

Micro-actions of emergency #1

Emergency: a serious, unexpected, and often dangerous situation requiring immediate action.

Taking the political, economical and social context as a starting point, the exhibition gathers micro-actions that have been performed in the public realm and refer to the attitude adopted in it. More specifically, the show reveals the need to respond and take action when confronting with certain legal measures of control –resulting of the present economical, social and political conjuncture– which seem to exceed basic rights and aspects of individual freedom. In this context, many have been the artists that have chosen the action as a tool to shape and spread their protest. As Jennifer Higgie explains about the relation between art and activism, “for many artists, the mere act of expression might be for them a radical gesture of defense”ⁱ.

The projects presented in the show articulate a discourse, which explores two different concepts: the artist’s attitude in front of its reality and the use of public space as an ideal arena to claim their practices. Therefore, the artistic proposals compiled in this show are traces of performances occurred in specific spaces and specific times and they are understood as triggers investigating entangled formulas to the question: How do we deal with reality? Understanding treatment as attitude, each performance concerns the artist in an active way addressing issues of inequality, manipulation, conflict and instability in recent history. Thus, these micro-actions invite and lead for a major debate and awareness of reality and current situation.

Quoting Iria Candela, ***Micro-actions of emergency*** is based on a core premise, “that any idea of social consensus that does not consider the difference is meaningless”ⁱⁱ. Therefore, each project aims to revert a situation predetermined by the system generating a gap that illuminates alternatives and offers different readings which allow this consensus. In this sense, the actions performed in the public space and the activism can certainly combine and share the same goals: to activate and provoke social and/or political change. Chantall Mouffe develops the role of the “mainstream consensus” in its public conception proposing an antagonistic model: “public space is the battleground where different hegemonic projects are confronted (...) and consequently, art can play a role by subverting the dominant hegemony and by contributing to the construction of new subjectivities”ⁱⁱⁱ.

Micro-actions of emergency is a cycle of three exhibitions taking place throughout the year and starting on June 2013. The first exhibition manifests the inconsistencies emerged from the implementation of certain legislative and judicial powers of a government. The incoherence of these mechanisms is present and links the actions of Núria Güell and Levi Orta as well as Daniela Ortiz, Xose Quiroga and Marco Godoy. They present compromised actions which urge for responsibility and inscribe themselves in the space

which legitimates art as resistance ground from where to demand and claim. Quoting Alain Bieber about political art today, artists “operate against the system from within with irony and subversion”^{iv}. Being aware of their impossibility of overthrowing it, they respond creating small moments of chaos which distort and alter the existence order. Acting as pacific resistance devices, the performance conducted provide a glimpse about the existing situations of injustice and clear positioning of the artists who, through their actions, address these specific situations.

The second chapter explores the limits and frustrations of ideals, utopias and collective protest movements that have taken place. It portrays the less affable face of social proclamations and political counter-currents that aimed to change the world but have unfortunately failed. The exhibition intends to echo a rough nostalgia of the current social disappointment and its limitations.

The exhibition closing the cycle includes artistic proposals that take place in the public space but with a closer attitude to the community that inhabits the space and its context. They are appeals of participation where its main protagonist is the reality and give visibility to the position of the artist in relation with the world surrounding and the persons who live it, in agreement with Paul Ardenne's idea of the artist *weaving*^v with the reality. As artist Tania Bruguera describes, political art “is defined while it is done; it is an experience, not an image”^{vi}. Through public participation, the viewer is ultimately who decides the scope of the work and its ratio of impact. The aim of these projects is not only to generate interest in political issues but rather encourage and invite to take action directly through other formats such as humour and memory.

Micro-actions of emergency is understood as a place of dissent, conflict and doubt that questions and displaces reality, reshaping what has been pre-set and claiming the legitimacy of alternative subjectivities. The common ground of these artistic proposals is a place of constant dialectic where new communitarian communicative links are established and that responds to immediate and tangible situations. The aim of the actions presented in this show is to create a critical pulse in society. They investigate, identify and pinpoint facts or events from the past or present allowing a reflection on the present and future^{vii} by telling stories or constructing situations and allowing identifying their own mechanisms.

