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# Between Paris and the “Third World”: Lea Lublin’s Long 1960s

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## Abstract

Lea Lublin resided for the most part in Paris from 1964 on, and by 1965 she started orienting her work toward establishing a methodology for reading images, based on different parameters of perception and participation related to the devices involved in their exhibition. Until 1972 she articulated a considerable portion of her projects between Paris, Buenos Aires and Santiago de Chile. These networks of production and circulation were decisive in constructing the meaning of her works in terms of exploring the status of representation and culture. We propose a study that would restore the geopolitical density and translocal nature of her production of the long sixties.

## Resumen

Residente en París desde 1964 con algún intervalo, a partir de 1965 Lea Lublin orientó su trabajo a establecer una metodología de lectura de las imágenes, basada en diferentes parámetros perceptivos y participativos relacionados con sus artefactos de exhibición. Hasta 1972, buena parte de sus proyectos se articularon entre París, Buenos Aires y Santiago de Chile. Esas redes de producción y circulación fueron decisivas en la conformación del sentido de sus trabajos ligados a la exploración del estatus de la representación y la cultura. Nos proponemos entonces un estudio que reponga el espesor geopolítico y el carácter translocal que resulta clave en una parte sustancial de su producción de los largos años sesenta.

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Of all the Argentinean artists who settled in France during the 1960s, Lea Lublin maintained arguably the greatest amount of activity in South America.<sup>1</sup> She was born in Poland in 1929 and moved to Argentina at the age of nine, receiving a degree from the Escuela de Bellas Artes in 1949. During her first stay in Paris between 1951 and 1956, she attended the Académie Ranson and became close to the circle of figurative leftist artists who began the Salon de la Jeune Peinture. From 1964, she resided primarily in Paris. By 1965, however, she had stopped painting, and began to orient her work toward a methodology for reading and deciphering images, based on shifting parameters of perception and participation and incorporating exhibition conditions and implements. Other scholars have discussed this embrace of institutional critique previously, but what tends to be overlooked is that at least until 1972, Lublin staged a considerable portion of her projects between the city of Paris and the art and political scenes of Latin America. She maintained a significant presence in the agendas of local art scenes, one that intensified during a stint of residence in Buenos Aires between 1969 and 1972. This was not, however, simply a matter of producing or exhibiting works in one city or the other. Her travel decisions were deeply informed by her aesthetic and political interests, and her movement back and forth between Europe and the Americas yielded an artistically productive flux that can be registered in her artworks themselves.

This article will analyze several of the projects that Lublin carried out between France, Chile and Argentina, which reflected upon the networks of production and circulation that were decisive in constructing their cultural representations and meanings. In each instance, Lublin would articulate a specific institutional critique or employ iconography that directly addressed the venue's public. Although not all of her works were conceived of as site-specific, they turned out to be impossible to repeat in other institutional, urban

and cultural contexts. These works explored representation as an issue at the same time that they joined in a larger revision of how Latin America was being represented amidst the emergence of the so-called Third World on a global scale. While not purporting to survey Lea Lublin's complex body of work in its entirety, in what follows I will aim to restore the geopolitical density and essentially "translocal," rather than transnational, nature of her production.<sup>2</sup>

## Seeing Latin America Clearly

The series of works that Lublin began in 1965 and titled *Ver claro* (To See Clearly) appropriated emblematic images from art history, or history more generally, arranged in montage (Fig. 1). In the first of these, she included a reproduction of Leonardo Da Vinci's *La Joconde* (Mona Lisa), which the Musée du Louvre had already protected behind a pane of glass (and a wall of viewers). Lublin framed a poster reproduction of the Da Vinci behind glass featuring brightly colored perspectival designs that interfered with the highly recognizable image. The viewer could squirt water onto the glass using a rubber bulb placed on its upper edge. The water would then be dispersed through the action of a windshield wiper that would repeatedly clear the surface of the glass protecting the poster.

This piece was included in a group exhibition organized in homage of Marcel Duchamp, held at the Mathias Fels gallery in Paris. The show was titled *La fête de la Joconde* (Celebration of the *Mona Lisa*), and it brought together works by other artists who, like Lublin, were active in renovating figurative painting. These included Bernard Rancillac, Hervé Télémaque and Pol Bury, the latter of whom was closely associated with kinetic art. Duchamp had used the *Mona Lisa* in several versions of his *L.H.O.O.Q.*, 1919, whose phonetic pronunciation sounded like the phrase "elle a

<sup>1</sup> Antonio Seguí, a fellow Argentinean and "Sud-américain de Paris," in the French parlance, also returned home, but his visits to his natal province of Córdoba were motivated above all by family concerns. See Isabel Plante, *Argentinos de París. Arte y viajes culturales durante los años sesenta* (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> See Clemens Greiner and Patrick Sakdapolrak, "Translocality: Concepts, Applications and Emerging Research Perspectives," *Geography Compass*, Vol. 7, No. 5 (May 2013): 373-384.

chaud au cul,” French expression that translates literally as “she has a hot ass” and colloquially as “she is horny.”



**Figure 1.** Lea Lublin, *Ver claro* series, 1965. Reproduction of the *Mona Lisa*, painting on glass, rubber bulb with water and motorized windshield wiper. Image courtesy of Nicolás Lublin on behalf of the estate of Lea Lublin.

The original and most famous version consists of a cheap reproduction of the *Mona Lisa*, on which Duchamp drew a moustache and goatee beard in addition to the acronym. In another version from 1965, conserved today at MoMA in New York, Duchamp used an unaltered reproduction of Da Vinci's painting on the reverse side of a playing card, with the inscription “L.H.O.O.Q. rasée” (shaved). Lublin echoes and reinterprets the demystifying gesture of modifying a “masterpiece,” or, to be more precise, its mass reproduction. She also played on words, albeit different ones, by employing language in a quite redundant way in relation to the work. It was less a corrosive,

Dadaist intervention than it was an analytic operation that could be applied to other emblematic or widely disseminated images. This was not because something had been learned about Da Vinci's innovative techniques like *sfumatto*, for example, or because there was some iconographic detail to be discovered in the cheap reproduction. More simply, once the surface of the glass was clean, what was behind it could be seen more clearly—an allegory for clarifying what Lublin understood to be the illustrious painting's mythic dimension. Examining the masterpiece from a fresh point of view meant, as the artist saw it, undermining its myth by disarticulating habitual or uncritical ways of seeing. Denaturalizing the perception of an image that might potentially be familiar to everyone, like the *Mona Lisa*, paved the way for questioning the durability of its mythic dimension in the case of industrial reproduction, and for investigating which of its aspects might be brought to fuller potential by widespread circulation as enabled by posters or postcards. With the same device, then, two issues could be brought into perspective: a referential and retrospective aspect and another, absolutely current material or technical aspect. On the one hand, to examine and “see clearly” a modern Western culture born of the Renaissance provided an opportunity to leave its already-archaic values behind. On the other hand, it invited observation of how technological means of reproduction were lending works of high art the presence of everyday images.

In diverse texts and interviews, Lublin would refer to the need to “demystify” art and culture, aligning her with Argentinean kinetic artist Julio Le Parc, who was also based in Paris in the 1960s. In addition to its signature objects featuring dynamic components, kinetic art explored collaborative work and the production of multiples with the aim of abolishing the aura surrounding traditional works of art and artists.<sup>3</sup> Kinetic art was confident

<sup>3</sup> See Isabel Plante, “La multiplicación (y rebelión) de los objetos. Julio Le Parc y la consagración europea del arte cinético,” in Isabel Plante and Cristina Rossi, eds., *XIII Premio Fundación Telefónica a la investigación en historia de las artes plásticas en la Argentina. La abstracción en la Argentina: siglos XX y XXI* (Buenos Aires: FIAAR - Fundación Espigas, 2010), 15-74.

that altering perception was a way of demystifying art and transforming the participatory viewer's perspective. Lublin would also abandon traditional art and exhibition formats, but unlike the kinetic artists, she employed highly visible cultural iconography. Her work approached visual representations as artifacts, focusing on the way that certain images embodied "mythologies": given traditions of seeing and representing as well as a stable set of aesthetic and historical meanings.<sup>4</sup> Teresa Riccardi provides an eloquent view on this point:

It was not enough that the eye could see. It had to learn to look at how things were being exhibited in order to comprehend the myths elaborated through the reification of images. Aiming for an experience that would clarify this difference and invert passive contemplation by engaging these subjects' bodies and memories in participation was no simple task. In any case, the act of looking could nevertheless critically inform viewers regarding cultural colonization and domination's visual manifestations, in addition to revealing other hidden histories.<sup>5</sup>

Lublin seems to have conceived of visual culture as a dense, complex process involving materials, perception, rhetoric and symbolism. The essential position that the visual seems to have acquired during the sixties only confirms how important it was to examine it closely in all of its diverse supports, circuits and functions.<sup>6</sup>

