

C A S E ■

21

## ACTO

**Podemos extraer alguna orientación** para la publicación de una revista de arte, por ejemplo, por lo que atañe al lector escribir de verdad sólo para quien quiera leer de verdad, es decir para el semejante; o, dicho de otro modo, escribir la revista que a uno mismo le gustaría leer. Respecto a su distribución, publicar con absoluta indiferencia respecto a si esos semejantes son escasos o numerosos, incluso con indiferencia por si existen o no como tales; ahora bien, una vez publicada, facilitar, en la medida de nuestras posibilidades, que el otro pueda acceder a ella. Respecto a sus contenidos, enfrentarse al arte de hoy con absoluto menosprecio por la actualidad, o mejor, con la plena conciencia de que la actualidad es un dictado; dicho de otro modo, intentar apuntar a la radicalidad del acto artístico con una actitud despierta y crítica tanto hacia los dictados de la Historia como hacia los dictados de la Actualidad, y en ambos casos por los mismo motivos.

Para acometer esta tarea es posible que el ámbito universitario, es nuestro caso, pueda constituir un lugar privilegiado —a pesar de su mezquindad— desde el que observar con la suficiente independencia —siempre, por supuesto, que se evite el pánico académico a errar— la situación presente de las obras e ideas sobre arte. A propósito de todo esto, no debemos olvidar que los discursos teóricos e históricos sobre arte en nuestro pasado reciente han sido escritos, en buena medida, desde instituciones directamente involucradas en su evolución. En el siglo pasado la institución Museo (con su corolario de exposiciones, publicaciones, festivales y congresos) ha tenido, sin duda, más

responsabilidad en la redacción de la historia del arte contemporáneo que los departamentos correspondientes de la institución Universidad. En el campo específico de las artes, el modo en que el Museo ha venido ejerciendo como legitimador, a tiempo real, de determinadas tendencias lo ha llevado a interactuar con las orientaciones del Mercado y a convertirlo en juez y parte, tanto por lo que respecta a la evolución práctica de las artes como a su interpretación teórica. De aquí la necesidad de hacer una relectura atenta y razonable de esas historias recibidas del Museo, del Mercado y de la Universidad, en especial, por lo que atañe a ese fenómeno todavía tan difícil de interpretar que conocemos como vanguardia.

Para finalizar, os adjunto el planteamiento genérico de ACTO expuesto en su número cero y que vendría a resumir todo lo anterior:

*“Sus intenciones son las que dicta el sentido común para este tipo de iniciativas, de manera especial la de ofrecer una revisión de las ideas recibidas sobre el arte moderno y de las historias del arte que con ellas se han tramado. Se trata, pues, de poner a andar una revista que cumpla con la tarea que le encomienda su primera acepción, segunda vista: una revista que nos invite a ver y visitar de nuevo —y, por tanto, a criticar en sus presupuestos— los discursos vigentes sobre el arte y las prácticas que sobre ellos se construyen.”*

Como es obvio, esto es a lo que aspira, no lo que es; esa diferencia sería el camino que le queda por recorrer. ■

# ACTO

**Arte aldizkari** bat argitaratzeko orientabideren bat ateratzea daukagu; adibidez, irakurlea aintzat hartuz gero, egia idaztea bakar-bakarrrik egia irakurri nahi duenarentzat, hau da, antzekoa denarentzat; edo, bestela esanda, norberari irakurtzea gustatuko litzaiokeen aldizkaria idaztea. Banatzeari dagokionez, antzekoak diren horiek gutxi edo ugari ote diren, baita berez existitzen ote diren ere, erreparatu gabe argitaratzea; eta, behin aldizkaria argitaratu ondoren, besteak argitalpen hori eskuratzetik edukitzea bultzatzea, ahal dugun neurrian; argitalpenaren edukiei gagozkielarik, gaur egungo arteari aurre egitea gaurkotasuna inolako begiramenik gabe baztertuz, edo, hobeto, gaurkotasuna agindutako zerbait dela guztiz jakitun egonda; beste era batera esanda, arte ekintzaren erradikaltasunari aurre egitea Historiaren zein Gaurkotasunaren aginduen aurrean jarrera adi eta kritikoa azalduz, eta bi kasuetan arrazoi berberengatik.

