The Unavowable Community

05.02./11.04.2010
Opening: 04.02.2010 (19.30 h)

A project by Valentín Roma with:

*Technologies To The People*
Daniel G. Andújar

*Sitesize*
Joan Vila-Puig and Elvira Pujol

*Archivo F.X.*
Pedro G. Romero
The Unavowable Community is not so much an exhibition project as a reflexive body of work developed around the idea of community, a brave and rigorous exercise which takes the communal as a starting point for exploring some keys to understanding the direction of the contemporary world.

The proposal, presented in the Catalan pavilion at the last Venice Biennale, seeks to situate research within the nucleus of contemporary artistic practices while approaching the notion of identity beyond territorial and national boundaries.

Many current artistic proposals address the question of community, with frequent, often poorly backed, calls for joint artistic creation or shared production. However, attention must be drawn to the dissolution of authorship in a production and transmission of knowledge which is directed and set in motion by the community itself, by an audience no longer understood as an unreflecting mass of visitors but as a public that is both producer and user, without overlooking the essential need to stand back and work out solid thought bases that delve deep into the heart of the processes. This is why it is pertinent, and absolutely crucial, to open up a (collective) reflection on the concept itself and on its related phenomena.

Bòlit therefore undertakes responsibility to expand a project which, in the words of its curator, poses vital questions for approaching the communal through art, and vice versa. Immersion in the proposals set out by The Unavowable Community will undoubtedly enable us to nourish the cultural and social capital to which we belong, as conscious members of the community.

Rosa Pera, director
Bòlit. Girona Contemporary Art Centre

In the last twenty years there have appeared, cyclically and gradually, different examples of artistic proposals presented under the heading of the communal, operating from this place of tension where art and community attempt to link up with each other. It is not a simple matter to draw a map enabling us to locate these practices, as many of them are episodic and invisible. Nor is it easy to measure their importance, to distinguish what part is project and what part is populism. In any case, we can say that with the advent of the communal a different area of work has opened up for art, a field of social action—also a commercial network, an audience—the exploration of which forces its practitioners to find different methodologies of negotiation, to assume other tensions and dynamics, to construct untranslatable forms of representation.

Conceived to form part of the first Catalonia pavilion at the 53rd Venice Art Biennale and now presented at Bòlit, Centre d’Art Contemporani. Girona with a different museographic arrangement, this project—which takes its name from Maurice Blanchot’s book of the same title and from his interpretation of communism as ‘something that creates a community’—constitutes, therefore, an investigation of the complex relationships established between art and community. To this end, three projects have been selected (Technologies To The People, Sitesize and Archivo F.X.) which, in spite of operating from different perspectives, share the same strategies of a cross-cutting approach, antagonism, supplantation and interference, forcing them to place themselves in an ambivalent territory situated between both the institution of art and the models of cultural productivity. The intrinsic diffuse character of these three ‘communities’ and their non-exemplifying nature mean they are located beyond certain decision-making monopolies, reusing pre-existing methods of action, taking advantage of (or reorienting) communication nodes, feeding off consolidated structures, configuring new archives and, in short, placing these amidst the tension of that ‘general intellect’ Marx spoke of: that social brain which is at the same time a productive force and a principle of citizen organisation.

“The Unavowable Community” articulates itself around the following three lines of work: a) an expanded exhibition at diverse museographic spaces of the city, offering a monographic presentation of each of the participating collectives’ proposals; b) a book constituting a kind of polyphony of essays using texts by Maurice Blanchot, Giorgio Agamben, Jean-Luc Nancy, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Lars Iyer, Peter Pál Pelbart and Marina Garcés that share questions related to the communal, to which three visual insertions have been added, one by each participant in the exhibition—Technologies To The People, Sitesize and Archivo F.X.; c) a website, www.lacomunidadinconconfesable.org, operating as a vast archival collection around the notion of the communal from the perspective of philosophy, anthropology, the social sciences and art, among other disciplines; d) a series of dialogues developed in collaboration with the University of Girona, exploring some of the main issues affecting the three artistic practices included in this project.