In 1965, Lublin exhibited *Recuerdo histórico bajo limpiaparabrisas* (Historical Memento under Windshield Wiper), another work from the *Ver claro* series, at the La Ruche gallery in Buenos

Aires.<sup>7</sup> She positioned reproductions of two portraits of José de San Martín from the Museo Histórico Nacional's collection side by side behind a pane of glass (Fig. 2). One of the portraits had been completed in 1818 in Chile, painted by the Peruvian artist José Gil de Castro on the basis of a session with the liberator following his crossing of the Andes. The second portrait was from the mid-nineteenth century, attributed to the drawing teacher of San Martín's daughter, painted in Brussels. The latter entered the museum's collection in 1899 along with all the furniture from the liberator's French quarters, and rapidly became the canonical image of the father of Argentina. Unsuspecting viewers in 1965 may not have detected that both portraits were of the same historical figure. The first painting, carried out on the American continent during the early stages of independence, presented a late colonial style effigy that was far from the image that school manuals have left imprinted on our memories since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: it showed a man with a thin face and aquiline nose in a pose that is more timid than heroic. The second was inspired by a portrait of Napoleon and based on an earlier print portraying the Liberator. It coincides to a greater extent with the idealized appearance and moral stature of a republican hero: it shows a robust San Martín, gazing off into the future and enveloped by a voluptuous Argentinean flag.<sup>8</sup>

In *Recuerdo histórico bajo limpiaparabrisas*, Lublin uses art-historical juxtaposition. Drawing a parallel between one portrait and the other highlights their opacity more than their mimetic functionality. The reproductions of these portraits were exhibited as representations, with their respective conventions and material characteristics. They were treated like visual artifacts that provoke by way of rhetorical or stylistic operations, eliciting responses that are more emotional than intellectual (such as, for example, identifying with a particular nationality).

<sup>4</sup> Lublin's reference to a "mythology" associated with common sense is inflected by Roland Barthes' writings. For the Barthes of the late 1950s, myth was a form of meaning production linked to consumption and bourgeois ideology, framed by the notion of culture. The semiological would thus need to be oriented toward the denaturalization of myth. See Roland Barthes, "Prólogo," *Mitologías* (Buenos Aires, Siglo XXI, 2003), 7-9.

<sup>5</sup> Teresa Riccardi, "Archivar mitologías: documentos secretos de una mirada femenina. ¿Cómo leer las vitrinas y las imágenes de Lea Lublin?" unpublished presentation delivered at *Art and Archives: Latin American Art Forum 1920 to Present. II International Forum for Graduate Students and Emerging Scholars*, University of Texas, Austin, October 15-17, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Guy Debord advanced one essential, if apocalyptic, theorization of the visual in 1967, in which he argued for a new status of the image linked to increases in communication technologies and the culture industry. He argued that he was witnessing an enlargement of the aesthetic sphere, where images were acquiring unprecedented dominance over life itself. Using the term "spectacle," Debord and many of his contemporaries considered images to be purely exterior, absolutely inactive in nature. Guy Debord, *La société du spectacle* (Paris: Gallimard 1992).

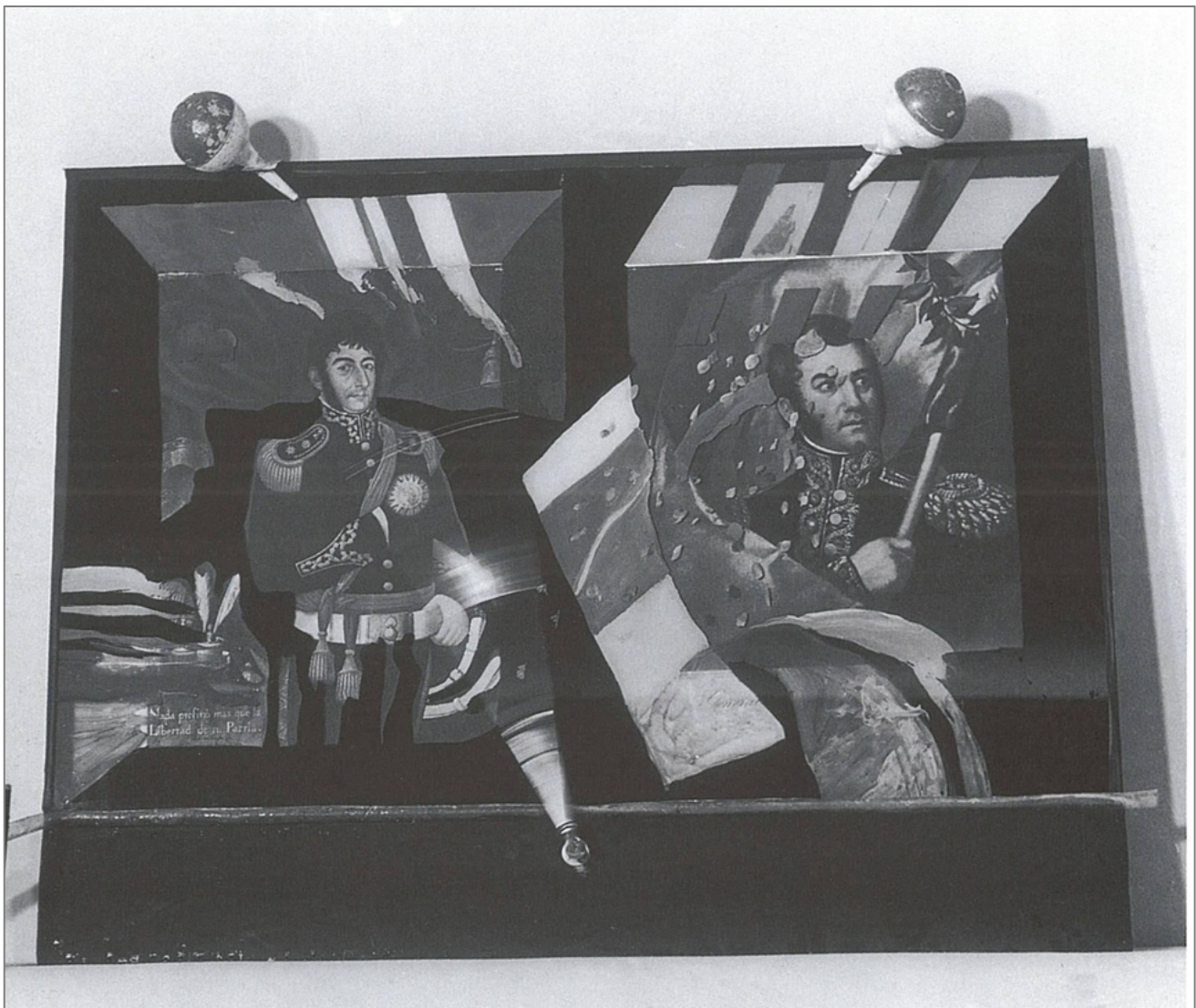
<sup>7</sup> The same work appears with different titles in later texts and catalogues: *San Martín aux essuie-glace* in Bernard Teyssèdre, "Le parcours de Lea Lublin," typed mimeograph, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes archive.

<sup>8</sup> Laura Malosetti Costa, "¿Verdad o belleza? Pintura, fotografía, memoria, historia," *Revista de Crítica Cultural*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (2009): 111-123.



The artist did not offer abundant explanations. The task of comparing and reflecting was left to the viewers, whom she considered to be active agents in attributing meaning to the works. Of course, Lublin was operating with a specific context in mind: Argentinean viewers familiar with the person portrayed and his canonical representations.

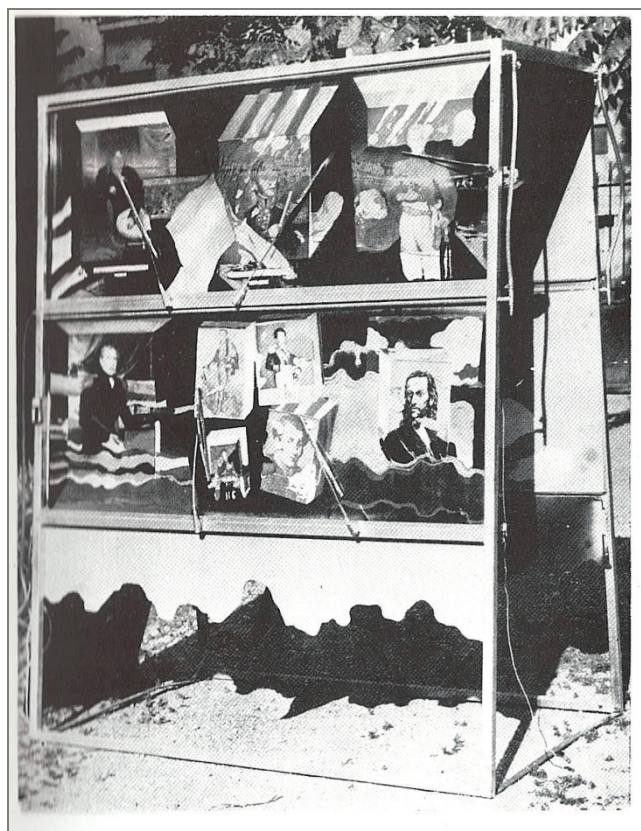
When the occasion arose to mount one of these works in Paris' Salon de Mai in 1966, Lublin presented *Mitos* (Myths), another example from the *Ver claro* series, in which she made a new choice of iconographic images that would be pertinent to the venue (Fig. 3).<sup>9</sup> With a more complex version of the same device that served as her starting point—the altar or showcase with windshield wiper—she selected a series of Latin American national heroes and liberators.