Eginkizun horri heltzeko, litekeena da unibertsitate esparrua —gu horren barruan gaude— leku ezin hobeaz izatea, daukan zikoizkeria izanda ere, hortik behar den independentziak behatzeko —eta, jakina, arteari buruz dauden egungo lanen eta ideien egoera okertzeko izu akademikoa saihesten bada, beti ere—. Hori horrela izanda, ez dugu ahaztu behar, igaro berri den iraganaldian, arteari buruzko diskurtso teoriko eta historikoak artearen bilakaeran esku hartu duten erakundeetatik idatzi direla, neurri handian. Joan den mendean, Museo erakundeak (eta antolatatu dituen erakusketa, argitalpen, jaialdi eta biltzarrak barne) Unibertsitate erakundeko departamentuek baino ardura handiagoa izan zuen, zalantzarik gabe, arte garaikideari buruz idaztean. Arteen arlo zehatzean, Museok joera jakin batzuen egiaztatzaile gisa —denbora errealean— jardun duen moduak Merkaturen joeren aurrean elkarre-ragina sortu du, eta epaile eta interesdun bihurtu du, bai arteen bilakaera praktikoa, bai horiek interpretatzeko teorian. Horregatik, Museo, Merkatu eta Unibertsitateetik jaso ditugun historia horiek berriro irakurtzeko beharra dago, adi eta zentzuz, abangoardia izenez ezagutzen dugun eta oraindik interpretatzea hain zaila den fenomeno horri dagokionez, batik bat.

Amaitzeko, ACTOren ikusmolde generikoa erantsi dizuet; zero zenbakian azaldu zen, eta gorago adierazitako guztiaren laburpena izan liteke:

*“Bere asmoak ekimen mota horretarako gure sen onak agintzen dituenak dira, bereziki, arte modernoari buruz jaso ditugun ideien eta ideia horiek erabilia osatu diren historien berrikuspena eskaintzea. Gure helburua da, beraz, “aldizka” hitzaren barruan dagoen adierak eskatutako eginkizuna betetzea: alegia, indarrean dauden arteari buruzko diskurtsoak eta horien inguruan eraikitzen diren jarduerak aldizka ikustera eta bisitatzera —eta, ondorioz, bere oinarrietan ere kritikatzera— bultzatzen gaituen aldizkaria.”*

Begien bistan dagoenez, hori da lortu nahi duena, ez daukan izaera; ezberdintasun hori izango litzateke, hain zuzen ere, jorrazteko daukan bidea. ■

Contribución enviada por JOSÉ DÍAZ CUYÁS, director de ACTO: revista de ideas contemporáneas, editada por Aula Cultural de Pensamiento Artístico Contemporáneo. Vicerrectorado de Extensión Universitaria de la Universidad de La Laguna.

## Zehar 42

Imagen publicada en



Alfred Hitchcock **La muchacha de Londres** 1929

## LA MÁS BELLA: FROM FANZINE TO BELLAMATIC

What first drove us to produce an open and experimental magazine (La Más Bella) was the need to create a platform in which we could publish work by the three of us who first set up the project and a place where we could publish what our friends and people close to us were doing. We took that decision at the time (ten years ago in Madrid and environs) because mainstream publications offered no openings for those of us who had little or no artistic 'curriculum vitae', and we felt it had to be easier to publish our own work than start fighting to get into the 'established' magazines. To be honest, there was no sense of an intentional rebellion on our part against existing art publishers or magazines. There was, however, a general regret for the passing of some emblematic publications of the 1980s, magazines identified with what became known as the 'movida madrileña' [the Madrid scene] (a movement, incidentally, which had long since expired and with which we had connections). As we say, we had no conscious desire to confront the existing situation, because it scarcely interested us, although there were some important exceptions, such as *El Canto de La Tripulación*, which acted as a model for a project that was managed by the same people who published in its pages. This philosophy of a self-managing publishing project encouraged us to create La Más Bella, and ten years on, we still firmly believe that it is valid, and we believe in the possibilities of self-publication and autonomous and individual management (or management by small groups) of publishing projects in parallel with the usual commercial circuits. We do not want to make what we consider to be the mistake of trying to be like 'them': of seeking large readership figures; of feeling bound by the idea that everyone has to like what we do and that it has to have a great impact; of wanting to enter into distribution circuits which quite simply do not care about us. You have to address people who are interested in listening to you - and try to go a bit further. The opposite approach is simply a continuous source of frustration.

