “The Unwritten Laws of Argentina’s Dictatorship” from the series *Journalism is Not a Crime* (<https://journalismisnotacrime.com/en/news/83>).

resistance. When living in an environment that is collapsed, conceiving a book can be a scarce gesture of survival.”²⁵⁸ Dermisache’s illegible texts enact their own “secret resistance” to the state’s exclusive claims to information and interpretation. She poses a counter-discourse at the very site of contact between government and people, the vehicle through which public discourse enters the private sphere of consumption. If the discomfort produced by an unreadable newspaper highlights the crisis of intelligibility in Argentina, it also provided a measure of cover – unlike Lublin, Orensanz, and Paksa, Dermisache herself was never censored, presumably because authorities did not understand that her scribbles represented a critique of what passed for news.

Considering the intricate *grafismos* that comprise *Diario No. 1, Año 1* returns us finally to the question of affect and the painstaking materiality of Dermisache’s work. In a recent catalogue for the Drawing Center, the writer Melissa Gronlund speculates that “though we learn nothing from the newspaper about the events it records, we can gauge a lot about Dermisache’s state of mind on the day she does the copying: concentration reflected in small, precise characters; tiredness in lazy loops; enthusiasm in large characters...in the fluidity and attention that Dermisache brings to this throwaway object of daily consumption as the newspaper becomes a carefully drawn image of itself.”²⁵⁹ The question

²⁵⁸ Diamela Eltit, “*E. Luminata*,” 5.

²⁵⁹ Melissa Gronlund, “Decodable Signals,” in *Drawing Time, Reading Time* (New York: The Drawing Center, 2024): 25.

of how much Dermisache was writing from her body is an unresolved one. But as conceptual art it leaves open the possibility that her newspaper might transmit a different sort of “news of the day” – might register the fluctuations of an affective state that is not only meant to be repressed, but is ultimately unnamable in the language of patriarchy.

“A carefully drawn image of itself” might best describe Dermisache’s engagement with the materiality, the mimicry, and the critical distance of writing. While she never described her work as feminist, her work questions systems of representation writ large, and, I argue, discursive structures of femininity and feminism embedded in those systems. Her texts address the possibilities of reading and writing as a woman as well as the role of such practices in (dis)allowing female subjectivity in an authoritarian state. For Dermisache, language is in crisis, but it is not a crisis that is new to women – language has always been a tool for the cultural and biological conditioning of women. This utility came to be central to the construction of all politicized subjects, and not just women, during this period. Even if identifiable strains of feminist discourse and activism do not emerge from Dermisache’s work, feminist analysis nonetheless provides crucial tools for understanding its stubborn occupation of discursive space. Her writings, however illegible, attest to an experience that is impossible to articulate using the language of authority. As Barthes wrote in a later essay, “Nothing, absolutely nothing, distinguishes true writings from false ones. It is we with our law who decide the status of a given piece of writing. What does that mean? It means that the signifier is free and sovereign. A piece of writing need not be legible to be a rightful piece of writing.”²⁶⁰ Dermisache’s signifiers – if not her self – are free and sovereign. They are a way to put her experience *into writing*: she formalizes it,

²⁶⁰ Barthes, “Variaciones sobre la escritura,” in *La escritura y la etimología del mundo* (Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1989): 137.

she asserts it as “true,” and she also disappears into it, allowing it to speak in ways that she could not. Language (and by extension representation) is infused with and iteratively performs the structures of differentiation and power in ways that not only determine what we can think and say, but also, in effect, create our reality.

MARIE ORENSANZ

In early 1974, another group CAYC exhibition, featuring work by Dermisache, Lublin, and Orensanz, among others, began circulating in Europe. Its English title, translated in each country, was *Art Systems in Latin America*. Its first stop was the International Cultureel Centrum in Antwerp, opening with a roundtable on “Art and Culture in the Third World,” in April 1974.²⁶¹ For this venue, where Schraenen remembered meeting Dermisache, Glusberg published a special edition of her texts [fig. 2.13]. Beginning with loose scribbles, a page of massive, furiously vertical blocks ultimately unravels into several pages of faint but consistent horizontal lines. Dermisache’s signature, dated 1969, occupies the last page, though the book’s publication date is December 1973.

In June-July 1974, the show traveled to the Palace of Fine Arts in Brussels. To end the year, it then traveled to London, opening at the ICA’s Nash House in November, accompanied by extensive publicity and programming. The catalogue, in a bilingual introduction, frames art as a semiological system and the works shown as critical of that system, self-conscious of the conditions of their own making.²⁶² As usual, each page,

²⁶¹ GT-354, “Introduction to Art Systems in Latin America, International Cultureel Centrum, Antwerpen, Belgium, April-May 1974,” February 5, 1974. GT-403, “Art Systems in latin America,” June 14, 1974.

²⁶² *Art Systems in Latin America*. Exh. cat., London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, Nash House, 1974. “From a semiological viewpoint, we find we are facing a set of signs which makes clear its production conditions: opaque messages which reveal the code which makes them up with a value of direct denouciation (in opposition to transparent signs: messages which conceal their codes” (n.p.).

formatted as a standardized grid, was given over to a participating artist. Lublin's page reproduces two photographs from *Fluvio subtunal* – one superceding the constraints of the grid, one broken apart by it – and a short statement adapting the language of her image process: “My work intends to point out – by means of a new practice of the arts – all the mechanisms concealed by ‘culture,’ so as to make possible a total awareness which will clear the way towards a true cultural revolution” [fig. 2.14]. Dermisache's page disregards the grid's vertical lines, adhering loosely to the horizontal lines as if in a lined notebook [fig. 2.15]. Sweeping introductory marks give way to tighter tangles, then ease into more regular, sentence-like lines on the bottom half, where she noted a simple title, “página escrita,” with her name and date above the CAYC stamp.

But it is on Orenszanz's page where the typological conceit of the grid evolves into a spatial device [fig. 2.16]. In the top register, the phrase “people are conditioned by environment” is typed, as on Dermisache's page, across the horizontal lines. In the middle of the page, a field of dots, suggesting energetic particles in space, hover behind the converging lines, perhaps allowing themselves to be mapped by longitude and latitude or captioned by the phrase “creative power.” The word “free,” floating in the middle of the square to the left, points via an arrow toward these disorganizing energies, though it remains a potential or unrealized move. Finally, jammed into the thin gaps between registers – what had been negative space on Lublin and Dermisache's pages – the words “closed” and “energy = 0” are punctuated by tinier grids, one made from thin black lines and one made from thicker black blocks. A row of small black blocks trails off as if an ellipsis. An unfinished thought, perhaps; Orenszanz's phrases are legible but not immediately decipherable. Like Dermisache, she arranges words as discrete visual, rather than representational or symbolic, elements. And like Dermisache, she signed and dated but did not title the page.

Orensanz's page in *Art Systems in Latin America* riffs on a body of work from the early 1970s in which she began incorporating text – in the form of Spanish phrases, numerical equations, and Letraset characters – in a prolonged investigation of the representational capacities of the signifier. Following her move from figurative painting to reduced, geometric sculpture, Orensanz's drawings from this period also engage with the grid as a spatial device – itself a signifier – on the page, canvas, floor, or city. The series indexes a transition in both her work and her life; in 1972, having won a fellowship from the Fondo Nacional de las Artes, she traveled to Italy and made the decision to stay, establishing herself and family among a community of artists and writers in Rome.²⁶³ She also established a working arrangement with her partner, a division of labor that allowed her to settle into the sometimes-conflicting roles of madre, mujer, artista. “I chose a partner who understood me,” Orensanz told me. “In Rome, Patrick took the girls to school in the morning, and at home – it was all a mess, but I worked on my work. When I came back – *chu chu chu* – nobody knew who I worked for, nobody saw me working at all. And I dedicated myself to the other part. For me it is important: having lived a great love, having had my children, who I adore, all of which seem important as creation.”²⁶⁴ As she looked for gallery representation, Orensanz experienced what she describes as her first encounters with gender discrimination:

When I arrived in Rome, I had an experience that had never happened to me before. I went to different galleries to show my work, and a gallery owner came to

²⁶³ These included the artists Ennio Iommi, Piero Dorazio, Fabio Maria, filmmaker Glauber Rocha, curator Vittorio Minardi and his wife Margaret, the poet Rafal Alberti and his wife, the writer María Teresa León (Buccellato 65). While Orensanz was in Milan, Dermisache stayed at her home and introduced her to Guy Schraenen, who later collaborated on publishing projects with both Orensanz and Dermisache.

²⁶⁴ Marie Orensanz, interview with the author, March 29, 2019. In a recent interview with Hélène Meisel, she elaborated that her family of five shared a 400-square foot apartment, which also served as her studio. “The girls slept in the bedroom and we slept in the living room. I worked while the girls were at school, my husband went looking for a job, and I set out in search of a gallery” (Orensanz and Meisel, *Marie Orensanz: Entretien avec Hélène Meisel*, 34).

see the work at home. He liked it very much, he praised it, but he confessed that I had a major defect: I was a woman. I felt smaller than my drawings, tinier than my dots. He also told me that there were a lot of collectors who sometimes will not buy a work because it was made by a woman.²⁶⁵

The experience prompted her to add a feminine “e” to her name to clarify, defiantly perhaps, that she was a woman artist. Orensanz moved again, to Milan, in 1973, where she befriended the critics Lea Vergine and Gillo Dorfles (who had already encountered her work at the Coltejer Biennial in Medellín),²⁶⁶ the artist Tomás Maldonado, and others, and began making regular trips to scavenge for marble fragments in Carrara. In Milan, her exploration of language again took the form of an installation at the Galleria Eros, where she exhibited another text-based work, *Manifiesto Eros*, in 1974.

Finally, the drawings Orensanz produced in these years track a period of escalating guerilla violence and political repression, in Argentina and elsewhere, following the uprisings of 1968-1969. On the anniversary of the Cordobazo, in May 1970, the Montoneros kidnapped and killed former president General Pedro Eugenio Aramburu. In September 1972, the military executed sixteen political prisoners at Trelew, the event Dermisache had referenced with a block of black ink on the back page of *Diario No. 1, Año 1*. As public support and the military coalition backing the junta fell apart, democratic elections were called for early 1973. The promise of a return to democracy, and the return

²⁶⁵ “Cuando llegué a Roma, viví una experiencia que jamás me había ocurrido. Fui a distintas galerías a mostrar obra, un galerista vino a ver los trabajos a casa; le gustó muchísimo, los alabó pero confesó que yo tenía un gran defecto: era mujer. Allí me sentí más chica que mis dibujos, más punto que mis puntos. Además me dijo que había un montón de coleccionistas que a veces no compran una obra por ser una mujer la que la ha hecho.” Ibid.

²⁶⁶ In an interview years later, Dorfles recalled seeing a drawing by Orensanz at the biennial. “Ya entonces hice varias presiones sobre el jurado para que el dibujo fuese tomado en consideración y solo algunos años después, aquí en Milán, me di cuenta que la misma persona que había hecho aquel dibujo era la que habría hecho una muestra en una galería milanesa” (*María Orensanz*. Exh. cat., Buenos Aires: Artemúltiple, October 4-15, 1977).

of the exiled Perón, created a heady and optimistic, if short-lived, political interlude.²⁶⁷ Perón's return, marked by the Ezeiza Massacre of June 1973, set off new violence between left- and right-wing Peronists.

In a series of drawings from this period, Paksa, who was working in the *villas miserias*, maps the contestation of urban space, resources, and even the meanings of terms between the militarized left and right, the guerillas and the “gorillas” [fig. 2.17]. In each of her *Diagramas de batallas*, a circle centered over the grid of a map distorts the block lettering of such terms, used with fervor on both sides – “libertad,” “victoria,” “libres o muertos,” – and suggests a view through the lens of a rifle scope. *Toma del Batallón 601*, from 1975, marks the sites of engagement in a guerilla attack on the Batallón de Arsenales 601 Domingo Viejobueno military base in Monte Chingolo, south of Buenos Aires, on December 23, 1975. The last military assault mounted by the ERP, the fighting lasted seven hours and resulted in around ninety guerilla, twenty civilian, and ten military deaths.²⁶⁸ During the attack, the military gained the upper hand with machine gun fire from a guard post and with artillery helicopters illuminating the area from above – strategies of visual control over the built environment through the kinds of views Paksa layers in her drawings. Perón had empowered the armed forces and right-wing radicals of his own party before he died in 1974, leaving his wife in office. A report in *Time* magazine on the Monte Chingolo attack indicates both her tenuous grip on power and the United States' view of the situation:

While Juan Perón's petulant widow went through the motions of governing as if in a trance and the nation hung ever more precariously on the precipice of

²⁶⁷ As part of the “democratic spring” of 1973, the transitional government of Héctor Cámpora authorized the release of films that had been banned during the Revolución Argentina, such as Pasolini's *Teorema* (1968) and Bertolucci's *Last Tango in Paris* (1972).

²⁶⁸ These numbers are estimates mostly because the military reported no survivors, though later reporting revealed that there were survivors taken to detention centers and later disappeared. See “Los prisioneros del ataque a Monte Chingolo” in *Página 12* (December 26, 1999). Luis Camnitzer has made the argument that these kinds of spectacular guerilla actions were themselves political conceptualism.

political and economic chaos, many Argentines wondered why the military did not simply end the charade and officially take command.²⁶⁹

Take command they did in a coup d'état on March 24, 1976. This final civil-military dictatorship, in power until 1983, escalated the tactics of torture and disappearance of the previous decade into a formalized program of state terrorism called the Proceso de Reorganización Nacional.

The anodyne name for this period of genocidal violence hints at the ways in which the dictatorship used language to obscure and confuse. In her groundbreaking study *A Lexicon of Terror*, literary scholar Marguerite Feitlowitz elucidated the linguistic distortions and transformations of meaning undertaken by the military. “With diabolical skill,” she writes, “the regime used language to 1) shroud in mystery its true actions and intentions, 2) say the opposite of what it meant, 3) inspire trust both at home and abroad, 4) instill guilt, especially in mothers, to seal their complicity, and 5) sow paralyzing terror and confusion.”²⁷⁰ The filmmaker Lucrecia Martel, who grew up in Buenos Aires during this time, described the disorientating disconnect between events and their meanings. “‘Things happened with no explanation, especially for a kid,’ she said, citing mysterious cars, bloodstains and even corpses in the street.”²⁷¹ “It made you psychotic,” a *madre* told Feitlowitz. “We could barely ‘read,’ let alone ‘translate’ the world around us. And that was exactly what they wanted.”²⁷² Turning now to look closely at the drawings Orensanz produced between 1970 and approximately 1974, both in Buenos Aires and Italy, I argue that her careful and sustained analysis of symbols – numerical and pictorial, national

²⁶⁹ “Argentina: Hanging from the Cliff” in *Time* vol. 107 no. 1 (January 5, 1976).

²⁷⁰ Feitlowitz, *A Lexicon of Terror*. The best example of this linguistic distortion is the uniquely transitive use of “disappeared.”

²⁷¹ J. Hoberman, “Lucrecia Martel: A Director Who Confounds and Thrills,” *The New York Times* (April 13, 2018).

²⁷² Feitlowitz, *A Lexicon of Terror*, 22.

landscapes and linguistic euphemism – probes the limits of this ambiguous universe of deteriorating semantic coherence.

El orden establecido

In September 1969, Galería El Taller in Buenos Aires sent out an invitation advertising an exhibition of “drawings on acrylic” by Marí Orensanz [fig. 2.18]. Designed by the photographer Humberto Rivas, the invitation card, a transparent sheet with black block text, simulated the new body of works on display, advertised as drawings though many were actually paintings on transparent acrylic. A year after her showing her “drawing” in black tape at the Premio Braque, and her primary structures at El Taller, these works suggested a return to two-dimensional, perhaps even representational, forms, even as they condensed and refined the logic of her foray into minimalist sculpture.

A paradigmatic painting from this series, produced the following year for the National Salon, is *El orden establecido*, a diptych of two transparent acrylic panels painted over with nearly identical, inverted 3 x 3 square grids [fig. 2.19]. On one panel, displayed on the left,²⁷³ Orensanz painted the borders of the grid, framing square units of negative space. Like small windows, the transparent squares structure views of the environment of the painting’s display – perhaps the space behind, or (as it has been photographed) a blank wall onto which a viewer might project an imagined scene. Small Xs hover below, and slightly over, two frames, evoking a contact sheet, film strip, or even a map looked over with an editorial eye. More enigmatically, a small tree has sprouted in the center of the bottom row of squares, the top of its foliage excised and loose. The shadows produced by the distance of the acrylic panel from the wall, at least in its installation views, produce the

²⁷³ Orensanz confirmed that the panels are always shown in the configuration (“siempre como están en la foto, pero una vez que lo expuse en el MNBA los puse uno enfrente del otro”). Interview with the author, April 10, 2020.

kind of figure-ground confusion on which much geometric abstraction depends: are the transparent squares figures, framed by the painted grid? Or do they cede to the ground behind, allowing the puzzling notations of Xs and tree to take the spatial fore?

The other panel in the diptych, displayed on the right side, might provide a clue. On this inverted or counter-grid, painted squares float within a transparent frame, though the analogy does not quite hold. There are only eight units, with the central square in the bottom row missing, and several appear deteriorated, as if paper that has been torn off, or eaten away, or – in the case of the bottom left square – painted over. Again an X appears to mark the bottom corner of a square on the center-left, while an identical tree, intact this time, edges into the indeterminate space of the top-right. Here the putative figures – the painted squares floating in space – do not command the composition. They are hesitant and ambiguous, yielding both to the texture of the surface behind them (especially in the installation view I rely on here) and to figural elements added on top. A photograph of Orensanz posing with this panel, reproduced in the catalogue for the 1971 exhibition *Panorama de Experiencias Visuales Argentinas–Fundación Lorenzutti* at the Museo de Arte Moderno, gives another sense of the relationship between painted squares and three-dimensional space behind [fig. 2.20]. It also reveals the grid, charted in pencil perhaps, tying the squares to two-dimensional space; perhaps they are not deteriorated so much as gestural or unfinished. Are we looking at something coming together (a provisional plan, an annotated sketch) or coming undone (a splitting up or falling away of the hegemony of the grid)?

The suggestion of editorial intervention – the layering of text and image over the geometry of the grid – in *El orden establecido* raises another reading better suited to the series of canvas-based drawings that Orensanz produced in the following years. In an untitled canvas from 1970 [fig. 2.21], the grid reappears, haltingly, in pencil to anchor

mathematical symbols on the page: another small X, a short dash or minus sign, parallel lines or wayward equal sign. Above, a figure on a bicycle points left from an intersection and a small car points outward, again disrupting the spatial consistency of the canvas. Are we looking at the two-dimensional space of a notebook, or the illusionistic three-dimensionality of an architectural plan? $0:0$ [fig. 2.212, from the same year, reduces the grid further, eliminating all but a few lines which suggest an urban site plan or aerial view of city streets. Two cars, one seen from the side and one from the front but both at elevation, play along. Both are hampered, however, by short but vexing lines. A sprinkle of dots (colons? periods? ellipses? people?) guide us toward what appears to be a complete, if not coherent, mathematical equation, sliding down a diagonal: $0:0=0$. We get a closer view in $1+1=0$ [fig. 2.23], in which a larger Letraset car, split in half like the tree, teeters on the precipice of a gridline that has abruptly stopped (a street corner? the roof of a building?). Things do not add up here, the equation suggests. Orensanz has sometimes contended that the numbers represent figures, but they combine fruitlessly, never amounting to anything.²⁷⁴

As in Dermisache's work, the architectures of the page fluctuate between literal and referential registers. Horizontal lines, she suggested in an interview, organize not just a page or grid but also the Argentine landscape and psyche:

²⁷⁴ "En un ambiente abierto la energía se produce y en un ambiente cerrado se hace '1 + 1 = 0'" (Marie Orensanz, interview with the author, November 29, 2019). In a text written in Milan in 1975, Orensanz wrote, "Sometimes I give symbols, or numbers, a precise meaning. For me, the number 1 represents the human being in society. The addition $1+1=0$ symbolizes our lack of communication. A dot can preserve its main meaning as a dot, but a dotted line means time. An arrow can indicate a direction, strength, or love." This text is quoted, but not cited, in Christine Frèrot, "Marie Orensanz: Aesthetic Thinking," *Art Nexus* 4, no. 59 (February 12, 2005): 76. More recently, she told Meisel, "The polysemy of symbols is important in my work. Number 1 represents the individual, but also the beginning. Number 2 represents the couple. Zero represents the infinite, but also the loss of all communication" (Orensanz and Meisel, *Marie Orensanz: Entretien avec Hélène Meisel*, 50).

The horizon is one of our characteristics; that is, once they asked me in Italy what differences there are between Argentines and Italians, and I had noticed that the photos of landscapes were taken as if from above: we see ourselves within a very present plain, a horizontality, that could be from the Río de la Plata, the sea, or the pampas...that gives you a feeling of space and can also give you a feeling of confinement, a certain suffocation expressed in the *pulcritud* of these conceptual paintings.²⁷⁵

Pulcritud, a kind of neatness and containment that is also elegance and economy; the kind of order and wholeness promised by a structuralist worldview.²⁷⁶ Orensanz's landscapes, the critic Horacio Safons wrote in a *Primera Plana* review of her 1972 exhibition at Galería Carmen Waugh, "present realities (beach, sea, sky, tree), through a drawing outlined as pure linear excisions, and connote large planes (real space), accounting for the relationship between things and the environment, their interdependence."²⁷⁷ Mathematical equations, dots and lines, and notational symbols attempt, perhaps, to quantify both things and the social production of space between things, the affective tissue that connects people with the world around them. There is always something that slips between these socio-symbolic ensembles, however; something that exists always in tension with our ability to narrativize it. In Kristeva's terms, the tension in the *pulcritud* of the sign is the dialectical discord between the semiotic and the symbolic. But the grids in Orensanz's drawings are themselves signs, and I want to consider for a moment what exactly they delineate.

²⁷⁵ "El horizonte es una de las características nuestras, es decir, una vez me preguntaron en Italia que diferencias hay entre nosotros argentinos e italianos, yo había notado que las fotos mismas y los paisajes estaban tomados como si fueran de arriba: nosotros contábamos con una planicie de fuerte presencia, una horizontalidad que podía ser del Río de la Plata, el mar o de la pampa...eso te da sensación de espacio y también te puede dar sensación de encierro, una cierta asfixia expresada en la *pulcritud* de estas pinturas conceptuales." Buccellato, *Marie Orensanz*, 59.

²⁷⁶ As Meltzer writes, "The linguistic turn in the visual arts makes visible for us structuralism's baseline belief about the nature of meaning and being in a structural world – a world ordered like a grid; a world conceived on the model of 'wholeness,' to come back to Jean Piaget's word, whose elements 'do not come on the scene except as [already] ordered'" (*Systems We Have Loved*, 59).

²⁷⁷ "Presenta las realidades (playa, mar, cielo, árbol), mediante un dibujo perfilado como puras escisiones lineales, y connota a los grandes planos (el espacio real), dando cuenta de la relación entre las cosas y el medio, su interdependencia." Horacio Safons, "Los paisajes del talento," *Primera Plana* 492 (July 4, 1972): 47. He begins the article by identifying the artist as "37, marplatense, casada, 3 hijos."

The Grid

The grid has represented the spirit of austerity and reduction that characterizes a dominant lineage of modernist abstraction in Western art history, a perspectival ordering device that has paradoxically come to embody the flatness of the picture plane.²⁷⁸ It is moreover inextricable from governing narratives of modernism in Latin American art history, in which geometric abstraction arrived in the port of Montevideo in 1934 with the return of Joaquín Torres-García and his pictographic grid.²⁷⁹ Torres-García, who developed his principles of constructive universalism after meeting Theo van Doesberg and Piet Mondrian in Paris, departed from the Neoplasticist grid by grounding it in symbolism. “What van Doesberg saw in an Egyptian pyramid was a model of ‘measure, direction, and number,’” Jacqueline Barnitz wrote in her survey text, the first of such governing narratives published in English. “What Torres-García saw in it was a structure ‘ruled by laws’ that were ‘the center of innumerable cosmic relationships’ and a depository of lost hermetic knowledge.”²⁸⁰ In this sense, Torres-García anticipates a structuralist analysis of the relations between archetypes across cultures and draws from those relations a “universal” symbology ordered by the grid.

²⁷⁸ Clement Greenberg championed modern art’s resistance to efforts to deny its physical properties, writing, “The history of avant-garde painting is that of a progressive surrender to the resistance of its medium; which resistance consists chiefly in the flat picture plane’s denial of efforts to ‘hole through’ it for realistic perspectival space.” See “Towards a Newer Laocoon,” in *Pollock and After* (London: Routledge, 1985): 43.

²⁷⁹ See regional histories from Jacqueline Barnitz, “Torres-García’s Constructive Universalism and the Abstract Legacy,” in *Twentieth-Century Art of Latin America* (Austin: University of Texas Press; 2001) to Gabriel Pérez-Barreiro, *The Geometry of Hope* (Austin: Blanton Museum of Art, 2007) to Mari Carmen Ramírez, *Dimensions of Constructive Art in Brazil: The Adolpho Leirner Collection* (Houston: Museum of Fine Arts Houston; 2007) to, more recently, Osbel Suárez and María Amalia García, *Cold America* (Madrid: Fundación Juan March, 2011). These histories of Latin American modernism, in which geometric abstraction dominates, have largely been shaped by the visibility of the private Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros.

²⁸⁰ Barnitz, *Twentieth-Century Art of Latin America*, 128.

The grid became so hegemonic in regions where concrete and constructivist movements took hold in the mid-twentieth century (Argentine, Brazilian, and Venezuelan metropolises in particular) that it came to lay claim to a broader set of values beyond universal form or, later, the mathematical concreteness of painting. In Latin America, as elsewhere, *modernism* as a set of nonrepresentational aesthetic principles signaled an entrance into *modernity* as a temporally- and economically-contingent way of living. As Kaira Cabañas has written, the universalism promised by the “principles of composition underwriting geometric abstraction (the grid) ultimately became aligned with individual states’ ideologies of modern industrial development.”²⁸¹ After World War II, María Amalia García adds, geometric abstraction, “coupled with the notion of modernity, came to be the means by which artistic institutions could demonstrate that they were internationalist and, hence, contemporary.”²⁸² From the Venezuelan kineticists to the concretist groups of Argentina and Brazil, the iconography of the grid was representational of something after all. Even as it purported to transcend or bypass nature and naturalism, it illustrated the very structures and archetypes of modernization: architectonic form, urban plans, technological and bureaucratic systems, positivist science, universalist politics, the experience of rupture and newness.²⁸³

Even the most doctrinaire theorists and practitioners of the modernist grid have conceded something more. Mondrian’s pursuit of “pure” geometric form did not expunge all references to the natural world – a notion belied by title, for example, of his iconic painting *Broadway Boogie Woogie* (1942). Mondrian shared with Torres-García an interest

²⁸¹ Kaira M. Cabañas, “If the Grid Is the New Palm Tree of Latin American Art,” *Oxford Art Journal* 33, no. 3 (October 1, 2010): 368.

²⁸² María Amalia García, *Abstract Crossings: Cultural Exchange between Argentina and Brazil* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019): 81.

²⁸³ Pérez-Barreiro, *The Geometry of Hope*, 34.

in underlying patterns, revelatory geometries, a spiritual objective of universalism. Indeed, as Rosalind Krauss wrote in her 1979 essay *Grids*, for artists such as Mondrian “the grid is a staircase to the Universal, and they are not interested in what happens below in the Concrete.”²⁸⁴ Krauss echoes Torres-García’s relational thread, using the vocabulary of structuralism and psychoanalysis to position the grid between “spirit” and “matter.” For Krauss, it is the grid’s status as myth that allows it to contain the contradiction of its claims to autonomy or anti-narrative *and* a hidden spirituality: “The grid’s mythic power is that it makes us able to think we are dealing with materialism (or sometimes science, or logic) while at the same time it provides us with a release into belief (or illusion, or fiction).”²⁸⁵ And it is this tension – between the grid’s organization of matter and the repressed “spirit” that it hides – that Orensanz’s drawings address. Evolving through a process of continual reduction, Orensanz’s drawings sought to “remove the superfluous and get to the essential.”²⁸⁶ In this process, she prods at nearly every ideological evocation of the grid – with its promises of logic, rationality, stability, universalism – to expose another precept of modernism: the myth of progress.

This is all to say that Orensanz’s sustained analysis of the grid (like Dermisache’s analysis of writing) reveals that it is both denotative and connotative, it is itself a signifier whose histories and conditions of use interplay in what Barthes called the “constant game of hide-and-seek between the meaning and the form which defines myth.”²⁸⁷ Orensanz

²⁸⁴ Krauss, “Grids,” in *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1985): 52.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 54.

²⁸⁶ When I asked Orensanz whether she thought studying with Pettoruti made her interested in geometry or in Cubism’s reliance on overlapping surfaces joined by a grid, she did not bite, replying simply, “No especialmente, ya que mi intención es sacar lo superfluo y ir a lo esencial” (Interview with the author, April 10, 2020). In a 1977 interview with Vergine and Dorfles, she reiterates that her objectives have always been “buscar la esencialidad del gesto unida al pensamiento” (*María Orensanz*. Exh. cat., Buenos Aires: Artemúltiple, October 4-15, 1977).

²⁸⁷ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1970): 118.

appropriates the grid's form, and its presumption of a self-sufficient or self-evident set of meanings, in order to bring through its other, more nebulous operations. In these drawings, the drawn city is a spatial and theoretical device, exposing the contradictory impulses of the modernist grid, but is also an actual city, a material and social environment in which the practices of its inhabitants were in flux.

Text in the Grid

What I have tried to do in the previous section is use a formalist history of the grid to position Orensanz's drawings as anti-formalist, or conceptual, insofar as their analysis of the grid as a material support of signification aims to estrange the ideologies that define art. Here I would like to examine how her use of both language and the grid not only visualizes but enacts her viewer-reader's imbrication in socio-symbolic ensembles. In 1972, for the same solo exhibition at Carmen Waugh, the artist Lidy Prati appeared on the radio show *La mujer y su mundo* to offer a thorough and subtle review of Orensanz's drawings. While she has abandoned painting in favor of "concepts" and "ideas," Prati notes,

We can see nonetheless that she is still a 'painter,' because even if the pictorial elements are minimal, they manifest subtly: a tree, a broken car, a dog, a cloud, a cross (a sign for *más* or *por*), lines of dots, etc. These are not mere notations, but rather transcend. She composes these elements, she frames them in an organization as geometric as the city of Buenos Aires: "the established order" is the title of the series.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁸ "Vemos no obstante que no deja de ser una 'pintora,' pues aunque son mínimos los elementos pictóricos, sutilmente se manifiesta con: un árbol, un automóvil quebrado, un perro, una nube, una cruz (signo más o por), líneas de puntos, etc. No son estas meras acotaciones, sino que trascienden. Compone estos elementos, los encuadra en una organización, tan geométrica como lo es la ciudad de Buenos Aires: "el orden establecido" se titula esta serie." "Marie Orensanz expone en la Galería Carmen Waugh." *La mujer y su mundo*. Buenos Aires: Radio Municipal, June 22, 1972. I have corrected in my quotation several spelling errors in the transcription.

Buenos Aires was the theater of operations, the space of contestation between coercive ideological discourses. Just as the cybernetic police remade the visual relations of the city, new administrative practices, particularly the introduction of more light and the “cleansing” of murals, posters and graffiti, produced new urban spaces and regulated new physical, mental, and political behaviors within the “established order.”²⁸⁹ The dismantling of *Arte e ideología: CAYC al aire libre*, for example, demonstrates the changing “field of programmed and regulated operations,” as Michel de Certeau has theorized the city – a sign system that, like language, established new and contingent rules controlling its individual use.