**Figure 2.** Lea Lublin, *Recuerdo histórico bajo limpiaparabrisas*, 1965, from the *Ver Claro* series. Reproductions of two portraits of General José de San Martín, painting on glass, rubber bulb with water and motorized windshield wiper. Image courtesy of Nicolás Lublin on behalf of the estate of Lea Lublin.

<sup>9</sup> This work has also been reproduced with different titles: *Libertadores* in the aforementioned text by Teyssèdre, and *Mythes historiques aux essuie-glaces* in the 1991 catalogue mentioned earlier.

This time she created a freestanding metal structure, two meters tall, which could be seen from two sides, with respective showcases containing images. Viewers could pass between the two showcases and observe, from the heroes' point of view, the other viewers who paused to look at the work. Songs and marches were broadcast over a speaker system as the twelve sets of wipers did their work. The two glass panels on either side showed reproductions of paintings and photographs of leading figures from Latin America's political past and present: Tiradentes, O'Higgins, Saavedra, Belgrano and San Martín were on one side, Martí, Sarmiento, Che Guevara and Fidel Castro on the other.



**Figure 3.** Lea Lublin, *Mitos*, 1966, from the *Ver claro* series. Steel structure, reproductions of paintings, posters, painting on glass, water pump and motorized windshield wiper. Image courtesy of Nicolás Lublin on behalf of the estate of Lea Lublin.

In an interview held much later, the artist summarized *Ver claro's* invitation to the public in these terms: "come and see what you have already

seen in a different way."<sup>10</sup> It was, in effect, a selection of icons that were highly visible to the public during the 1960s: the heroes of Latin American independence. However, Lublin approached their representations not only in terms of what they represented, but in terms of their conventional use and materiality as mass reproductions. Though her work managed to escape the enchantment that icons can produce, she also protected them, both literally and metaphorically. *Ver claro* is positioned against a culture industry, both within Latin America and elsewhere, which threatened to drain the political hero of all meaning through infinite reproduction.

In October of that same year, Lublin participated in a festival held in parallel with the Bienal Latinoamericana de Arte, organized by Industrias Kaiser Argentina in the city of Córdoba. The *Primer festival argentino de formas contemporáneas* was known as the Bienal Paralela or the Anti-Bienal, since it proposed to be an alternative to the official biennial and its more traditional art forms.<sup>11</sup> It took place on the first floor of a furniture store in Córdoba. Jorge Romero Brest, Director of the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella's Centro de Artes Visuales in Buenos Aires, delivered the opening presentation. Lublin's intervention was announced as *Happening patrio: invitado de honor Manuel Belgrano* (Patriotic Happening: Guest of Honor Manuel Belgrano). In this case, windshield wipers cleaned an image of Belgrano, the creator of Argentina's flag. Speakers played national anthems commonly sung in Argentinean schools. The artist handed out little flags and ribbon rosettes and then organized a parade around the hall, led by Romero Brest. Ana María Giménez was among the spectators and she recalls it as "a very patriotic happening, like a military parade," and considers it to be one of the first that was political in nature.<sup>12</sup>

The coup d'état carried out by General Onganía took place on June 28, 1966, a few months before

<sup>10</sup> "L'écran du réel." Entretien avec Léa Lublin par Jérôme Sans, in *Lea Lublin: Mémoire des lieux, mémoire du corps*, exh. cat. (Quimper, France: Centre d'Art Contemporaine Quimper, 1995), 37.

<sup>11</sup> María Cristina Roca, *Arte, modernización y guerra fría. Las bienales de Córdoba en los sesenta* (Córdoba: Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, 2009).

<sup>12</sup> Guillermo Fantoni, "Tensiones hacia la política: del Homenaje al Vietnam a la Antibienal," *Sisi*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (1990): 37.

the Festival and a few days after Flag Day, which is celebrated on June 20 in Argentina, the date of Belgrano's death in 1820. In late July 1966, the police had violently intervened five different departments of the Universidad de Buenos Aires, an episode known as "La noche de los bastones largos" (Night of the Long Batons). In this atmosphere of repression, the fact that Lublin's action referred to the history of national insignia, dating back to the outset of national independence intensified its political meaning. Anthems, ribbon rosettes and flags all heightened the character of the parodic action as a lived experience, demonstrating its relevance as a device to reactivate national sentiment (and jingoism). In parallel, Romero Brest's role as leader of the parade orchestrated by Lublin also evidenced the struggle between different Argentinean cultural institutions. Through the use of irony, the happening participated in critiques of the conservative nature of the biennial held in Córdoba, and simultaneously set up a friendly caricature of Romero Brest: ringleader of the riskiest mode of art production at that time.

## The "Image Process" Between Europe and South America

In 1967, Lublin began exploring the possibility of "dissolving systems of representation" by deploying figurative traces of painting in three-dimensional space.<sup>13</sup> In pieces like *Ottocritique*, 1967, and *Blanco sobre blanco* (White on White), 1969, the painting surface unfolded into two panes of acrylic superimposed over one another, with space left in between. The artist used the same procedure that Jesús Rafael Soto had explored during the 1950s in his optical works. As the viewer moved past the work with their gaze fixed upon it, the superimposition of the drawings varied, producing the illusion of movement in the image. As opposed to kinetic artists, however, Lublin did not abandon representation: she chose

precisely well-known figures as the base upon which she applied this kinetic device. In the case of *Ottocritique*, she painted a portrait of Otto Hahn, a friend and art critic who was active in Paris at this time, in Alkyd. The phonetic pronunciation of *Ottocritique* sounds the same as the French word "autocritique." As such, the image almost literally carries out a self-critique: the opacity of the painting is lost so that it becomes a transparent box, leaving the innards of figuration in plain view. The strokes delineating the face were divided between the outer and inner panes in such a way that the portrait could only be perceived clearly when seen head-on, becoming illegible from any other angle. At the same time, the face was represented in profile view, projecting shadows onto the background (something that bodies tend to do, while flat images do not).

Lea Lublin created her *Proceso a la imagen* (Image Process) series in 1970, an "active de-codification of the elements that constitute the system of representation."<sup>14</sup> Iconic paintings were here projected onto curtains made of strips of transparent plastic, through which viewers had to pass. Placing these images in a context that reinvented their modes of reception did not mean delving into their genealogy or historic meaning. On the contrary, it emphasized how, as images, they revealed or naturalized their intrinsic characteristics and the narratives that served as their armature. *Proceso a la imagen* alluded to both a theoretical question about the nature of images and the very concrete legal process that Lublin was subjected to in Argentina following the censorship of *Blanco sobre blanco* in 1970.

*Blanco sobre blanco* was exhibited at the *Exposición Panamericana de Ingeniería* (Pan-American Engineering Expo) in 1970 at the Sociedad Rural Argentina in Buenos Aires. At the Expo, visitors to the Acrílicos Paolini company stand could see a nude man and a woman on a bed. This is more or less how the press described it, echoing the news item about police censorship of the piece. The work was partially destroyed, but

<sup>13</sup> Lea Lublin, "Parcours conceptuel 1965-1975," typed mimeograph, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes archive, Buenos Aires.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.



there are descriptions and photographs published in newspapers (with black bars across them) (Fig. 4). The two figures in question were painted in Alkyd, twice, on two superimposed panes of acrylic measuring 160 x 120 cm. The female figure was in a supine position, with the male figure on top and between her open legs, depicted in a concise, realistic drawing style similar to that used for popular romance novels and adventure magazines. The “bed” was actually a real white sheet with wrinkles pressed in between, exceeding the acrylic panes along the edges. According to Bernard Teyssèdre’s description, the artist had painted the silhouettes in white on the first pane with black dotted lines on the second. Given the acrylic’s transparency, the drawings projected shadows onto the background, contributing to viewers’ sensation of having two actual bodies before them.<sup>15</sup> As with *Ottocritique*, Lublin left some space between the sheets of acrylic. Employing optical interference patterns combined with figuration, the artist tried out different visual possibilities for a well-known taboo: the amorous couple. At the same time, in a reference to Malevich that was as literal as it was ironic, *Blanco sobre blanco* suggested several equally literal meanings: there were two panes of acrylic painted in white, and two white people were represented, one on top of the other, and they in turn were on top of a white sheet.