Valentín Roma
Curator
Technologies To The People (TTTP) began in 1996, as part of the “Discord. Sabotage of Realities” exhibition project that took place at the Kunstverein and Kunsthaus in Hamburg. It was originally presented as a virtual company dedicated to bringing technological advances closer to the least privileged, a sort of vague corporation that reproduced dissuasive language, the identity tics and visual archetypes associated with the commercial companies in the digital environment. As a definition of the context in which TTTP originated, it is important to refer to a certain incipient explosion that was gathering momentum in the world of information technology at that moment; monetary mirages materialised there—public companies with inflated stock prices, exaggerated initiatives and platforms with no definition—which, after acquiring an incomprehensible media prominence, disappeared as if they had never existed. At the same time, and also in this initial period of the Net, notions uncritically idealising a supposed independence and democratisation of knowledge that the Internet should bring with it began to crop up, though in the end they never materialised. TTTP thus appears as a parody in the aforementioned double sense, i.e., as a disconcerting antithesis to the hypothetical wrongdoings of technological corporations, and also as an ironic counterpoint to the exhortations of the disciples of digital liberty.

*Postcapital Archive (1989-2001)* ([www.postcapital.org](http://www.postcapital.org)), is a multimedia proposal in process—that not only allows user consultations but also copying and even modification—that contains more than 250,000 documents compiled from the Internet by Daniel G. Andújar ([www.danielandujar.org](http://www.danielandujar.org)) over nearly a decade of creative work. These materials, among which publications, video and audio clips and image banks are to be found, sketch out a vast examination of the geopolitical transformations and the state of the communist and capitalist ideologies in the period spanning from the fall of the Berlin Wall to the attack on the Twin Towers in New York.
Throughout this entire period, Postcapital Archive (1989-2001) has gone on developing projects of different scales and formats, some of which shape its presentation in “The Unavowable Community” project. Thus the proposal developed for Bòlit, Centre d’Art Contemporani. Girona hinges around two major thematic areas in confrontation: one revolves around media imagery and the ideological stereotypes generated during the period spanning from 1989 to 2001; the other reflects on the nature of the archive itself, about which mechanisms of organisation, compilation and representation are used to categorise knowledge. Found within the first of these sections is the so-called Timeline, an extensive series of images from the media and advertising that shape a subjective chronology made from contrasts and antagonisms where the most varied of political occurrences from the post-capitalist period are narrated and illustrated. This sort of visual diary has its beginning and end in the publicity campaign launched by a South African newspaper with the slogan “The world can change in a day”, which made use of the confrontation between two photographs, one of the Berlin Wall on 8 November 1989 and another of the World Trade Center on 10 September 2001.

In terms of the work integrating reflection on the forms of organising the knowledge proposed by the archive, an intervention that has already become a sort of emblem of Postcapital Archive (1989-2001) is noteworthy. It consists of two large panels that show, respectively, the logos of the primary global corporations and the names of leftist organisations from all over the world, thus confronting capitalism and communism, the market and ideology. Situated in this same semantic space is the Tower of Knowledge, a wooden structure whose entrance has been blocked off. The Tower recalls the hierarchies of knowledge and houses the server which unites all of the compiled material and which offers the users the possibility not only to copy it but also to participate in its organisational layout since it is also located in this same semantic space, at the heart of the archive. Lastly we find two proposals that are complimentary in a certain way: an extensive collection of maps, diagrams and cartography that interprets recent social, political and economic changes, relating them to images of the new megacities and urban sprawl, as well as the so-called Postcapital Library, likewise a cosmology including texts, videos and other documents by over two hundred authors that could very well constitute a sort of post-capitalist canon.

Sitesize/Joan Vila-Puig, Elvira Pujol

Metropolitan Narratives_Permanent Classroom

Created by Joan Vila-Puig and Elvira Pujol Masip in 2002, Sitesize (www.sitesize.net) is a platform that proposes and develops collaborative projects of a specific nature, all linked by the common goal of studying, in depth, the economic, geographical and self-defining tensions that affect new contemporary urban spaces. To this end, Sitesize has focused on metropolitan Barcelona, an especially dense field of study burgeoning with problems arising from a lack of clarity regarding production, ongoing cartographic reconfiguration and certain supplantings that have thrown the social memory of the territory into disorder. In response to these circumstances, Sitesize utilises a methodology of immediate dialogue based on the visual, on territorial representations and on the development of elements of community cohesion. As a result of its work, the practice of autonomous cultural production in a particular social space is reinforced, contributing to the identification, shaping and transformation of the dynamics of both the action and of the places where this action occurs in equal measure.

Sitesize’s participation in the “The Unavowable Community” project attempts to revisit previous initiatives, amplifying them with specifically considered projects
within their context and reordering them based on two distinct thematic nuclei: one that is grouped under the title *Metropolitan Narratives*; and the other that is called *Permanent Classroom*.