For de Certeau, the grid represents the rational organization of urban space, the discourse that ideologizes the city. It articulates the visual and behavioral rules governing experience in the city and produces the realm of possibilities of everyday life. The state’s administration of these rules, he writes, is countered by “‘speculative’ and classificatory operations.”

On the one hand, there is a differentiation and redistribution of the parts and functions of the city, as a result of inversions, displacements, accumulations, etc.; on the other there is a rejection of everything that is not capable of being dealt with in this way and so constitutes the ‘waste products’ of a functionalist administration (abnormality, deviance, illness, death, etc.).²⁹⁰

In the city, as in art history, processes of reduction are driven by modernist desires for order and progress. How and when does one adjust to the new semiotics of urban space enforced

²⁸⁹ Cyrus Stephens Cousins, writing about the Onganía years, highlights the “spotlights installed to illuminate the city’s park benches supposedly to prevent ‘immoral’ public displays of affection. The General Inspection Division ordered clubs to improve their lighting and conducted daily inspection of places in which rock-and-roll bands played. They also closed down popular cinemas and well-known theatres.” See “General Onganía and the Argentine [Military] Revolution of the Right: Anti-Communism and Morality, 1966-1970,” in *Historia Actual Online* (no. 17, 2008): 71. Feitlowitz, writing about the *Proceso*, details “cleansing” and beautification efforts in the first chapter of *A Lexicon of Terror*. On spatial politics in the city of Buenos Aires at mid-century, see Ana María León, *Modernity for the Masses Antonio Bonet’s Dreams for Buenos Aires* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2021).

²⁹⁰ Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 95.

by a military regime? How does the rationalization of space, through the elimination of “waste,” produce new spatial practices? De Certeau proposes walking as a speech act within the urban system, an example of enunciation which might subvert the spatial meanings enforced by the grid.

A pair of untitled drawings from 1971 [figs. 2.24 and 2.25] mark Orensanz’s introduction of human figures in the series. A vestigial, penciled-in grid continues to order the compositions, though expressive patches of paint in blue and gray seem to challenge its authority. In one drawing, a field of blue dominates, framed with the crosshatching of a viewfinder, perhaps, and given a sense of scale by a small female figure walking, eyes to the ground, out of its bottom-right corner. What street – what urban plane – could she be walking on with such an open sky at her back? In the other drawing, a seemingly older figure, back turned and holding a cane, stands on a gray horizon line against a blue expanse. The texture suggests she is standing on sand. Below, the painted scene, along with the penciled columns framing it – that is, the gridded unit – is repeated at a smaller scale, as if zoomed out. Its elements are also deconstructed and rehearsed: read left to right, the columns appear in pencil, as does the figure in proportion to the square, then the field of blue, the textured horizon (this time reading as the sea), and the field of gray. Anyone who has visited Buenos Aires will recognize this particular combination of colors as the silvery plain that extends beyond the city’s edge, the Río de la Plata.

Prati, in her review, argues that Orensanz’s reintroduction of figural elements in such reduced space does not constitute figurative, or even symbolic, content. Her use of landscape, even if it includes pictorial elements, exceeds representation in order to enact a spatio-temporal process. This, she concludes, is “Marie Orensanz’s fundamental contribution:

the time of (simultaneous) perception of different ‘information’ is carried out within a single whole and not through the serial synthesis of partial moments of successive frames to present a concept. The perception of the ‘information’ transports the viewer, introducing him into the ‘spatial field’ as if it were a real event and, what is more, at the same time a simultaneous event is at work: the perceptive and the conceptual.²⁹¹

For Prati, the colors and textures, the temporal editing, even a momentary identification with a Letraset figure, all amount to something beyond the “serial synthesis of partial moments” that comprise an image. Indeed, the “spatial field” she describes, transporting the spectator as it performs perception, might relate more closely to the spatial interventions discussed in chapter one. They reveal the codes – both linguistic and spatial, discursive and material – enmeshing Orensanz’s viewer-readers in socio-symbolic structures.

“The rationalization of the city leads to its mythification in strategic discourses,” de Certeau writes; here, its discursive role as staging ground for a purified Catholic-nationalist social vision.²⁹² But its mythic status, returning to Krauss, allows the rationalized city – the grid – to contain both materialism and belief, science and illusion, logic and fiction, order and deviance. What spatial worlds of “waste” open up in the rigid grid of such a policed city? Where does Orensanz locate these expressive fields of blue and gray within the two-dimensional and three-dimensional operations of the grid? Are they mental or affective apertures produced by the figures who move within it? The suppressed

²⁹¹ “El aporte fundamental de Marie Orensanz: el tiempo de percepción (simuláneo) de diferentes ‘informaciones’ se realiza dentro de un todo único y no a través de síntesis seriadas de momentos parciales de sucesivos cuadros para presentar un concepto. La percepción de la ‘información’ transporta al espectador, introduciéndolo al ‘ámbito espacial’ como si éste fuera un hecho real y, lo que es más, al mismo tiempo se está obrando un hecho simultáneo: el perceptivo y el conceptual.” “Marie Orensanz expone en la Galería Carmen Waugh.” *La mujer y su mundo*. Buenos Aires: Radio Municipal, June 22, 1972.

²⁹² Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 95.

language of the “bodies [who] follow the thicks and thins of an urban ‘text’ they write without being able to read it”²⁹³

A closely related drawing, *Yo ladro* [fig. 2.26], repeats many of the motifs discussed here. This time, the pictorial field is comprised of but one square in the grid, filled in with the same gray-blue hue. The same Letraset tree, intact, sits on the bottom of the square, marking a horizon line and dwarfing a small Letraset dog. Below, a new element: a single line of typed text reads, “yo ladro tú ladras él ladra nosotros ladramos vosotros ladráis ellos callan.” Structured as the conjugation of a verb, it suggests we might be reading a notebook. “I bark, you bark, he barks” – it nearly captions the image above – “we bark, you all bark, they shut up.” The notation of the bark, an enunciation outside of language, an illegible expression, within the grammatical scaffolding of a verb conjugation illustrates the tension of the spatial and discursive grid. The bark is expressive, instinctive, defensive; it exceeds the behavioral grammars that organize the city. Unlike in the appropriated text that had comprised *La Gallareta*, the subject here is ambiguous (conjugated for all possible subjects), leaving open the question of who is barking and who is silenced. Is this another gesture of solidarity with resistance movements, or is this a critique of a political environment in which the bark is a “waste”?

To conclude with another diptych (a form that organizes its own spatial and temporal tension): a final drawing from 1971 titled *Desintegración del hombre II = cada cual atiende su juego = 0=0* [fig. 2.27]. On the left panel, the grid appears only to structure a progression of four figures from youngest to oldest. The beginning and end of the timeline, or x-axis, are marked with 0s. Below, four painted squares progress in a gradient from yellow to red. Neither section seems to support the “disintegration of man” suggested

²⁹³ Ibid., 93.

in the title. In the right panel, which the title's equation establishes as a kind of equivalent, no figures appear. The grid occupies nearly the entire canvas, this time overlaid with another diagonal grid, and the painted squares reappear, at the same scale, slightly above. Block lower case text occupies the bottom half: "cada cual atiende su juego." Here Orensanz has appropriated a phrase from the game Antón Pirulero, in which children sit in a circle and pretend to play instruments – "cada cual atiende su juego" – paying attention to the person playing the role of Antón Pirulero. As in Hot Potato, the person caught not paying enough attention to switch gestures with Antón Pirulero, the song warns, "una prenda tendrá." The phrase's idiomatic use, and perhaps the message of the game, is "every man for himself." Feitlowitz, in a translation of three plays by the Argentine playwright Griselda Gambaro, notes that the game is about arbitrary reward and punishment and contains threats (play along or suffer the blame).²⁹⁴ In Orensanz's drawing, each person – the baby, the child, the adult, and the "viejo," as she put it – plays their part.²⁹⁵ "It's about the idea of confinement," she has said.²⁹⁶ Another way to put it, as her page in the *Art Systems in Latin America* catalogue did: PEOPLE ARE CONDITIONED BY ENVIRONMENT.

LEA LUBLIN

Following its stop in London, in February 1975, *Art Systems in Latin America* took up residence at the Espace Pierre Cardin in Paris. Lea Lublin, though her catalogue entry

²⁹⁴ Griselda Gambaro, Marguerite Feitlowitz, and Diana Taylor, *Information for Foreigners: Three Plays* (Evanston [I.L.]: Northwestern University Press, 1992): 7. Gambaro's novel *Ganarse la muerte* was banned by Videla in 1977. Diana Taylor has characterized her plays as "theatre of crisis." Antón Pirulero is invoked in the play *Información para extranjeros* (1987).

²⁹⁵ Marie Orensanz, interview with the author, November 20, 2019.

²⁹⁶ Orensanz and Meisel, *Marie Orensanz: Entretien avec Hélène Meisel*, 50.

recycled the text and imagery of *Fluvio subtunal*, was at that moment developing a new body of interrogative work under the broad title *Discours sur l'art*. At the heart of this project was a series of painted banners, identical in form but ultimately produced in several languages, called *Interrogations sur l'art* [fig. 2.28]. Each banner, 280 cm long and 180 cm wide, listed a series of questions, stenciled in a rainbow of colors over a faint grid, pointing to a range of historical and analytical approaches to interpreting art: “Is art a system of signs? Is art a system of forms? Is art desire?...Is art a sexual problem?...Is art a symbolic language?...Is art an ideological production?...Is art an amusement?” The questions put into dialogue centuries of debates about the status and function of the art object, while demonstrating just by nature of the many competing ways of writing and speaking about art – its myths and methods – that it is primarily a discourse. A discourse that establishes patterns of socio-symbolic unity, patterns of meaning that signify themselves, accrue form, and sustain systems of power. As in Dermisache’s writings, Lublin turns her attention to the signifier, asking how the grammars and vocabularies, marks and gestures, even colors and forms, of art are encoded with values and histories. Beginning in 1974, Lublin used the banner as the backdrop of a roving set or studio in a related series of video works, also part of *Discours sur l'art*, which I will return to explore in the next chapter. But the banner stood alone as a text-based work and as an object with which she could gesture to the conditions structuring her questions.

The interrogative list, also known as a questionnaire, is itself a form, and suggests a sociological approach related, perhaps, to Lublin’s aim with *Mon fils* to measure and demystify. In a later essay on her question-prompts, she wrote, “by presenting them as open sets of inter-subjective (ideological) conflicts, I try to disclose the space-place in which Discourse on Art, Reflection on Art, and Art Practice are constituted in a bid to know finally and what it is we are speaking about, who is speaking, and where this discourse

comes from.”²⁹⁷ For Lublin, significantly, the questions establish not only subject and object – who is speaking and about what – but where these relations come into being: the space-place that organizes power. Several years later, she adapted the list to question the status of women in *Interrogations sur l’femme* (“Is woman private property? Is woman the proletariat of the sexes? Is woman a topic like any other?”) [fig. 2.29]. In parallel with *Interrogations sur l’art*, and perhaps with Simone de Beauvoir’s claim that “one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman,” the questions establish “woman” itself as a discourse.²⁹⁸ “Interrogating” or throwing something into question, however, denaturalizes it, and the discourse structuring woman becomes less stable as her questions come into conflict with each other. Lublin’s next interrogative step was to take the banner to the street, posing her questions about the space-place of discourse to the city.

Interrogations sur l’femme was Lublin’s contribution to *Action de 5 femmes*, five participatory works presented by artists affiliated with the collective *Femmes/Art* (Françoise Janicot, Elisa Tan, Claude Torey, Nil Yalter, and Lublin) over the course of a March afternoon in 1978. A video documenting the day shows the banner hanging on the wall of Janicot’s studio as the other artists performed. At 5:00 pm, Lublin, accompanied by the artists, friends, and now-10-year-old Nicolás, pulled down the banner and set out from Janicot’s studio, processing through Île Saint-Louis before stopping on the Pont Marie to hurl the text into the Seine [fig. 2.30]. The mood, as in all of Lublin’s participatory works, seems to be cheerful and festive, though curator Stephanie Weber reads the questions as indictments of the common forms of misogyny and Lublin’s theatrical act of throwing the text into the water “a societal construct of Woman that was symbolically

²⁹⁷ Lea Lublin, “Interrogations sur l’art,” in Weber and Mühlring, *Lea Lublin*, 326.

²⁹⁸ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973): 301.

being drowned...in the spirit of solidarity and friendship amongst these female artists.”²⁹⁹ I read Lublin’s gesture as more playful than violent, since it is of course *her* – and not the banner – which is at stake. Moving through the city, below the text, she mobilizes the semiotics of urban space – “the nets of discipline”³⁰⁰ – against her own body. She stands in for the object in question, asking her friends and collaborators, passersby and onlookers, even buildings, bridges, and sidewalks, who she is. In response, she comes into being as she moves through the social space of the city, encoding the values of the built and discursive environment (of language and the grid), measuring in order to demystify even if she cannot exactly dispose of them herself.

Photographs documenting the action, which Lublin titled *Dissolution dans l’eau, Pont Marie, 17 heures*, show people smiling and smoking, stopping to chat along the way, sometimes helping Lublin with the large canvas, like bridesmaids following a bride down the aisle, and sometimes marching dutifully below, as if forming a religious procession through town. Lined up along the edge of the massive stone bridge, her audience peers curiously over the edge as Lublin lowers the banner like a flag or a sail and dips it gingerly below the water’s surface. Framed just by the water with no people around, the banner suddenly looks small and fragile, like a piece of paper ready to dissolve. But it does not, and photographs show her pulling it right back out of the water, undestroyed, and rolling it up with a grin on her face. So I’m not sure it was a gesture of destruction – maybe it was closer to laundry.

Lublin’s performance moves the representational systems of the page – the symbolic order of the grid and the object relations structured by language – into the social space of the city. If women come into being only through a representational economy that

²⁹⁹ Weber, “Lea Lublin: Retrospeculum,” in *Lea Lublin*, 51.

³⁰⁰ Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xv.

denotes them as such (in Irigaray's terms *the other of the other*), Lublin puts this process into motion in order to demonstrate how it acts on their bodies – how, to borrow Orensanz's mantra, people are conditioned by their environment. Her appropriation of language is not so much a mimicry or exaggeration or vision of a female imaginary, but rather a playful act of dissolution. It tosses it overboard into the river, whose fluids might lap at the precarious containment of the subject/object divide, the need to constitute oneself against the threat of (and, Kristeva says, desire for) dissolution.

CONCLUSION: EROS

As *Art Systems in Latin America* circulated in Europe, Orensanz was invited by the critics Lea Vergine and Pierre Restany to participate in the small exhibition cycle *Eros come linguaggio* at the Galleria Eros in Milan. Conceptualized by Vergine, the show's title uses Freudian terminology to pose language as part of a life drive, pleasure principle, or "desire for projection into the future" (Eros) as opposed to the death drive (Thanatos).³⁰¹ Open from October 1974 through January 1975, the first week consisted of a series of events "specially designed by the invited authors," including actions, performances, and experimental music. In her curatorial text, Vergine encouraged extra-, or perhaps anti-, formalist readings of works. "There are times when culture and aesthetic specificity no longer matter as much; it also happens when Eros is involved, which is never separable from Thanatos," she wrote.³⁰² Orensanz's contribution, which Vergine described as a "provocation," was the text-based print titled *Manifesto Eros*, made in an edition of 100 and taped to the gallery wall [fig. 2.31]. A frame of dashes, a gesture to an invisible grid,

³⁰¹ Lea Vergine, "*Eros come linguaggio*"; *il linguaggio dell'amore, oggi*. Galleria Eros, October 14, 1974.

³⁰² Ibid.

encloses a list of twelve phrases which had already become recurring themes in her work [fig. 2.32]:

Thinking is a revolutionary act
Action is the consequence of thought
Thinking and communicating produces energy
Transmitting the energy of thought
Producing change through thought
Finding vital solutions in the imagination
A point connected to the ground generates creative force
Creative power communicates to all
People are conditioned by environment
To be free a transformation is needed
We have the power to choose
Eros also needs adequate social conditions³⁰³

A small note in the top margin encourages the participation of her viewer-readers: “questo foglio puoi prenderlo e portartelo a casa.” If her installation of the manifesto on the walls of the gallery seems to revive the conceptual strategy behind *La Gallareta*, its disposability as a print supports a more tactile form of active participation – something closer to Dermisache’s *diarios* than Lublin’s *interrogations*. Orensanz’s phrases fit into an architecture identifiable as a manifesto, though they do not state intentions so much as abstracted beliefs alluding to their social surroundings. “Thinking is a revolutionary act” is the kind of statement which derives meaning entirely from the context in which it is uttered, and would carry a range of associations during the years of “revolutionary” politics in both Italy and Argentina (or even in the history of Milan, home to the Futurists and the first of many art manifestos of the twentieth century, including Lucio Fontana’s 1952 Television Manifesto). Her use of a looping, distinctly feminine script further undermines the force

³⁰³ “Eros 12,” written at the top of the page, highlights the significance of Orensanz’s twelve statements; she later said, “El doce como número tiene diversos significados. Doce son las horas, los meses, doce son los apóstoles, los signos astrológicos, el doce como uno = unidad y como dos = pareja, el doce es también la trinidad. ...el doce es un número mágico” (*Maria Orensanz. Exh. cat.*, Buenos Aires: Artemúltiple, October 4-15, 1977).

and vigor which usually characterizes a manifesto's tone. Is this an art historical parody, a political critique, or a love note?

The final phrase of the manifesto, "Eros also needs adequate social conditions," raises the question of what is produced and how. For Orensanz, Eros is clearly an energy or force born of thinking, imagining, and communication between people. Sometimes this is frustrated, as in her earlier equation $I+I=0$. According to Freud, that is because happiness and pleasure must be subordinated and disciplined to ensure survival. It is Herbert Marcuse's exegesis on Eros, however, which most closely shares Orensanz's vision of its transformational – even emancipatory – possibility at the individual level. In *Eros and Civilization*, published in paperback the same year as the exhibition, Marcuse revises Freud's identification of civilization with repression and, going further, imagines the relations of a non-repressive civilization. Establishing that the repressive "reality principle" Freud presumes to be universal is actually historically conditioned, Marcuse argues that "its triumph over the pleasure principle is never complete and never secure."³⁰⁴ For him, the "aesthetic dimension," which protects the freedom of imagination from "reality," opens up a different set of standards and makes possible a kind of social emancipation derived from the Eros of the individual. But, he concedes, this kind of freedom relies on material needs being already met: "Possession and procurement of the necessities of life are the prerequisite, rather than the content, of a free society."³⁰⁵ Eros also needs adequate social conditions.

What, then, is the role of language in organizing Eros, in adjusting pleasure to the reality principle, given the provocation of Vergine's exhibition title positioning Language as Eros? The structuralists I have discussed here argue that language *is* the reality principle;

³⁰⁴ Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955): 15.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 195.

that it not only organizes but creates the “world of things” and constitutes the subject itself.³⁰⁶ Dermisache’s writings, Orensanz’s drawings, and Lublin’s questions labor to reveal language as a method of semantic control, an enforcer of symbolic unity. But they have also revealed what exceeds the grasp of the grid or the stability of meanings in language, as if slipping through a sieve. Their experimental practices in writing and drawing – what Kristeva calls signifying practices – operate on these systems in order to reveal ideology at work. Kristeva, like Marcuse, argues that such practices “take productive advantage of the dialectical discord between semiotic [or “pleasure”] and symbolic [or “reality”] and thus keep this discord oriented toward dissent and protest rather than inner collapse.”³⁰⁷ The writing and drawing discussed here works through and against the right angles of the page, the stability of the representational economy. It is open not only in its interpretation but in its constitution, since it requires the participation of an active spectator. This kind of anarchy of possibilities is anti-authoritarian “waste”; it is anti-repressive in Marcuse’s sense, it is life-affirming, or maybe revolutionary in Kristeva’s terms, and it is my argument that it is space of inherently political potential that is built into the critical stance of conceptual art.

By opening the work of art to a spatial and temporal experience of collaboration, Dermisache, Lublin, and Orensanz invited their active spectators to imagine a kind of social transformation through mutual reading. In a later interview with Vergine and Dorfles, Orensanz made a statement much closer to a manifesto, perhaps, than *Eros*: “I think, in

³⁰⁶ While Marcuse writes that “under the reality principle, the human being develops the function of reason: it leans to ‘test’ the reality, to distinguish between good and bad, true and false, useful and harmful,” Lacan, also revising Freud, goes farther, arguing that “It is the world of words that creates the world of things” and “Man speaks, then, but it is because the symbol has made him man.” See “The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis,” in *Écrits: A Selection* (New York: Norton, 1977).

³⁰⁷ Kristeva, “Signifying Practice and Mode of Production,” 69.

effect, that art...is not and should not be only the vision of an individual, the expression of one alone, but rather that it should give points of reference that allow others to develop their own ideas...I do not believe that my works are only mine.”³⁰⁸ For each of Orensanz’s signifiers, there are many possible signifieds; for each of Dermisache’s signifiers, there is no signified. As Glusberg wrote in his introduction to Lippard’s exhibition, “conceptual art demands a direct mental reconstruction, an active participation of the viewer.” In the politically complex years in which these artists were working, their art indexed the social and historical relations among its viewers. It asked active spectators to witness the ideology structuring, or perhaps delimiting, their subjectivity.

These refigured relations characterized the work of these four artists, as well as many of their colleagues at CAYC, in the 1970s, even as the object itself became less and less materially significant. Dermisache’s focus turned increasingly to experiments in pedagogy. As Orensanz was handing out her Eros prints in Milan, Dermisache had begun inviting students into her studio, renaming it the “taller de Acciones Creativas, de Mirtha Dermisache y otros.” She concluded 1974 with a show of her own at Carmen Waugh, turning the gallery into a public art workshop.³⁰⁹ The next year, Orensanz moved her family for the last time, joining Lublin in Paris and starting work, with Glusberg’s help, on the video project *Límites*. Experiments in video, which I will discuss in the next chapter, provided new collaborative avenues for visualizing the ideology of space and subjectivity.

³⁰⁸ “Pienso, en efecto, que el arte...no es y no debe ser solo la visión de un individuo, la expresión de uno solo, sino que debe dar a los otros puntos de referencia que permitan desarrollar las propias ideas...no creo que mis obras sean solo mías, que sean fruto de una indagación conducida en primera persona.” *María Orensanz*. Exh. cat., Buenos Aires: Artemúltiple, October 4-15, 1977.

³⁰⁹ On Dermisache’s pedagogical practice through the Jornadas del Color y de la Forma, see Lucía Cañada, “Intensive Work Sessions in Color and Form (1975-1981): Art as Vital Praxis,” in Pérez Rubio, ed., *Mirtha Dermisache: porque ¡yo escribo!* (49-63). I argue elsewhere for a reading of this work, as well as Paksa’s experimental pedagogy in the *villas*, as participatory art.

Chapter 3: Itineraries of the Viewer-Collaborator, 1975-1983

Writing is memory and the screen is forgetting.

Pierre Restany, “De l’art sociologique a l’esthétique”³¹⁰

*El video es una materialización de las relaciones sociales
y a su vez una fuente permanente de pautas culturales.*

Jorge Glusberg, GT 687

INTRODUCTION

On January 23, 1974, the long-delayed and highly anticipated gathering Open Circuits: An International Conference on the Future of Television convened at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Originally planned as an exhibition, Open Circuits was redesigned as a conference, with about 40 invited artists, curators, and critics participating in panels such as “The Esthetics of Television” and “Television and the Politics of Liberation” over the course of three days.³¹¹ The result, its organizers wrote, “was anything but smooth and soothing. ‘Open Circuits’ was a provocation, not a pacifier.”³¹² Its scope was ambitious, and its international roster of participants included Vito Acconci, John Baldessari, Gregory Battcock, Douglas Davis, Hollis Frampton, Joan Jonas, Allan Kaprow, Shigeo Kubota and Nam June Paik (from whom the event’s title was borrowed), critics Edward Lucie-

³¹⁰ Pierre Restany, “De l’art sociologique a l’esthétique,” in *Fred Forest, un pionner de l’art vidéo a l’art sur l’internet* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2004): 57. On the connection to Herve Fischer, Fred Forest, and Jean-Paul Thenot’s Collectif d’art sociologique, with whom Lublin worked and exhibited, see Lily Woodruff, *Disordering the Establishment: Participatory Art and Institutional Critique in France 1958-1981* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020).

³¹¹ There is an interesting history of this event in MoMA’s archives. Open Circuits was originally proposed by artist/journalist Douglas Davis and John Hightower, who was briefly Director of MoMA. Hightower supported the exhibition but was soon replaced by Richard Oldenburg as Director. It was ultimately co-organized by Davis, Fred Barzyk of WGBH in Boston, and Gerald O’Grady, a media professor at SUNY Buffalo, with Willard Van Dyke of the MoMA Film Department.

³¹² Douglas Davis and Allison Simmons, *The New Television, a Public/Private Art* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1977): preface.

Smith and Robert Pincus-Witten, Richard Serra, curator Allison Simmons, Michael Snow, and Steina and Woody Vasulka. In addition to sharing technical information and debating the relationship of video technologies to fine art, artists brought their video tapes, which were shown on the museum's sixth floor. It was a gathering of the "global village," one among many organized convergences of a far-flung community of collaborators invested in the ethics and aesthetics of what was often called "new television," or experimental video.

Jorge Glusberg, who was invited to the conference to represent Latin America, brought ten videos, all made under the auspices of CAYC's newly formed production unit Ediciones Tercer Mundo.³¹³ In a documentary photograph, Glusberg, two down from Kubota in a casually-arranged circle of folding chairs, contributes to the group discussion on "Global Trends in Experimental Television" [fig. 3.1]. In another, later reproduced with the conference proceedings in the book *The New Television, a Public/Private Art*, Glusberg is lined up and frowning skeptically beside other participants in front of a bank of television monitors, suggesting the tape and audio setup for a viewing. As the essays compiled in *The New Television* document (and the title suggests), much of the discussion at Open Circuits revolved around video's links to television and its inheritance of televisual relations, structured by immediacy and passivity, with its public.³¹⁴ Like video technology itself, the

³¹³ GT-349, "Video-alternativo latinoamericano en el Museo de Arte Moderno de Nueva York," January 21, 1974. Glusberg founded Ediciones Tercer Mundo with photographer Pedro Roth and Danilo Galasse. Roth recorded CAYC's activities in Buenos Aires and accompanied Glusberg on many of his travels, while Galasse often served as an additional cameraperson or as editor. The group switched between film and video, and some events were documented on both. For example, *El Grupo de los Trece*, made in 1973 for the Berlin Workshop for Experimental Art, is sometimes listed as a ½-inch reel black-and-white videotape. A 16mm version of the film, in the CAYC Archive at ISLAA, introduces Roth and Galasse by showing their footage of a street protest. In March 1974, they showed video of *CAYC al aire libre*, the outdoor exhibition discussed in chapter 2, at the MCA Chicago (GT 359).

³¹⁴ Allison Simmons, "Introduction: Television and Art: A Historical Primer for an Improbable Alliance," in *The New Television, a Public/Private Art*, 2-15.

terminology surrounding video as a medium and structuring its nascent discourse was unstable.³¹⁵ At this gathering and the ones I will come to later in this chapter; through magazines such as *Radical Software*, *Todo Cine*, and *ArTitudes*; and in the catalogue essays, *gacetillas*, and grant proposals circulating in the early 1970s, terms such as “alternative television” appear fluidly alongside “video art,” couching the medium in the theories of communication and ideological production of space explored in chapter 1. Some focused on formal questions of spontaneous production. Simmons, in her introduction “Television and Art: A Historical Primer for an Improbable Alliance,” identifies at least three emergent, “and often conflicting,” methodological currents: “political” or documentary videos aimed at increasing awareness of social issues through existing broadcast structures; “imagist” or experimental uses of technology engaged with the creation of new types of images; and “conceptual,” or concerned with the “videotape as object-medium” itself.³¹⁶ For Glusberg, Vilém Flusser, and likeminded conference participants, the liberatory promise of video resided in works that investigated the televisual relations established by mass-mediated immediacy and its potential for social control.

In his own presentation, “Video in Latin America,” Glusberg riffed on the themes of his (by now) well-circulated essay for *Art Systems in Latin America*, bringing in for this

³¹⁵ Because audiovisual technology was not standardized, gatherings of international video practitioners relied on a range of equipment and expertise. Archival materials from these events contain a lot of correspondence about the availability of different kinds of equipment, and it seems like of the value of exchange with people from other parts of the world came largely from learning about different uses and techniques. For example, Jorge Glusberg wrote to Julie Lawson, “We shall take with us a video tape reproducer for black/white and color, Ampex-Toshiba, 60 cycles/220 volts. Please inform us if through ICA we can obtain the use of two monitors for color projection. Can you inform us as to the voltage and cycled used in London?” (Jorge to Julie Lawson, Buenos Aires, Argentina, August 22, 1974). In the exhibition files for *Art Systems in Latin America* at the ICA, there is a running list Lawson kept titled “Can’t Do.”

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

occasion the ideological objectives of New Left cinema in Latin America. “In this early stage,” he writes, “we could say that rather than *works*, the Latin American operators of alternative television produce *documents* composed of their reality, evidence of what is happening in their respective countries. The idea of the young artists...is to oblige television to stop being a colonizing instrument of alienation, a repeater of foreign values, and to convert their lives and their art into testimonies of the struggle for liberation.”³¹⁷ Citing the Brazilian filmmaker Glauber Rocha and the Cuban Julio García Espinosa, Glusberg chiefly dwells on the third current of video-making identified by Simmons. But the conflation of postcolonial filmmaking and analytical video art is puzzling given their often-oppositional stances on mass media. If the class critiques of revolutionary cinema equated the televisual relations of the modernizing city with the neocolonial influence of consumer culture – as *La hora de los hornos* had – this linkage between video and television would complicate video’s ability to critique mass media. Video as an aesthetic medium offered a way to explore and contest these reconfigured spectatorial relations from the inside, posing questions about how subjects come into being in televisual time and space.