From the very outset, the formal aspect also played a fundamental role in La Más Bella; we sought experimentation not only from a graphic point of view but in terms of a complex and overall publishing product. Given that the pages of La Más Bella were open to pure experimentation by artists, to their freest and most personal works, simply offering a blank sheet of paper was not enough. Hence our obsession with constant experimentation in formats and supports, which have often even led us away from the printed page. Our philosophy was closer to the notion of the artist's book than that of a magazine for distributing content.

Our latest project, BELLAMÁTIC, forms part of this philosophy, but it seeks to go further: rather than content ourselves with making a magazine into an artistic object, we want to make distribution of the magazine an art object too. BELLAMÁTIC is an automatic vending machine, a prototype designed to sell magazines (La Más Bella and others), books, CDs and original works... created by artists and groups with whom we have contact. In short, it consists of making the entire publishing process (including the act of buying the magazine for money) an artistic action.

We all know that this type of publication or project is only of interest to a very small circle of people, often the artists and publishers themselves, and it is these people we trust will buy our publications. Clearly, publishers need to have the skill to distribute their publications as widely as possible, but they also need to have a clear idea of what type of product they are offering and how many people are interested in it. There is nothing sadder than to see magazines and books piled up in warehouses - money and raw materials wasted in the name of high cultural ideals, backed by objectives which were perhaps too pretentious. Maybe publishers should publish by and for those people who are going to be receptive. This may mean small publications and a limited distribu-

tion and impact of our work, but it will always be better than pulping entire print runs. The newsagents, the large sale outlets and the distributors are not necessarily the only means of promotion and distribution. Indeed, newsagents are not the natural outlet for this type of publication, and never have been. But mail, word of mouth, certain bookshops and galleries and most definitely the Internet allow very direct distribution to people who are interested in specific publications. Nearly everyone knows where to go in their city to find an independent experimental artistic publication.

At first sight La Más Bella might seem to have little in common with publications like Zehar, but at the end of the day, we believe they are two sides of the same coin; our magazine is primarily devoted to formal experimentation, and this has often led us away from the printed page, to something closer to the artist's book; Zehar experiments and investigates mainly from a position of theory and debate, but also through formats, in this case theoretical and different, analysing contemporary art from varied and not always artistic perspectives. The two fields of publication undoubtedly need and complement each other, and contribute to offering a closer and more precise vision of contemporary creation. ■

*Contribution by Diego Ortiz & Pepe Murciego, editors of LA MÁS BELLA magazine published in Madrid.*

## ACTO

21

We can get some guidance on publishing an art magazine, for example, as far as the reader is concerned, really you should only write for people who really want to read, that is, for your fellow men; or to put it another way, write the magazine that you would like to read yourself. As for its distribution, publish it with a complete disregard of whether these fellow men are few or many, even regardless of whether they exist or not as such; now then, once you have published it, make it easy, as far as you possibly can, for other people to get to read it. As for its contents, face up to modern art with a total lack of regard for the current situation, or rather, be completely aware that the current situation is a dictate. To put it another way, try and point out the radical nature of artistic activity with a lively critical attitude both regarding the dictates of History and of the present time, and do so in both cases for the same reasons.

To carry out this task the university system, which is our case, might be an exceptional place, (despite its small-mindedness,) from which to observe the current situation with regard to works and ideas about art with the right degree of independence, as long as we avoid the academic fear of failure, of course. As far as all this is concerned we should not forget that the theoretical and historical discourses on art in our recent past have been written, to a large extent, by institutions that were directly involved in its development. In the last century the institution of the Museum (with its corollary of exhibitions, publications, festivals and congresses) was definitely more responsible for writing the history of modern art than the corresponding departments in the institution of the University. In the specific field of the arts, the way that the Museum has acted to provide legitimacy, in real time, for certain trends has led it to interact with the tendencies shown by the Market, and this has made it both judge and judged, not only as far as the practical evolution of the arts is concerned but also with regard to their theoretical interpretation. As a result we need to produce a careful, reasonable reinterpretation of the histories that the Museum, Market and University have given us; especially, with regard to that phenomenon which is still extremely difficult to interpret that we call the avant-garde.

To finish, I am attaching ACTO's generic approach which was set out in issue number zero and which could well sum up everything that I have said here: "Its intentions are those that common sense advises for this kind of initiative, which is especially to provide a review of preconceived ideas about modern art and the histories of art that have been produced

with these. We are talking then, about launching a magazine that fulfils the main task that it has been given: a magazine that invites us to read and go back to —and therefore, to criticise in their premises— current discourses on art and the practices that are constructed over these.”