On September 21, 1970, the press reported that people attending the fair had denounced the work, and a police officer was sent to the exposition to cover the work and remove it from the grounds.<sup>16</sup> In addition to the work being censored by the police and confiscated, a legal process was initiated that ultimately charged Lublin with “indecent assault”; a three-month sentence was handed down two years later, in 1972.<sup>17</sup> The powerful response to this work can only be fully comprehended in relation to a “moral” person’s

intolerance in finding him or herself shifting and adjusting their position in order to observe a couple in the midst of a supposedly sexual act. This corporeal dimension evidenced a performative, almost voyeuristic attitude that, if seen from a prudishly conservative perspective, would seem nothing short of indecent.



**Figure 4.** Lea Lublin, *Blanco sobre Blanco*, censored press reproduction of 1969 original. Painting on two acrylic boards with bed sheet. Image courtesy of Nicolás Lublin on behalf of the estate of Lea Lublin.

As Michel Foucault would define it, a “device” is a sort of mechanism that makes one see or speak. This includes architectural installations, speeches, laws, administrative measures, institutions, and scientific statements, among other phenomena. A Foucauldian device is something that may have a material form or concrete function, but if so, it is not limited to its status as an object. Instead, it establishes or sustains a regime of visibility and/or enunciation that in turn modulates a power struggle.<sup>18</sup> As visual devices, images make us do things; they always question us in the present and they often do so in a visceral manner. This is how both Lublin and those who carried out police censorship understood them. Such a strong reaction to exhibiting this piece on an erotic theme in public resoundingly confirmed the potency of visual representations in general and of certain iconographic genres in particular, be they national emblems or erotic images. This is perhaps why the artist utilized this episode as material in future

<sup>15</sup> See Isabel Plante and Teresa Riccardi, “Tela de juicio. Lo erótico y lo blanco según Lea Lublin,” *Blanco sobre blanco. Miradas y lecturas sobre artes visuales*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (September 2011): 57-58.

<sup>16</sup> “Exposición rural. Miniescándalo,” *Crónica*, September 21, 1970, 6.

<sup>17</sup> Paola Melgarejo and Florencia Vallarino, “El discurso del arte entre la estética y la censura,” in María José Herrera, ed., *Exposiciones de arte argentino 1956-2006* (Buenos Aires: Asociación Amigos del Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, 2009), 137-147.

<sup>18</sup> Gilles Deleuze unfolds the range of meanings that this notion acquired for Foucault in “¿Qué es un dispositivo?” in *Foucault filósofo* (Barcelona: Gedisa, 1990), 155-163. See also Giorgio Agamben, “¿Qué es un dispositivo?” *Revista Sociológica*, Vol. 26, No. 73 (May-August 2011): 249-264.

reflections on the status of images, while she was mounting a legal defense.<sup>19</sup>

shots were repeated on a smaller scale in the press clippings. The photographs of the work and the



**Figure 5.** Lea Lublin, *Lecture d'une œuvre de Lea Lublin par un inspecteur de police*, 1972. Collage of photographs and photocopies. Image courtesy of Nicolás Lublin on behalf of the estate of Lea Lublin.

In 1972, the artist presented at the Salon Comparaisons in Paris a work titled *Lecture d'une œuvre de Lea Lublin par un inspecteur de police* (A Police Inspector's Reading of a Work by Lea Lublin) (Fig. 5). It was a group of photographs, official documents and press clippings referring to Argentina's censorship of *Blanco sobre blanco*, arranged on a panel. On the left side there was a letter on Ministerio del Interior letterhead describing the work as "the images of a female subject and another of the opposite sex on top of her carrying out 'the carnal act' completely in the nude, without their genitals visible" on the sheet of Plexiglas. On the lower portion of the center panel, there was a photograph of the work surrounded by various others that showed the police officer covering the piece in question with sheets of newspaper. The largest and most prominent of these shots was placed above the reproduction of the work, standing out among the other papers. This image of the policeman and other similar

policeman were juxtaposed with the photomechanical reproductions of the same scene in the press, in which a black bar covers the couple, as well as the official typed document with its written description of the work. Different visual and written representations were laid out in an orderly but without a clear logic, as if on an evidence table or in a display case. This is how Lublin introduced the censored work to the French public: by documenting the concrete effects of its Argentine reception.

In all probability, this work could not have been exhibited in Argentina. In this period, as capital of the "Republic of the Arts" and the cradle of human rights, Paris served as an international platform for many different Latin American artistic and political scenes. Although the French government deported "unruly" foreign artists such as Hugo Demarco and Julio Le Parc in June of 1968 for their May activities, radical art and film that was circulated in limited or clandestine circuits in Argentina—such as Pino Solanas' 1968 film *La hora de los hornos* (The Hour of the Furnaces)—

<sup>19</sup> Lublin did not have to serve the sentence because her lawyer, Américo Castilla, made a successful appeal. Interview between the author and Américo Castilla, October 2009.

could be shown practically without restrictions in France.<sup>20</sup> The *Amérique Latine non-officielle* (Unofficial Latin America) show, held in 1970, clearly confirmed this, as did the ubiquitous posters of Fidel Castro and Che Guevara in Parisian shops.<sup>21</sup> The cultural scene in France made it possible to denounce authoritarian regimes in South America. After the September 11, 1973 coup d'état in Chile, the issue of "Chilean exiles" honed the French public's sensitivity on Latin American dictatorships and human rights violations.<sup>22</sup>

In the years immediately following May 1968 in France, a work such as *Lecture d'une oeuvre de Lea Lublin par un inspecteur de police* also reverberated with the overall questioning of authority and of the police in particular that was a recurring theme in Parisian culture. During the late sixties and early seventies, France witnessed the formation of artists' groups whose activities were aimed at criticizing the Beaux-Arts system, in particular its official initiatives. In parallel to the large cultural enterprises undertaken by George Pompidou's government—such as the construction of the cultural center that bears his name today, first announced in 1969—the era was rife with cultural confrontations and police intervention in Parisian art institutions.<sup>23</sup>

Compared to some artists' interventionist initiatives, *Lecture d'une oeuvre de Lea Lublin par un inspecteur de police* has greater depth in

aesthetic and theoretical terms, while also being more cryptic—and perhaps less efficacious politically. The installation revealed the gaps between what *Blanco sobre blanco* had actually put on view (without the optical effect of movement, an essential element of the piece), what viewers may have psychologically projected onto its suggestive imagery, and the anti-erotic quality of its judicial description. *Lecture d'une oeuvre de Lea Lublin par un inspecteur de police* comparatively analyzed each means of representation (writing, painting, and photography in different forms and levels of quality) while incorporating variables related to desire and the gaze.

## The Underground River

Lublin's discreet studies of images were created alongside installations loaded with diverse experiences and stimuli. Her navigable environments such as *Fluvio subtunal* (Sub-tunnel Fluvial), 1969, and *Cultura: dentro y fuera del museo* (Culture: Inside and Outside the Museum), 1971, can be considered expansions of the transparent boxes of *Ottocritique* and *Blanco sobre blanco* to architectural scale. The artist explained that the contemplation required by a painting was being replaced by an "active, poly-sensorial perception" in order to include viewers as active parts of the work.<sup>24</sup> The exhibition itself took the form of a circuit along which Lublin's earlier scrutiny of the image was treated as a theme and put into practice.

*Fluvio subtunal* was carried out as part of "La semana del túnel" (Tunnel Week) on the occasion of the inauguration of the sub-fluvial tunnel connecting the cities of Santa Fe and Paraná in Argentina.<sup>25</sup> It was held at a 900 square-meter location situated on a central corner in downtown Santa Fe that was slated for demolition, and was sponsored by the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella. The project was complex, not only in terms of scale but

<sup>20</sup> Demarco and Le Parc were detained on June 7, on their way to Flins, when the police repressed strikers at the Renault factory in that town, some 40 kilometers from Paris. See *Argentinos de París*, 200-215. Le Parc himself had paid, in part, for the French subtitles of *La hora de los hornos*.

<sup>21</sup> See Isabel Plante, "Amérique Latine Non Officielle o París como lugar para exhibir contrainformación," *A Contracorriente: A Journal of Social History and Literature in Latin America*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Winter 2013): 58-84.

<sup>22</sup> Marina Franco, *El exilio. Argentinos en Francia durante la dictadura* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2008).