In his essay Glusberg does not, in fact, mention any video artist from Latin America, of which, by 1974, there were quite a few who had benefited from the technical support and resources offered by CAYC itself. Many of those videos, such as Margarita Paksa’s *Tiempo de descuento* or Marie Orensanz’s *Límites*, were primarily concerned with the “videotape as object-medium” – that is, with an investigation of the formal, technical, and conceptual possibilities opened up by video rather than with political or symbolic content. However, in this chapter I will aim to demonstrate, as I have throughout, that these investigations were critical in themselves, and that the politics of video art were not limited

³¹⁷ Glusberg, “Video in Latin America,” in *The New Television*, 203. Emphasis mine.

to critiques of mass-media through documentary forms. Glusberg identifies the primary challenge of Latin American artists as a semiotic one: video presented new, even revolutionary, possibilities for communication and counter-programming, a new language structuring the relations between artist and viewer. “We are involved in an ideological struggle related to the meaning of the artistic messages,” he concluded.³¹⁸

For the purposes of my analysis here, I take Glusberg’s optimism about the political potential of video seriously. It was evidently a feeling shared by many early practitioners of video, within and without Latin America, from Juan Downey’s alternative anthropology to Jaime Davidovich’s parodic psychoanalyst, Dr. Videovich, on public access television in New York City.³¹⁹ Whether or not Glusberg truly saw video as an instrument of class struggle, he was quick to establish CAYC as a node in the discursive and technological exchanges of an enthusiastic and interconnected international video network. And if, as Salvador Allende told artists and intellectuals in 1971, before being a good revolutionary one must be a good student, a good intellectual, a good worker, Glusberg had established CAYC as a kind of a school. He had brought a Sony Portapak back with him to Buenos Aires in 1968, lending it and production resources to CAYC-affiliated artists experimenting with video in the years that followed. In later publicity materials, he claims that

Since 1971, through its School of Advanced Studies, the CAYC has been developing this new working tool that is alternative video. The Center has formed a cooperative – Ediciones Tercer Mundo – in order to document Latin American

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ In an interview, Davidovich said, “I wanted to introduce video into television because it offered me the possibility of penetrating into people’s homes, of becoming a member of the household...another important thread for me was politics and context. Politics as regards doing without the power brokers in order to approach the viewer directly. And the other by bypassing museums, those temples of art, in order to put the work in a domestic environment” (Fito Rodríguez, *Jaime Davidovich: Biting the Hand That Feeds You*, 103). Lippard and Leon Golub hosted Artists Call Against US Intervention in Central America (1984) on Davidovich’s Artists’ Television Network.

activities and problems, developing the ideas of artists from this part of the American continent. The idea is to try to build in Latin America a circuit of video recordings made by artists and produced in the Third World. This interdisciplinary work was – at the beginning – done by artists who were related to the Center, but now this work is supported by a group that collaborates with the productions, and which includes, among others, two epistemologists (Gregorio Klimovsky and Raul Sciarreta), a futurologist (Agustín Merello), a sociologist (Felix Schuster), a philosopher (Eduardo Rabossi) and an expert in the sociology of art (Jorge Glusberg).³²⁰

As discussed in chapter 1, the architectural space and programming of CAYC itself modeled the televisual relations of the modernizing city. As that city became an increasingly surveilled and policed arena of “gazes and institutions, subjects and bodies, screens and physical structures,” video opened up new space for structural critique.³²¹ Indeed, scholars such as Rodrigo Alonso have made the case that in Argentina, the development of an audiovisual language, a televisual vocabulary, actually preceded the arrival of videographic equipment, and video art was thus born first as a discourse “responding largely to the interrelationships it maintains with the socio-political context and the networks that legitimate it.”³²² This socio-political context, of violent repression mediated and concealed by television, informed a shared interrogative stance, a use of video for questioning the material conditions of reality.

³²⁰ “Depuis 1971, à travers son École d’Hautes Études, le CAYC est en train de développer ce nouvel outil de travail qu’est le vidéo alternatif. Le Centre a formé une coopérative – les Éditions du Tiers Monde – afin de documenter l’activité et les problèmes Latino-Américains, en développant les idées des artistes de cette partie du continent américain. L’idée est d’essayer de construire en Amérique Latine un circuit d’enregistrements de vidéo, réalisés par des artistes et produits au Tiers Monde. Ce travail interdisciplinaire a été – au début – crée par des artistes qui étaient relationnels avec le Centre, mais actuellement ce travail est appuyé par un groupe qui collabore avec les productions, et qui est intégré, entre autres, par deux épistémologues (Gregorio Klimovsky et Raul Sciarreta), un futurologue (Agustín Merello), un sociologue (Felix Schuster), un philosophe (Eduardo Rabossi) et un expert en sociologie de l’art (Jorge Glusberg).” “Deuxième Rencontre Internationale Ouverte de Vidéo,” n.d.

³²¹ McCarthy, *Ambient Television*, 3.

³²² See Clara Garavelli, *Video Experimental Argentino Contemporáneo* (Buenos Aires, EDUNTREF, 2014).

Authoritarianism relied on the socio-symbolic unity of the built environment and the space of the page – the fixed and insistent semantic stability of information and its possible interpretation – even as senseless acts of violence and unexplained disappearances proliferated. Television, as artists not just in Argentina quickly identified, was yet another unidirectional flow of information, another form interpellating subjects. Following the coup in March 1976, Argentina’s television channels and radio stations were redistributed among the branches of the military junta: Channel 7 was awarded to the Presidency of the Nation, Channel 9 to the Army, Channel 13 to the Navy, and Channel 11 to the Air Force.³²³ Newscasts and official propaganda became indistinguishable, censorship more generalized, and publications like *Primera Plana* and *Análisis* closed. Following the logics of demystification explored in previous chapters, this chapter treats video as yet another strategy to leverage this structuring of information against itself. As the artists who gathered at Open Circuits (and elsewhere) saw it, video could reverse the flow of television, giving people access to the tools of its production and distribution and opening up horizontal networks of collaboration and image exchange.

The works analyzed here were all produced during the most repressive years of Argentina’s civil-military dictatorship. In their videos, Lublin and Orensanz, working in Paris, and Paksa, working in Buenos Aires, engage the terms framing the new medium and index the social and historical relations between video and viewer. As in their other work, they made videos that sought to expose their own codes, to make visible the implications of mass media on the ideology structuring of subjects. As such, I read their videos as relational works, both in their making and in their address to viewers. My name for the

³²³ See Yamila Heram, “La crítica de televisión en la prensa durante la formación de los multimedia: Modernización del medio, mutación del género e integración académica,” in *UBA Sociales* (January 2018).

active spectator shifts once again, from viewer-*voyeur* and viewer-reader to viewer-collaborator, in an effort to emphasize the dialogic and communitarian nature of early video. These videos were not made by Lublin, Orensz, and Paksa alone – they document cooperative processes and projects. Neither do they exist as discrete objects – each took other forms in their making, display, and circulation. The “open” process of making and viewing, as both the Open Circuits conference and Umberto Eco suggest, positions video as another kind of structural critique of the “sequence of communicative effects,” a circuitous and potentially liberatory form of democratized relations between artist and viewer.³²⁴

On the other hand, I begin with an anecdotal institutional history of video in part to suggest an inherent tension between the revolutionary premise, or promise, of the medium and its reliance on institutions for both the creation and exhibition of new works. I also hope to highlight that video was, from its earliest days, a self-critical and collaborative discourse, circulating in the form of objects but also as a roving discussion, a set of theories, a shifting roster of participants in a conversation that shaped the field. In addition to looking at video art made by Lublin, Paksa, and Orensz, this chapter tracks the itinerary of one such discussion, the International Open Encounters on Video, organized by Glusberg to accompany *Art Systems in Latin America* on its tour around Europe. Beginning with Lublin’s series of video-questionnaires *Interrogations sur l’art*, made in Paris in 1975, I will return with Glusberg to Buenos Aires to consider Paksa’s video-poem *Tiempo de descuento* (1976) and Orensz’s video-portrait *Límites* (1978). These works dot the timeline of a crucial period in the early history of video art, and they also chronicle the final phase of the social and political era that brackets this project. Looking at the diffuse

³²⁴ Eco, *The Open Work*, 3.

and overlapping methods the artists deployed over this period, we might discern a shift or an adaptation in their vision for the active spectator.

The heady atmosphere of Open Circuits, which took place just a few months before *Art Systems in Latin America* arrived in Europe, itself served as a kind of school, or model, for Glusberg. The exhibition's opening in Antwerp, in spring 1974, had included a roundtable and a concert. But beginning with the presentation in London, at the end of 1974, the events surrounding it began to proliferate. There, it opened under the banner "Latin American Week in London" at the Institute of Contemporary Art on November 28, 1974.³²⁵ That week, the ICA hosted lectures; panel discussions and roundtables; concerts; magic; dance performances, photo-visual performances, and improvisational theatrical performances; a symposium on art and politics; and screenings of films produced by Narcisa Hirsch, Analivia Cordeiro, Marta Minujín, Jaime Davidovich, and Juan Downey, among others.³²⁶ In correspondence with Glusberg, Julie Lawson, the exhibition's curator at the ICA, encouraged providing as much supplementary and background information as possible, since "I'm sure you'll agree that the public here and many artists are not aware of the conditions governing cultural development in Latin America, and the relationship between the social-political situation and the arts."³²⁷ In his preview of the events of Latin American

³²⁵ "Proposal for an exhibition in Galleries I and II, October 1974," Tate Archives. In a June 10, 1974 letter to Lawson, Glusberg wrote, "I propose to carry out a series of films, video tape and audiovisual projections, and one or two electronic music concerts as we have done during the first week in Antwerpen. This could be called "Latin American Week in London...in order to carry out the Latin American Week, we need to Kodak Carousel slide projectors, a long-lay tape recorder, a 16 mm sound projector, a Super 8 sound projector and a ½" black and white cassette Sony reproducer. If possible but this is not too important, we could also use a colour reproducer also of ½" for video tapes."

³²⁶ Institute of Contemporary Arts and Centro de Arte y Comunicación, *Latin American Week in London: November 28th-December 6th 1974 at the I.C.A.* (Buenos Aires: Centro de Arte y Comunicación, 1974).

³²⁷ Julie Lawson to Jorge Glusberg, London, England, June 25, 1974.

Week, writer Robert del Quiaro reflected some of this lack of knowledge, explaining that “the art of the urban elite in Latin America has had little to do with the ancient Indian crafts which please visitors.”³²⁸ Glusberg clarified, “Our artists express themselves in the same language as in Europe or North America. But in the cafes and bars in Europe, they talk revolution. In Argentina, everyone knows someone who has been killed because people want revolution.”³²⁹ Lawson wrote to Glusberg that she felt it would be important to have the artists present, and Glusberg arranged travel for twenty CAYC-affiliated artists, requesting the ICA provide monitors and slide projectors for Lea Lublin, “who will go from Paris to make a special spectacle.”³³⁰ Marie Orensanz, “another of the artists, who lives in Milan, will go specially to London,” he promised, and Nicolás García Urriburu would also make the trip from Paris to color the water fountains of Trafalgar Square [fig. 3.2].³³¹

In addition to these events, a specialized conference called the International Open Encounter on Video took place on December 4 and 5. An open gathering to which “any artist present in London is invited to participate,” it was organized by Lucie-Smith, who had also attended Open Circuits earlier in the year, and its format mirrored the New York conference, with panelists including theorist Abraham Moles, curator Florent Bex, and critics Gillo Dorfles and Caroline Tisdall, as well as CAYC artists Urriburu, Leopoldo

³²⁸ Robert del Quiaro, “Latin American Events.” Typed manuscript, n.d.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ This started out as “five or six” artists in June 1974, but ended up including Jacques Bedel in London, Jonier Marin in Paris, Raúl Marroquin in Amsterdam, Arnaldo Ramírez Amaya in Paris, and Antonio Trotta in Milan; the Cuban novelist Guillermo Cabrera Infante in London; and the Argentine magician Finita Ayerza, also in London. In September, Lawson write, “I am getting rather concerned about the accommodation for the artists coming over.”

³³¹ Jorge Glusberg to Julie Lawson, June 10, 1974. Orensanz told me she did not end up going. In her September 11 letter to Glusberg, Lawson wrote, “I hope [Urriburu] is not going to ‘colour’ the fountains in Trafalgar Square, as this has been done too many times already.” Nonetheless, she wrote to him on September 13, enclosing a photograph of the fountain in Trafalgar Square and leaving the choice of site up to him.

Maler, Luis Pazos, and Glusberg's wife Amelia. Early proposals emphasize that CAYC itself was modeled on the ICA, highlighting Glusberg's oft-reiterated goal "to establish a closer approach between European and American video operators."³³² Unlike Open Circuits, however, it is clear from this first Encounter that it would form the basis for an ongoing series; the first pamphlet already includes a notice for the second Encounter, planned for February 1975 in Paris, and "Video 75: The International Festival," to be held in Buenos Aires the following October.

During the London Encounter, the ICA hosted lectures, panels and screenings of works that were not on the exhibition checklist. On November 30, Lublin took part in a roundtable discussion on "Art and Culture in the Countries of the Third World" and on December 30 she contributed to a "Symposium on Experimental Theatre." The tapes shown in London included two new videos made by Marta Minujín documenting her performance *Kidnapping* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, as well as *La Menesunda*, credited only to Maler. While these might have fallen more into the documentary category, Open Circuits and the Encounter both included Davidovich's first video work, *Road* (1972), in which he adapted his tape-based analyses of the canvas and the built environment to consider the linearity of video-tape.³³³ Glusberg's selection of videos to screen in London was relatively narrow and nearly the same as the tapes he brought to New York. (Interestingly, he explored the idea of producing new videos while in London, to be exhibited at CAYC and shown on Argentine state television, writing Lawson to ask for introductions to personalities such as Peter Brook, Lawrence Olivier,

³³² "Press Notice: International Open Encounter on Video," n.d.

³³³ Davidovich had been developing his tape-based works and *Road*, connected to his pavement installation from the same year, tracks the central dividing line on a street, creating an infinitely repetitive linear structure. In *Art Systems in Latin America*, he showed *Libertad de prensa*, pages of Latin American newspapers covered in tape.

and Peter O'Toole. Lawson replied, "I'll do my best to get to you the addresses of the persons mentioned, but they are the most difficult people to get hold of.") Prior to all future Encounters, he sent an open call for video submissions and the screenings were much expanded.

In spite of the varying approaches to videomaking on view, reviews of the ICA exhibition focused on political content rather than form. In a letter that January, Glusberg asks the British critic Barry Barker, who would be joining the events in Paris, for a favor: "Could you send me all the press articles that have appeared concerning our show? Even those that speak against us...Caroline Tisdall told me that you would be publishing something in the 'Guardian.' Did you finally do it?"³³⁴ The reviews, it seems, were uneven, though Glusberg did not shy away from reproducing negative takes in the *gacetillas*.³³⁵ Even reviews that describe the work as conceptual, emphasizing ideas rather than perceptual content, remain focused on the "recent political events" Quiaro had publicized. Rather than Barker, it was Tisdall, a panelist at the London Encounter, who ended up reviewing the exhibition in *The Guardian*. "The exhibition abounds in political symbols," she wrote. "The grave trouble with this kind of art is that the viewer quickly grows used to it. Symbols and analogies lose their impact or their ability to make you think as quickly as the images of violence growing daily more remote on the television screen."³³⁶ Though she does not mention the exhibition's engagement with video, she does highlight the importance of technologies of mass communication to the Third World: "the need to control it, the need to demystify it, and the need to explore its positive possibilities... It may well be that this is the most effective way for the Latin American artist to shake himself

³³⁴ Jorge Glusberg to Barry Barker, Buenos Aires, Argentina, January 7, 1975.

³³⁵ ["Art Systems in Latin America."] Untitled press manuscript on Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna stationary, n.d.

³³⁶ Ibid.

free of the influence of Western art.”³³⁷ For Tisdall, it seems, the televisual relations made possible by video carried the potential for the naturalization of violence happening around the world, and its passive consumption as spectacle. But a critical exploration of its possibilities might allow Latin American practitioners to develop a decolonial set of practices through analytical use. The necessity of demystifying the structures of video echoes Lublin’s terminology around “life-language-art that at once measures and demystifies the traditional cultural structures.”³³⁸ As we have seen, her use of closed-circuit video in earlier environments and her sociological approach to discursive conditions anticipate many of the questions raised at the video conferences. Her participation in the CAYC Encounters from their first iteration in London coincided with her own forays into the possibilities of the medium.

LEA LUBLIN

On February 19, 1975, *Art Systems in Latin America* opened at the Espace Pierre Cardin, a new cultural center named for the fashion designer and housed in the historic Théâtre des Ambassadeurs in Paris.³³⁹ On February 20, the day after the exhibition opened, Glusberg convened the Second International Open Encounter on Video with another roundtable discussion on “Art and Culture in the Third World.” Documentary photographs, published by CAYC to promote a later Encounter, show a lively confluence of critics and artists at the Second Encounter.³⁴⁰ Guy Brett, Fred Forest, Goran Trbuljak, Pierre Restany, and Gillo

³³⁷ Ibid.

³³⁸ Lea Lublin to Pierre Restany, Paris France, September 11, 1970. Archives of the Critique d’Art, University of Rennes. Reproduced in Plante, “Representations (and Dissemination) of Sexuality.”

³³⁹ GT-471, “Art de Systèmes en Amérique Latine à l’Espace Pierre Cardin,” December 24, 1974.

³⁴⁰ “Second International Open Encounter on Video,” n.d.

Dorfles sit seriously in a circle, engrossed in thought. Nam June Paik and Hervé Fischer edge off their seats and Iris Scaccheri gesticulates in costume, presumably as part of a performance. Jorge and Amelia Glusberg chat with Pierre Cardin. Lublin holds her hand to her chin, staring ponderously at the floor beside Florent Bex [fig. 3.3]. On another day, she sits, smiling, around the same circle with a different color cardigan draped over her shoulders.

It is a familiar look, and the presence of most of these participants is documented, because aside from the CAYC exhibition the Encounter also coincided with the second edition of the Foire internationale d'art contemporain (FIAC), an art fair held at the old Bastille train station in Paris. FIAC, along with the second *ARC* exhibition at the Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris just a few months prior, represented a shift underway in French exhibition models and in the shape of the Parisian art scene.³⁴¹ As art historian Annabelle Ténèze has tracked, during the 1960s, a decade that had begun with the belated opening of the Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris (an outmoded institution even before it opened, with plans for the Pompidou already underway), French institutions grappled with a combination of pressures such as the increased focus of the art world on New York, the cultural emergence and preferences of a new middle class, and the political upheaval and demands for institutional reform with which the decade closed. Lublin and her work had evolved in tandem with the Musée throughout the decade; she participated in the Salons de la Jeune Peinture (1965 and 1966) and Salons de Mai (1966, 1967, 1968), where she exhibited *Mon fils* in May 1968. During the 1970s, the major group shows to which Lublin contributed reflected the shift from salon model to “synthetic,” or thematic,

³⁴¹ For more on the ARC exhibition and the transition, in the 1960s, to the “museum-temple” of modern art housed in the Palais de Tokyo, see Annabelle Ténèze, “Exposer l’art contemporain à Paris. L’exemple de l’ARC au Musée d’art moderne de la Ville de Paris (1967-1988)” (Paris, École nationale des Chartes, 2004).

shows: from the Salon *Comparaisons* (relatively unorthodox in its internationalist focus) at the Grand Palais in 1972 to the *Animation/Recherche/Confrontation* (ARC) series, the Musée's contemporary art initiative under the direction of Suzanne Pagé. *ARC 2*, coinciding with CAYC's Paris Encounter, included a section called *Art Vidéo Confrontations*, the first "synthetic" video exhibition in France, during which Lublin began recording her series of interviews.

Le Monde, covering *ARC 2* with an article called "Le nouveau monde de l'art-vidéo," described with ambivalence the abandonment of painting, "le médium de toujours," for the inherent and self-aware instability of the video image. If Picasso "destroyed" form, and Chagall "invented" a new poetic universe, the video artist is a "manipulator" of form, using new technology to appropriate images and critique "a political, ecological, sociological, or simply poetic reality."³⁴² Indeed, Lublin's "abandonment" of her paintbrushes for the video camera (though, as we know, the technology was not new to her work) aimed precisely at an investigative approach to aesthetic processes. Lublin's works in *ARC 2* and FIAC revolve around interrogation as both praxis and discursive critique. They mark the beginning of a decade of documentary and interview-based video work revolving around the question: what is art?

Over the course of the six days of the Paris Encounter, Glusberg wrote, "more than 250 videotapes from various countries have been showed at the Espace Cardin. But the most important were the personal dialogues between artists and specialists which have participated at the round tables: Antonio Berni, Mirtha Dermisache, Gregorio Dujovny, Jorge Glusberg, Victor Grippo, Lea Lublin, Mari Orensanz...Guy Brett, Jasia Reichardt, Nam June Paik, Sanja Iveković, Goran Trbuljak."³⁴³ If one of Glusberg's stated aims for

³⁴² "Le nouveau monde de l'art-vidéo," *Le Monde*, November 28, 1974.

³⁴³ "Third International Open Encounter on Video," press notice no. 2, n.d.

the Encounter, and the larger exhibition it accompanied, was to break down barriers of exchange and communication between European artists and their counterparts in Latin America, critic Hugo Verlomme wrote in *Le Quotidien de Paris*, “breaking this wall, even if the action is sporadic and instantaneous, *Art de systèmes de l’Amérique latine* succeeds with bulldozer power.”³⁴⁴ In contrast with the British critics, Verlomme emphasizes the New World-to-Old World or asymmetrical flow of this novel information, admiring the inventive use of technologies of mass communication presented as a practical or applied art rather than, as the *Le Monde* review complained, a “gadgetization of the instruments of the artist who swaps his easel for an electronic desk, a camera, a video recorder and multiple screens.”³⁴⁵ Verlomme wrote, “Let us pay particular attention to observing the different forms of discourse between the Third World country, in struggle, and the developed nations where no armed militant activity exists,” naming Lublin as paradigmatic of “an ideological practice more structured (despite an apparently disordered method), more systematic, more direct, more down to earth, and which could legitimately rename itself ‘avant-garde.’”³⁴⁶ Thinking, perhaps, in the context of the Video Encounters, about art as an ideological system, Lublin structured her video work as a dialogue, positioning herself as intermediary in the semiotic circuit of viewer-artist-work. Giving her viewer-collaborators control of their own images, Lublin asks them to originate their own representation, rather than receive it, reversing the flow of reception.

³⁴⁴ Hugo Verlomme, “Avant-garde et fers de lance,” *Le Quotidien de Paris*, February 24, 1975.

³⁴⁵ “Le nouveau monde de l’art-vidéo.”

³⁴⁶ Verlomme, “Avant-garde et fers de lance.”

Interrogations sur l'art (1975)

As discussed in chapter 2, Lublin's text-based project *Interrogations sur l'art* had formed the basis for her expanded exploration of art as discourse. Building on the sociological methods she had begun to develop in works like *Mon fils*, Lublin's project began to incorporate video as she traveled with her banner, setting up a camera in various European cities and asking people to answer questions in front of it.³⁴⁷ After her initial interviews at ARC 2, Lublin set up a similar arrangement in a booth at FIAC in February 1975, just a few weeks before CAYC convened its second Video Encounter. As in earlier participatory works, Lublin used the fair as both a space of exhibition and creation, furnishing the booth as a contained and relaxed environment with carpeted floor and dark walls, a television set perched atop a couple of crates in the corner, and a Sony Portapak on a tripod at the entrance [fig. 3.4]. On the largest wall, directly across from the camera, Lublin hung the banner with French text. During the fair, she invited visiting artists, critics, and members of the general public to stop by her booth and sit on the floor before the camera, using the questions enumerated on the banner behind them as interview prompts and filming their free-flowing responses [fig. 3.5].

In a typed flyer inviting FIAC visitors to take part in the project, Lublin highlighted the collaborative nature of its creation, writing, "You are invited to answer questions about ART that are posed to you...Through our speech, yours, a Practice of Art, another Discourse is being constituted. The speaking subject is alive, recorded in an in/mortal instant, in real, trans-artistic space-time, an archeology of lived experience, memory in the

³⁴⁷ The versions of this work that I know about were made in Paris, London, Neuenkirchen, Antwerp, Annemasse, and Naples. In Neuenkirchen, where she traveled with the Collectif d'art sociologique through a program sponsored by the Office franco-allemand pour la jeunesse, Lublin hung her banner (with questions in German) outside a supermarket and interviewed passersby. In Antwerp (1975), she draped the banner over a public statue of Rubens (NUMAV-328497), and over Dante in Naples (1977), in addition to the performance at the Pont Marie in Paris (1978).

present.”³⁴⁸ The invitation recalls the language of her “image process,” the inscription of an image into space and the simultaneous integration of viewer into image. As Lublin captured her viewer-collaborators frontally, the camera reflected their image back, in a closed-circuit, from the corner.

Handwritten title cards occasionally announce distinguished friends and guests: the Brazilian economist Celso Furtado (living in exile in Paris),³⁴⁹ the Argentine dancer Iris Scaccheri,³⁵⁰ the British sculptor Roy Adzak,³⁵¹ the Polish-American impresario Michael Sonnabend,³⁵² the French gallerist Yvonne Lambert or critic Pierre Restany.³⁵³ Some participants, such as Restany, assume a psychoanalytic pose, lying down at the CAYC show at Espace Cardin and defining art, perhaps predictably, as a system of signs [fig. 3.6], while others, such as Sonnabend, look straight into the camera as they wax lyrical on the meaning of art. Sonnabend, whom Pincus-Witten once described as a “leprechaunlike Dantephile and Michelangelo scholar,” charms his audience with his rudimentary French, eliciting giggles and coos from Lublin and others behind the camera [fig. 3.7].³⁵⁴ “Qué

³⁴⁸ “Vous êtes invités à répondre à des questions sur l’ART qui vous sont exposées... A travers une note parole, la vôtre, un Pratique d’Art, un Discours autre est en train de se constituer. Le sujet parlant est vécu, enregistré dans un instant in/mortel, dans un espace-temps réel, trans-artistique, archéologie du vécu, mémoire au présent.” Lea Lublin, “Interrogations sur l’art – Séquence vidéo,” Paris, 1975.

³⁴⁹ Bibliothèque nationale de France, NUMAV-32840.

³⁵⁰ Bibliothèque nationale de France, NUMAV-328508.

³⁵¹ Bibliothèque nationale de France, NUMAV-328502.

³⁵² Bibliothèque nationale de France, NUMAV-328512; NUMAV-769991.

³⁵³ Bibliothèque nationale de France, NUMAV-328542, NUMAV-328483, NUMAV-328540 with Patrice Pinaud, and NUMAV-328491 has the bearded guy on the floor answering yes or no. Other interviewees: Joe Deluch, Christiane Germain, Liliane Touraine, Dany Bloch, Yann France, Hannah Wilke, Flor Bex, Pierre Simon, Yvon Lambert, Francisco Sobrino, Pascal Pinaud, Marion T, Greg Dupont, Patrice Triagano, Martial Raysse, Catherine Millet, Celso Furtado, David Medalla and the group Artists for Democracy, Jacques Monory, Gilbert Haes, André Hamon, Gilles Aillaud, Alain Kirili, Pierre Restany, François Pluchart.

³⁵⁴ Bibliothèque nationale de France, NUMAV-328540. “Pierre Restany, février 1975, on est à l’Espace Cardin, en pleine confusion de systèmes, puisqu’on est dans une exposition qui s’appelle ‘un art de systèmes.’ Alors, quand j’ai devant moi, cette espèce de grilles de questions que tu poses, qui sont, en quelque sorte, si tu veux, une interrogation générale sur l’art en 20 points, j’en lis quelques-uns au hasard. Et je fais une sorte de jeu de l’oie, une sorte d’itinéraire à travers ce genre de questions que tu proposes et

lindo,” they reply as he gestures to Lublin’s questions, declaring them all to be true “in the sense that Jorge Luis Borges said that art is a way of breathing. And as art is a way of breathing – if you breathe desire, if you breathe *la jouissance*, or politics – if it’s your deepest breath, it’s art.”³⁵⁵ Sonnabend and Borges seem to agree, with Kristeva perhaps, that art’s constitutive properties precede the unity of the linguistic signs on Lublin’s questionnaire and reside in a state of embodied, regulated motility comparable to breath.

At times Lublin takes on a more journalistic role, appearing in front of the camera with her interviewees or guiding the conversation from just behind it [figs. 3.8-3.9]. “With her singular energy,” art historian Thibault Boulvain has written, “she grabbed people as they passed by the exhibition aisles and prevailed on friends and acquaintances. There were those who refused, some because the video camera, a device so new and unknown that it frightened and intimidated them, made them feel uneasy, others because they didn’t quite know what to say or how to say it. Faced with the camera, the artist Jean Le Gac, for example, offered up nothing at all.”³⁵⁶ In an interview with the Argentine semiologist Eliseo Verón, the tone is more contentious, with Lublin and her subject talking over each other in debate, and Lublin finally cutting off the exchange with a skeptical laugh.³⁵⁷

évidemment quand je vois la question ‘l’art est-il un système de signes?’ et que je vois la façon dont on systématise les signes ici, je me dis, évidemment, que l’art peut être un système de signes.” Pincus-Witten is quoted in Roberta Smith, “Michael Sonnabend, 101, Downtown Art Impresario.” *The New York Times*, June 6, 2001.

³⁵⁵ “Je sais très bien, ce que je veux dire c’est que tout ceci est vrai. Mais dans le sens que Jorge Luis Borges disait que l’art c’est une manière de respirer, et comme l’art est une manière de respirer. Si vous respirez le désir, si vous respirez la jouissance, ou la politique, si c’est votre profonde respiration, c’est l’art.” Bibliothèque nationale de France, NUMAV-328540.

³⁵⁶ Thibault Boulvain, “Take the Floor/The Floor is Yours,” in Weber and Mühling, *Lea Lublin: Retrospective* (München: Köln: Lenbachhaus: Snoeck, 2015): 80.

³⁵⁷ Bibliothèque nationale de France, NUMAV-328501, NUMAV-328538.

Other videos are less structured, lingering on passersby, bored policemen who entertain themselves with the closed circuit for a few moments,³⁵⁸ or larger groups who gather and discuss the questions amongst themselves.³⁵⁹ Some subjects engage the technology creatively, manipulating the electromagnetic currents on the screen, repeating the announcements on the fair's public address system, toying with the phallic prop of the microphone, or confessing to a feeling of "being caught in the act" – a reminder, perhaps, of interpellation through surveillance.³⁶⁰ In one video, a ragtag group of protesters gather in Lublin's booth, arranging themselves in a kind of sit-in. A title card introduces them as the "Comité de Défense du 4 arrt," the district encompassing the plateau Beauborg, site of the Les Halles markets and low-income housing which were being cleared to make way for the new Centre Pompidou.³⁶¹ The Pompidou, in addition to culminating the decade-long shift in arts infrastructure I touched on earlier, as a political and architectural project represented a major spatial reorganization of the city. The Pompidou's architects, Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano, envisioned the museum as a venue for the spectacular presentation of everyday life in the televisual city, inverting the building's insides and outsides in a cybernetic circuit of snaking metal and transparent tubes. An elderly woman,

³⁵⁸ Bibliothèque nationale de France, NUMAV-328538. Boulvain reads this section as critical of authority, using a background of discordant music to make fun of them: "One of them grabbed a microphone without really knowing how to use it and read a text. Lublin deliberately mocked them; in her eyes they represented the police authority that, four years previously in Buenos Aires, had censored one of her works in the exhibition of the *Ingeniería Panamericana*" ("Take the Floor/The Floor is Yours," 82).

³⁵⁹ Bibliothèque nationale de France, NUMAV-328541.

³⁶⁰ Bibliothèque nationale de France, NUMAV-328540. "Quand je suis rentré dans l'exposition, il y avait, on avait l'impression d'être pris en flagrant délit, un peu. C'est -à -dire que partout ces appareils, cette technologie déployée, puis les différents systèmes qu'il y'a à l'intérieur dans l'exposition réservée à l'explication technique. Une sorte, j'ai vraiment eu l'impression qu'on était traqué. Ya ce premier point, et je crois que c'est dû au fait que la télévision a donné ce mythe de la représentation, on est toujours passé à la télévision pour le grand public c'est en quelque sorte un pied d'estale."