The metropolitan narratives could be defined as an approach to the forms of cultural creation and participation that contribute to the act of defining metropolitan space. This conceptual area, thus, unites a complete series of works that revolve around notions of ‘territory’ and ‘community’ with the intention of proposing new geographies based on collective forms of thought and action. To this end, four different proposals are presented: *The Gate of Hell*, a new investigation that explores the contrasts produced in certain urban spaces between the dynamics of use and the dynamics of life, focusing the analysis on the Barberà del Vallès zone on Barcelona’s industrial outskirts; Metropolitan Agoras, which compiles acts of diffusion/construction in the *S.I.T Manresa*, project’s archive on the city’s public space, thereby reclaiming the public space as a place of debate on the urban transformations of Manresa, while paying special attention to communities’ capacity for producing cultural content; *Un conservador de las cosas que se tiran* (A Keeper of Things That Get Thrown Away), the story of the life of self-taught artist Manuel Sánchez, who not only embodies the imaginary of the Ripoll River as it passes through the city of Sabadell in the province of Barcelona, but is also a sort of exemplary model of the incarnate experience of the territorial; and, finally, situated in the apse of Bòlit-SantNicolau, a website (*www.construccioautonoma.net*) that is intended to become a repository of autonomous metropolitan narratives.

In another distinct semantic space, we find the *Permanent Classroom*, a workspace inspired by libertarian pedagogies, defined as a learning community organised around the rereading and recomposition of the practices of the rationalist schools, trade unions and the libertarian cultural associations in Catalonia. The collective nature of pedagogical values means that here the construction of the community and the territory are linked and underpinned by education. Pedagogy thus becomes an action and enters political practice, since any activity acquires, in and of itself, a component of unavoidable learning. The three projects that make up the *Permanent Classroom* are acts of deed and
reinforcements of meaning within the Campaña contra el Cuarto Cinturón (Campaign against the Fourth Ring Road in Barcelona) located in the apse of Bòlit-Sant Nicolau, which views collective action as a critical stance and, at the same time, as personal involvement in the definition of the territory; the publication of a Cuaderno Pedagógico (Pedagogic Notebook) that seeks to rewrite autonomous social construction on the basis of the processes of the pedagogic avant-garde in Catalonia and to connect them to current practices of pedagogic action in diverse urban areas such as New York, São Paulo, Granada and Barcelona; the publication of a series of posters that recover pictures of some of the barricades raised in Barcelona during the Tragic Week in that city (26 July – 2 August 1909) and that recall, at the same time, the role of women in the building of these physical contrivances of resistance, and lastly, the audiovisual work La ciudad suplantada (The Supplanted City), an invitation to the interlocutors who participated in the conference REpensar Barcelona (Rethinking Barcelona) to rename, reinterpret and rethink concepts such as power, public space, assembly or urban ecology, which seem to have been emptied of content.

Archivo·F.X./Pedro·G. Romero

On Zero Economy

The works presented by the Archivo F.X. as part of the project “The Unavowable Community” are structured around an area of research recently embarked on entitled On Zero Economy. This investigation focuses on documenting the path of secularisation that has transformed some religious creeds and their rituals into what we today know of as the political economy. The research concentrates in particular on those changes triggered by certain iconoclastic processes. As a result, the proposal that the Archivo F.X. has worked on for Venice has a semantic architecture founded on three different concepts—money, community and knowledge—each of which constitutes an independent field in which internal relations and interchanges of meaning follow one after the other.

Accordingly, in pursuance of the reflection on ways of interfering with pre-existing museographical devices which was initiated at Santo Domingo de Silos Abbey and in the Catalan pavilion at the 53rd Venice Art Biennale, Archivo F.X. has developed a proposal for Bòlit, Centre d’Art Contemporani. Girona, which is presented in three different spaces. Bòlit-Sant Nicolau Chapel displays the Archivo F.X. file, the documentary nucleus of the proposal; Girona City History Museum permanent collection has been “questioned” by a series of embedded works; and the Jewish History Museum has had interventions intentionally placed in sections of its permanent exhibition. The two museums, therefore, are hosting Archivo F.X. applications.

Bòlit-Sant Nicolau displays a compilation of works carried out over recent years, notably the collection of postcards from Barcelona’s “Tragic Week”, produced for the exhibition of the same name held in 2002 at Santa Monica Art Centre, Barcelona or the book-object entitled Archivo F.X.: La ciudad vacía. Política which compiles material developed for the homonymous exhibition held in 2006 at Tàpies Foundation, Barcelona and the latest update of the Archivo F.X. website (www.fxysudoble.org). Finally, a graphic panel indicates and identifies the works or applications carried out in the collections of Girona City History Museum and the nearby Jewish History Museum.