**Project by de vuelta y vuelta (Inés Jover & Claudia Segura)*

It is no time for metaphors

Marco Godoy (Spain, 1986)

Action performed in January 2013 in Girona

Video HD, 3:19 min.

“Girona locks its containers to stop people from searching for food”.

El Pais 7.8.2012

The Council of Girona, near Barcelona in Spain, has recently taken the decision to lock the supermarket's garbage bins, in order to stop people from searching for food. In the last few months, due to the Spanish economical and social crisis, these numbers of people have dramatically increased. One night the artist walked around the city unchaining the locks that the Council had installed in the supermarket containers firmly opposition to the institutional decision.



54 mm

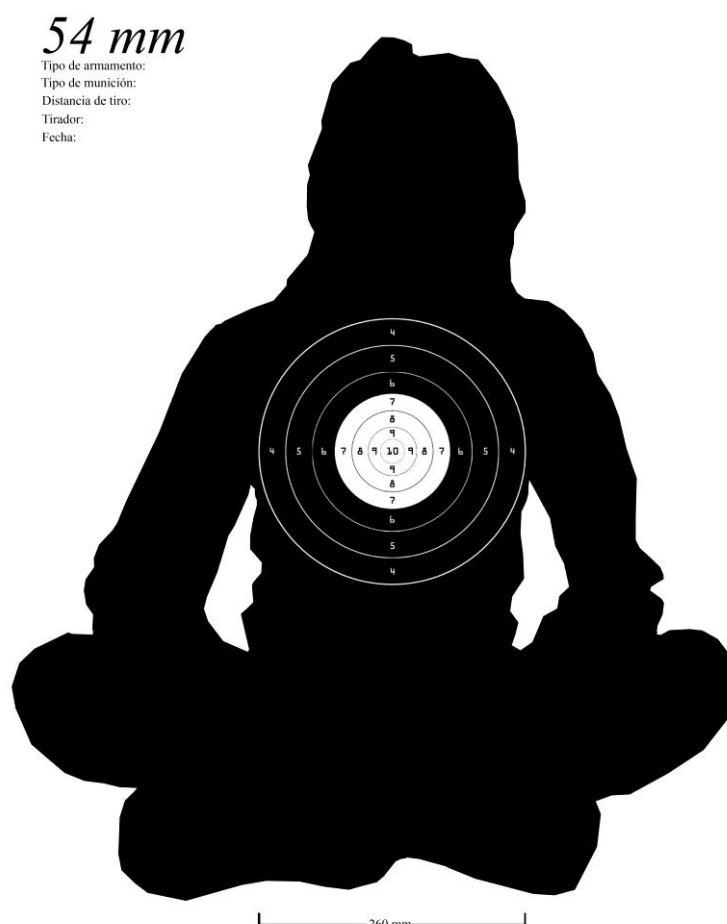
Núria Güell (Spain, 1981) y Levi Orta (Cuba)

Action performed in November 2012 at Cercle Square, Santa Coloma de Farners

Video, 10:02 min. installation with 7 targets

This proposal was designed to be a simulacrum for the police that consisted of making an anonymous call warning that a group of citizens gathered in the public space were organizing themselves for a demonstration. What the police found at the public square was a group of targets, as those used by police commandos in their gunfire trainings, but this time, the shooting spot was represented as pacific resistance. The whole process was recorded in a hidden video and afterwards uploaded to an online forum from the National Spanish Police Force, together with a list of laws defining the duties of the police towards society and the Constitution.

On October 11, 2012 the Spanish Government approved a number of amendments of the criminal code. One of them includes pacific resistance as an attack against authority being punishable with three months to one year in jail. (Art. 550 C.P). In a democratic state, the government has the legitimated monopoly of violence to protect the rights and freedoms of citizens. In recent protests against cuts on constitutional rights, the government has used its police forces to defend the interests of a minority. It is well known that terrorizing the population is an effective method to deter and prevent political participation.