<sup>23</sup> Examples include the activities carried out by Atelier Populaire in May and June of 1968; the international boycott of the X Bienal de São Paulo in 1969, in which critic Pierre Restany played a key role; the intervention by La Polycritique group in Yves Klein's exhibition at the Musée d'art décoratif in March of the same year; *Octobre 1969*, a kind of anti-biennial of Paris, held on the university campus; the Jeune Peinture salons, with the motto *Police et culture* (1969 and 1970); *Amérique Latine non-officielle*, an exhibition held by an anonymous group of Latin American artists in 1970; the Cooperative des Malassis collective, formed that year and dedicated to experimentation with collective and *engagé* art; the takeover of the *Peintures de la police* salon in 1971 at the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris by a group from Jeune Peinture; police censorship of two canvases by Jean Mathelin in September, exhibited in the same Parisian museum; the closing of Bernard Rancillac's exhibition at the Centre National d'Art Contemporain, also in 1971; and, in October of that year, the formation of the Front des Artistes Plasticiens (FAP) group, a non-hierarchical organization that brought together some 80 artists whose agenda was to halt the construction of the future Centre Pompidou and to boycott the *Douze ans d'art contemporain en France* exhibition. FAP considered both to be symbols of a "new cultural order" that had triumphed after the events of May 1968.

<sup>24</sup> Lublin, "Lea Lublin. Parcours conceptuel 1965-1975," 2.

<sup>25</sup> My thanks to Guillermo Fantoni for providing me with these valuable press materials.



because of the wide variety of machines and materials, and the task of structurally dividing the space into nine sections.<sup>26</sup> Photographs of the installation, conserved in the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella's Centro de Artes Visuales archives, provide a sense of the surprise or unease that this installation may have generated in a city that had rarely experienced such an unorthodox artwork (Fig. 6).<sup>27</sup>

There, a large number of columns of air (inflated tubes measuring two and a half meters tall, half a meter in diameter) hung from the ceiling, in constant movement due to fans that functioned intermittently. The “Zona tecnológica” (Technology Zone) was next, accessed through a translucent curtain onto which photographs of the workers who had constructed the Hernandarias tunnel were projected onto the floor, walls and



**Figure 6.** Lea Lublin, *Fluvio subterral*, 1969. Contact sheet with various views of an interactive, multimedia environment installed in Santa Fe, Argentina. Image courtesy of Nicolás Lublin on behalf of the estate of Lea Lublin and Archivos Di Tella, Universidad Torcuato Di Tella, Buenos Aires.

In order to enter the venue, viewers had to pass through “La fuente” (The Fountain) by stepping on cubes that emerged from colored water. This section concluded with foam rubber ramps that led to the “Zona de los vientos” (Wind Zone).

ceiling. Fifteen closed-circuit television monitors showed what was happening at other points along the course of the installation. The “Zona de producción” (Production Zone) had cement-mixing machines that had been painted by Lublin, along with natural and artificial materials such as dirt, lime, sand, stones and styrofoam so that visitors could mix them and construct forms. The “Zona sensorial” (Sensory Zone) was an enclosed

<sup>26</sup> Photographs of every section are not available. The description of these works is based on the artist's project and on Jorge Glusberg's comments, mentioned below. It is known that certain adaptations were made between the project and its implementation due to production conditions. In any case, what is of interest to us here is to point out the abundance and variety of materials and devices on display.

<sup>27</sup> Guillermo Fantoni, *Instantáneas sobre el arte de la ciudad de Santa Fe. Una antología desde el siglo XIX hasta el presente* (Rosario: Fundación Osde, 2007), 22.



area with black light, where stimuli included florescent colors and odors. The “Zona de descarga” (Unloading Zone) was full of interactive, inflated polyethylene objects shaped like rabbits. The “Fluvio subtunal,” a transparent plastic tube 2 meters in diameter and 20 meters long that gave the entire project its name, was located inside the “Zona de la naturaleza” (Nature Zone), an environment with plants, trees, and animals. The tube split this zone in half; water flowed through it, and several obstacles had to be navigated between entrance and exit. The final section of *Fluvio subtunal* was the “Zona de participación creadora” (Creative Participation Zone), where the artist installed three “shooting ranges.” Archival photographs show visitors with toy rifles shooting at these rectangular targets framed to look like paintings. Opinions from the public were recorded and broadcast over loudspeakers.<sup>28</sup>

Lublin’s playful, sensorial environment had several elements in common with the “labyrinths” that GRAV had created in Paris during the mid-sixties, which were circuits designed for visitors to wander around in, manipulate objects and receive diverse types of optical and tactile stimuli.<sup>29</sup> *Fluvio subtunal* most directly echoed *La menesunda*, however, Marta Minujín and Rubén Santantonín’s 1965 environment at the Centro de Artes Visuales at the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella in Buenos Aires.<sup>30</sup> *La menesunda* was also a ludic, participatory, sectioned circuit that offered surprises at each stage of the route. Minujín and Santantonín had similarly incorporated closed-circuit television into *La menesunda* to make viewers aware of their own technological mediation within the space. Overall, however, *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. A visitor could have

make-up applied, be enveloped by confetti and the smell of deep-frying or come across an intimate scene played by two actors in a bed.

Lublin may have visited *La menesunda*, given that she traveled to Buenos Aires in 1965 for the previously mentioned exhibition at La Ruche gallery. At very least, she would have known of it through the press and Pierre Restany in particular. Restany was one of the European critics who most often and enthusiastically visited South American metropolises during the 1960s. While Restany primarily promoted the *Nouveaux Réalistes* group and *Mec Art* during this period, the focus of his interest was on urban culture.<sup>31</sup> Though his travels were not limited to South America, what he experienced in its peripheral metropolises contributed to his position that the best art was now realist, urban and planetary.<sup>32</sup> Lublin had been in contact with Restany in Paris; he visited Buenos Aires in 1965 and considered *La menesunda* “a capital event.”<sup>33</sup> In addition, *La menesunda* had attracted over 30,000 visitors during the two weeks it was exhibited, a number that in Restany’s view was indicative of the magnitude of the renovation Buenos Aires was in the midst of in contrast to the institutional panorama in Paris, based on old modernist ideas.<sup>34</sup> With the advent of that era’s modernization and its impact on cultural institutions, some cities turned into metropolises, true power plants of cultural production. From Restany’s perspective, Buenos Aires seemed like a Rio de la Plata version of New York in comparison to conservative Paris, deserving of being re-baptized “New York South.”<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Michèle Cone, “Pierre Restany and the *Nouveaux Réalistes*,” in *The French Fifties: Yale French Studies No. 98* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 50–65.

<sup>32</sup> He was also a key ally for Argentineans in Paris such as Nicolás García Urriburu, Gyula Kosice, Julio Le Parc and Lublin herself, whose production he helped to conceptualize and disseminate in the press and in art institutions and galleries. See Isabel Plante, “Pierre Restany et l’Amérique Latine. Un détournement de l’axe Paris–New York,” in Richard Leeman, ed., *Le demi-siècle de Pierre Restany* (Paris: Institut National d’Histoire de l’Art – Éditions des Cendres, 2009): 287–309, and chapters 2 and 6 of *Argentinos de Paris*.

<sup>33</sup> Pierre Restany, “Les happenings en Argentine: Buenos Aires à la découverte de son folklore urbain,” manuscript sent to Olle Granath (editor of *Kontrevy* magazine), July 21, 1965, Archives Pierre Restany–Centre de la Critique d’Art, Châteaugiron, France, APR-CCA.

<sup>34</sup> *La Menesunda* received 33,694 people from May 28 to June 11. *Memoria y balance 1965/66* (Buenos Aires: Instituto Torcuato Di Tella, 1967).

<sup>35</sup> Letter from Pierre Restany to Marta Minujín, December 26, 1964, APR-CCA.

<sup>28</sup> See Jorge Glusberg, *Del pop a la nueva imagen* (Buenos Aires: Gaglianone, 1985), 304–305.

<sup>29</sup> Beginning in 1963, this group’s motto was “it is prohibited not to touch.” See Groupe de Recherches d’Art Visuel, *GRAV 1960–1968*, exh. cat. (Grenoble: Centre d’Art Contemporain de Grenoble, 1998).

<sup>30</sup> See Victoria Noorthoorn, ed., *Marta Minujín. Obras 1959–1989*, exh. cat. (Buenos Aires: Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires, 2010).

In contrast to Minujín and Santantonín, however, Lublin's aim was to reflect upon the "dialectical opposition between the concepts of nature and technology."<sup>36</sup> *Fluvio subtunal* was conceived of for a city that was small and provincial in comparison with Buenos Aires or Paris, whose urban structure and everyday habits, organized to a great extent around the Paraná River, were profoundly affected by the construction of the Hernandarias Tunnel. She did not engage this public's senses in order to destabilize them, nor seek to decontextualize everyday behavior as an end in itself. Instead, by way of participation, she aspired to engage the public in analytical and historical reflection. The language Lublin used to enunciate her purposes and articulate her projects was permeated by a structuralism that recalls Eliseo Verón or Oscar Masotta, among other Argentinean thinkers, who may have collaborated on the project the artist carried out in Chile in 1971 (see below).<sup>37</sup> She reversed the expression "túnel subfluvial" ("sub-fluvial tunnel," turning it into sub-tunnel fluvial instead) to identify her transparent anti-tunnel—a fictional or dysfunctional replica of the underwater passageway. Dismantling language to operate on common sense, she unveiled the interdependency of nature and technology as both concepts and realities. This is why she made reference to the tunnel's construction process and laborers, as well as the natural elements pertaining to Argentina's coastal region.