³⁶¹ Woodruff writes that Victor Baltard's nineteenth-century glass and cast-iron market was torn down in 1969 after years of battles, and with it an extensive community of vendors, restaurateurs, prostitutes, street sweepers, and others that populated the Beaubourg neighborhood. See also Louise Chevalier, *The Assassination of Paris*, trans. David P. Jordan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994): 210-263.

with headscarf and a poster reading “scandale dans le 4e”, silently registers the group’s opposition to the incursion of the Pompidou in the area [fig. 3.10]. As if in a scene from *Playtime*, a middle-aged man stands to speak animatedly about having been to war, not university, waving his veteran’s card in the face of eviction from his Beaubourg home. A young person responds condescendingly; as Boulvain has translated, “The two men converse, but without understanding each other: ‘It’s not a museum that will give you bread,’ the first points out indignantly. ‘Go home, granddad,’ the second concludes by saying.”³⁶² The camera pans around slowly to give a 360-degree view, where more young people cluster to look on, overflowing the boundaries of Lublin’s booth. However artificial her environment, Lublin wittingly captures a moment of feeling amid cultural debates about the modernizing city. The questions about art yield to questions about the material conditions of modernization. The video is a document as much as a stage.

In an essay on the *Interrogations sur l’art* project, Lublin used the terms of her image process to expand her theory of the inscription of image in space. “In a Space-Environment specially created for this action, I invite spectators to take the floor and speak,” she writes. “With a video camera I record an interview concerning questions about art, which are also exhibited. This sequence unfolds in front of a monitor, a screen which simultaneously re-transmits the gestures, reactions, and discourses of those who are in the process of speaking.”³⁶³ As in *Fluvio subtunal*, the closed-circuit video reveals the image “in process,” allowing Lublin’s viewer-collaborators to watch their spoken thoughts – or even themselves – be transformed, in real time, into discourse. Using two cameras, she later wrote, decentered the process of perception by multiplying the points of view: “the

³⁶² Boulvain, “Take the Floor/The Floor is Yours,” 77.

³⁶³ Lublin, “Interrogations into Art,” undated. Reproduced in translation in Weber and Mühling, *Lea Lublin: Retrospective*: 326.

use of two cameras (one fixed, the other mobile) deconstructs the space of perception, signals the relation of space between the different points of view, puts into circularity the scene and the place from which the scene is perceived, and reveals the space-distance between the *voyeur* and the view.”³⁶⁴ These are the displacements she initially explored in *Mon fils* and *Fluvio subtunal*, the estrangement or disruption of the “natural givenness” of ideological space.

Lublin gamely referred to the monitor in the corner in Lacanian terms, calling it a “screen-mirror.” Her setup playfully mimics, but also draws methodologically from, the spatial arrangements and interpersonal dynamics of psychoanalysis. In fact, it closely parallels the *mise-en-scène* of *Mon fils*, this time positioning her viewer-collaborators against the backdrop of her questionnaire in order to measure, as she had with her son, their inscription into the spatial “process” of language. “As an artist,” she writes, “and on the stage itself on which the action is unfolding, I become the intermediary between the spectator and the work, which returns the former to his/her own images, the specular image of the ego at the stage of speech.”³⁶⁵ If the mirror, as Lacan argues, provides a surface onto which one can project and thus produce an image of oneself as subject, it also presents an illusion of unity, a sense of coherence or bodily self-possession that curtails freedom and dissolution.³⁶⁶ Lublin’s reflexive environment allows the ego to identify with its “specular image” on screen, while the discussion facilitated by Lublin as “intermediary” (or analyst) frees the ego from the constraints of the image through the representational practices of language. This is not exactly the curved mirror of Dermisache’s writing, but it is reflexive

³⁶⁴ “Ainsi l’utilisation de deux caméras (l’une fixe, l’autre mobile) déconstruit l’espace de la perception, signale le rapport de l’espace entre les différents points de vues, met en circularité scène et lieu d’où la scène est perçue et révèle l’espace distance entre le voyeur et le vu, entre le regardeur et le regardé.” Lea Lublin, “Discours sur l’art, Entretiens Vidéo,” January 1979.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ See Lacan, *Écrits* (trans. Bruce Fink, New York: Norton, 1970).

in the sense that it opens up “a concrete place of individual or plural discourse, dialogue or polylogue,” in “a bid to know finally what it is we are speaking about, who is speaking, and where this discourse comes from.”³⁶⁷ It proposes that art is a discourse, a set of relations rather than objects, shaped by who, exactly, can speak. Borrowing a term from Michel Foucault’s recently published *L’archéologie du savoir* (1969), Lublin concluded her text on the discursive formations defining the boundaries of art with the lines

ARCHAEOLOGY OF EXPERIENCE
TAKE THE FLOOR
THE FLOOR IS YOURS³⁶⁸

If *Interrogations sur l’art* established a space-environment of discursive analysis, it was, perhaps, not only to answer the question “what is art?” but also the corollary “what is woman?”

In another interview conducted at FIAC, Lublin situates the American artist Hannah Wilke in front of the camera, surrounded by a scrum of excited French schoolboys [fig. 3.11].³⁶⁹ After adjusting her hat and positioning them around her in the frame, Wilke begins taking questions from one boy, sitting cross-legged to her left, who can translate into English for his schoolmates. As Wilke explains that she came to Paris to “get people to chew the gum to make her art,” it is clear that Lublin knows something of her *S.O.S. Starification Object Series: An Adult Game of Mastication*, which she planned to perform at the Galerie Gerald Piltzer, inviting audience members to chew gum for her to sculpt and hang on the wall. Wilke’s exploration of her own objectification in works such as this, or

³⁶⁷ Lublin, “Discours sur l’art, Entretiens Vidéo,” January 1979.

³⁶⁸ Ibid. In *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault treats discourse as a historically-conditioned system of conceptual possibilities or boundaries of thought specific to a time and place. The term “polylogue” was coined by Julia Kristeva. See Kristeva, *Polylogue* (Paris 1977). Many of Lublin’s later videos incorporate the term “Archaeology of Real Life,” another allusion to Foucault’s text.

³⁶⁹ Bibliothèque nationale de France, NUMAV-328490.

her own video *Gestures* (1974), asks similarly insistent questions about whether the structures of femininity and the structures of subjectivity are necessarily in conflict. Like Lublin's space-environment, the female body is also "a concrete place of individual or plural discourse," a site from which women experience the discourse materially, from the inside.

As Wilke submits to this improvised questionnaire, the schoolboys test the limits of what it can reveal. "Do you think that one day women will be able to go around like men without their shirts on?" Her young interviewer asks. "I hope so," she replies. "I think that people are afraid of their bodies, and that's why I did this performance."³⁷⁰ The class asks whether she is married and has children, whether she teaches children (she answers that she teaches college students), whether "there more people like you in the U.S. that strip?", whether she is successful, whether people usually laugh at her, whether they are afraid or embarrassed, whether they point. "Embarrassment is a very honest emotion," she explains.

What is confusing is the fact that I'm an artist doing it, and a female artist. See, men artists have made body art, which you see around the fair. If women do it, it's generally about hurting themselves. My chewing gum can't really hurt anything, but it poses a much more emotional problem, even than if somebody cuts their face or puts bugs on themselves, or really hurts themselves – sometimes it's harder to not hurt oneself. And to have pleasure, pleasure is more difficult.³⁷¹

The boys chew gum of their own, handing their soft sculptures over to Wilke, who displays them on a sheet of paper or on her translator's forehead [fig. 3.12-3.13]. "The important

³⁷⁰ Wilke's explanation suggests she is referencing her 1974 performance *Super-T-Art*, in which she used a white bedsheet to transform from a goddess, posing like a statue, through a series of gestures, to a crucified Christ. I cannot find evidence that she performed this while in Paris. What is more likely, especially since she demonstrates her chewing gum sculptures for the boys, is that she is referring to the *S.O.S. Performance*, which she performed at Galerie Gerald Piltzer in 1975. When they ask if she has done this sort of thing in the United States, she references *Super-T-Art*: "I did it once without the designs on my face, where I just was a Greek figure – people thought I was just strip-teasing – and then I became a crucifix."

³⁷¹ Bibliothèque nationale de France, NUMAV-238490.

thing about the gum is also the idea of giving somebody a gift. Like, I give to you and you take. A lot of people don't know how to give as well as take," she says.³⁷² Finally, a wave of giggles comes over the students as they spot their teacher walking by, and the camera pans to show him watching his students put on this performance of their own. The formal interview has turned into spontaneous art project.

Seated before her banner-questionnaire, Lublin's viewer-collaborators posed their own questions to each other – questions that responded to “what is art?” as much as “what is woman?” As she collected footage from ARC, FIAC, and the Espace Cardin, she resisted discursive coherence among the many responses, combining and re-combining them into over thirty videos which are now housed at the Bibliothèque National in Paris. Some show Lublin in the process of creation, seated in a small editing room with a goateed young man, reviewing footage. As Sonnabend appears on screen, the man smiles, smoking a cigarette, and the two stop to discuss. The camera pans down to show a CAYC *gacetilla* in his hand – likely the one announcing that *Interrogations sur l'art* would be shown at the Espace Cardin [fig. 3.14-3.15]. Lublin's representation of herself in the many-layered process of making these video works proposes that she was but one more viewer-collaborator, alternately creating, absorbing, and mixing the images in space.

The next stop for *Art Systems in Latin America* was Ferrara, Italy, where the Third International Video Encounter opened the exhibition at the Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna, then housed in the Palazzo dei Diamanti, on May 25, 1975. For this Encounter, CAYC's Ediciones Tercer Mundo published a program booklet featuring a cover design

³⁷² Ibid.

that would become formulaic for future Encounters. Against a black background, two screen-shaped boxes, one on top of the other, present photographic images as if they are frozen on screen or in video stills [fig. 3.16].³⁷³ In the top screen, a corner view of the Renaissance palace showing the marble diamonds carved into its *bugnato* walls. Below, an image of protest, which might seem to refer to the political tumult in Italy, a period known as the Years of Lead, but which actually represents the crowds gathered at Ezeiza airport on June 20, 1973, heralding Juan Perón's return to Argentina. A banner, perhaps not so different from Lublin's, announces the participation of Matanzas (where Paksa had gone to establish her pedagogical-activist practice). In Italy, political violence mirrored the social disintegration that followed Peron's return to Argentina, and the image links Italy's Years of Lead with the conflicts building in the "third world."

Inside, Glusberg's essay (now called "Against TV") shifts its focus from the liberatory potential of documentary cinema to the critical potential of noncommercial television. Whereas conventional video, modeled on the relations established by television, "is having everyone sweetly but conclusively accept repression and turning artists into their collaborators," he wrote, video art, steering away from corporate profitmongering, was a means of research; "it will raise a process of awareness in the audience and enable art to serve the aims of free expression and struggling against violence and hate."³⁷⁴ Putting this into practice, perhaps, Glusberg and the CAYC group had brought the video *Hey Joe*, billed as the only text Samuel Beckett wrote for television, performed and produced by Ediciones Tercer Mundo.

³⁷³ On how these images functioned, see Benjamin Murphy, "The Dream of Broadcast: Video and the Problem of Latin American Interconnectedness, 1974-78." In *Afterlives and Different Futures for Latin American Art*. College Art Association Annual Conference, 2020.

³⁷⁴ Glusberg, "Alternative Video (Against TV)," in *Third International Open Encounter on Video*. Exh. cat., Ferrara: Galleria Civica d'arte Moderna, May 25-29, 1975: n.p.

As curator Glenn Phillips has recently documented, Italy had a particularly active video community in the early 1970s, with centers of experimentation and production in Ferrara, Varese, and Florence.³⁷⁵ In Ferrara, Glusberg co-organized the Encounter with Lola Bonora, a curator and video practitioner he had met through Restany and who had brought videos to the London and Paris Encounters. The roster of conference participants expanded in Ferrara, and included Italian representation by Luciano Bartolini, Eugenio Carmi, Sandro Chia, Gillo Dorfles, Luciano Giaccari, Ugo La Pietra, Mauricio Nannucci, Vanna Nicolotti, Luca Patella, Franco Vaccari, and Orensanz, who was living in Milan. At the Ferrara Encounter, Lublin presented *Questions about art*, described in English as “a record of what people said and how people reacted to the questions put to them about art.”³⁷⁶ This video likely incorporated footage from the previous Encounter.

In October of that year, Glusberg and his exhibition returned to Buenos Aires. Political violence had escalated, inflation run away, and consumer prices doubled between March and August. The Fourth International Open Encounter on Video was scheduled to take place at CAYC from October 31-November 14. “Those of us in Latin America who work in the field of art ask ourselves if this is the appropriate moment to carry out discussions about art,” Glusberg wrote,

The question, “how much will a kilogram of meat cost next month?” would certainly be more appropriate at this moment than an attempt to understand artistic works. Even more so when news such as this appears in the daily press: “In the province of Córdoba the parents and two brothers of a student killed in

³⁷⁵ See Glenn Phillips and Sophia Serrano, “Encounters: CAYC and the International Encuentros,” in Shtromberg and Phillips, *Encounters in Video Art in Latin America* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2023): 33.

³⁷⁶ *Third International Open Encounter on Video*. Exh. cat., Ferrara: Galleria Civica d’arte Moderna, May 25-29, 1975.

1972 were assassinated and their bodies were subsequently blown to bits by dynamite (August 14, 1975, in the morning daily *La Razón*, Buenos Aires).³⁷⁷

In fact, as the Encounter convened in Buenos Aires that spring, the armed forces had already planned and approved a coup d'état, which they carried out four months later.

After the coup, CAYC set its sights, once more, beyond Buenos Aires. A new group show, titled *Latin America '76*, began circulating in Europe. The catalogue shows that Dermisache sent a photograph of her work *Journal I/IV*, though her page in the catalogue reproduces an earlier work, simply titled *Página de un libro*, from 1974 [fig. 3.17]. As in the *Art Systems in Latin America* catalogue, the pages's grid once again becomes the lines ordering a written page, this time filled with dark, blocky scribbles. Horizontal lines have been applied with pressure, though they seem to cover vertical and round characters, as if Dermisache changed her mind and crossed everything out or, perhaps, her text was redacted. The thickness of line conveys tension and force. Orensanz's use of the grid, on the other hand, is spare and spatial [fig. 3.18]. A few added lines of varying thickness work within the structure of the grid, framing a landscape in the central cell. A small arrow points toward the phrase "*paysage perdu*." If the landscape is lost, it might reappear in a cell below, her viewer-reader's eye crossing first over the word "*transformateur*" in a spatio-temporal stitching of related images. To the exhibition, Orensanz contributed four screenprints and three drawings with titles formed by fragments of thoughts which could have been drawn from her manifesto: *To be free requires a transformation; To think is a revolutionary act; Action is the consequence of thought; To find in the imagination vital solutions; All roads lead to; The medium conditions people; A point connected to earth*

³⁷⁷ Glusberg, "Alternative Video," in *Fourth International Open Encounter on Video*. Exh. cat., Buenos Aires: Centro de Arte y Comunicación, October 31–November 14, 1975: n.p.

emits creative force.³⁷⁸ Lublin contributed the drawings *Project for art systems I/II*, though she doesn't seem to have reproduced them on a page in the catalogue. Finally, Margarita Paksa returned to CAYC, showing a series of drawings titled *La Comida*. Her page of the catalogue reproduces one such drawing, representing in scathingly naturalistic detail a stuffed pig on a platter [fig. 3.19]. The allusion to slaughter, for Paksa, was an indictment of unspeakable political violence; in a later interview she recalled, "I wanted to represent that a bit, I didn't want to do still lifes, I had no interest, but I felt that people were being eaten, digested; it was the engulfment by the military of all the rest of the people."³⁷⁹ But Glusberg has also discerned in her drawings a feminist critique, a grotesque metaphor for the objectification and display of women, and the Brazilian art historian Paulo Herkenhoff has connected them to the tradition of *antropofagia*. While the precision and naturalism of the drawings belie a density of symbolic associations, "the only message they were giving was death," Paksa said.

As the exhibition made stops in Denmark, Belgium, and Spain, the video Encounters accompanied it. In February 1976, the Fifth International Open Encounter on Video assembled at the ICC in Antwerp, and in February 1977 the Seventh in Barcelona (with an eventful Sixth Encounter in Caracas in between). As Phillips points out, this Encounter coincided with major cultural and political shifts in Spain – including the reassertion of Catalan cultural visibility following the death of Francisco Franco – where questions about video's potential to forge new connections with the public took on special

³⁷⁸ GT 602, GT 619. GT 621 reproduces a transcript of Celso Furtado's answers to Lublin's questions. This is significant because, as Laura Podalsky notes in *Specular City*, Furtado's writings were banned by the military in Argentina.

³⁷⁹ "Yo quería representar un poco eso, no quería hacer bodegones, no tenía ningún interés, pero sentía que la gente era comida, digerida; era la fagocitación por los militares de todo el resto de la gente." Buccellato, *Margarita Paksa*, 120.

resonance.³⁸⁰ As censorship fell away in Barcelona, some of Argentina's increasing political isolation and cultural silencing might also be felt between the lines of the *gacetilla* announcement, where Glusberg calls for artists to come together: "It is evident that our failure or our success – being a small number of artists and cultural workers – will depend on the collaboration of those who are close to us."³⁸¹ Communitarian video, as he called it, offered possibilities for mutual support and for dismantling the myths of authorship associated with other art forms. It opened up to and circulated among this itinerant community, this network of video enthusiasts around the world. And it also presented a new avenue of "communication" – that is, a collaborative process of mutually-constitutive critical subjectivity – between artist and viewer.

MARGARITA PAKSA

Though she contributed to several of the presentations of *Art Systems in Latin America* in Europe, Paksa had remained in Buenos Aires and had not attended the Encuentros as the exhibition traveled. Even as she claimed that she was no longer a practicing artist, she had continued to make work that experimented with writing and activist pedagogy. After 1976, she resumed making art more consistently and exhibiting it with CAYC in Europe, in Lima in September 1977, and in Mexico City in November 1977, along with the corresponding video Encounters. Having "returned" to art, her work was undergoing major changes, and perhaps it was, in part, the video component of the CAYC exhibitions that persuaded her to return.

³⁸⁰ Phillips and Serrano, "Encounters: CAYC and the International Encuentros," 50.

³⁸¹ "Es evidente que nuestro fracaso o nuestro éxito – siendo nosotros un número reducido de artistas y trabajadores de la cultura – dependerá de la colaboración de todos los que se nos acercan." Ibid.

Tiempo de descuento – Cuenta regresiva – La hora 0 (1978)

In November 1978, Paksa recalled in an interview with curator Laura Buccellato, “I had been researching materials, multiples, all that. One day Glusberg calls and tells me, ‘I’ve just been loaned a video-making machine and I’d like you to come and try it out.’”³⁸² Taking a more narrative approach, perhaps, than Lublin’s experimental documentary videos, Paksa called the actress Malena Marechal, who performed with the Grupo Espacio Blanco Humano at CAYC.³⁸³ “I asked her if she had an actor to lend me and she connected me with Juan, an actor whose last name I don’t remember. We met at the Villa Luro train station and I asked him to bring black stockings.”³⁸⁴

In a dimly-lit, nondescript room inside the Modulor office on Elpidio Gonzalez, Paksa drew a white square on the wood floor where Juan would run in place in front of the camera. Dressed exactly as Paksa and Cairola were for their performative roles in *Comunicaciones*, Juan entered the space and ran in place, flailing his arms wildly, for about 45 minutes without stopping [fig. 3.20]. Glusberg provided two engineers who were able to record and edit simultaneously on a U-MATIC/Betamax tape.³⁸⁵ Paksa directed the engineers to point the camera at mid-body, so Juan would appear to be running in an open or unidentified space rather than in the cramped room. When he slowed from exhaustion, Paksa recalled, “I told him that it had been a rehearsal, that we would meet another day, because I wanted to review it, record it again. He did not want to, he said that it was already

³⁸² Buccellato, *Margarita Paksa*, 142.

³⁸³ Marechal, a close friend of Orensanz, had participated in *Arte e ideologia: CAYC al aire libre* in 1972 and had signed an open letter of protest, published *La Razón*, along with Dermisache. See “Clausura de la muestra ‘CAYC al aire libre’ en la Plaza Roberto Arlt,” Buenos Aires, September 26, 1972.

³⁸⁴ Buccellato, *Margarita Paksa*, 142.

³⁸⁵ Sony introduced U-matic recording formats to the market in September 1971. Among the first video formats to contain the videotape inside a cassette, as opposed to reel-to-reel or open-reel formats, its instant playback made real time editing possible.

done, that there was no time, with very bad will.”³⁸⁶ Paksa was left with a single recording that was cut into sequences. Of the 45 minutes, 12 were salvageable, and Paksa titled them *Tiempo de descuento*.

The edited video collages the upbeat but dissonant sounds of electronic music over Juan’s jerky motions. The outline of his figure, which appears nearly as a black-and-white silhouette against the white wall, subtly multiplies, first as if in shadow, then engulfs his actual figure as the image zooms in and out. Color overlays begin to fill in his outline, with a dark circle in the center that suggests an image of a record (another reference to the components of *Comunicaciones*, perhaps) spinning across his flailing arms at the center of the screen [fig. 3.21]. Later, the color overlay shrinks to the shape of an egg [fig. 3.22] or expands to fill the screen and overtake his figure, his shadow escaping the round frame [fig. 3.23]. As he runs, the effects become more erratic, the music shifting suddenly or the camera moving quickly in and out. Though the timestamp on the bottom of the screen moves steadily, the twelve minutes of “salvageable” footage is sped up so that a minute passes about every 2.5 seconds. This may be “discounted” time, but it is not a countdown; the timestamp shows time moving forward, rather than backward, and does not end at zero. Having begun at 17:21, Juan stops running, stands upright for a moment, turns, and walks out of his box on the floor at 17:34. The video concludes, as it began, with a title card reading “Centro de Arte y Comunicación CAYC. ‘Tiempo de descuento – la hora cero.’ Proyecto y dirección Margarita Paksa. Buenos Aires 1978” [fig. 3.24].

The spare setting and anonymous dress, as Glusberg and other critics have written, suggests that Juan’s role is to represent something universal, a man who runs in place as metaphor for the continuous (and perhaps pointless) movement of humans “who run, toil,

³⁸⁶ Buccellato, *Margarita Paksa*, 142.

work, unable to free themselves from their confinement, the confinement of life that, in turn, cannot free them from death.”³⁸⁷ The countdown is the race toward death, the shared condition of entrapment in a finite time and space. The timer on the screen measures the the expenditure of finite time and confined energy. Paksa staged a presentation of *Tiempo de descuento – Cuenta regresiva – La hora 0* at the 1978 meeting of the Asociación Argentina de Críticos de Arte, a group Romero Brest founded in the 1950s and had just that year handed over to Glusberg.³⁸⁸ Photographs from her presentation of the work show Juan, once again dressed in black and running in place, this time alongside a monitor on which the 12-minute video plays [fig. 3.25]. The performance mimics, or perhaps analyzes, the self-referential operation of a closed-circuit video feed, showing a mediated version of an action alongside the action itself. But the distance between the edited video, aestheticized with experimental music and effects, and the real person struggling to run, leads the viewer backwards through the sequence of transmission.

As in *Comunicaciones*, the performance was accompanied by a poem which, according to Buccellato, Juan distributed to viewers as part of his performance. A meditation on the tension between the forward motion and continuity of time, Paksa’s “anti-poem” shares with the performance a repetitive, circular structure. The tediously linear poem performs the same tension that Juan has enacted by running in place, that the video has enacted by recording twelve minutes of time on a U-MATIC cassette tape, and that Juan then re-enacted by running in place again. “Una sucesión perpleja,” she repeats throughout, returning to the idea, like music playing on a spinning record, of simultaneous forward (narrative) and cyclical (infinitely repetitive) motion. It is a structure that echoes

³⁸⁷ “que corre, se afana, trabaja, sin poder liberarse de su encierro, encierro de vida que a su vez, no puede liberarse de la Muerte.” Glusberg, *Del pop art a la nueva imagen*, 367-376.

³⁸⁸ Safons et al., *Art Criticism in Argentina* (Buenos Aires: Argentine Association of Art Critics, 1979).

her poem “Santuario del sueño,” the “cool” side of the record accompanying *Comunicaciones*, which she had described as “an obsessive, circular description...capable of introducing the audience member/listener to the void, nothingness.”

La ley de su continuidad
Es el sentimiento de lo mismo
De lo idéntico, el que sirve de base a la memoria
El tránsito de lo homogéneo a lo diferente
La forma de toda actividad, a su vez
Una forma sucesiva
Una sucesión perpleja

“A perplexed succession” might well describe the temporal interplay of *Tiempo de descuento*: the frustrated forward motion, the repetition and continuity, the relentless drive toward nothing. Like Dermisache’s *grafismos*, the work might also relate an affect that was constituting Paksa’s bodily experience of dictatorship; as she had said about her drawings, “the only message they were giving was death.” The poem closes with a stanza under the phrase “LA MEMORIA,”

De lo que fue, se dejó y no fue
Fluye en un aire tenue de fantasmas puramente imaginarios.
En ambos casos nos domina la misma ilusión
Una sucesión perpleja
En la persecución de un imposible
Encaminados tras fantasmas sin realidad
En un vacío de movimiento.
La ley de su continuidad
Es el sentimiento de lo mismo, de lo idéntico

The law of continuity, the only thing that remains the same, is death.

Three years later, curator Barbara London included the video in her exhibition *Video from Latin America*, one of the earliest presentations of video art at the Museum of Modern Art

following Open Circuits.³⁸⁹ Characterizing Latin American video art as fundamentally political, London's presentation highlighted censorship and technological scarcity in the region, as well as the importance of institutions like the Di Tella and CAYC. "Over the years a number of Latin American artists have moved to Europe or North America in order to pursue their art work under more favorable conditions," she wrote in the catalogue essay. "In some areas it is illegal for an individual even to possess a video camera."³⁹⁰ London grouped her selection, as Simmons had for Open Circuits, into performance-oriented, narrative, poetic, documentary and political videos. Filing *Tiempo de descuento* under performance, she showed it alongside Anna Bella Geiger's *Mapas Elementares* (1976) and CADA's *Ay Sudamérica!* (1981). Those videos address the censorship and traumatic violence carried out by military dictatorships in Brazil and Chile much more expressly than Paksa's, so the inclusion of *Tiempo de descuento* suggests London may have read it as coded or allegorical in its political context. She quotes Paksa as saying, "The general idea of this work is the marking of time. In the tape it has been represented by a man running eagerly, despite the fact that he is shown always in the same place. In the left corner of the screen a reference to time is made by the use of a digital clock. The accompanying text is an uninterrupted series of philosophical and poetical descriptions of time, superimposed over his uninterrupted course."³⁹¹ Paksa's quote doesn't do much to illuminate the political references in her video, though a brief essay, written a year after she made *Tiempo de*

³⁸⁹ "Video from Latin America at MoMA." Press notice #70, The Museum of Modern Art, October 16, 1981. The selection of videotapes in *Video from Latin America* was made by Barbara London, then Assistant Curator in the Department of Film, over the course of two research trips through Latin America in 1979 and 1980, funded by MoMA's International Council.

³⁹⁰ Barbara London, *Video from Latin America*. Exh. cat., New York: Museum of Modern Art, October 29–December 1, 1981.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*

descuento, might sum it up. “Fragmentation, breakdown, dissolution, masking and dematerialization, are all adequate representations of our age,” she wrote.³⁹²

MARIE ORENSANZ

In July 1975, following her exhibition of the *Manifiesto Eros* in Milan, Orensanz visited Argentina. When she returned to Europe, she moved her family – Audras, who was French, and their three daughters – permanently to Paris.³⁹³ She stayed with Lublin when she first arrived before establishing a studio at 4 cité Thuré. “She opened a lot of doors for me and helped a great deal,” Orensanz recalled. “She introduced me to her circle of artist friends.”³⁹⁴ The year before, Orensanz had made a trip from Milan to Carrara, collecting discarded pieces of marble from the quarries and experimenting with found sculpture [fig. 3.26]. Without changing their size or shape, she treated the porous marble fragments as she had her grid drawings, incorporating patches of paint, text, Letraset, and mathematical motifs. These marble fragments informed a new phase of her work which revolved around found form. In October 1978, she consolidated her thinking into another manifesto, this time titled “Fragmentismo” [Fig. 3.27]. On a poster-sized page, similar in size and format to the *Manifiesto Eros*, Orensanz printed a single phrase in Spanish, English, and French:

Fragmento: parte pequeña de una cosa rota. (sic Pequeño Larousse). El fragmentismo busca la integración de una parte a un todo, transformándose, por sus múltiples lecturas, en un objeto inacabado e ilimitado a través del tiempo y del espacio.

Fragmentism. Fragmentism searches for integration of a part with a totality; transforms by multiple readings in an object non-terminate and unlimited, traversing time and space.

³⁹² Paksa, *Proyectos sobre el discurso de mi*.

³⁹³ In 1978 Orensanz married Audras and received French citizenship.

³⁹⁴ Orensanz and Meisel, *Marie Orensanz: Entretien avec Hélène Meisel*, 56.

The first phrase in Spanish, a definition of the term “fragment,” cites the Pequeño Larousse, the illustrated encyclopedia published (in French as *Le Petit Larousse*) for over 100 years. Fragmentism, as Orensanz defines it, is the process by which the “small part of a broken thing” becomes an unfinished or limitless object, something transformed as it moves across time and space. The fragments of marble Orensanz was working with had, since ancient Rome, moved from limestone deposits in the Apuan Alps throughout the world, taking on a chain of signification that derived from its use in monumental architecture, like the Pantheon in Rome or the Marble Arch in London, and in Renaissance sculptures like Michelangelo’s *David*. In contrast with the fixed set of meanings those works used marble to assemble and communicate – permanence, authority, the dominance of man over his natural and social surroundings, power – Orensanz’s marble fragments are small and unstable, contingent, as she writes, on “multiple readings” of her cryptic additions. Rather than using the smooth surface of the marble as support or starting point, Orensanz approaches the fragments as already-started, combining her use of color and line with the veins embedded in the ancient stone [fig. 3.28]. Against the methods of force and subtraction required for the stone to yield a figure like *David*, Orensanz’s process is additive, suggestive, and gestural, transforming a discarded chunk into an open work. Her manifesto continues,

The recovery and choice of marble constitute the first stage. Then I intervene, making fragments of drawings and paintings, which are fragments of thought. I expose the elements to a problem without giving a solution. The solutions can be multiple and depend in themselves on those who observe the object. They complete the figures with the help of their own thinking...It is about open discourse.

What interests me is establishing a dialogue with the person looking at the marble, seeking to produce an intellectual or emotional reaction in the ghostly projection of each of us.

At that moment the polysemy of symbols begins to work.³⁹⁵ Fragmentism, for Orensanz, represented the reimagined relations between artist, object, and viewer-collaborators as social agents. It is explicitly against the stability and coherence of meaning communicated by marble, asking viewer-collaborators to consider their own enmeshment, as fragments themselves, in socio-symbolic structures.

Límites (1979)

Orensanz's fragments, as sculptural objects and as theoretical device, appear and reappear in various forms. If her drawings were but one part of the fragment's path, there were other ways they could circulate. She returned to Buenos Aires to exhibit them in December 1978, at Galería Artemúltiple, where they were received with the same enthusiasm as her drawings in 1972. A review in *La Razón* highlighted the spatial and temporal collapse that her drawings had achieved a few years earlier: "through her poetic and sensitive essential landscapes...she has been detaching herself from reality, conceptualizing it. Irregularly shaped pieces of marble, some of which can fit in the palm of a hand, are the three-dimensional spaces where she develops her message."³⁹⁶ As Lidy Prati had seen in

³⁹⁵ "La recuperación y elección del mármol constituyen la primera etapa. Después intervengo haciendo fragmentos de dibujos y de pintura, que son fragmentos de pensamiento. Expongo los elementos de un problema sin dar la solución. Las soluciones pueden ser múltiples y dependen en sí de los que observan el objeto. Ellos completan las figuras con ayuda de su propio pensamiento...Se trata de un discurso abierto. Lo que me interesa es establecer un diálogo con la persona que mira el mármol, buscando producir una reacción intelectual o emotiva en la proyección fantasmal de cada uno de nosotros. En ese momento que comienza a funcionar la polisemia de los símbolos. Esas notas no son más que hilos conductores para comprender las primeras intenciones de mi obra, pero ellas se transforman durante el proceso creativo hasta provocar mi asombro, delante del objeto una vez terminada mi intervención." Reproduced in Buccellato, *Marie Orensanz*, 103.