The applications are conceived as slots, jokes or paradoxes, and operate not only within the formal, museographical devices of the above-mentioned institutions but also within their respective discourses, their manner of narrating the historic episodes with which they are concerned. Two sound pieces appear in the City History Museum section on Romanesque Girona. Las Finanzas developed out of an oral account by Pericón de Cádiz
and sets up a lively allegory; Las Falsificaciones records a peculiar ideological history of money told by anarchist José “El Pelao” Romero Espada. The pieces in a somewhat histri-onic reflection on what Pedro G. Romero calls “the spectral value of money”. On the other hand, in the section on Spain's transition to democracy, we find Entrada: Postmodernismo collection of posters. Finally, in the section on the Spanish Civil War and Franco's political repression, we come across Tesouro: Pessetes, a set of reproductions of banknotes issued by Catalan institutions and popular organisations between 1936 and 1939.

The “Cemeteries” section of the Jewish History Museum hosts a sound piece entitled Las Lamentaciones, which explores the equivalences between language and the economy by considering the association between oral expression and the smallest monetary unit, in other words, the old system of counting out aloud, which is presented to us simultaneously as narration and pecuniary quantification. For this project, extracts have been taken from The Merchant of Venice by Shakespeare, a classic in which the financial equivalents of banking and the novel appear, perhaps for the first time, not only as genres that hold sway in the new modern order, but also as examples of the current paradoxical bio-political circumstances: human bodies violently affected by the global circulation of capital. In another direction we find the postal piece Las Correspondencias which pursues the reflection on communication and trade carried out for Archivo F.X.’s proposal for the Venice Biennale. The piece links up an entire community of citizens of Venice who anonymously send each other letters (“notes”) announcing unexpected notifications, debts, reflections, quantifications, reproaches and, as in any correspondence, the sorrows of love. Two different projects are presented in the open-air courtyard of the Jewish History Museum. Entrada: Anti-Globalización is a re-issue of four thousand copies of the coin minted by the Catholic Mutual Co-operative in Manlleu (Barcelona). The original coins were seized by the Municipal Committee and then later, in 1937, put back into circulation after the word ‘Catholic’ had been mechanically removed from the back of each and every coin; Entrada: El Capital is a seminal proposal for the Archivo F.X.: La ciudad vacía: Comunidad. Finally, in the temporary exhibition room there is Entrada: La coquille et le clergyman projection and texts developing out of one of the Archivo F.X. files.
BÒLIT, CENTRE D’ART CONTEMPORANI. GIRONA

Organized and produced by: Ajuntament de Girona and Generalitat de Catalunya. Departament de Cultura i Mitjans de Comunicació
Director: Rosa Pera
Production: Farners Cabra
Press, publishing and web: Diana Sans
Management: Airusa Aguilera
Identity design– Design consultant: Estudi Lamosca

EXHIBITION
Curator: Valentín Roma
Graphic design: Nieves and Mario Berenguer
Museographic design: Roure/de León arquitectos SLP
Web design (lacomunitatinconfessable.org): Sandra Niubó
Installation coordinator: Xavi Torrent
Vigilance: Omar Al-Ajvani, Adela García-Caamaño and Mariona Terrats
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Exhibition
1 Bòlit–LaRambla / Dadespai
   Rambla de la Llibertat 1, 17004 Girona
   Joan Vila-Puig, Elvira Pujol
   Pedro G. Romero
2 Bòlit–SantNicolau
   Plaça de Santa Llúcia 1, 17007 Girona
   Monday closed
   Tuesday: 17 – 20 h
   Wednesday – Sunday and bank holidays: 12 – 14 h, 17 – 20 h
   Pedro G. Romero
3 Museu d’Història de la Ciutat
   Carrer de la Força 27, 17004 Girona
   Tuesday – Saturday: 10 – 14 h, 17 – 19 h
   Sunday and bank holidays: 10 – 14 h
   Pedro G. Romero
4 Museu d’Història dels Jueus
   Carrer de la Força 8, 17004 Girona
   Monday: 10 – 14 h,
   Tuesday - Saturday: 10 – 18 h
   Sunday and bank holidays: 10 – 14 h

Integrated activities
Dialogues
12.03.10
16 pm: Valentin Roma (Exhibition Curator) and Jordi Font (Director of Exile Museum)
17.45 pm: Daniel G. Andújar (Artist) and Ivan de la Nuez (Essayist and Art Critic)
26.03.10
16 pm: Sitesize (Artists) and Joan Nogué (Human Geography Professor in UdG and Director of the Catalonia Landscape Observatory)
17.45 pm: Pedro G. Romero (Artist) and Xavier Antich (Director of the MA in Art, Communication and Criticism in the UdG)

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