When *Fluvio Subtunal* was produced in 1969, Restany returned to Argentina, accompanied Lublin on press interviews, and wrote about the

project for the overseas press.<sup>38</sup> Despite Santa Fe being outside his usual circuit of capital cities, Restany reported on the environment with enthusiasm:

*Fluvio subtunal* is architecture that is both formative and informative: it is of interest to all who are concerned with a greater awareness of their acts and emotions, those who are tempted to refuse to accept, even if only for an instant, the terrible passivity of language.<sup>39</sup>

Restany's interest in the cultural effervescence of cities like Buenos Aires was tempered by the increased sensitivity to the politics of Latin America and the "Third World" more generally in France at the end of the decade. When he returned to Paris from Argentina in 1969, he published a series of articles on South America's metropolises. In his view, repressive military dictatorships in Argentina and Brazil generated urgency on the part of its artists "to devise an authentic Latin American culture, a scale of sensibility that would be realistic and original at the same time."<sup>40</sup>

In December 1969, French president Georges Pompidou announced the construction of a major cultural center in Paris: an impressive modern museum to restore the lost symbolic power of postwar France. While this museographic modernization otherwise met with Restany's ambitions for cosmopolitan cultural advancement, Pompidou's political agenda included nuclear armament and aggressive foreign policy. For the critic, the realization of the museum was tantamount to surrendering twentieth-century culture to "arms sellers." Rather than a French culture "fertilized by the smoke of cannons," Restany was moved by the vitality and resistance that he detected in South American artists. "The raising of consciousness in the Third World should be a lesson to we French, who find shelter in habit and tradition."<sup>41</sup>

<sup>36</sup> The theme may well have fallen within the framework of the overall plan of events for the tunnel's inauguration, given that there was also an exhibition of computer works at the Museo Provincial de Bellas Artes Rosa Galisteo de Rodríguez. See "El fluvio subtunal," *Dinamis*, No. 16 (January 1970): 58.

<sup>37</sup> By the mid-sixties, both Verón and Masotta were interested in semiotics and its aim to constitute a general science of systems of signification. In 1961, Verón moved to Paris with a scholarship from the National Scientific and Technical Research Council (CONICET) to carry out post-graduate studies with Claude Lévi-Strauss at the Collège de France. In 1962 he attended a seminar given by Barthes at the École Pratique des Hautes Études. Structuralism began to be disseminated in Buenos Aires through his articles. See Eliseo Verón, "Sociología, ideología y subdesarrollo," *Cuestiones de Filosofía*, Vol. 1, Nos. 2-3 (1962): 13-40. Upon his return, he was Director of the Centro de Investigaciones Sociales at the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella from 1967 to 1968. In 1970, he moved back to Paris with a Guggenheim grant. During that period, he translated *Antropologie structural* and *Tristes tropiques*, by Lévi-Strauss, into Spanish. Masotta oriented his reading toward structuralism during the early sixties, when he disseminated Jacques Lacan to the Spanish-speaking world and discussed the pertinence of semiotics for aesthetic interpretation. Between 1967 and 1969 he published three key books on this topic: *El "pop-art," Happenings, and Conciencia y estructura*. See Ana Longoni, "Estudio preliminar," in Oscar Masotta, *Revolución en el arte. Pop-art, happenings y arte de los medios en la década del sesenta* (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2004), 9-105.

<sup>38</sup> Pierre Restany, "La crise de la conscience sud-américaine," *Domus*, No. 486 (1970): 51-57.

<sup>39</sup> Pierre Restany, "Una arquitectura de la información," *El Litoral*, December 16, 1969, MNBA Archive.

<sup>40</sup> Lublin's work was juxtaposed with the 1968 *Tucumán Arde* project and Hélio Oiticica's *Tropicalismo*. Pierre Restany, "La crise de la conscience sud-américaine."

<sup>41</sup> Pierre Restany, "Le musée du XXe siècle," *Combat*, February 26, 1970.

## Inside and Outside the “Third World”

Lublin produced *Cultura: dentro y fuera del museo* (Culture: Inside and Outside the Museum) at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in Santiago, Chile, in 1971. This was one year after Salvador Allende was elected President with the Unidad Popular party's alliance between different sectors of the Left. The project was an interdisciplinary effort “to raise questions about how the world is represented and how the different plastic and visual languages used in transmitting it are constituted.”<sup>42</sup> In this sense, the ultimate goal was to “point out the mechanisms that ‘culture’ keeps hidden.”<sup>43</sup> Lublin aimed to compare the culture industry's representation of social processes “outside of the museum,” on the one hand, and the intellectual and technical processes of art and knowledge “inside the museum,” on the other. She sought to understand how policies of inclusion and exclusion operated within museums through their specialization of knowledge and valuation of some images over others, leading to a kind of split between culture and society.<sup>44</sup> To this end, *Cultura* deliberately accentuated the differences between the museum's inside and outside, while also producing porosity in the conceptual barrier between museums and Chilean society at this transitional moment. Its aesthetic has affinities with the demystifying practices that would come to be known as “institutional critique,” but articulated them along geopolitical lines.<sup>45</sup> What was happening “outside” the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in Santiago in 1971 was unprecedented anywhere in the world: socialism had come into power through democratic means.

The project became possible when artist Nemesio Antúnez became Director of the Museo Nacional

de Bellas Artes and initiated a renovation in 1969. The museum was looking to articulate the relationship between the institution and the citizenry in general. Antúnez oversaw the construction of Matta Hall, 600 square meters of exhibition space on the basement level. It was here that Lublin situated her section dedicated to the “inside” of the museum. Lublin's project joined Gordon Matta-Clark's *Claraboya*, also 1971 (one of his first architectural “cuts”), took place within a temporary exhibitions program initiated by Antúnez.<sup>46</sup> In this sense, the institution itself enabled this mode of institutional critique. The cultural policies implemented during Chile's access to socialism made it possible to revise the functioning of art museums as bourgeoisie institutions through notions like “critical” or “popular culture.”<sup>47</sup> Santiago's Museo de Arte Contemporáneo also undertook initiatives in this direction, although in a different way, which explains why they would program a retrospective show of murals by the Brigadas Ramona Parra in the same year that *Cultura* was held.<sup>48</sup>

*Cultura's* “Fuera del museo” (Outside the Museum) section had three parts. First was the “Muro de los medios de comunicación masiva” (Mass Communications Media Wall) (Fig. 7). Translucent screens were installed on the façade of the 1910 building, showing audiovisual footage projected from inside the museum: a selection of the most important events that had taken place in Chile during preceding months taken from the local media. The original plan was for six documentaries to be shown simultaneously on a large sub-divided screen, but press reports indicate that this did not take place due to a lack of means.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Lea Lublin, “Dentro y fuera del museo,” *Artinf* (July 1971), MNBA Archive.

<sup>43</sup> “Cultura fuera y dentro del museo,” una investigación del conocimiento,” *La Opinión*, January 21, 1972, MNBA Archive.

<sup>44</sup> Aline Dallier, “Le rôle des femmes dans les avant-gardes artistiques,” *Opus International*, No. 88 (Spring 1983). Here I follow Teresa Riccardi's arguments in the previously cited Austin presentation, although I dispute the notion that there was a feminist position or particular engagement with gender in these works.

<sup>45</sup> It is likely for this reason that *Cultura* is featured in a North American reader on institutional critique. See Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson, *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writings* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009).

<sup>46</sup> See Tatiana Cuevas and Gabriela Rangel, eds., *Gordon Matta-Clark. Deshacer el espacio* (Lima: Museo de Arte de Lima, 2010).

<sup>47</sup> See Martín Bowen Silva, “El proyecto sociocultural de la izquierda chilena durante la Unidad Popular. Crítica, verdad e inmunología política,” *Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevos*, January 2008, at <http://nuevomundo.revues.org/13732> as of October 8, 2014.

<sup>48</sup> Carolina Olmedo Carrasco, “El muralismo comunista en Chile: la exposición retrospectiva de las Brigadas Ramona Parra en el Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Santiago, 1971,” in Olga Ulianova, Manuel Loyola and Rolando Álvarez, eds., *1912-2012. El siglo de los comunistas chilenos* (Santiago: Instituto de Estudios Avanzados, Universidad de Santiago de Chile, 2012), 299-311.

<sup>49</sup> Ernesto Saúl, “Juegos respetuosos,” *Ahora*, December 28, 1971, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes Archives, Santiago.