³⁹⁶ "desde sus poéticos y sensibles paisajes esenciales...ha ido desprendiéndose de la realidad, conceptualizándola. Trozos de mármol de forma irregular, algunos caben en el cuenco de una mano, es el espacio tridimensional donde desarrolla su mensaje." Hernández Rosselot, [Sin título, Nota de *Arte, cuadros y exposiciones* sobre la exposición en Artemúltiple de 1978]. *La Razón* (Buenos Aires), December 23, 1978.

Orensanz's drawings, the materiality of the marble fragments synthesized the time and space of perception with an ancient history in a dense formation of geological and semiotic layers. Prati had described this process as occurring "within a single whole and not through the serial synthesis of partial moments of successive frames to present a concept," that is, simultaneously rather than cinematically. This spatio-temporal condensation, and the simultaneity of its perception, is also performed by video. Televisual relations bring the time and space of representation into proximity with the time and space of perception – with the viewer – and that proximity shapes her subjectivity.

Just two months after Paksa made her video at CAYC, Glusberg offered Orensanz use of his equipment, and she returned to Buenos Aires to produce the video *Límites*. Like *Tiempo de descuento*, *Límites* begins with a title screen, this time in English, reading "Center of Art and Communication (CAYC), Buenos Aires January 1979, 'Limits and Unlimited' by Marie Orensanz, Technical Cooperation: Jorge Glusberg, Video Engineering: Renato Santucci, Sound Technician: Jorge Piantentini" [fig. 3.29]. Against a percussive soundtrack, the camera pans out from a white screen, on which Orensanz has written, in her signature script, "Límites" with four arrows, each pointing in a cardinal direction, as if we are looking at a marble fragment.³⁹⁷ But we are in fact looking at another screen, a small television with two rotary knobs [fig. 3.30]. Slowly, the edge of the television becomes outlined and flashes pink, using the same masking technique Paksa had in *Tiempo de descuento* [fig. 3.31]. Like her egg-shaped void, the space of the screen becomes a hole which, as we lose the framing device of the television, opens up to reveal an image of the artist's hands mixing paint on a palette [fig. 3.32]. Rather than painting a

³⁹⁷ Interview with the author, October 17, 2022. During the late 1970s, perhaps because it posed fewer risks than showing art, CAYC was host to a dense roster of electronic music performances (see, for example, GT-686, "Expomúsica," November 8, 1976). Very little scholarship has addressed the experiments in audiovisual technology and electronic music taking place at CAYC.

canvas, however, she is painting her fingernails. Her performance as artist – specifically as artist’s hands – points to the aesthetic training that precedes women’s formal education; perhaps even in deadpan reference to the ways in which women direct their creativity toward their bodies.

Next, the central video dims, with the pink flashing remaining around the screen’s border, and the video fades into the image of a block with paper pinned up against it. Now, Orensanz is painting the border of the paper [fig. 3.33]. The pink flashing fades away and the camera homes in on Orensanz’s hand as she begins to fill in the blank page with patchy fields of color: first an olive green, then a navy blue beside it, and later an ochre. A square pink border reappears, then it turns cerulean blue, then neon yellow, then coral pink, then back to the bluish pink – all clashing with the more subdued hues with which she is painting [fig. 3.34]. Finally, the screen fades to black once again, and in the field now framed by neon yellow, a patch of dirt appears. As the yellow fades away, Orensanz’s hands begin scratching at the dirt, digging a shallow hole and, in the process, uncovering a white shard of stone [fig. 3.35]. She pulls it gingerly from the earth, brushing dirt off it and weighing its small form carefully, turning it sideways for the camera to consider its narrow layers [fig. 3.36]. Subtle markings are just visible between the veins on the marble’s flat side, suggesting it is one of her fragments. As she wipes it and turns it slowly, the yellow frame reappears, perhaps to reiterate and fix it as a work of art rather than a naturally-occurring piece of stone. In a final shot, a blurry white square blinks in and out of focus against a black background. As the camera zooms in, the image comes into focus: it is a partially uncovered fragment, still in the ground, with the text “lo ilimitado” visible [fig. 3.37]. From there, the camera zooms back out of focus, and the black screen flips to the title card, the drum beat petering out.

The marble fragment in Orensanz's film is not just an object that, as she theorizes, is unfinished and unlimited in its accretion of meanings as it circulates in the world – “marble as a dialogue between the past and the future” – but it is also a *representation* of “lo ilimitado” – the unlimited in the sense of energy, creativity, the potential of women buried just under the surface.³⁹⁸ The dirt threatens to cover it up and hide it once more, disappearing it underground or into the spatio-temporal void of a turned-off television. Going beyond “the limits of the page, I emphasize, is to go beyond the roles to which we are assigned, either as females or in the way we express ourselves,” she wrote.³⁹⁹ Orensanz's meditation on limits – the frame of the television screen, the borders of her canvas, the things she can and cannot do as an artist or as a woman – asks her viewer-collaborators to consider their enmeshment in a set of codes (linguistic and spatial, discursive and material) that structure and determine form. In a closely related photograph, titled *Limitada* and suggestive of a still from *Límites*, Orensanz poses herself in close-up within the frame of the screen [fig. 3.38]. Looking straight into the camera lens, her forehead is labeled “limitada,” and on the white screen behind, three small arrows point to the left, to the right, and up from her face. She stares into the camera lens with a serious expression, perhaps a bit tired or resigned, a look that combines with the word to convey a feeling, perhaps, associated with a certain kind of womanhood in the 1970s: she is ambitious, full of Eros, but constrained at the level of language and in material options. She is labeled like a fragment, and like her fragments she is given form through the representational economy – the space-place that organizes power.

³⁹⁸ Interview with the author, October 17, 2022. “En el video se ve el mármol con la escritura *ilimitada*, es la relación de la tierra, y el mármol. Un diálogo entre el pasado y el futuro.”

³⁹⁹ “Los límites de la hoja, yo los remarco, es ir más allá del rol al cual nos destinan, ya sea como sexo femenino o por la forma que tenemos que expresarnos.” Ibid.

CONCLUSION: GLUSBERG'S COMPROMISE

“The messages of video,” Glusberg wrote in advance of the Barcelona Encounter, “constitute the structures of the human, the true organizers of interpersonal relationships. Video is a materialization of social relations and, in turn, a permanent source of cultural guidelines [*pautas culturales*].”⁴⁰⁰ At this point, Glusberg had organized seven international gatherings and was promoting a group show at CAYC in response to the question “hay vanguardia en Latinoamérica?”. The “pautas culturales,” however, had shifted. While the junta claimed there was no censorship, it imposed “guidelines” determining what could be shown on television or broadcast over the radio and how; there was no live television since everything had to be taped and submitted to censors before airing. New “guidelines” also dictated the limits of permissible gender presentation, policing the appearance and behavior of male and female students through mass media. Like the “policía electrónica” profiled in *Análisis* a few years before, condensing its views of the city onto a centralized screen, the civil-military dictatorship restructured the relations between citizens and state through unequal relations of looking. Military violence and conspicuous disappearances were not invisible. But the junta claimed total control over visibility through the one-way look of surveillance; it controlled not just what Argentines could see, but also *who* could see. Diana Taylor has termed this powerlessness to look – a viewer’s inability to witness or return what she sees – percepticide.⁴⁰¹

Spectacles of nationalism, just as much as violence, enforce the power relations structured by the nonconsensual and nonreturnable gaze. And as Taylor has detailed, the

⁴⁰⁰ “Los mensajes del video constituyen factores estructurantes de lo humano, verdaderos organizadores de las relaciones interpersonales. El video es una materialización de las relaciones sociales y a su vez una fuente permanente de pautas culturales. GT-687, “VII Encuentro Internacional Abierto de Video: Barcelona,” November 8, 1976.

⁴⁰¹ Taylor, *Disappearing Acts*, 10.

dictatorship made use of the unidirectional flow of mass media in staging the “masculinist spectacle” of the World Cup in Buenos Aires in 1978.⁴⁰² Argentina’s win did much to distract from the peak of the military’s violence and to legitimize the junta and its myths of national unity. “Like the military on parade,” Taylor writes, “this spectacle is about dominance, not reciprocity. The military make themselves available to viewing, but they...need not return the look or establish a connection of any kind with their spectators. Power stems from maintaining distance and control.”⁴⁰³ Unlike the reciprocal and co-constitutive relations elicited by the videos described here, the dictatorship relied on the one-way look (returning to Althusser) to bring subjects forcibly into being.

It is a rich and perplexing historical detail, then, that the staging of this mass media spectacle, and its role in configuring the repressive relations between military and population, was abetted by Jorge Glusberg. In 1978, Modulor received a contract from the military to install the stadium lighting for the World Cup. It is hard to imagine a more effective structural device than the glare of bright stadium lighting, both in negating the return of the look and in rendering the spectacle visible on television. Taylor argues that the dictatorship’s cultivation of spectacular screens like the World Cup was a crucial component of its attack on perception. The violence in plain sight and the unwillingness to witness it demonstrate a breakdown in the mutuality or reciprocity of looking. In this sense, the collaborative making of both the videos I’ve described here and their discursive communities begins to function as ideological critique.

⁴⁰² Taylor, *Disappearing Acts*, 112-117.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, 115.

Tucked into the debut issue of the film magazine *Todo Cine*, which published six issues in 1981, is an advertisement for Modulor's newest product: a video intercom system called Minison [fig. 3.39]. A compact call box meant to be installed by the front door, the system consisted of a doorbell, a telephone, and a small screen connecting a security camera to an "internal station." "When the call button is pressed at the external station, the tele-camera automatically turns on and a light illuminates the visitor and their surroundings," the ad explains, "allowing the internal station to see the person calling from outside and to start a conversation."⁴⁰⁴ Minison brings the surveillance setup of the "policía electrónica" home, shielding homeowners from the vulnerability of reciprocal looks while answering the door.

By 1981, *Primera Plana* and *Análisis* had shuttered. *Todo Cine*, a short-lived magazine with a less generalist focus, nonetheless treated film culture very broadly, including debates on censorship and low rates of attendance at movie theaters, coverage of foreign film industries (particularly Hollywood) and even video art. Some sixty pages after the Modulor ad, the article "Arte y tecnología: El video," by Jorge Glusberg, appears at the back of the magazine. It is a familiar analysis of the ways in which video, as opposed to film, structures meaning. "The artistic product is inseparable, in all cases, from the structural conditions in which it originates," he writes, emphasizing that in Latin America, even video as an art form indexes the sociohistorical conditions of its making. In some ways, Glusberg's rhetoric had come a long way from his discussions of the potential for video in the struggle for liberation. His article is dense and academic for a film lover's magazine, even one that styled itself, headily, as a space of resistance to censorship. Perhaps this was the only way to continue say what Glusberg had either fervently believed

⁴⁰⁴ "Al oprimirse el pulsador del tablero de llamada en el puesto externo, entra automáticamente en funcionamiento la tele-cámara, y una luz ilumina al visitante y su entorno, permitiendo en el puesto interno ver a la persona que llama desde el exterior y entablar conversación con ella. *Todo Cine* 1 (March 1981): 10.

or opportunistically boosted over the last six years. Because in other ways, Glusberg's many catalogue essays, press releases, newspaper articles, and conference papers had recycled the same points over and over, tweaked slightly for each new setting, promoting and propagating around the world but really saying nothing at all.

Glusberg organized ten Encounters between 1974 and 1978. But they were just one part of a thriving international ecosystem of video art and exchange, encouraging particularly in Latin America the proliferation of related events such as the Bienal Internacional de Video-arte, in Medellín, and the establishment of *Espaço B*, a venue dedicated to exhibiting video at MAC-USP in São Paulo. In May 1975, just five months after the first Encounter in London, Sue Grayson organized *The Video Show*, a major international group exhibition at the Serpentine Gallery. Lea Lublin returned to stage a performance called *Is Art an Enigma?*, organized by Guy Brett and David Medalla, Cecilia Vicuña, and John Dugger's recently-formed organization Artists for Democracy.⁴⁰⁵ Lublin's video of the event shows artists gathered in a small gallery, standing before her English-language banner and other homemade signs tacked on the wall [fig. 3.40]. On one, the statement "all art has a class basis" is scrawled, while another singles out the question "is art an enigma?" Participants, dressed in costumes identifying them with various historical periods (one person dressed to signify Indigeneity, another in the Dutch Renaissance style) arrange themselves in a series of *tableaux vivant*. Medalla holds open an art history textbooks to show details of the paintings of Johannes Vermeer. The critical but irreverent events of the group performance and its inclusion in *The Video Show* speak to a politics of cooperation and collectivity.

⁴⁰⁵ Bibliothèque nationale de France, NUMAV-328511.

Even Mirtha Dermisache saw the potential video might have for her collaborative process of meaning-making. In her workshops, which she ran out of her studio between 1972-1980, she gave participants cameras “to enable participants to come into contact with that system and to learn to express images in that medium or language.”⁴⁰⁶ She screened videos on loop in the studio and organized roundtables to discuss filmic technique. In an application for a Guggenheim Fellowship, which she prepared in 1971, Dermisache wrote, “While, in my practice, what has been and is essential is research in graphisms, I have applied them in an interdisciplinary fashion...I seek to further their expressive capacity, their ability to generate other types of visual and/or audible manifestations...My research into the cinematographic potential of my graphisms and their expressions might lead to the production of a short film.”⁴⁰⁷ Like her *grafismos*, video promised a language for revelation, a tool for the collaborative liberation of the inner self. “When I say work-revelation,” she later wrote, “I mean that the audience does not come to see a work, but that the audience, working, is the work.”⁴⁰⁸

The tensions between visibility and percepticide, video as discourse and video as technology, and the institutional and communitarian relations of “the global village” index a fascinating historical gap between what these artists sought and what was possible. As Phillips notes, it does not appear that Glusberg necessarily promoted CAYC-affiliated

⁴⁰⁶ Pérez Rubio, ed., *Mirtha Dermisache: porque ¡yo escribo!*, 277.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 265.

⁴⁰⁸ “Mirtha Dermisache,” in *Summa. Revista de arquitectura, tecnología y diseño* (Buenos Aires, Ediciones Summa S.A., no. 178/179, September 1982): 69–80. “Program: Friday: screening of *Sextas Jornadas del Color y de la Forma*, a short sound and color film in Super 8 by Carlos Garcarena; roundtable—broadcast live on VCR monitors coordinated by Emilio Stevanovich with the participation of Jorge Romero Brest, Gregorio Klimovsky, Silvia Puente, and Emilio Renart; exhibition of photographs by Antonio Zaera. Friday to Sunday: screening of the short film by Carlos Garcarena. Screening in loop of a video on the *Jornadas* by Carlos Dulitzky. Tape of the roundtable. Saturdays and Sundays: workshop using some of the *Jornada*’s techniques to get a direct sense of the experience; promotion of attendance by media figures.”

artists beyond his own exhibitions, and indeed it is largely CAYC's own videos from this period that have disappeared from circulation.⁴⁰⁹ Glusberg's control over the circulation of videos through CAYC channels, his benevolence with technical resources and relentless promotion of the CAYC narrative, might be another form of a one-way look. On the other hand, the roving itinerary of *Art Systems in Latin America*, and the gatherings that blossomed around each of its stops, brought these artists and their work into an international dialogue. In Antwerp, Dermisache met Guy Schraenen, with whom she and Orensanz both collaborated on artist books. In Paris, Orensanz adapted her video into a series of prints and circulated her texts in mail art and small press publications such as Julien Blaine's magazine *Doc(k)s*. One way to view the video works I have discussed here is as an index of the reciprocal relationships nourished by the early video community: a work of art as an open system that solicits feedback. These works, like all the works in this dissertation, insist on the co-constitutive relationality between videos and viewer-collaborators, with the hope that the latter recognize their part – perhaps their responsibilities – in producing the image world.

⁴⁰⁹ Phillips and Serrano, "Encounters: CAYC and the International Encuentros," 67. While Phillips speculates that the videos may no longer exist, many indeed survive in the CAYC Archive. They have been digitized and are accessible through the Institute for Studies on Latin American Art.

Conclusion

A 1975 CAYC *gacetilla* announces a visit from Julien Blaine, the French poet and experimentalist, to Buenos Aires.⁴¹⁰ Blaine was a frequent collaborator with CAYC artists, poets, and interlocutors, contributing to one of its earliest presentations, the Expo Internacional de Proposiciones a Realizar, organized by Edgardo Antonio Vigo at the new gallery in June 1971.⁴¹¹ He had founded, with Jean Clay, the short-lived but influential magazine *Robho*, a venue that chronicled the events of 1968 from Paris and privileged the perspectives and production of Latin American artists, in whom Clay had taken an interest on his visit to judge *Materiales*.⁴¹² Blaine was in town to work on a special edition of his new editorial project, *Boite Postale*, and presented at CAYC a persona he was developing under the pseudonym Jules V.A.N. (Vrai Art Nouveau). In a column in the publication *Libération*, Jules V.A.N. offered tricks and testimonials for living more “intensely”: deliberate spelling mistakes, pirated coupons, tiny acts of sabotage and “creatividades del sub-mundo” that Blaine considered works of art invented and elaborated by the people. *Il y a mille trucs* for disrupting the flows of power that structure everyday life.

Several years and several editorial projects later, Blaine invited Orensanz to contribute to a series of proposed occupations of plinths and pedestals around Paris.

⁴¹⁰ GT-515, “‘Jules V.A.N.’ por Julien Blaine,” July 16, 1975.

⁴¹¹ GT-49, “Expo Internacional de Proposiciones a Realizar,” June 25, 1971.

⁴¹² On *Robho* and the cultural politics of Latin Americans in Paris, see Isabel Plante, *Argentinos de París: Arte y viajes culturales durante los años sesenta* (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2013). Plante writes that, after his trip to Buenos Aires, Clay wrote to Julio Le Parc that he was planning to publish an Argentine edition of *Robho* in partnership with Glusberg, focusing first on “the group of Margarita Paksa and Pablo Suárez”; that is, the artists organizing *Tucumán Arde*.

Documented in a special edition of his journal *Doc(k)s*, Orensanz's performance *Apropiación de un zócalo in Paris* took place in the sixth arrondissement on June 12, 1982, where an empty plinth served as a stage for a series of parodic substitutions for the missing statue.⁴¹³ In one photograph, she is splayed across the plinth, with her husband Patrick standing over her, his foot on her head and his hand on his hips. Laughing, Orensanz holds a text in the place of the statue's inscription: *Liberté, égalité, fraternité*. Appropriating the banality of the national motto and its place on the statues of national heroes, her gesture rhymes with Lublin's lampooning of patriotic symbolism through performances like *Happening patrio: invitado de honor Manuel Belgrano*. But Patrick's amused frown and self-important pose, as he steps on her head, draws attention to who, in the history of images, has represented the revolutionary principles of the republic – who can and cannot lay claim to liberty, equality, and fraternity. Finally, their playful grins register a personal irony in the performance of gendered domination, given Patrick's role in supporting Marie's career.

Putting a joke about their personal relationship on display, Orensanz plays with the spatial and symbolic unity promised by the plinth. She repeats the gesture in another photograph, *La famille*, in which her three daughters join her on the plinth for a family portrait. The objectification of the family unit rhymes with Bony's *La familia obrera*, and may intentionally or not repeat his foregrounding of classed trappings and taste. But, as in

⁴¹³ *Doc(k)s* no. 50, Autumn 1982. The empty plinth, now home to Jean-Paul Aubé's bronze statue of Dante, is located in a small green square on rue des Écoles which, in 2005, was re-named to honor Michel Foucault, who taught The History of Systems of Thought at the nearby Collège de France.

the photographs documenting Lublin's performance *Mon fils*, joy and irreverence are clearly part of the performance. Orensanz brings her close friend, the artist Elisa Tan, onto the plinth for a photograph titled *Amistad*. In another, she positions herself, alone, over the inscription *Fragmentisme*. As we have seen throughout the works discussed here, laughing is another disruption of power, another trick or tactic of everyday life.

Visualizing and intervening on the structures moving the body through the city, the text on a page, or the virtual space of the screen have been the tactics employed by Dermisache, Lublin, Orensanz, and Paksa, and braided together in my analysis. Each negotiated their critiques with subtlety and inflection that was highly specific to their circumstances as they negotiated shifting social, political, and personal contexts. At the same time, the emergence of the active spectator allowed their work to take the form of exchange, opening it up to an uncontrollable range of interpretive experiences. Watching and being watched, reading and being read, asking and being asked are mutually-constitutive ways of coming into being, circuits of subject-formation. One of the ways I have tried to frame the reformulated relations between artist and active spectator is through an imbrication that actually shorts the circuit. In the works I have discussed, signaling gestures – sometimes playful, sometimes solemn – point to the grids of socio-symbolic unity, the language and images that structure representation, and at the same time laugh, or breathe, or bleed, or otherwise exceed them. The relations, rather than things, offered up by conceptual art were a “workaround.”

Figures



Fig. 0.1. Margarita Paksa, *Calórico*. *Construcciones en poliéster y vinilo*, 1965.
Installation views, Galería del Centro Argentino por la Libertad de la
Cultura, Buenos Aires.



Fig. 0.2. Margarita Paksa, *Calórico. Construcciones en poliéster y vinilo*, 1965. Opening at the Galería del Centro Argentino por la Libertad de la Cultura, Buenos Aires, October 28, 1965.



Fig. 0.3. Margarita Paksa, *Calórico. Construcciones en poliéster y vinilo*, 1965. Opening at the Galería del Centro Argentino por la Libertad de la Cultura, Buenos Aires, October 28, 1965



Fig. 0.4. Lea Lublin and Antonio Seguí (center) at their Paris studio, 1964.



Fig. 0.5. Margarita Paksa in her studio, 1960s.



Fig. 0.6. Marie Orensanz (center left) with Antonio Seguí (center right), 1960s.



Fig. 0.7. Mirtha Dermisache (far left) at the Escuela Nacional de Bellas Artes Prilidiano Pueyrredón, Buenos Aires, ca. 1958–1960.



Fig. 0.8. Façade of the Centro de Artes Visuales del Instituto Torcuato Di Tella, Florida 936, Buenos Aires.

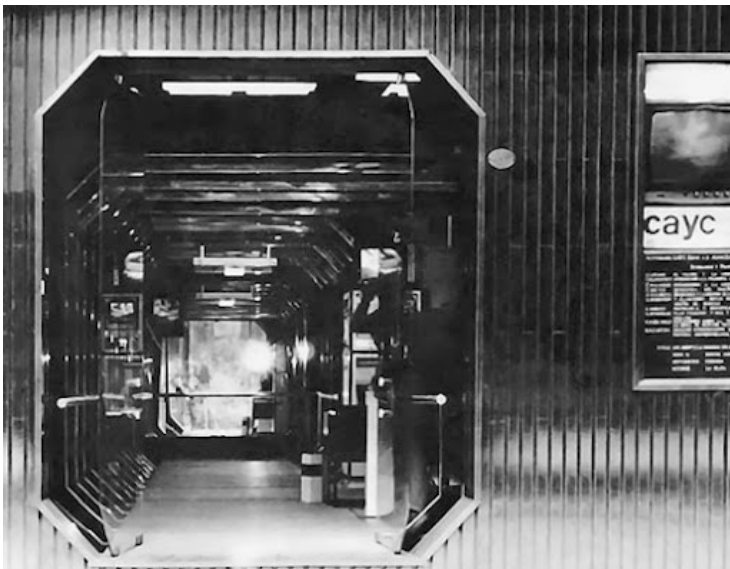


Fig. 0.9. Façade of the Centro de Arte y Comunicación, Viamonte 452, Buenos Aires.

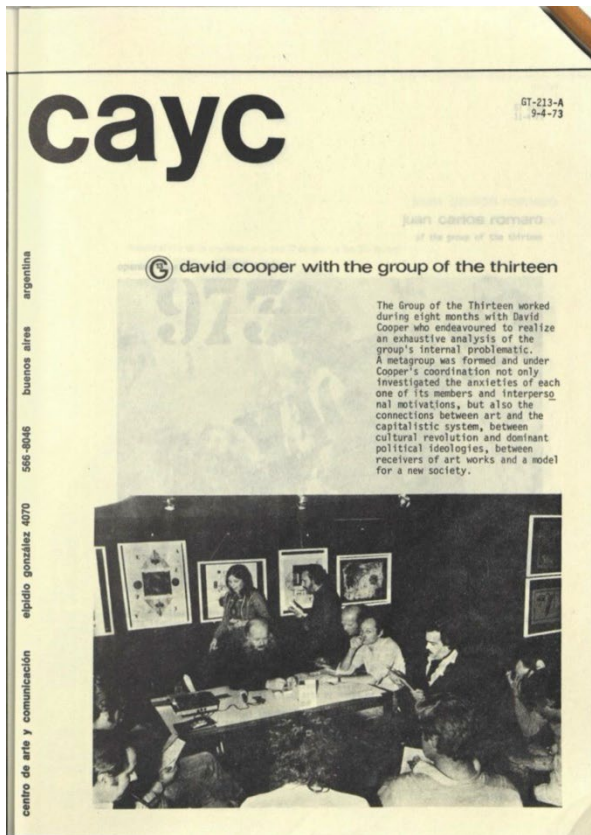


Fig. 0.10. GT-231A. "David Cooper with the Group of Thirteen," April 9, 1973.



Fig. 0.11. Pedro Roth, Juan Carlos Romero, Jorge López Anaya, Margarita Paksa, Marie Orensanz, and Ennio Iommi, 1999.



Fig. 1.1. Still from Jacques Tati, *Playtime*, 1968.

TIEMPO Y GENTE

MIRÓN EN CALLE FLORIDA
Una de las más placidas formas del conocimiento

LA VIDA DE LOS DEMÁS

Día: Viernes. Hora: 16. Lugar: Calle Emeralda, cerca de Lavalle, en Buenos Aires. Un diario baja bruscamente de un ómnibus que de inmediato se detiene. Baja también el guardia; intenta abalanzarse sobre el casillero pero la gente se lo impide. El conductor convence al guardia; ambos suben y el ómnibus parte. El diario es ayudado a recoger los periódicos que se desparmaron en los forcejeos. Duración del hecho: 35 segundos. Testigos: pasajeros de dos colectivos, dos taxis y 35 peatones que se dispersan lentamente.

Esta escena o sus variantes menos agresivas alimentan cotidianamente la curiosidad, un hobby que, según el Espasa-Calpe, consiste en "ver lo que pasa en la casa del vecino" y también "verlo que nos lleva a inquirir lo que no debiera importarnos", y que genera un espécimen comúnmente llama-

do "mirón" cuyo modus vivendi propone como únicas vivencias legales el cine, la televisión, los deportes, los colores, Buenos Aires vista desde el vapor de la carrera y sobre todo, por encima de todo, los demás, la vida, los genios, el ascender de los demás.

El único modo de combatir esta inofensiva plaga es obligarlos a cerrar los ojos. La mejor manera de gratificarlos es hacerlos vivir en 1969, inmersos en una sociedad que ha sublimado los medios audiovisuales hasta convertidos en rectores de sus pautas de consumo. El sociólogo Luis Stulhman distingue por lo menos tres categorías de curiosidad: "la científica, la cotidiana y la que busca lo que no se puede saber. Creo que esta es la que provoca la indagación permanente. Querer saber reemplaza a querer participar, es decir, actuar". Humear

es un hábito indetenible que nos impulsa a enterarnos de lo que lee nuestro vecino de arriba. Lo cierto es que su diario suele traer noticias mucho más interesantes que el nuestro pero nadie lo acepta porque, como explica Stulhman, "hay un grado de sanción informal para los miróns. A la gente le da vergüenza quedar al descubierto, sobre todo a los hombres, porque el espionaje, el chisme, son tareas de tiempo libre, es decir, se los identifica con la mujer".

Un rápido chequeo entre las páginas de los diarios de mayor circulación en la Capital, permitió detectar una población permanente frente a sus vidrieras. Por su privilegiada ubicación, *La Nación* —Florida al 300— atrae entre 15 y 40 personas, siendo sus momentos-pico el mediodía y entre las 17 y las 19 horas. En el mismo cuadro se inscriben *Clarín* con 15 a 20

TIEMPO Y GENTE

EXCAVACIONES Y REMATES
Las mujeres siempre pasan de largo

ROBERTO LEÓN
"A mí no me molesta, al contrario"

Hay dos niveles de curiosidad como motor del conocimiento —propone la psicóloga Virginia Schejter— uno es conocer para manejarse mejor y otro el solo placer de mirar. Por ejemplo, ante accidentes y situaciones límite, la excitación que provoca ser testigo es tan extrema que produce una especie de control. Burlarse es una forma de negar la propia muerte." Schejter opina que la curiosidad es un modelo infantil aprendido de la necesidad de cada chico por conocerse a sí mismo, por descifrar el mundo de sus padres y aun su propia gestación. "Quizá sea esta atracción por lo desconocido, por lo prohibido, lo que incite durante toda la vida. La curiosidad trata de pasar el límite de lo que está permitido conocer, no es solamente mirar sino mirar lo que está prohibido." Y concluye: "Bichar en el otro es una forma de aprender un modelo para conocerse más a sí mismo, juzgándolo sin riesgo. Por eso toda curiosidad, en suma, es una búsqueda del conocimiento".

Nadie se siente molesto cuando es mirado por algo que lo distingue favorablemente de los demás. Roberto León, encargado de preparar paqueques junto a la vidriera de Costa Azul —Corrientes y Emeralda— admite "a mí no me molesta, al contrario; al fin y al cabo están admirando las piruetas que uno hace con la masa. Yo creo que los que miran son personas de afuera, que no están acostumbradas. Los sábados y los domingos la vidriera parece un mitin político".

A simple vista, paquer no es un delito grave. Sin embargo, a nivel colectivo, la dimensión que adquiere suele tener límites inesperados, como los que rememora recientemente una psiquiatra: "En Alberti y Caseros había un equidnómico que se escapó del hospital de las Mercedes y estaba acorralado por un semicirculo de gente que no se le acercaba pero tampoco lo dejaba mover. Era gente común, hombres, mujeres y chicos de barrio, hacia como diez minutos que estaban así cuando yo llegué. Pedia que me consiguieran un taxi y nadie se movió. Tuve que hacerlo yo y llevar al enfermo de vuelta al hospital. Es que se da un fenómeno de repulencia y

Fig. 1.2. "La vida de los demás," *Análisis* 416 (March 5, 1969), pp. 36–38.

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Fig. 1.3. "Cibernética contra el delito," *Análisis* 421 (April 8, 1969), pp. 14–18.



Fig. 1.4. Censorship of Roberto Plate, *El baño*, 1968. Centro de Artes Visuales del Instituto Torcuato Di Tella, *Experiencias '68*.



Fig. 1.5. Margarita Paksa, *Comunicaciones*, 1968. Installation view, Centro de Artes Visuales del Instituto Torcuato Di Tella, *Experiencias '68*.



Fig. 1.6. Margarita Paksa, *Comunicaciones*, 1968. Reproduced in Alberto Cousté, "Di Tella: La sangre llega al río," *Primera Plana* 282 (May 21, 1968), p. 70.