As it obvious that this is what it aspires to, and not what it is, the difference between these would be the stretch of road that we still have to travel along. ■

*Contribution by José Díaz Cuyas, editor of Acto, magazine published by the Cultural Society for Contemporary artistic philosophy. Vice-chancellor's office for the Extension Department at La Laguna University.*

## BRUMARIA

22

Brumaria is a project by artists for the construction of a forum for studying, reflecting on and making proposals about art, and which aims to put into circulation theoretical and practical material dealing with artistic and aesthetic ideas and their relationship to the social and political structures that are inherent to them.

As a project by artists, Brumaria cannot be divorced from the work carried out by the people behind it, as it is in keeping with their present ideas and stance as creative artists at the present time to work as individuals qualified to carry out critical activities both by putting into practice different kinds of artistic proposals and by theoretical reflection channelled through various formats.

The breeding ground for the currently much-trumpeted crisis about the presence of modern Spanish art on international circuits, which in the past seemed to be restricted to salon and café discussions, is the mediocrity of recent artistic output which has abandoned research, criticism and debate, to name but a few qualities, for a more chaotic evolution; it is really difficult for us to find an area of culture in our country more exposed to historiographical mediocrity than the visual arts. And all this has happened in a historical period like the present day in which unidirectional messages are backed up by the remnants of the mediocre reactionary attitudes of the eighties which are still alive today and exercise an influence that would be unimaginable in other Western countries. One result of this is another of the most painfully evident aspects of the current plight of the arts in our country: their scandalous detachment from contemporary cultural, social and political practices that help to set up organs fostering critical rationality and radical autonomy and democracy. Brumaria, through the wide variety of its approaches, aims to try and find a way to help to restore the links between these organs and contemporary artistic practices.

As far as the magazine is concerned, this is reflected in our aim to promote a plural, varied, multidisciplinary team of collaborators, including people who are not strictly from the visual arts but who are close in spirit to the stated aims of this project.

Brumaria is a project that its most direct collaborators and editors have thought about, debated and reflected on at length; it has started behind schedule and, inevitably, with financial problems. However, it has also begun with the satisfaction of a job well done. We would like the boundless capacity for dissection and analysis displayed by Sloterdijk or Negri to serve as a catalyst for artistic energies in this period and field, which are urgently in need of reflective impetus. In our case, this impetus has led Brumaria to adopt a policy that generally identifies with global resistance movements.

Then, suddenly, at the end of the summer, after it had been overdoing on biennials, Juan Muñoz's death restored contemporary Spanish art to that precarious state of lacking a father figure that it has never really accepted. Suddenly, with the New Year approaching, the mini-war in South Manhattan broke out. This was the result of the confluence of two great tragedies: that of an arrogant, violent, inward-looking empire that erects new barriers and creates poverty every-

where; and that of the resounding failure of the various Islamist regimes to politically administer the absolute power that they exercise so unjustly. This relocated political activity beyond the reflective, ideological mediocrity that the apologists for neo-liberalism and the end of history had been trying to sell day after day.

It is in these times that we are publishing; and in these times we are mounting a bitter, optimistic tripod, with sections formed by art, aesthetics and politics that fit smoothly into the sphere of the real world. ■

*Contribution by Dario Corbeira, Marcelo Expósito and Gabriel Villota, editors of Brumaria, magazine coordinated by Francisco Felipe and financed with support from: Arteleku, Artium, MACBA, Injuve and contributions from its members/promoters and subscribers.*

## A brief theory of independence

23

**(on the critical definitions that guide the praxis carried out in Aleph, Acción Paralela and arts.zin as a micro-constellation of independent editorial projects)**

“So the model nature of production turns out to be decisive, that firstly, instructs other producers in the production process, and secondly, is able to place an improved structure at their disposal. The more consumers it leads to the production process, the better this structure will be; in a word: if it is in a position to turn readers into producers.”

—Walter Benjamin, *The author as producer* 1934

1. First paradox (it is really more a fallacious argument): that you cannot talk about this independently. Any kind of independence would have to be from something. Independence, in order to become a reality, inevitably depends on... what it aspires to not depending on; at least, in order to define itself. But this is not just a mere play on words: the structure of this logical connection is also unfortunately the structure of the entire effective, practical reality of independence — a paralogical reality, it is true, however often it occurs in history, or in the real world (or, in the phantasmagoric extended area of the symptom).