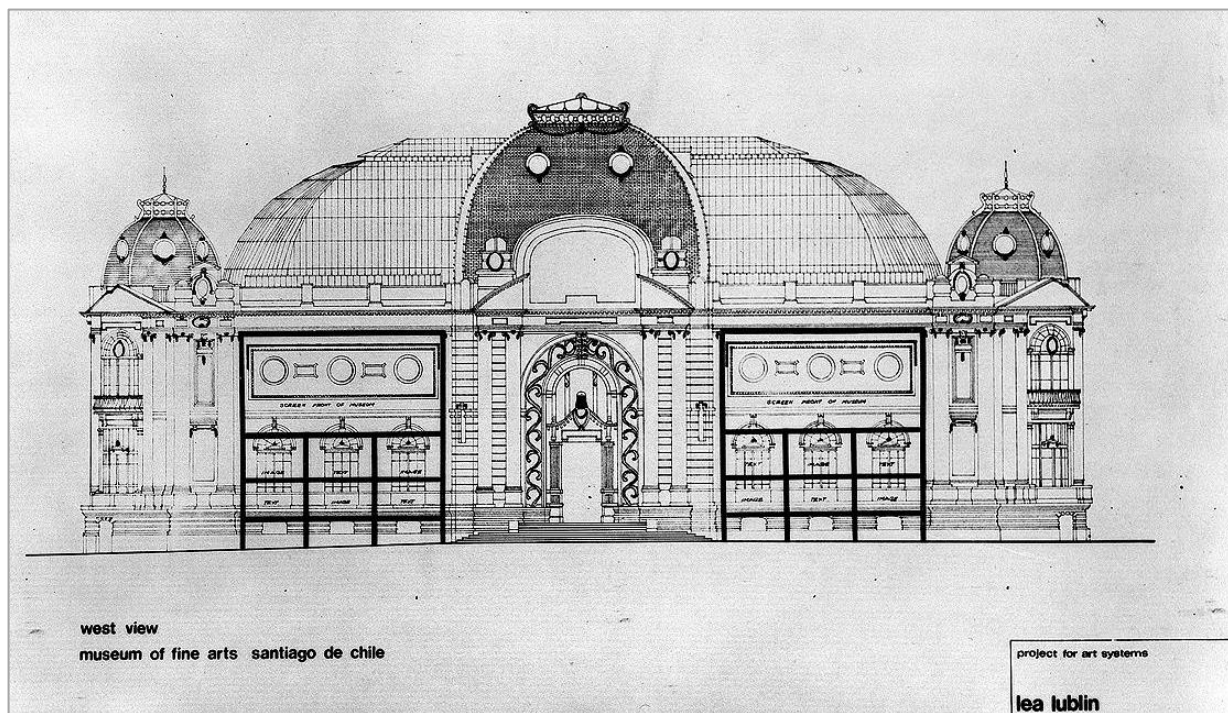


Figure 7. Lea Lublin, *Cultura: dentro y fuera del museo*, 1972, detail. Plan of Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de Santiago façade. Image courtesy of Nicolás Lublin on behalf of the estate of Lea Lublin.

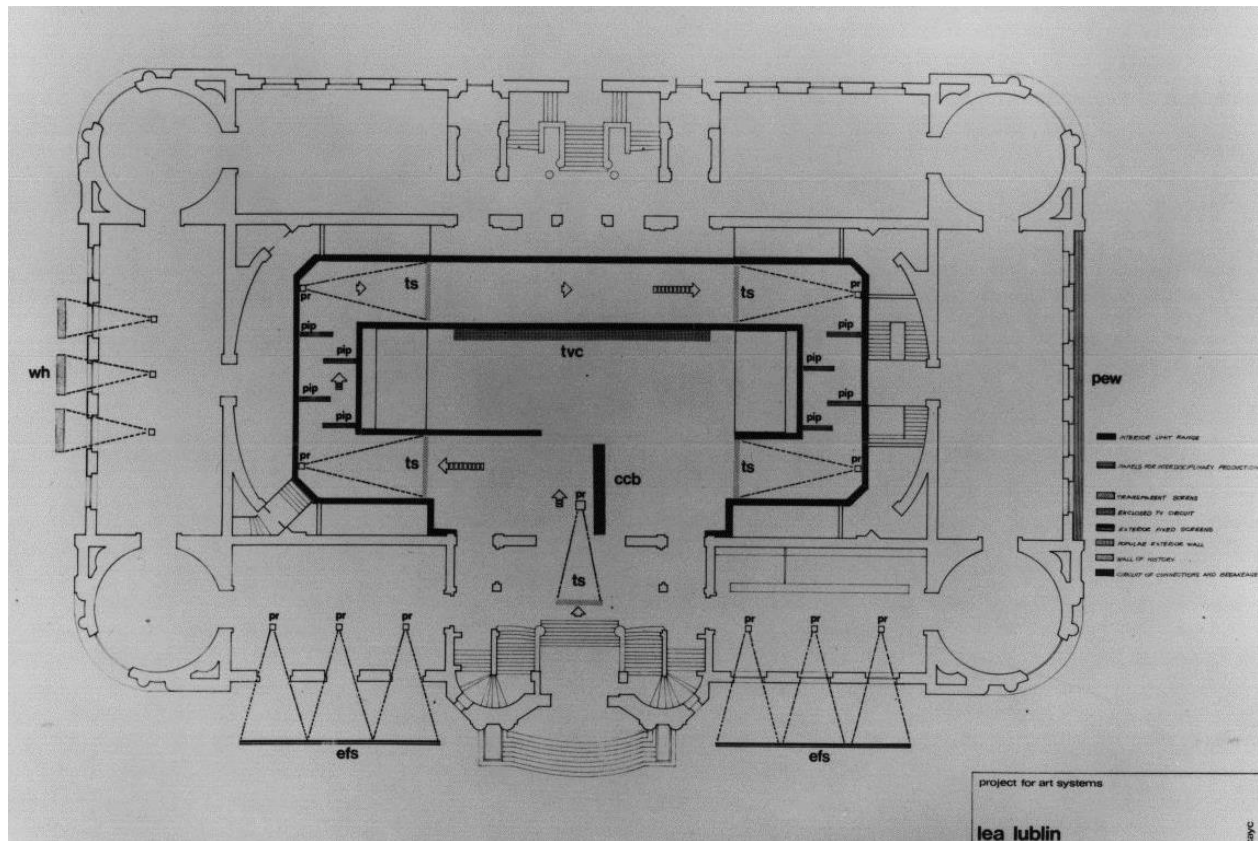
Existing photographs of the event nonetheless show screens installed at the entrance to the museum. The “Muro de la historia” (History Wall) was on the southern lateral façade of the building, with two translucent screens showing images of key figures in Chile’s history and connecting them to other historic figures in Latin America, again projected from inside. The white surface of the northern lateral façade became the “Muro de la expresión popular” (Popular Expression Wall), renewed daily so that the public could make drawings or graffiti. This was filmed and transmitted over televisions situated inside the museum’s halls.

The “Dentro del museo” (Inside the Museum) section was organized in three sections in Matta Hall (Fig. 8). Visitors following the route of the installation were offered information on the most important developments in the arts and sciences since the mid-nineteenth century.

This information was articulated with diagrams that Lublin called “Paneles de producción interdisciplinaria” (Interdisciplinary Production Panels), labeled on the floor plan as PIPs. For example, a panel on linguistic theory linked the names of Saussure, Whitney, Harris, Hocket and Chomsky with arrows, along with succinct explanations. The social sciences diagram began with Marx, written above in the center. In order to assemble these synoptic schematics, the artist worked with several specialists in physics, social sciences, linguistics, philosophy, psychoanalysis, visual arts and optics, including Verón, exiled Brazilian critic Mário Pedrosa, and Chilean Carlos Martinoya, among many others.<sup>50</sup> In spite of efforts by all the teams who collaborated, as Lublin confessed to the press, they were unable to present the project in its totality; the graphics were not ready in time.

<sup>50</sup> The list of collaborators varies according to the source, surely due to differences between what was planned and what was finally carried out. The Argentinean team listed before the work was realized included Juan Carlos de Brasi (philosophy, methodology), Jorge Sabato (physics), Jorge Bosch (mathematics), Eliseo Verón (human sciences), Diego García Reynoso (psychoanalysis), Oscar Masotta (social history of insanity), Juan Carlos Indarta (linguistics), Alberto Costa (architecture), and Analfá Wertheim (visual arts). These names do not coincide, however, with Lublin’s own account of the project. See Lublin, “Dentro y fuera del museo.”





**Figure 8.** Lea Lublin, *Cultura: dentro y fuera del museo*, 1972, detail. Floor plan of the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes de Santiago. Image courtesy of Nicolás Lublin on behalf of the estate of Lea Lublin.

As a floor plan the artist presented in the *Hacia un perfil del arte latinoamericano* (Toward a Profile of Latin American Art) organized by the Centro de Arte y Comunicación (CAYC) in 1972 indicates, the PIPs alternated with a series of curtains made of translucent strips—“Pantallas transparentes” (Transparent Screens)—on which a selection of art, ranging from Impressionism to 1971, was projected (Fig. 9). Visitors had to walk through them in order to continue along the installation route, while listening to a recorded compilation of music that corresponded to the same periods of time. Lublin had to put up signs to indicate that viewers should pass through the projected images; otherwise they tended to remain in front of them, watching. In the middle of the room, closed circuit television showed a live transmission of what was happening outside the museum on the three walls.