Fig. 1.7. Margarita Paksa, *Comunicaciones*, 1968. Installation view, Centro de Artes Visuales del Instituto Torcuato Di Tella, *Experiencias '68*.



Fig. 1.8. Margarita Paksa, *Comunicaciones*, 1968. Reproduced in Alberto Cousté, "Di Tella: La sangre llega al río," *Primera Plana* 282 (May 21, 1968).

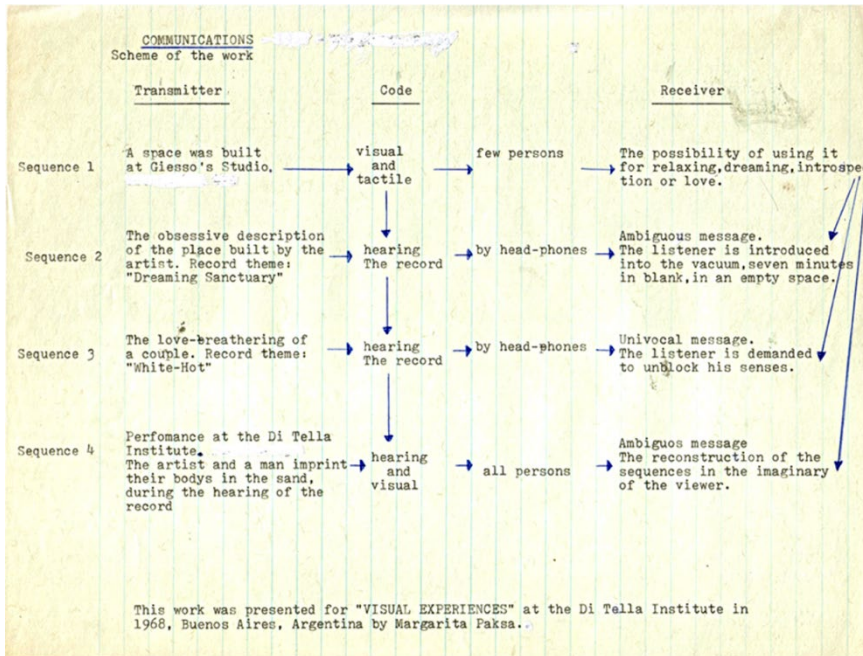


Fig. 1.9. Margarita Paksa, plan for *Comunicaciones*, 1968.



Fig. 1.10. Cover of *Primera Plana* 282 (May 21, 1968).



Fig. 1.11. "Estudiantes: Un 10 en disturbios," *Primera Plana* 282 (May 21, 1968), p. 53-54.



Fig. 1.12. Lea Lublin, *Ver Claro*, 1965.



Fig. 1.13. Photograph of Lea Lublin, *Happening patrio: invitado de honor Manuel Belgrano*, 1966.



Fig. 1.14. Photograph by Lea Lublin of her studio on rue Marcel Sembat, Paris.



Fig. 1.15. Lea Lublin, *Mon fils*, 1968. Installation view, Salon de Mai, Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1968.



Fig. 1.16. Lea Lublin, *Mon fils*, 1968.



Fig. 1.19. Lea Lublin, *Mon fils*, 1968.

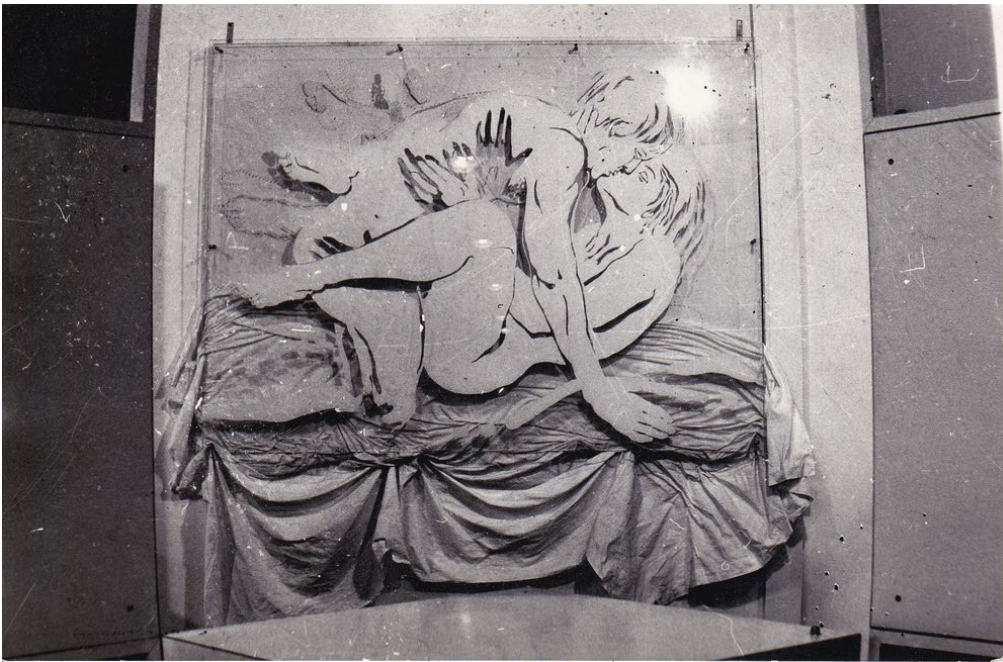


Fig. 1.20. Lea Lublin, *Blanco sobre blanco*, 1970.



Fig. 1.21. Censorship of Lea Lublin, *Blanco sobre blanco*, Exposición Panamericana de Ingeniería, in Buenos Aires, 1970.



Fig. 1.22. Lea Lublin, *Mon fils*, 1968.



Fig. 1.23. Lea Lublin, *Fluvio subtunal*, 1969.

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Fig. 1.24. Siam Di Tella advertisement, *Análisis* 372, April 29, 1968.



Fig. 1.25. Lea Lublin, *Fluvio subtunal*, 1969.



Fig. 1.26. Lea Lublin, *Fluvio subtunal*, 1969.



Fig. 1.27. Lea Lublin, *Fluvio subtunal*, 1969.

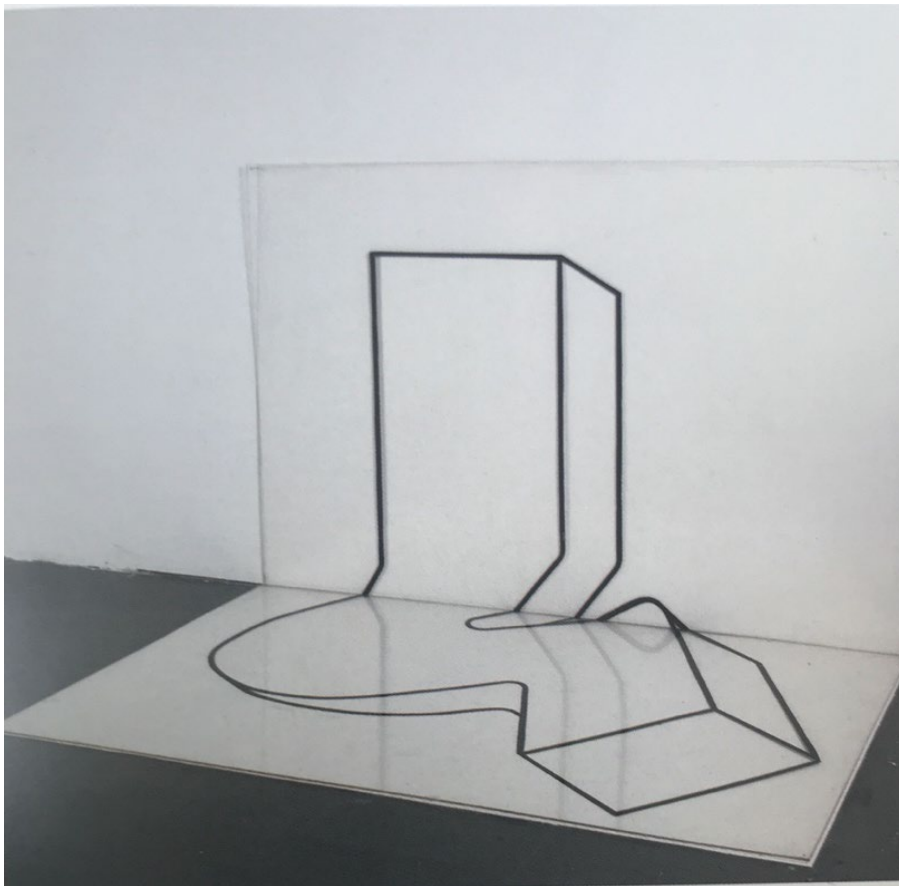


Fig. 1.28. Marie Orensanz, *Untitled*, 1968. Installation view, Premio Braque, 1968.



Fig. 1.29. Marie Orensanz, *Estructurías Primarias*, 1968. Installation view, Galería El Taller, 1968.



Fig. 1.30. Marie Orensanz, *La Gallareta*, 1969. Installation view, Galería Primera Plana, Mar del Plata, 1969.

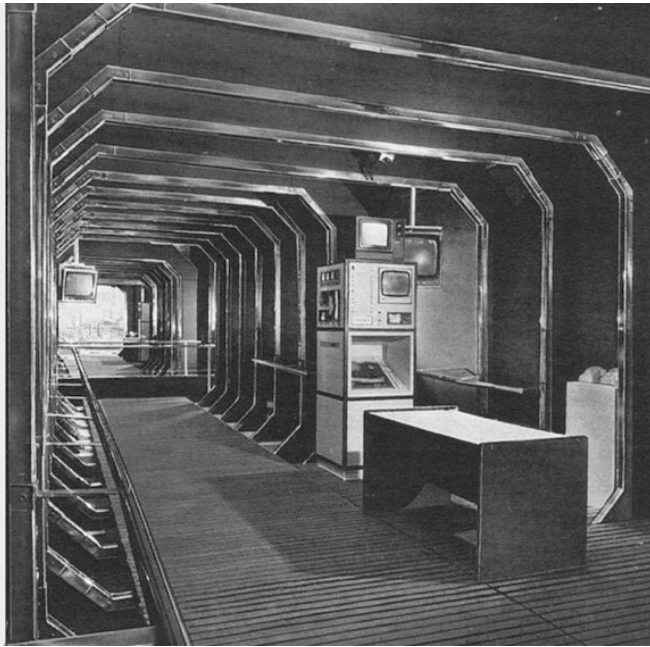


Fig. 1.31. Interior of the Centro de Arte y Comunicación, Viamonte 452, Buenos Aires.

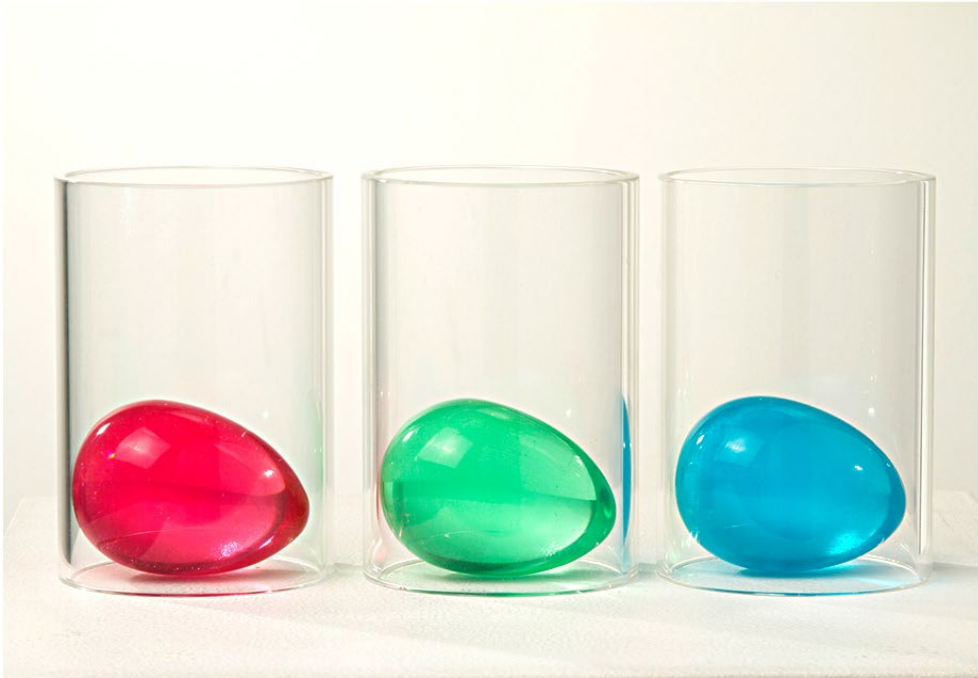


Fig. 1.32. Margarita Paksa, *Relaxing Egg*, 1970.

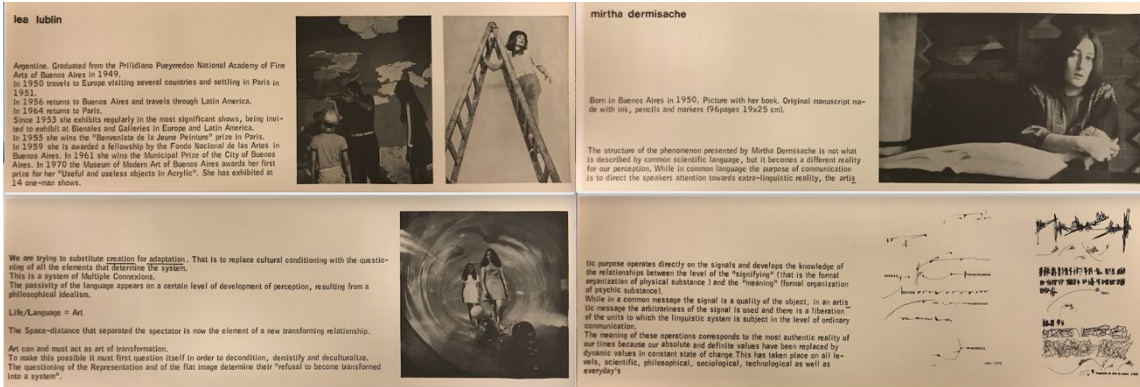


Fig. 1.33. Cards from *De la figuración al arte de sistemas*. Exh. cat., Buenos Aires and London: Centro de Arte y Comunicación and Camden Arts Center, 1970.



Fig. 2.1. "Premios con variaciones." *Análisis* 393 (September 25, 1968): 42.



Fig. 2.2. Installation views, 2,972,453, Centro de Arte y Comunicación, 1970.



Fig. 2.3. Lucy Lippard and Jorge Glusberg, 2,972,453. Exh. cat., Buenos Aires: Centro de Arte y Comunicación, 1970.

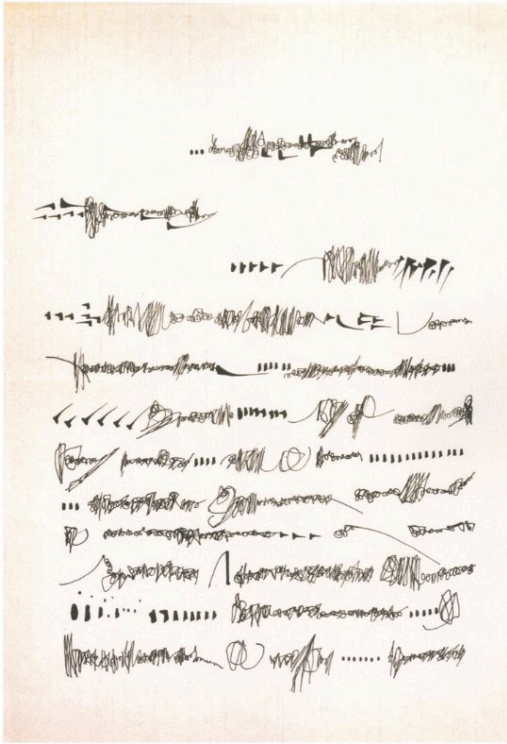


Fig. 2.4. Mirtha Dermisache, *Sin título (carta)*, 1971.

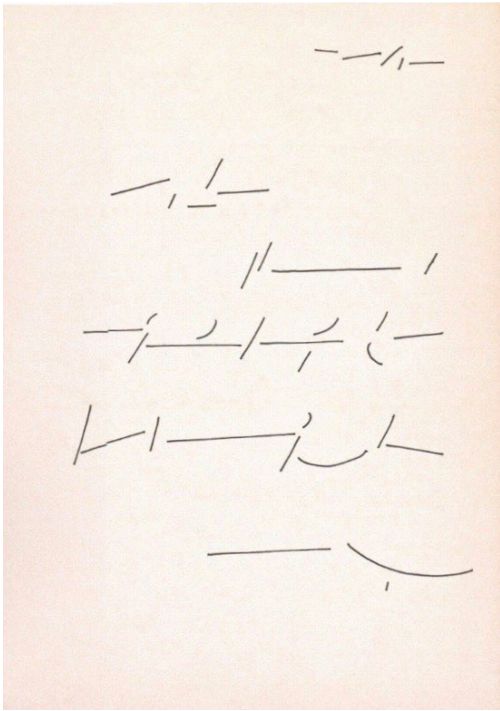


Fig. 2.5. Mirtha Dermisache, *Sin título (carta)*, 1970s.

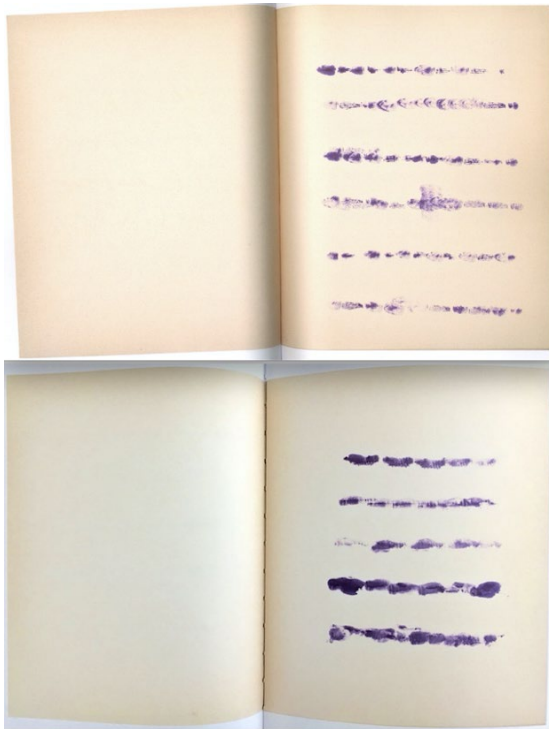


Fig. 2.6. Mirtha Dermisache, *Sin título (libro)*, 1974.

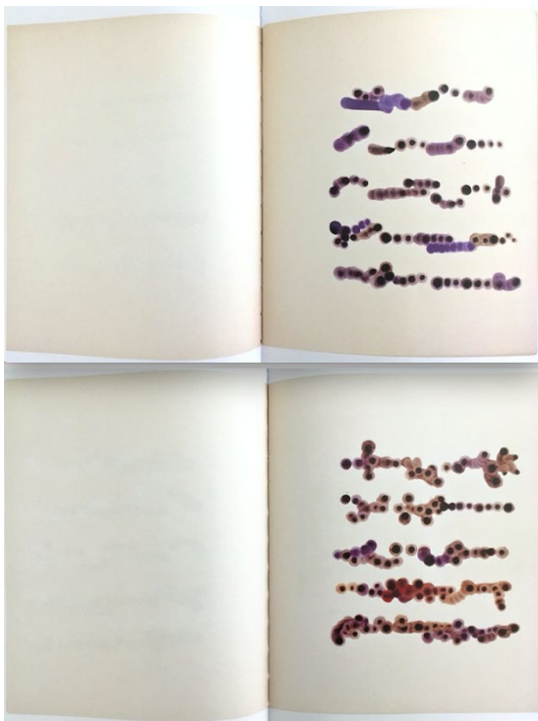


Fig. 2.7. Mirtha Dermisache, *Libro No. 7*, 1974.

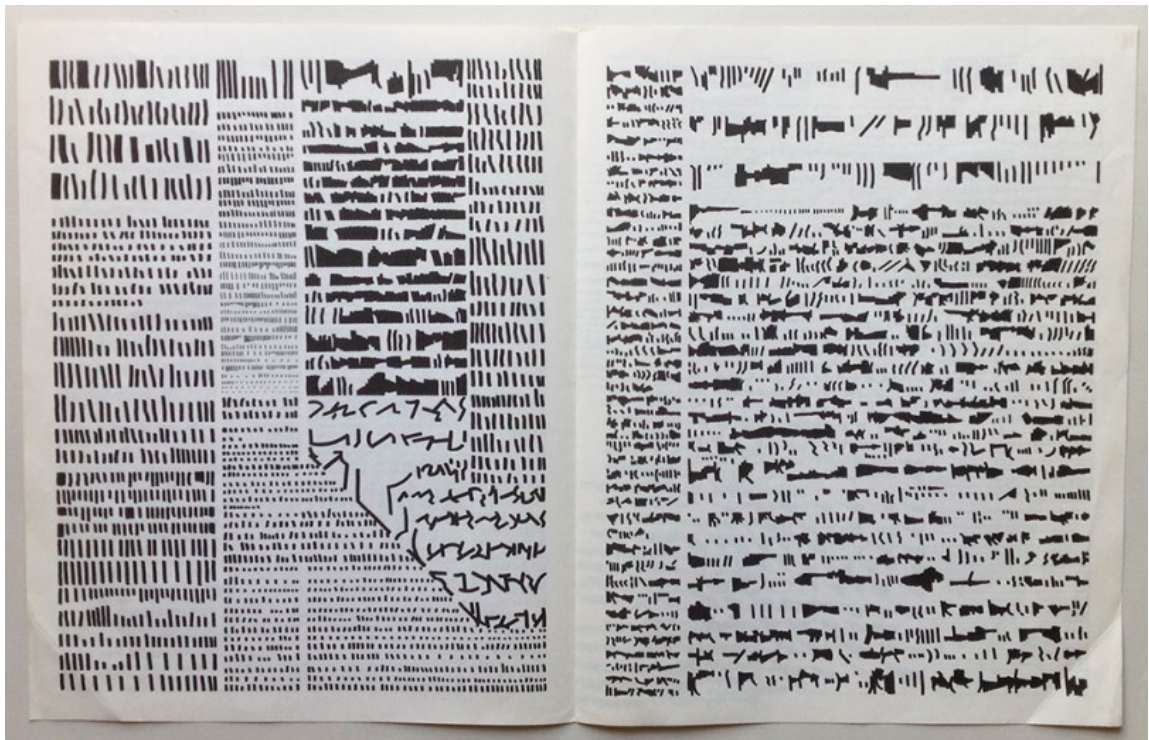


Fig. 2.8. Mirtha Dermisache, *Diario No. 1, Año 1, 1972*. [Counter-clockwise: cover, interior spread, back cover]



Fig. 2.9. Mirtha Dermisache reading *Diario No. 1, Año 1*, 1972. Still from Ediciones Tercer Mundo, *El Grupo de los 13*. Berlin Workshop for Experimental Art, September 23, 1973.



Fig. 2.10. Mirtha Dermisache and Mederico Favre, *Escenas de la vida cotidiana o La gran orquesta*, 1972. Installation view, *Arte e ideología: CAYC al aire libre: arte de sistemas II*. Buenos Aires, September 1972.

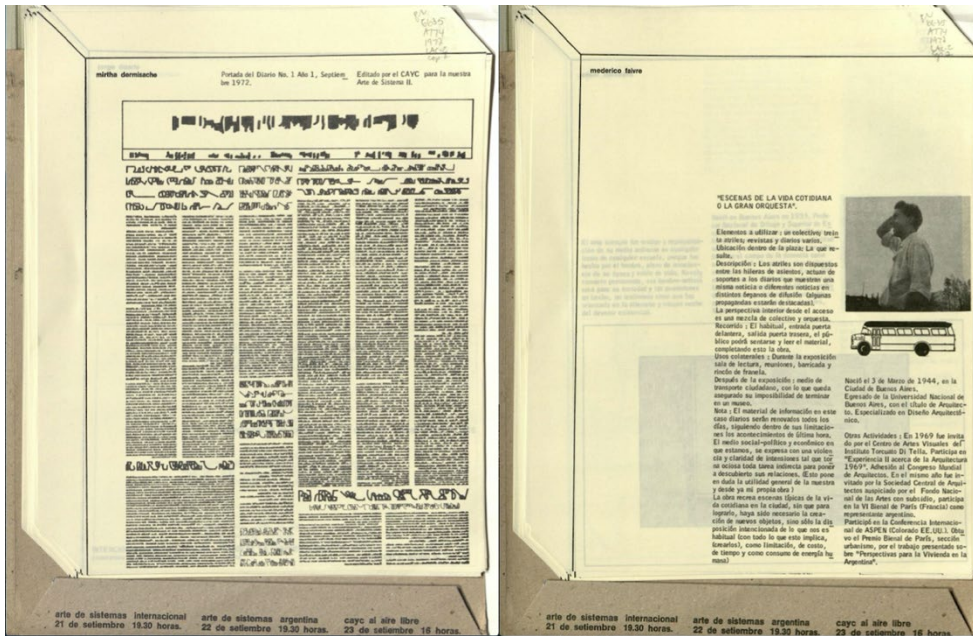


Fig. 2.11. Arte e ideología: CAYC al aire libre: arte de sistemas II, participación argentina. Exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Centro de Arte y Comunicación, September 1972).



Fig. 2.12. Joseph Beuys, Comparación entre dos tipos de sociedades: La forma de destruir la dictadura de los partidos, 1972. Arte e ideología: CAYC al aire libre: arte de sistemas II. Buenos Aires, September 1972.

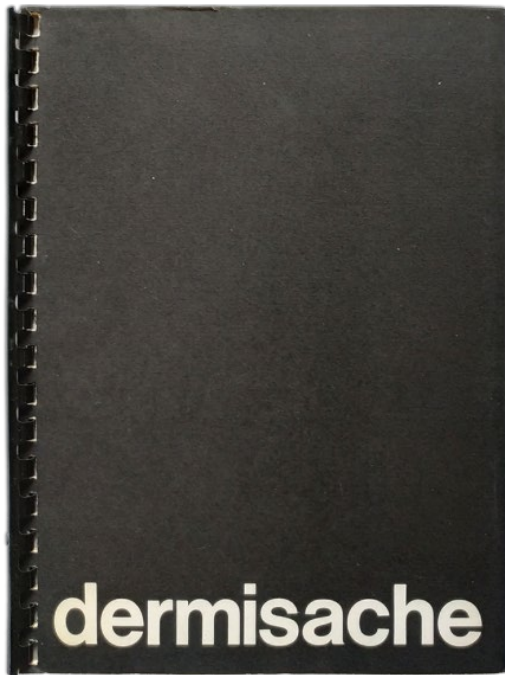


Fig. 2.13. *Mirtha Dermisache en arte de sistemas en Latinoamérica*. Exh. cat., Buenos Aires and Antwerp: Centro de Arte y Comunicación and Internationaal Cultureel Centrum, Antwerpen, 1974).

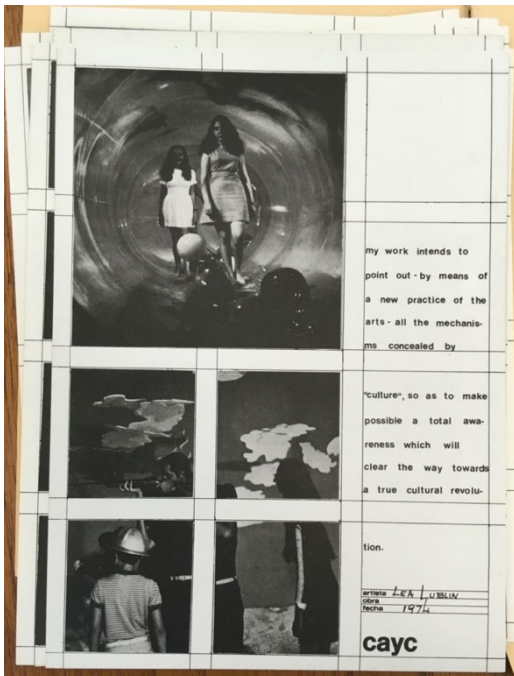


Fig. 2.14. *Art Systems in Latin America*. Exh. cat., London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, Nash House, 1974.

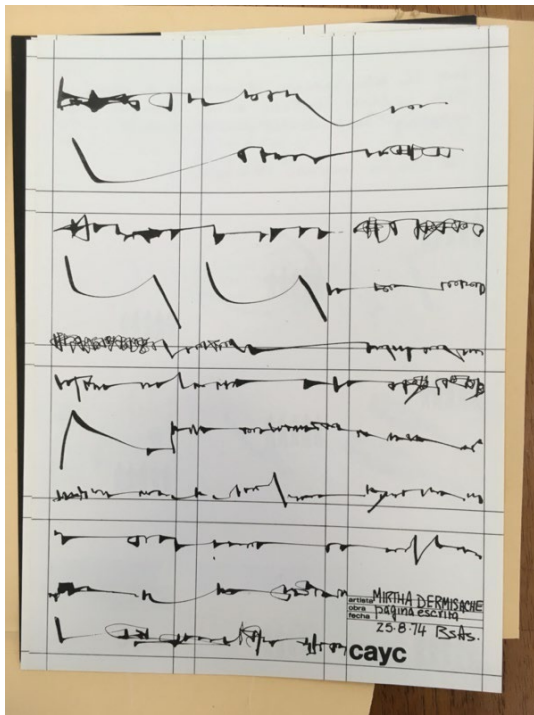


Fig. 2.15. *Art Systems in Latin America*. Exh. cat., London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, Nash House, 1974.

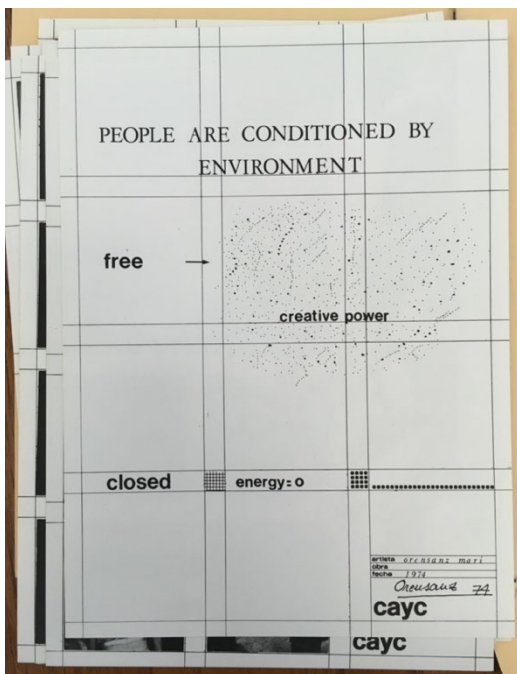


Fig. 2.16. *Art Systems in Latin America*. Exh. cat., London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, Nash House, 1974.



Fig. 2.17. Margarita Paksa, *Toma del Batallón 601*, 1975.



Fig. 2.18. Marí Orensanz. *Dibujos sobre acrílico*, September 1969, Galería El Taller, Buenos Aires.