2. Let's imagine it like a cutting edge. Not a mere unsteady edge —like the ones that they analyse in disaster theory applied to the study of morphogenesis— between two fabrics, and not this gesticulative hesitant kind of difference. It's more like a fold: like a displaced point at which something ceases simultaneously to be two things that it is at the same time. It is on this very machine-like potential that a good knife, or any good sharp weapon, depends to be effective. It is something that depends on its emptied condition — a good knife-edge is not produced by reducing its thickness, but by the degree of perfection with which a fold (around a void that is defined in this gesture as its interior nature) avoids the existence of two planes that cross at this point and acquire a (dis)continuous form, (and the force it exerts inwardly later enables it to exert this force outwardly).

As it is “the place where the points meet” which is both and neither of them at the same time, living on this edge involves the dangers that a tightrope walker would experience if he were condemned to walk along a series of sharpened intertwined blades.

3. However its carnal dangerousness (which is less civic than vital) excessively fosters its fallacious venial appeals, and the emptiness (that is more paranoid than paratactic) of its rhetoric. Let's call this the second paradox of independence: the fact that it is as easy to declare independence as it is difficult to actually achieve in the real sense, (you know what I mean). With regard to how difficult it is to achieve: refer to the following. With regard to how easy it is

to declare, the fact that in this declaration it is the logic of its false consciousness that is being expressed. As Debord was to state in the penultimate thesis on his Society, it does not tend to clarify itself.

4. If the fold by which independence could be defined —never as an absolute limit, but as a degree of tension where points meet or fail to meet— had to be expressed with reference to the planes that cross at this point, these would be —if we are talking about editorial projects in the specific field of the visual arts— the institutional plane (Art) and the market. Or perhaps to be more precise, the planes formed by those initiatives that run on public resources and the others that are run on private ones —as far as we know, there are no others. If in other publishing fields it is the market that acts as an arbitrator —so independence would be defined by the distance that they manage to place in the way of its dictates— in the field of the visual arts (here, among ourselves) financing mainly comes from public funds that are distributed to a greater or lesser extent by administrative bodies. Even the remaining area that in our sphere formalises a minimum private market appears when it manages to do so to be merely subsidiary —and nearly always subsidised. Any independent initiative that emerges from civil society in our milieu, has its sword of Damocles in this unavoidable evident reality, as well as problems to establish its critical distance.

5. Having defined its cutting planes, let's also describe its folding (and unfolding) axis. At one end the limit would be the maximisation of the audience —at the other, a willingness to be critical, and to be even prepared to risk zero visibility. The former stipulates a law that is valid not only for the market —in areas where it is predominant its implacable nature is obvious, whenever audience and customers coincide— but also for the institutional domain, even when this equation does not appear to be so obvious and immediate in this. But it is, and twice over: firstly because it is legitimate to demand that what is produced with the public's money should satisfy interests that are also presumably universal (what in classical times described the common good, which is the basis of any call for public service), and secondly —an instrumental interest this time— because the equation between maximising the audience and forming public opinion has as its ultimate beneficiary the same person who has the job of authorising payment —the politician who carries out their responsibility as the person administering public services. To put it another way: here customers and audience also coincide —thanks to the self-seeking mediation of a third element that has been interposed (between institution and audience). This is a critique implemented to be useful in media circles —and the challenge and problem it faces is how to get its opinions and critical distance to pass underneath the task and real mission that it is based on.

6. At the other extreme —where its critical purpose prevails— the main risk is formed by zero visibility (the secondary risk is its resulting lack of profitability.) However, we are operating in this field and what we call independence —perhaps we ought to call it micro-dependence, or relative independence— focuses on the design of a movement that we could describe as being doubly negative: it is a non-market and non-institution at the same time (it has to be said for Krauss's admirers), even though it is aware that this double negation does not absolve it of its double-dependence, although this is less. When it formulates its structure, it excludes that fatal agreement between audience and customers which is a characteristic feature of the market structure, but it also excludes at the same time the a priori presupposition that its activities were of public interest and that these should be compulsorily covered by an extended welfare state model. To put it another way: it has an origin and a purpose —and appeals to a target— in the strict sphere of civil society, as an autonomous initiative — as well as through the free expression of their interest that the latter actually show, beyond any a priori presuppositions, through the practical effectiveness of their reading activities.