Homenaje a los caídos

Daniela Ortiz (Perú, 1985) y **Xose Quiroga** (Spain, 1979)

Action performed on October 12, 2012 in Madrid

Video, 19:38 min. documentation and photographs

Courtesy àngels barcelona

Performance showing the route walked on October 12, 2012, Spanish National Day, carrying an image of Samba Martine from Colon Square to the October 12 Hospital. Samba Martine was arrested in Melilla and taken to the Centre for Foreigners of Aluche in Madrid to proceed with her deportation to Congo, her country of origin. While being under arrest at the CIE (Centro de Internamiento de Extranjeros) she repeatedly informed to the National Police guarding her that she was getting extremely ill. The health services who nursed her at the CIE considered her health was not that serious until she was taken to the October 12 Hospital where she died on December 19, 2012 due to a body infection. Several medical reports confirm that, should she have received the necessary treatment on time and diligence, the illness would not have killed her. On September 24, 2013 the Court number 38 of Madrid decided to close the criminal investigation opened by the death of Samba Martine.

During the walking tour there were stops in iconic spots of Madrid such as Plaza Colón, where every October 12 a military parade is performed to celebrate the Spanish National Day, the Centre for Foreigners of Aluche, the October 12 Hospital etc.

The video recording of the performance is accompanied by photocopy of portraits of immigrants who died being under the Spanish police custody.



ⁱ Higgle, Jennifer. *Shouts & Murmurs. Art's disputed relationship to activism*. Frieze, No 149 September, 2012.

ⁱⁱ Candela, Iria. *Contraposiciones, Arte Contemporáneo en Latinoamérica 1990-2010*. P. 19. Alianza Editorial, S.A. Madrid 2012

ⁱⁱⁱ Mouffe, Chantal. *Artistic Activism and Agonistic Spaces, Art & Research, A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods*. 1.2 (Summer 2007) <http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v1n2/mouffe.html>. Jul. 2012. "Public space is the battleground where different hegemonic projects are confronted, without any possibility of final reconciliation". Consequently, art can play a role "by subverting the dominant hegemony and by contributing to the construction of new subjectivities. (...) According to the agonistic approach, critical art is art that foments dissensus, which makes visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate. It is constituted by a manifold of artistic practices aiming at giving a voice to all those who are silenced within the framework of the existing hegemony."

^{iv} Bieber, Alain. *Art & Agenda. Political Art and Activism*. p. 53. Gestalten, Berlin 2011. "Now art wants to infect the system like a virus, to damage it, or to change it. The intention is to change the infected system, to heal it; this is art setting out to change reality. However, within democratic systems the artists are behaving like parasite; they know that they cannot kill the host, but they still passionately attack the organism in order to introduce a little chaos into its orderly existence. The artists have accepted they cannot escape the capitalism system, so they operate against the system from within with irony and subversion."

^v Ardenne, Paul. *Un arte contextual. Creación artística en medio urbano, en situación, de intervención, de participación*. P.15. Cendeac, Murcia 2006. "Un arte llamado "contextual" agrupa todas las creaciones que se anclan en las circunstancias y se muestran deseo das de "tejer con" la realidad. Una realidad que el artista quiere hacer, más que representar, lo que lleva a abandonar las formas clásicas de representación [...] y preferir la relación directa y sin intermediarios de la obra y de lo real. Para el artista se trata de "tejer con" el mundo que lo rodea, al igual que los contextos tejen y vuelven a tejer la realidad. Lejos de ser sólo de sí mismo en un planteamiento tautológico, lejos de hacer de lo ideal su religión, el arte se encarna, enriquecido al contacto del mundo tal y como va, nutrido, para bien o para mal, d elas circunstancias que hacen, deshacen, hacen palpable o menos palpable la historia". Apartado de "Contexto de Arte Contextual."

^{vi} Bruguera, Tania. *Political Art Statement* 2010. <http://www.taniabruquera.com/cms/388-0-Political+Art+Statement.htm> "Political art has doubts, not certainties; it has intentions, not programs; it shares with those who find it, not imposes on them; it is defined while it is done; it is an experience, not an image; it is something entering the field of emotions and that is more complex than a unit of thought. Political art is the one that is made when it is unfashionable and when it is uncomfortable, legally uncomfortable, civically uncomfortable, humanely uncomfortable. It affects us. Political art is uncomfortable knowledge."

^{vii} Bieber, Alain. *Art & Agenda. Political Art and Activism*. p. 53. Gestalten, Berlin 2011. "Contemporary political artists are not merely reflecting the present age, they are conceiving the future."