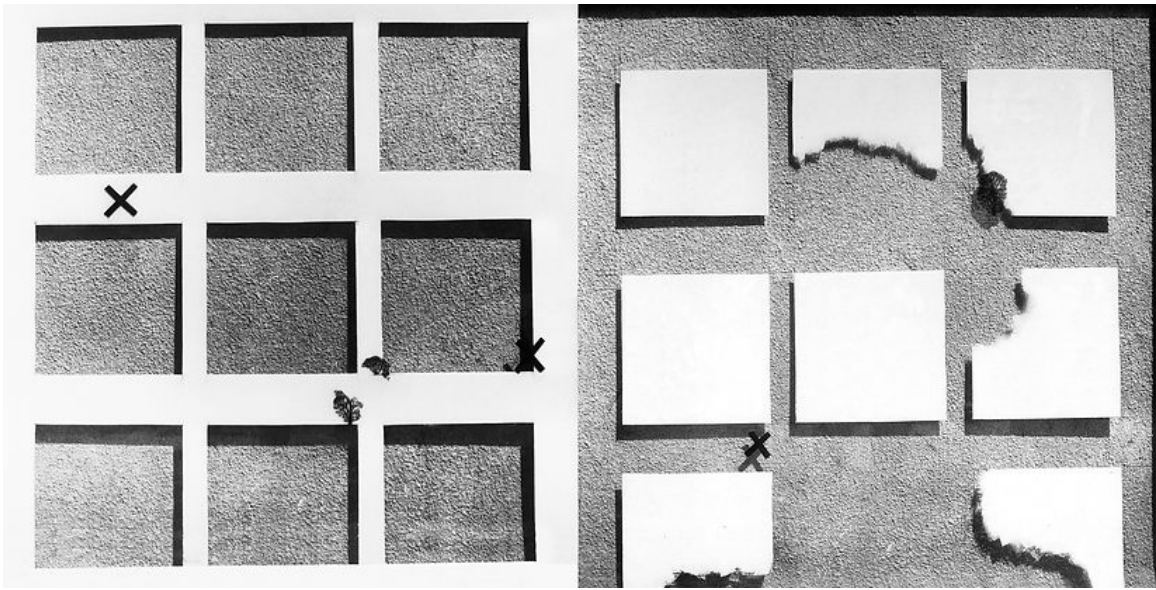


Fig. 2.19. Marie Orensanz, *El orden establecido*, 1970.

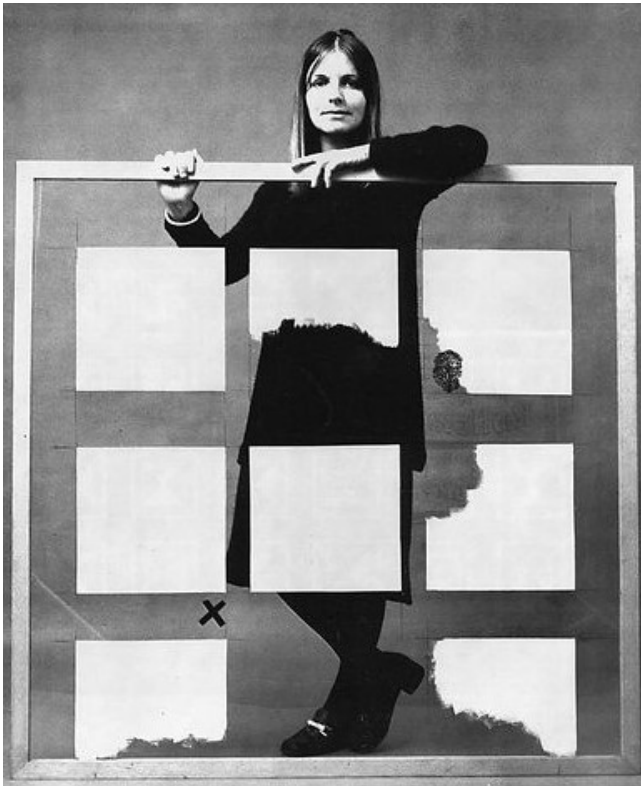


Fig. 2.20. Marie Orensanz with *El orden establecido*. *Panorama de Experiencias Visuales Argentinas*—Fundación Lorenzutti. Exh. cat., Buenos Aires: Museo de Arte Moderno, 1971.

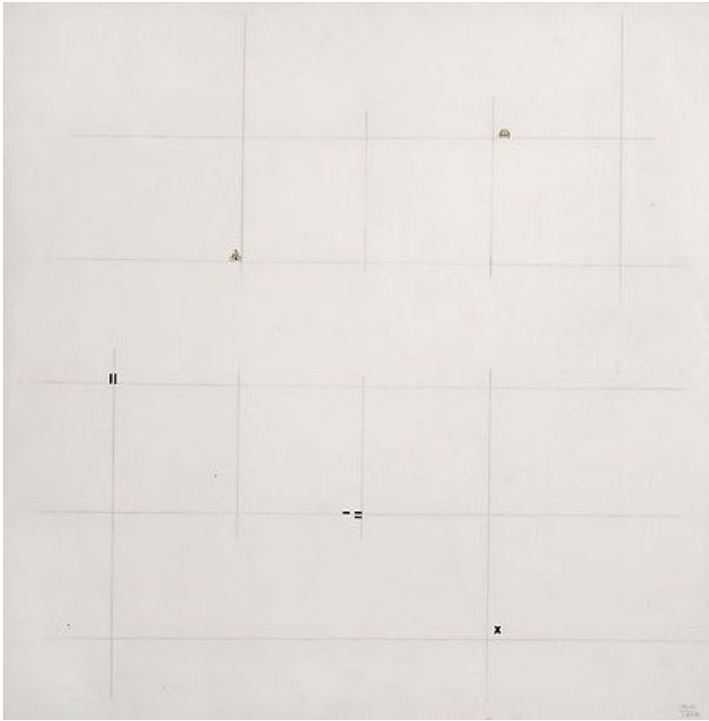


Fig. 2.21. Marie Orensanz, *Untitled*, 1970.

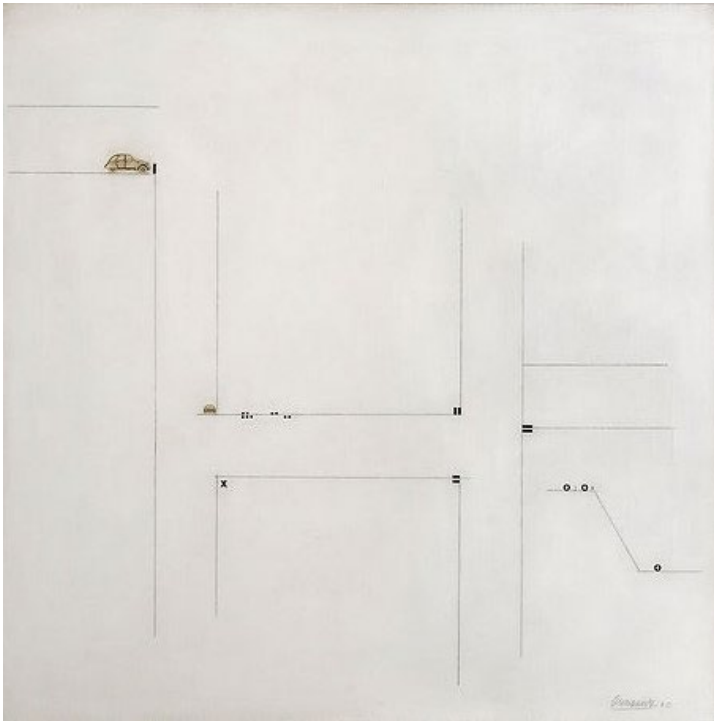


Fig. 2.22. Marie Orensanz, *0:0*, 1970.

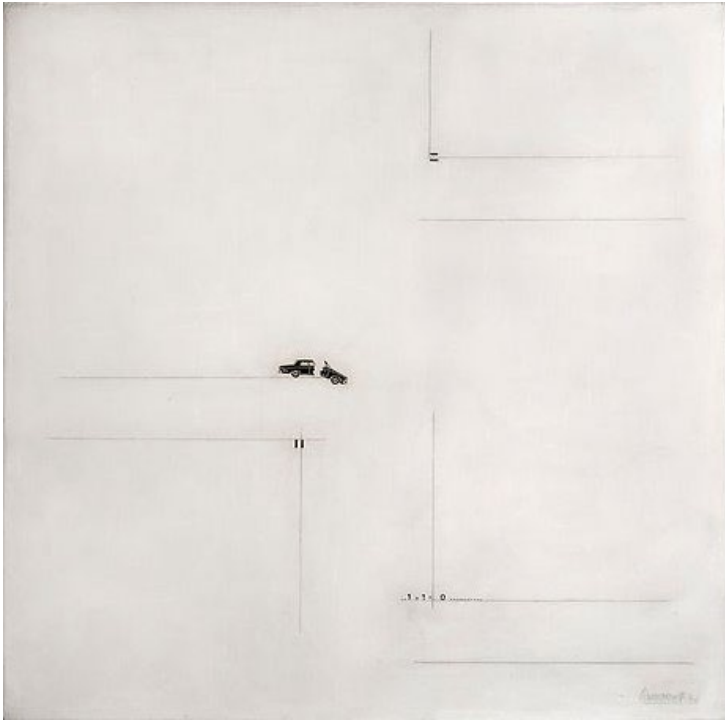


Fig. 2.23. Marie Orensanz, *I+I=0*, 1971.

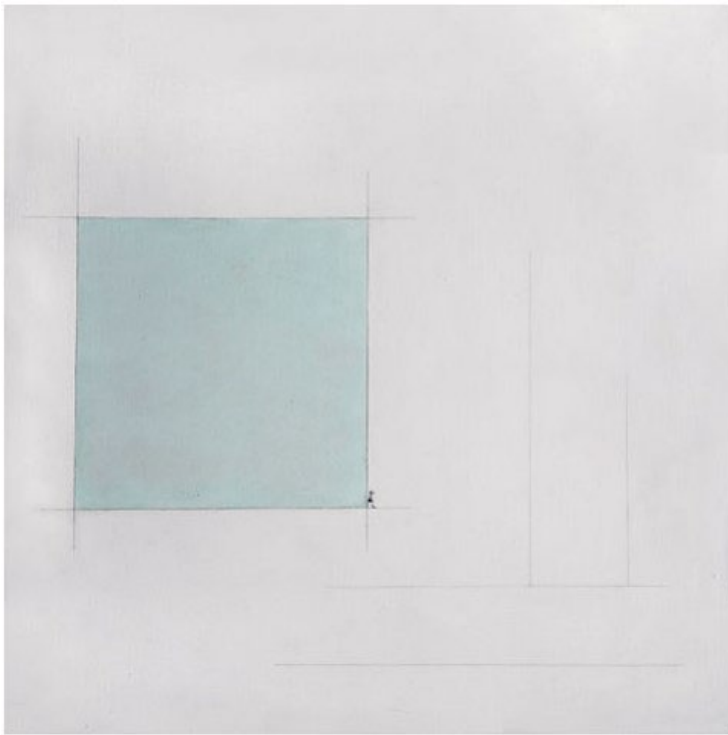


Fig. 2.24. Marie Orensanz, *Untitled*, 1971.

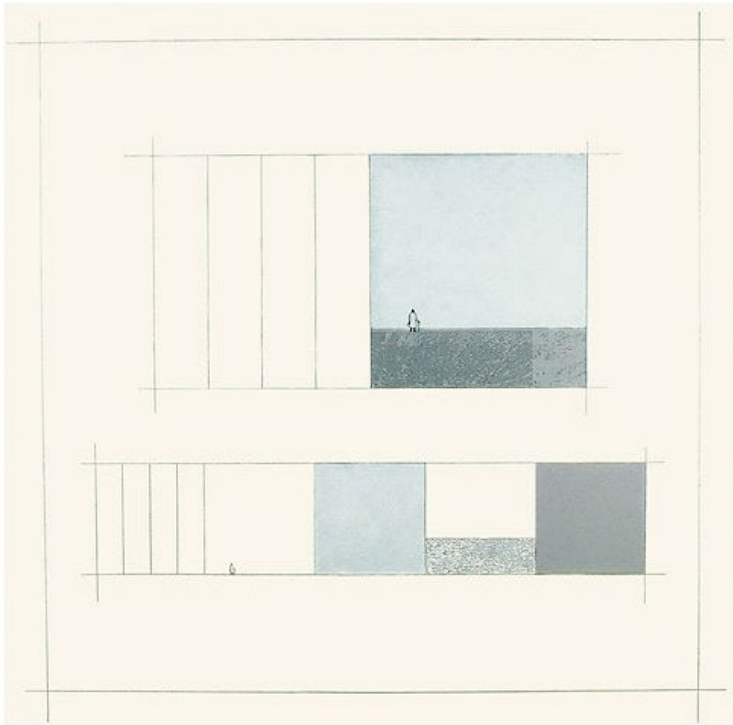


Fig. 2.25. Marie Orensanz, *Untitled*, 1971.



Fig. 2.26. Marie Orensanz, *Yo ladro*, 1972.

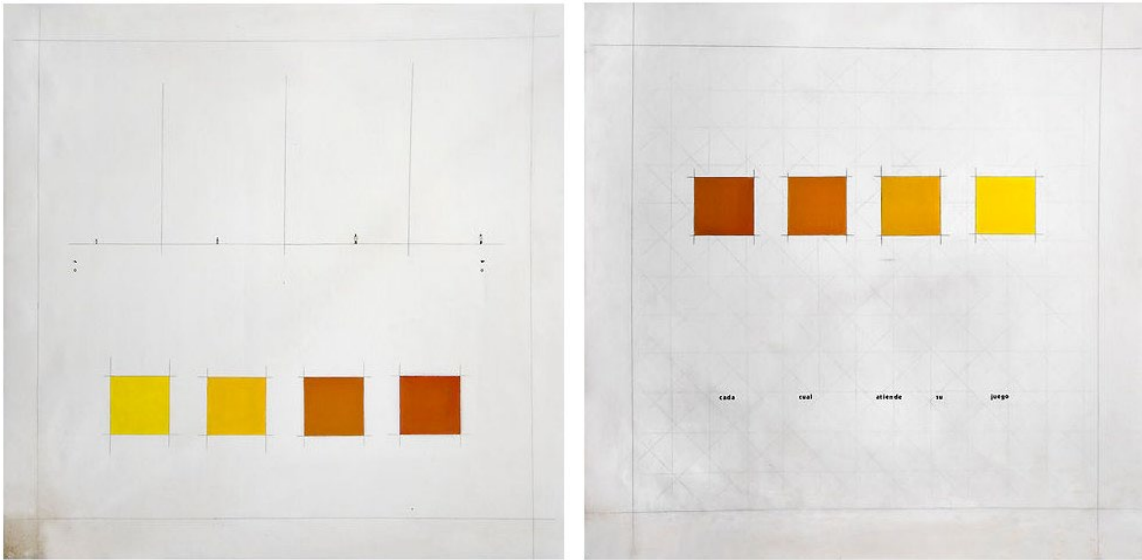


Fig. 2.27. Marie Orensanz, *Desintegración del hombre II = cada cual atiende su juego = 0=0*, 1971.



Fig. 2.28. Lea Lublin, *Interrogations sur l'art*, 1975.

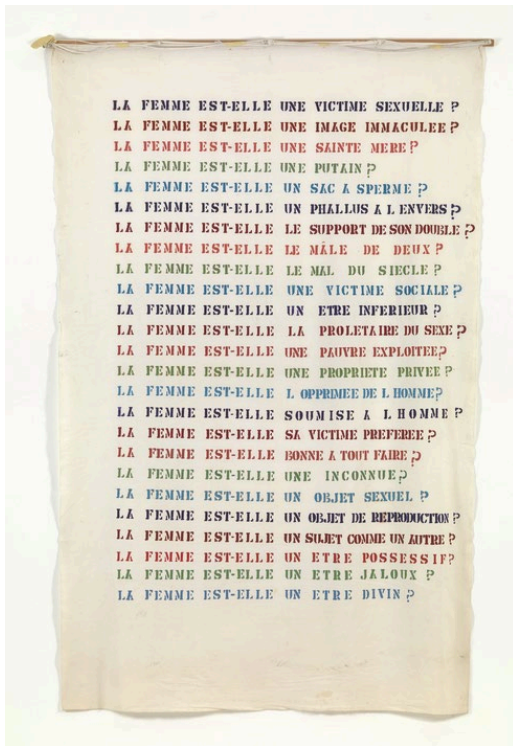


Fig. 2.29. Lea Lublin, *Interrogations sur l'femme*, 1978.



Fig. 2.30. Lea Lublin, *Interrogations sur l'femme*, 1978. Documentation of *Action de 5 femmes*, March 11, 1978.

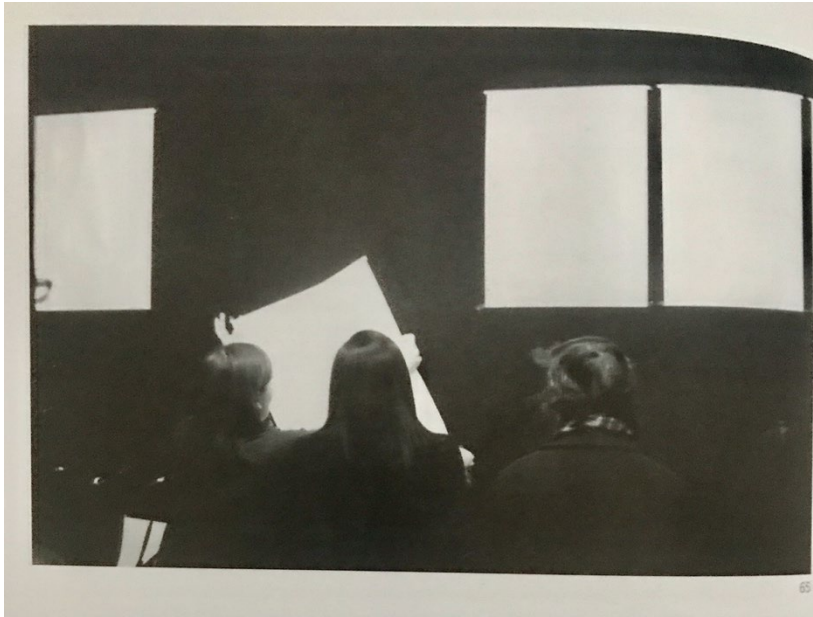


Fig. 2.31. Marie Orensanz, *Manifesto Eros*, 1974. Installation views, *Eros come linguaggio*, Galleria Eros in Milan, October 1974.

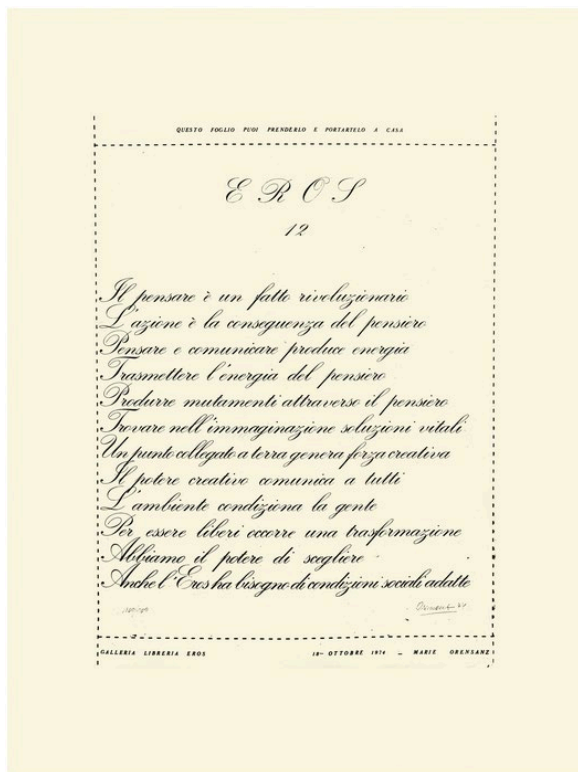


Fig. 2.32. Marie Orensanz, *Manifesto Eros*, 1974.



Fig. 3.1. Shikego Kubota and Jorge Glusberg, among others, at Open Circuits: An International Conference on the Future of Television, the Museum of Modern Art, New York, January 1974.



Fig. 3.2. Nicolás García Urriburu, *Coloration of Trafalgar Square Fountains*, 1971.

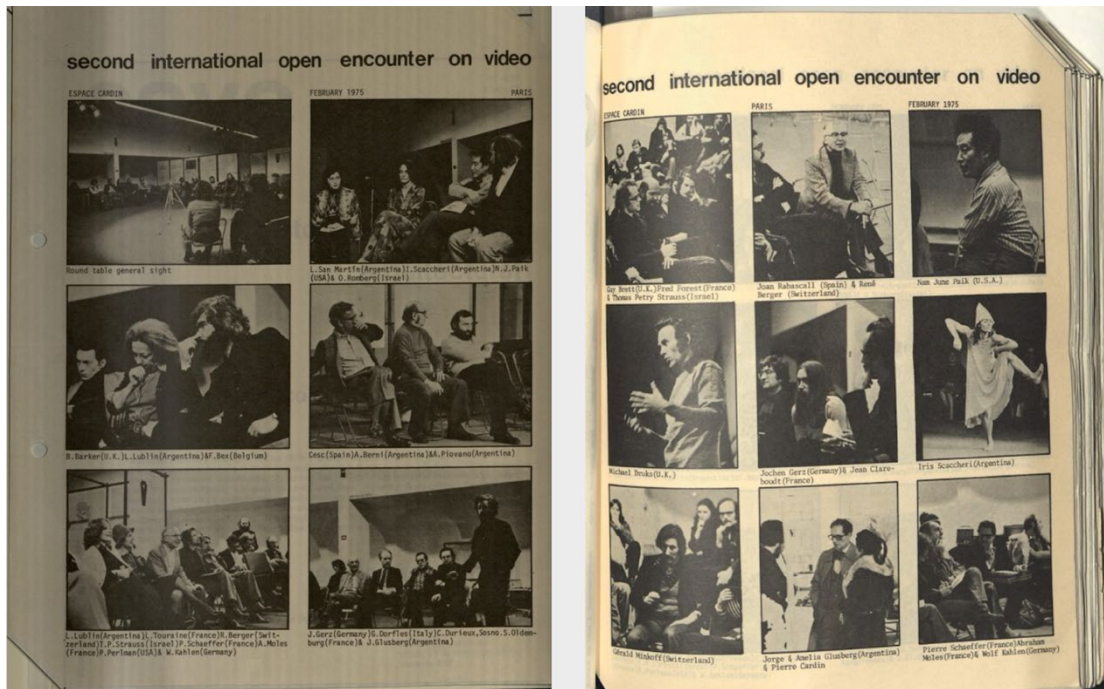


Fig. 3.3. Centro de Arte y Comunicación, “Second International Open Encounter on Video,” n.d.



Fig. 3.4. Lea Lublin, *Interrogations sur l'art*, 1975. Installation view, Foire internationale d'art contemporain (FIAC), Paris, 1975.



Fig. 3.5. Lea Lublin, *Interrogations sur l'art*, 1975. Installation view, Foire internationale d'art contemporain (FIAC), Paris, 1975.

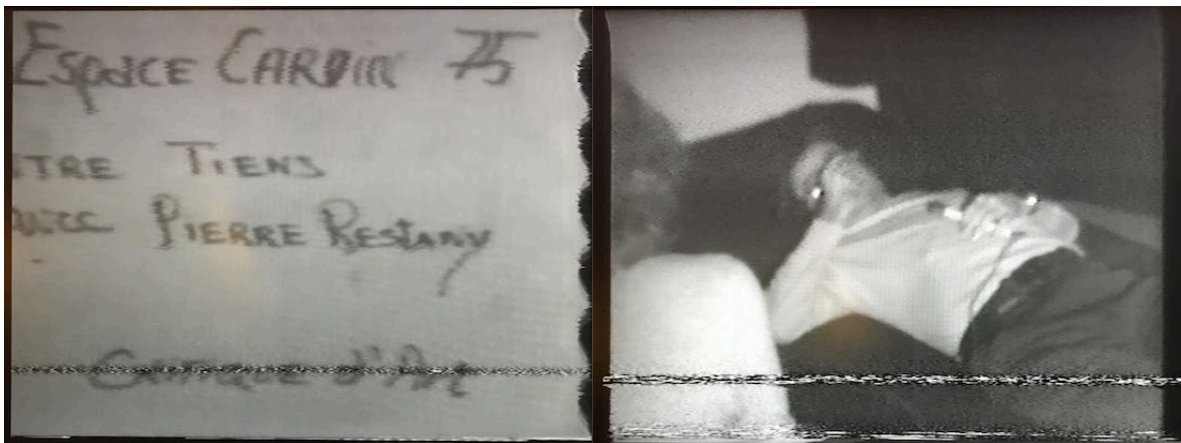


Fig. 3.6. Stills from Lea Lublin, *Interrogations sur l'art. Entretiens avec Pierre Restany*, Espace Cardin, 1975.

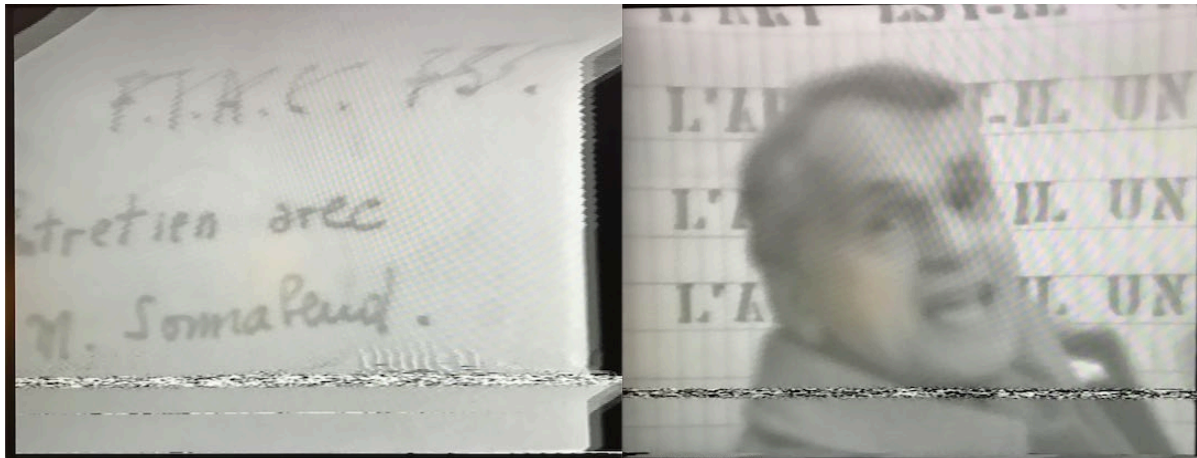


Fig. 3.7. Stills from Lea Lublin, *Interrogations sur l'art. Entretien avec M. Sonnabend*, FIAC, 1975.

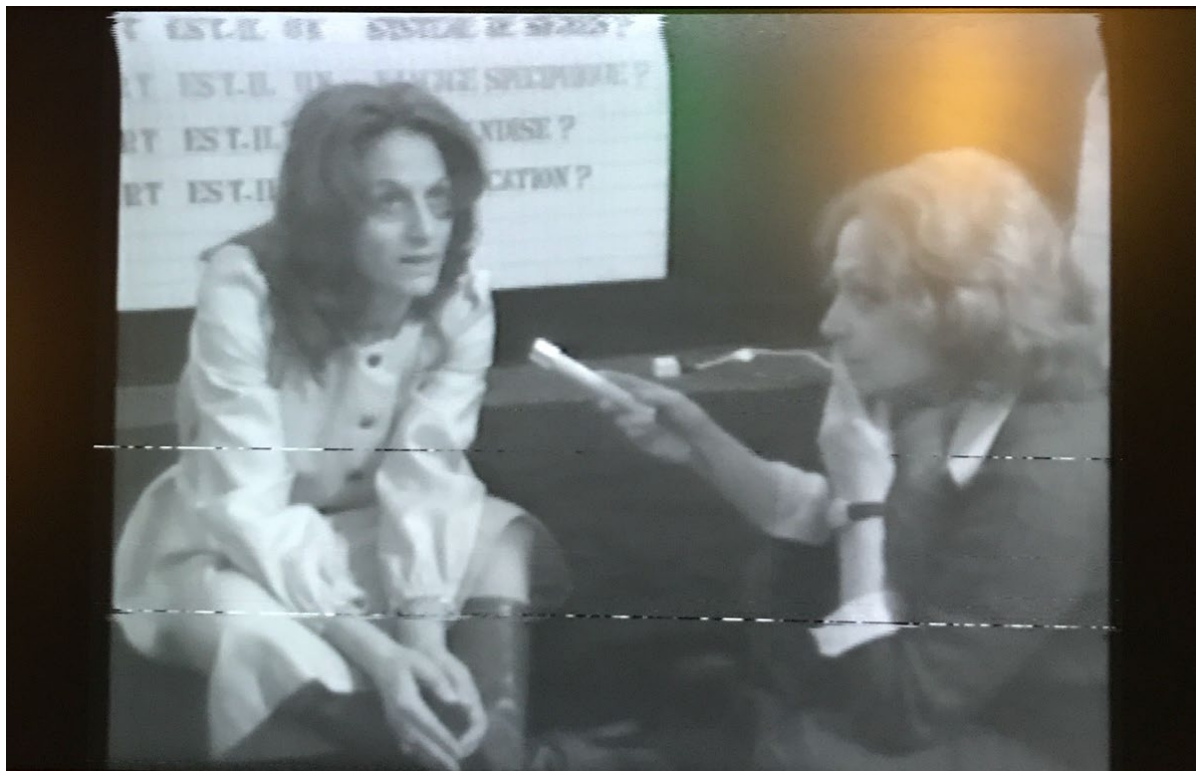


Fig. 3.8. Still from Lea Lublin, *Interrogations sur l'art*, FIAC, 1975.

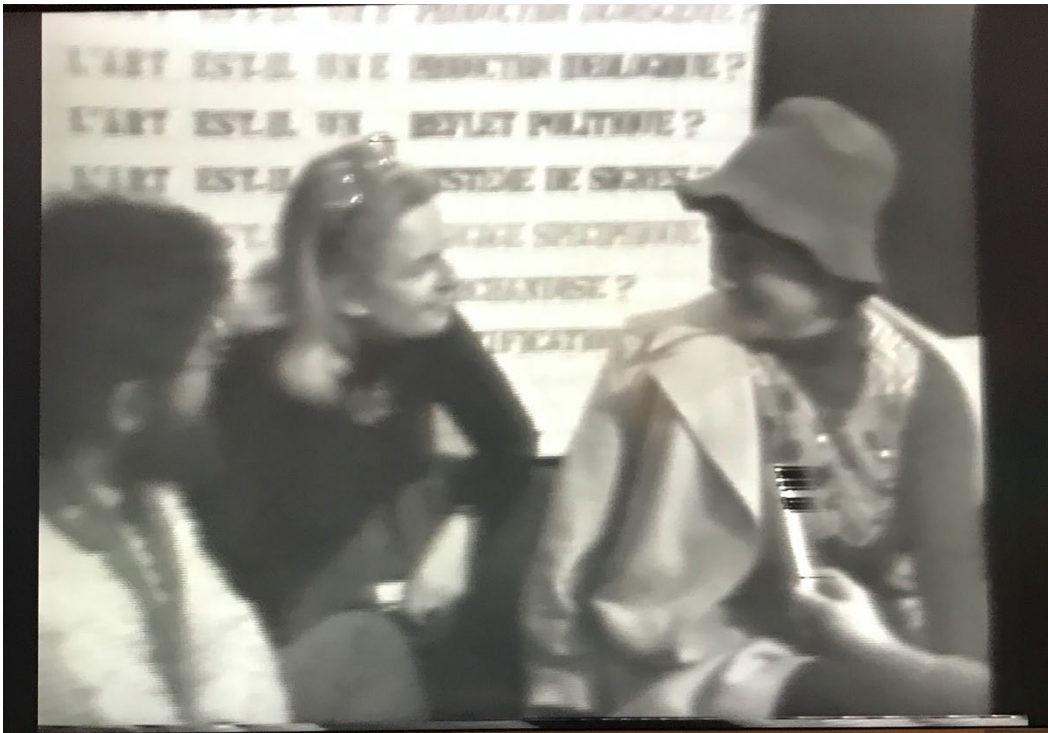


Fig. 3.9. Still from Lea Lublin, *Interrogations sur l'art*, FIAC, 1975.

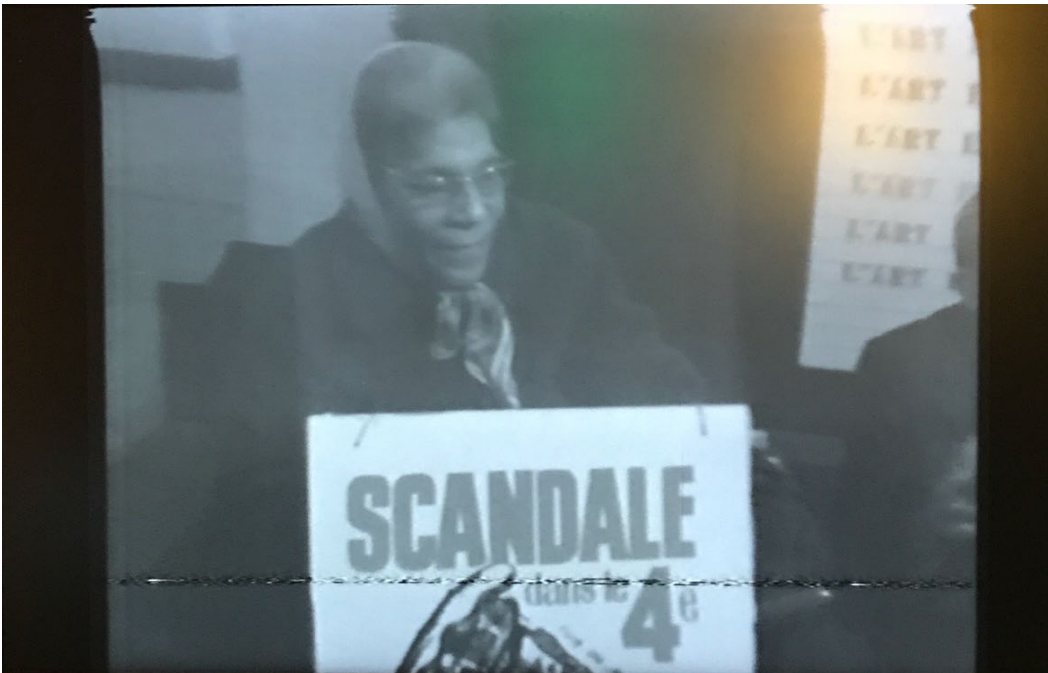


Fig. 3.10. Still from Lea Lublin, *Interrogations sur l'art*, FIAC, 1975.



Fig. 3.11. Still from Lea Lublin, *Interrogations sur l'art*, FIAC, 1975.

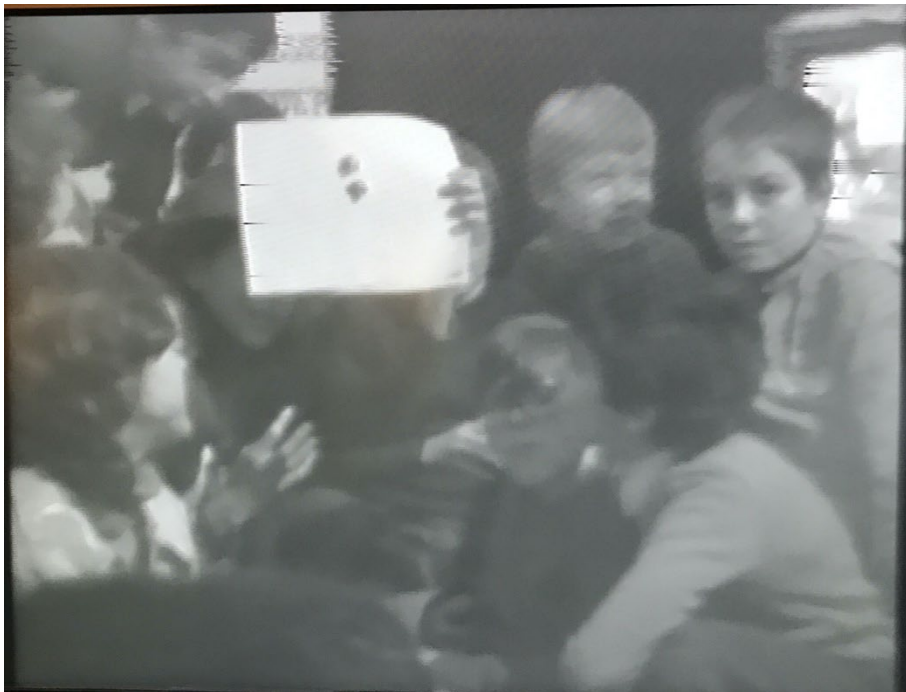


Fig. 3.12. Still from Lea Lublin, *Interrogations sur l'art*, FIAC, 1975.



Fig. 3.13. Stills from Lea Lublin, *Interrogations sur l'art*, FIAC, 1975.

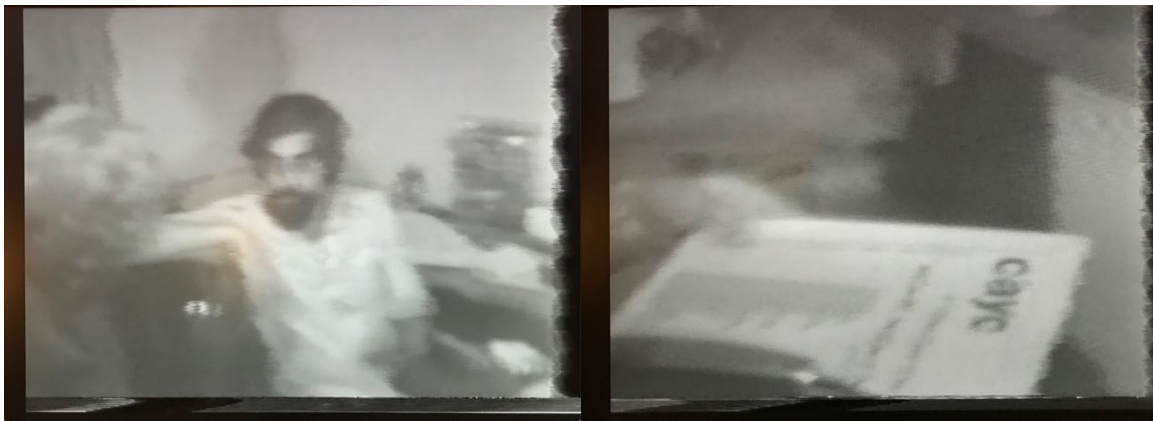


Fig. 3.14. Stills from Lea Lublin, *Interrogations sur l'art*, FIAC, 1975.

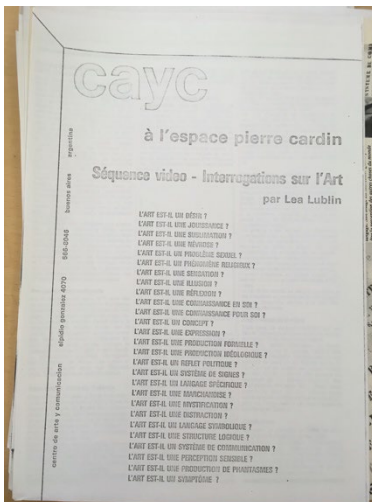


Fig. 3.15. Centro de Arte y Comunicación, “A L’espace Pierre Cardin. Séquence vidéo – Interrogations sur l’Art par Lea Lublin,” n.d.

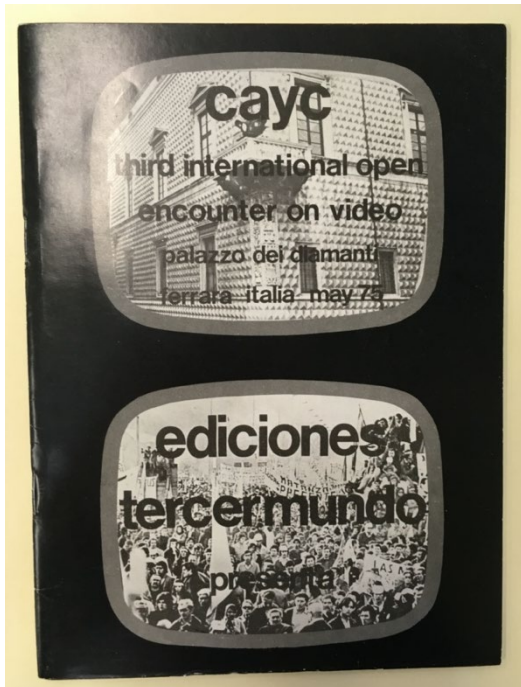


Fig. 3.16. Centro de Arte y Comunicación, *Third International Open Encounter on Video*. Exh. cat., Ferrara: Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna, Palazzo dei Diamanti, 1975.

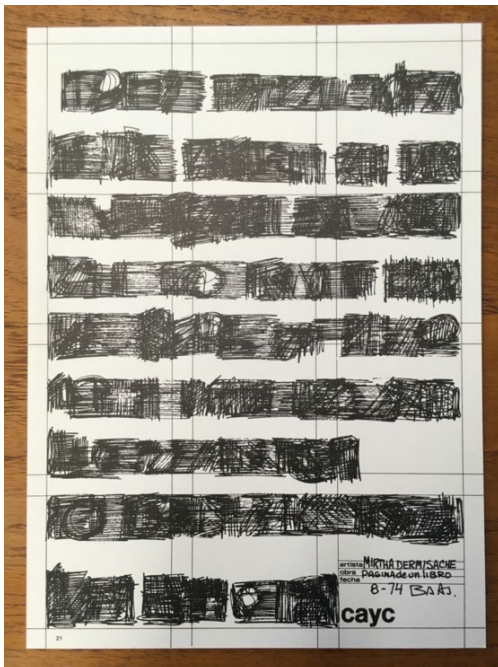


Fig. 3.17. Centro de Arte y Comunicación, *América Llatina '76*. Exh. cat., Barcelona: Fundació Joan Miró, Parc de Montjuïc, 1977.

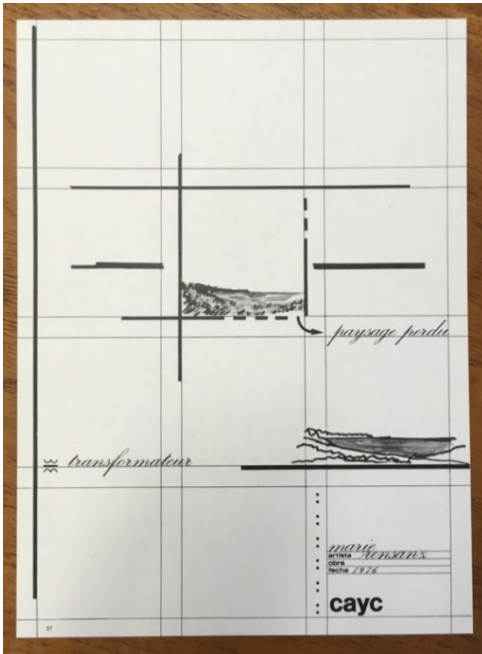


Fig. 3.18. Centro de Arte y Comunicación, *Amèrica Llatina '76*. Exh. cat., Barcelona: Fundació Joan Miró, Parc de Montjuïc, 1977.

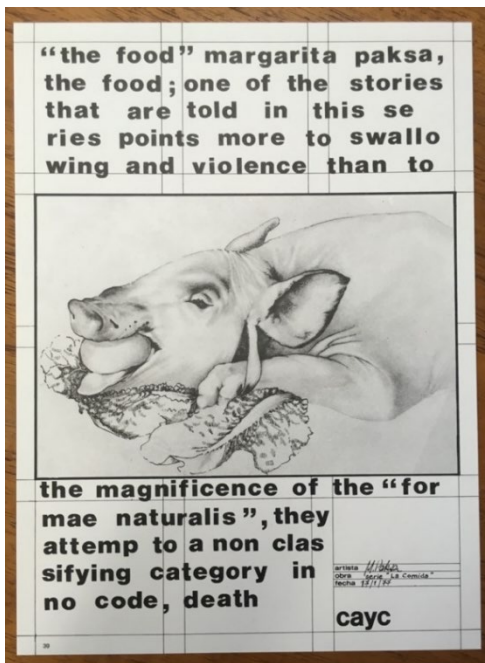


Fig. 3.19. Centro de Arte y Comunicación, *Amèrica Llatina '76*. Exh. cat., Barcelona: Fundació Joan Miró, Parc de Montjuïc, 1977.



Fig. 3.20. Still from Margarita Paksa, *Tiempo de descuento – Cuenta regresiva – La hora 0*, 1978.



Fig. 3.21. Still from Margarita Paksa, *Tiempo de descuento – Cuenta regresiva – La hora 0*, 1978.



Fig. 3.22. Still from Margarita Paksa, *Tiempo de descuento – Cuenta regresiva – La hora 0*, 1978.



Fig. 3.23. Still from Margarita Paksa, *Tiempo de descuento – Cuenta regresiva – La hora 0*, 1978.



Fig. 3.24. Still from Margarita Paksa, *Tiempo de descuento – Cuenta regresiva – La hora 0*, 1978.



Fig. 3.25. Margarita Paksa, *Tiempo de descuento – Cuenta regresiva – La hora 0*, 1978.



Fig. 3.26. Marie Orensanz in Carrara, Italy, 1974.

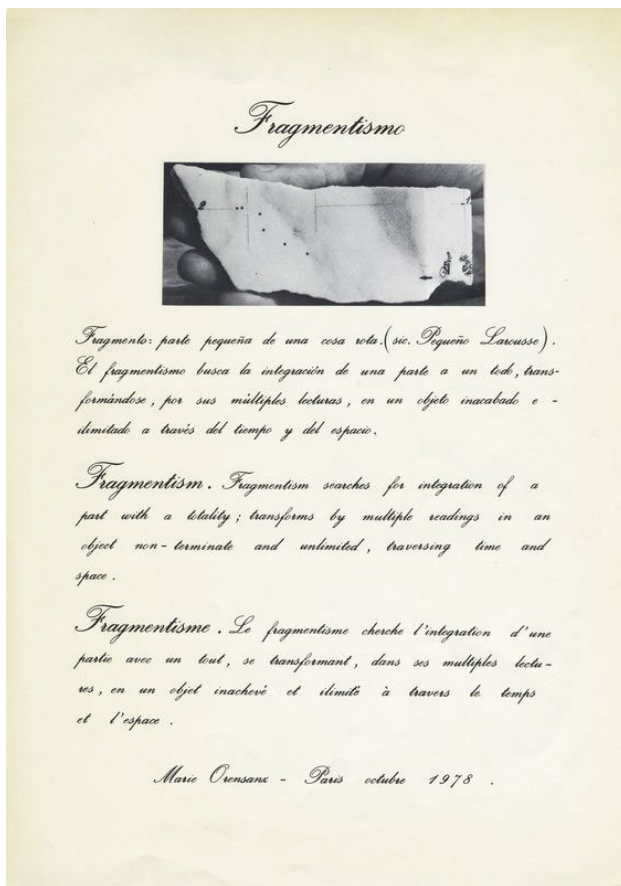


Fig. 3.27. Marie Orensanz, *Fragmentismo*, 1978.



Fig. 3.28. Marie Orensanz, *Lo ilimitado*, 1974.

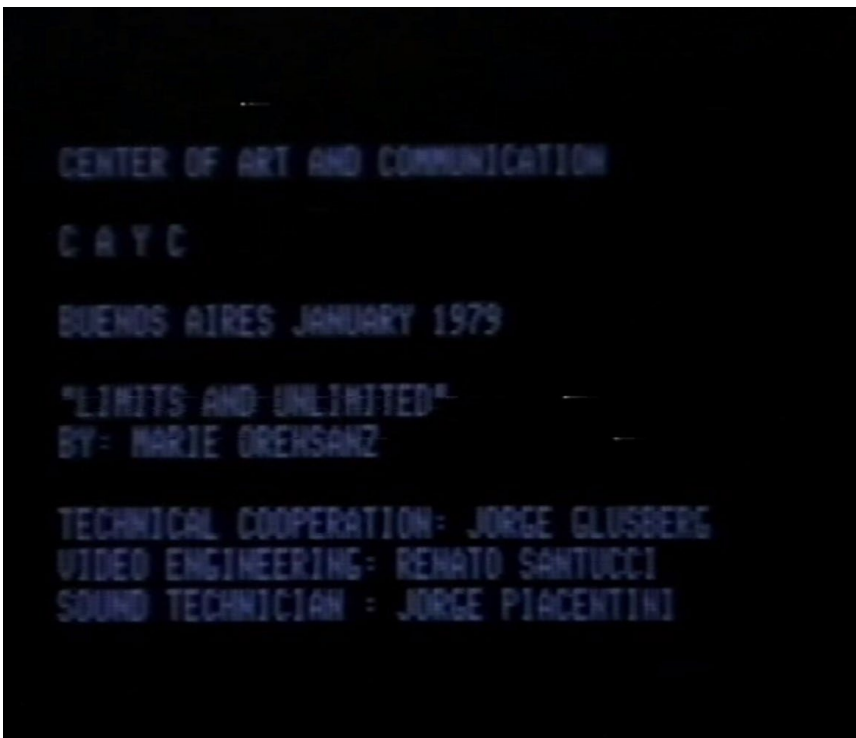


Fig. 3.29. Still from Marie Orensanz, *Límites*, 1979.

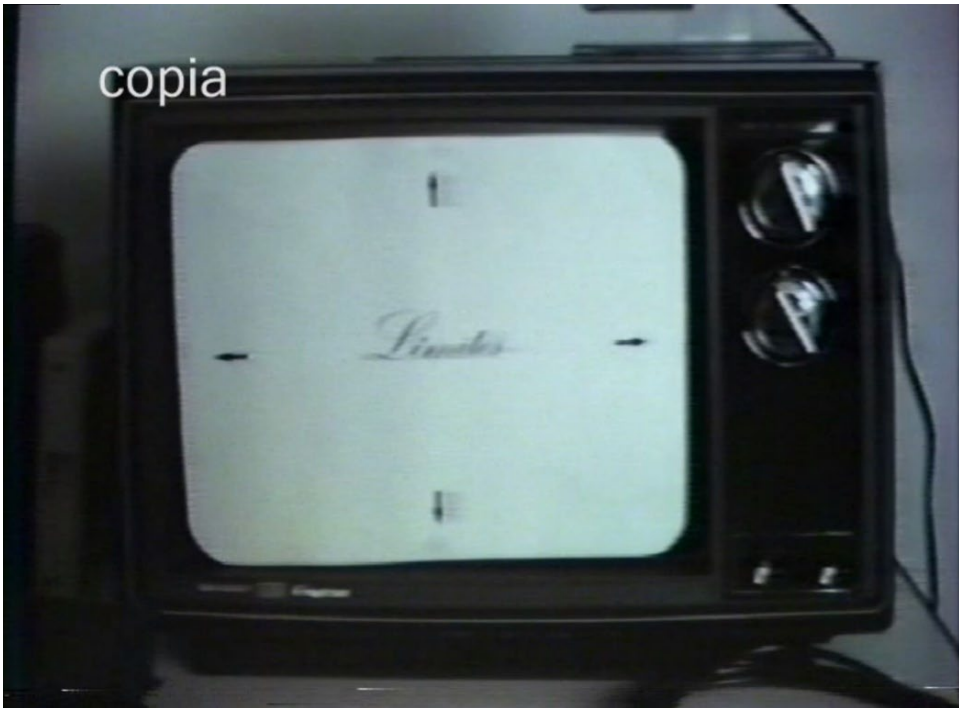


Fig. 3.30. Still from Marie Orensanz, *Límites*, 1979.

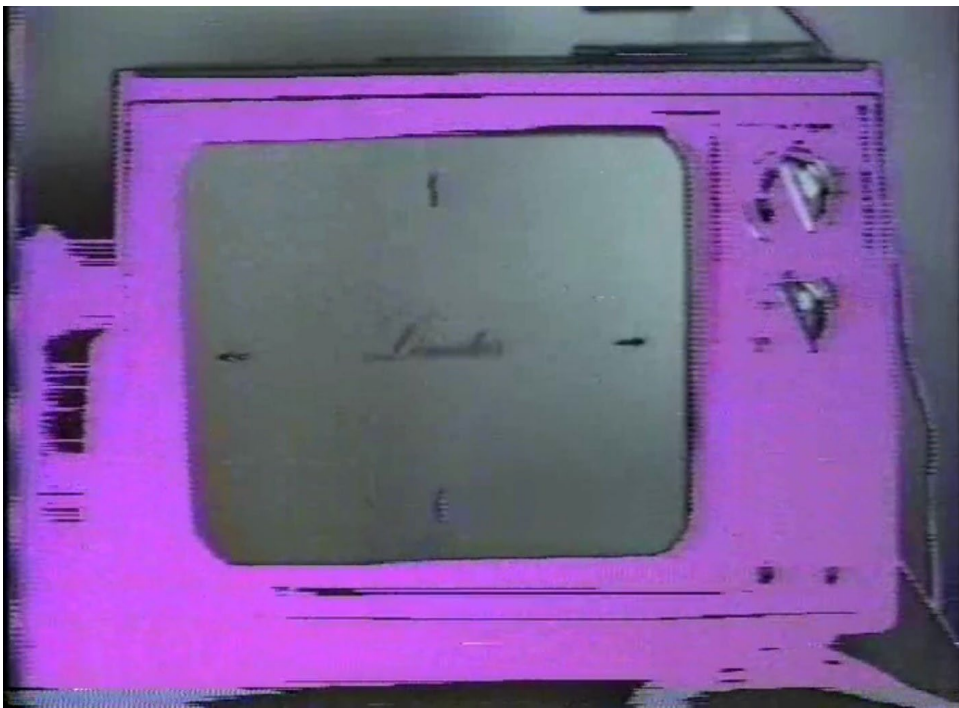


Fig. 3.31. Still from Marie Orensanz, *Límites*, 1979.



Fig. 3.32. Still from Marie Orensanz, *Límites*, 1979.

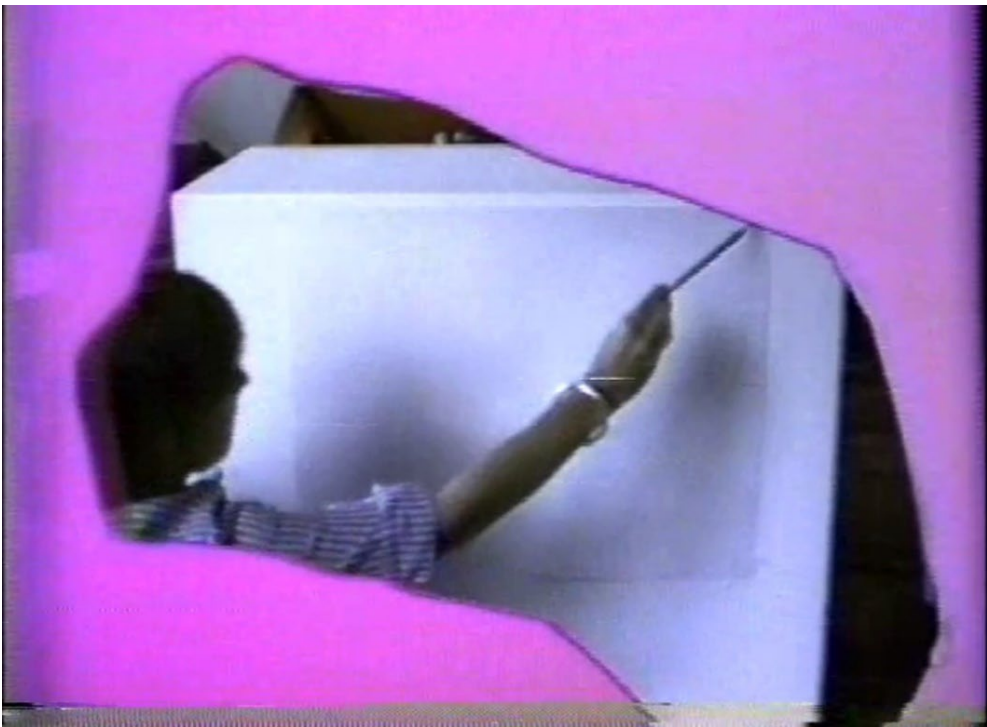


Fig. 3.33. Still from Marie Orensanz, *Límites*, 1979.

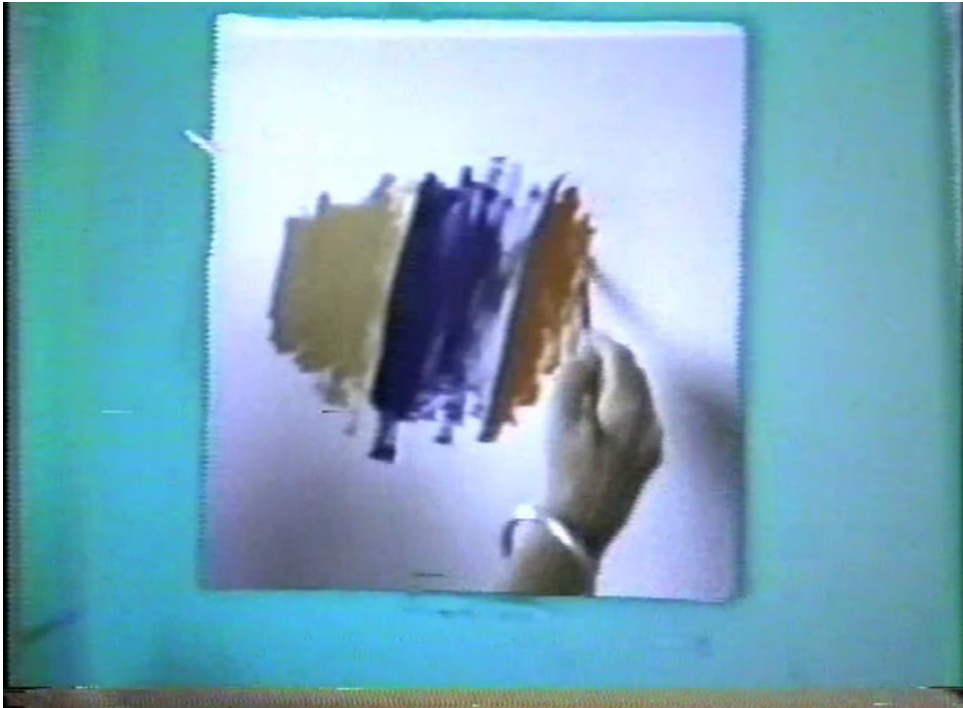


Fig. 3.34. Still from Marie Orensanz, *Límites*, 1979.



Fig. 3.35. Still from Marie Orensanz, *Límites*, 1979.



Fig. 3.36. Still from Marie Orensanz, *Límites*, 1979.

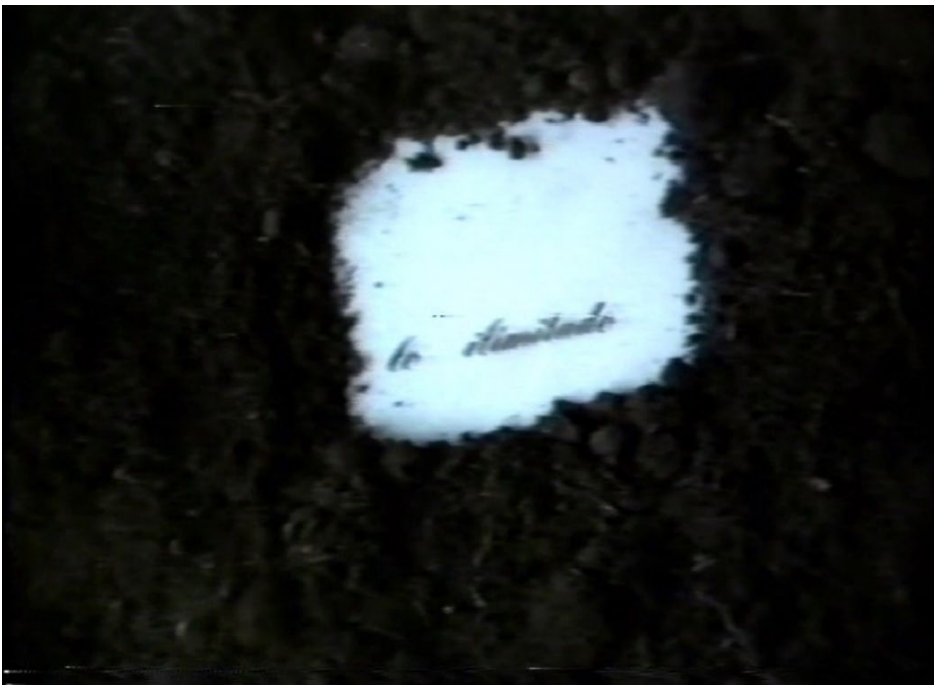


Fig. 3.37. Still from Marie Orensanz, *Límites*, 1979.



Fig. 3.38. Marie Orensanz, *Limitada*, 1979.

MINISON

Sistema de Video Portero Modulator

El sistema enlaza la comunicación audio-visual hacia un puesto interno (oficina, departamento o casa), desde un puesto externo (puerta de acceso), permitiendo en el puesto interno ver a la persona que llama desde el exterior y entablar conversación con ella. Al identificarla visualmente la permitirá el acceso accionando una cerradura eléctrica mediante un pulsador incorporado al monitor.

Al oprimirse el pulsador del tablero de llamada en el puesto externo, entra automáticamente en funcionamiento la telecámara, y una luz ilumina al visitante y su entorno. Se produce a la vez una llamada acústica en el puesto interno y entonces se activa automáticamente el monitor permitiendo la identificación de quien efectúa la llamada.

El sistema puede ser ampliado para dos puertas de acceso (principal y de servicio o auxiliar). Se pueden instalar en cada puesto interno tantos microteléfonos como se desee, pudiéndose complementar con monitores de video. El sistema estándar permite la instalación de hasta 60 puestos internos. La cantidad de puestos internos sólo está sujeta a las necesidades operativas de cada caso en particular, siendo esta prácticamente limitada. El microteléfono permite la comunicación con la puerta de acceso, portería y garage, y es de sonido bidireccional y simultáneo.

Admite la posibilidad de dos comunicaciones simultáneas (por ejemplo: departamento 1 con garage y departamento 2 con acceso principal) sin que se interfieran las comunicaciones. El lapso de activación puede ser regulado en períodos de 30 a 60 segundos. Asimismo una unidad de auto-bloqueo asegura que las señales de audio y video sean recibidas únicamente por el puesto interno requerido.

modulor
especialistas en iluminación electroacústica y video

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Fig. 3.39. Modulator advertisement, *Todo Cine*, 1981.



Fig. 3.40. Stills from Lea Lublin, *Is Art an Enigma?*, 1975. Installation view, Serpentine Gallery, London, 1975.



Figs. 4.1-4.4. Marie Orensanz, *Apropiación de un zócalo*, Paris, 1981.

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