Optical-perception investigations carried out by Carlos Martinoya, the Chilean physicist who had created a series of devices with which he obtained “unprecedented visual effects and particular chromatic experiences” were also shown here.<sup>51</sup> Across from this kinetic production related to scientific technique, there were examples of popular language in anonymous manifestations—street murals and graffiti—recorded by way of technological devices such as cameras and television.

<sup>51</sup> Ana Herlfant, “Cultura dentro y fuera del museo,” *Eva*, January 7, 1972, Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes Archives, Santiago.

According to Bernard Teyssèdre, the artist spent three months in Chile. In spite of her efforts, however (she had managed to achieve the cooperation of local institutions like Chile-Films, television stations and the School of Fine Arts), the project was exhibited for only a few days, and was missing some of the sections and props detailed above; it is impossible to reconstruct a completely reliable sense of everything that was on display. Nonetheless, the press reported on the event to the extent that it sounds as if the artist's dialectical intentions were fulfilled to some extent: "Inside lies what is classified, arranged in order, frozen. The street is a physical place while inside there is intellectual play; outside lies reality while inside there are representations of reality."<sup>52</sup>

In Lublin's work from 1967 on, representation is no less important than reality; understanding processes of signification is ideal for apprehending the reality they represent. Culture was not something to be discarded as a whole, as the anti-intellectual camp of the New Left claimed. The artist was convinced that the socio-economic changes brought about by Allende's regime (and by Cuban socialism) would not come to fruition unless inherited Western culture participated in the active process of revision. As such, *Cultura* proposed close ties between the museum and its local context. The project aimed for nothing less than to contribute to Chile's political process, taking for granted that culture had a fundamental role to play in articulating political concepts.



**Figure 9.** Lea Lublin, *Cultura: dentro y fuera del museo*, 1972, detail. Photograph of projections of works of art from diverse time periods on transparent screens. Image courtesy of Nicolás Lublin on behalf of the estate of Lea Lublin.

<sup>52</sup> Ernesto Saúl, "Juegos respetuosos."

In Allende's Chile, public art institutions could represent obstacles in the process of social change, but they also held the possibility of becoming instruments for facilitating the new state's aims. Enunciated from this very specific place, *Cultura* also established connections with art history, contemporary art, and the artist's own prior experimentation, in an attempt to harness the full potential of the museum to symbolize and represent on a wide variety of mechanisms and devices.<sup>53</sup>

In 1972, Lublin returned to France and settled in a studio granted to her by the city of Paris. In addition to preparing the aforementioned *Lecture d'une œuvre de Lea Lublin par un inspecteur de police*, she began working on a new version of *Dentro y fuera del museo*. The project was postponed several times, and it was only in 1974 that she managed to develop a version that was limited to the section on art discourse for Galerie Yvon Lambert. This discourse was not approached as an autonomous domain, but rather as a factor connected to other societal discourses. She set up the "Pantallas transparentes" and their respective projections of masterpieces from art history, but not the "Paneles de producción interdisciplinaria." There were no interventions in the gallery's exterior, but she did bring material previously foreign to the art realm—sound recordings—into the exhibition space. The project was rounded out with *Polilogue extérieure* (Exterior Polylogue), a fictitious dialogue of sorts (or a collective monologue) comprising tape recordings of gallery owner Yvon Lambert, Lublin herself, writer Philippe Sollers and poet and essayist Marcelin Pleynet, the latter two both co-founders of famed magazine *Tel Quel*. With questions or themes set forth by Lublin as the point of departure, they expounded on the difference between word and image and on the current state of painting and art. The artist once again included other, specialized voices to introduce theoretical issues into her work. The presence of two of *Tel Quel's* founders

speaks to the artist's interest in structural analysis as well as her intellectual network.<sup>54</sup>

Above and beyond the circumstantial reasons why the most ambitious version of her project was not completed, it seems highly unlikely that a work with characteristics such as the one she had carried out in Chile could have been brought to fruition in a Parisian museum. Teyssèdre quips that he can hardly imagine the Musée National d'Art Moderne ceding one of its exterior walls to allow people to express their thoughts on President Pompidou via graffiti. He sees it as equally unlikely that images on France's revolutionary struggles might be projected inside the museum. Analogies between institutions in Chile and Argentina, which were insistently subjected to critique, and their French counterparts are not as easy to construct as it may seem.

My interest in this article has been to address the sense of place in Lublin's production between 1965 and 1972. For Lublin, place is both geographical and a site of enunciation from which meanings were articulated in relation to the potent image of the Third World and its proximity to European culture. The series *Ver claro*, as well as works like *Fluvio subtunal*, *Cultura: dentro y fuera del museo* and *Lecture d'une oeuvre de Lea Lublin par un inspecteur de police*, were all site-specific: their meaning cannot be disassociated from the place in which they were carried out. The prevailing tendency up until now has been to universalize them as either institutional critique, which neglects significant differences between diverse institutional contexts, or feminism, which is not always sufficiently attentive to the diversity of Lublin's body of work.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Jorge Glusberg's description is the most complete; I have combined it with information from press and archival photographs.

<sup>54</sup> I recently secured the tape recordings of *Polilogue extérieure*, but unfortunately too late to include in my analysis here. Nonetheless, we can look for clues in the compilation of essays Pleynet published three years earlier on important figures in modern painting. This historiographical project aimed to critique the idea of art's progressive evolution by situating contradiction as one of modern painting's constitutive elements. In this sense, Pleynet's perspective was in harmony with the deconstruction of art history that Lea Lublin had been carrying out in her artistic proposals for almost a decade. See Marcelin Pleynet, *Enseignement de la peinture* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1971).

<sup>55</sup> For more on feminist readings of Lublin, see Françoise Ducros, "Mémoire des lieux, mémoire du corps, dit-elle" in *Lea Lublin: Mémoire des lieux*, as well as Teresa Riccardi's work more generally.



Lublin's earliest experimentation with deconstructing Western culture's visual objects has been associated with certain insistence with gender perspectives. It is certain that pieces like *Blanco sobre Blanco* or *Mon Fils* (My Son, 1968) invite feminist interpretations,<sup>56</sup> and that from the latter half of the seventies on Lublin herself did articulate her discourse in relation to gender issues.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, the complexity and variety of her work require a diverse range of frameworks of interpretation in accordance with each piece. For the majority of works and projects discussed here, the most accurate assertion would seem to be that they were presented as cultural critique. It is hardly convincing to propose that the deconstructive spirit applied to art history was an artistic strategy pertaining to women, or that the penetrable structures participated in rhetoric related to soft receptiveness.<sup>58</sup> Let us recall, for example, that for the *Journée dans la rue* in 1966, GRAV artists had constructed several *Pénétrables* (Penetratables) using rubber tubes, a denomination and device that Soto would take up again the following year, making them more widely known.<sup>59</sup> These proposals involving visitors' bodies were linked to intentions to destabilize everyday perception by way of active participation. The projects by Lublin analyzed in this article would seem to be headed in the same direction, with the fundamental difference that what the artist was putting to the test were art history and museography, considered to be paradigmatic activities in structuring uses of visual representation.

In this sense, the fate of these works' international recognition was very likely marked by the fact that

the issues they touch on lost interest in Europe from the mid-1970s onward, and that works such as these became impossible in Latin America during the new political panorama of the same time frame. With the militarization of the region's governments by 1974, the potentiality of Latin America as a bastion of international cultural development and political 'resistance' dissipated, and the site of enunciation it represented quickly faded.<sup>60</sup>

Like many other artists, Lea Lublin moved to Paris in order to further her professionalization and to prove herself in an international arena. Her moves away from the production of discreet image-objects and toward interventions in situ, ephemeral productions and participation made the physical presence of the public before or inside the work an increasingly relevant factor. Similarly, the sites where these new experience-based works were carried out (or where more traditional works were shown) became essential for achieving international resonance. In a 1968 interview, the artist expresses this clearly:

In order to develop our work we must keep ourselves informed on a daily basis, instantly, of what happens in the visual arts. I have "my" public in Buenos Aires, but Paris is an international center for information and so we find out [what is going on] personally and directly, making a real confrontation possible by attending shows. Otherwise, if artists are far away, they begin to follow the lead of those who initiate a movement in Paris without a thorough knowledge of what it is about. Here, every person should create their own movement.<sup>61</sup>

To a large extent, Lublin created her own movement. The fact that she resided in Paris did not mean that her career was limited to Europe. Thanks to her movements between different geographical sites, she developed her own mode of production: projects deeply informed by structuralism's possibilities for critical thought. At least until 1972, the artist capitalized on her trips

<sup>56</sup> In fact, Cornelia Butler and Lisa Gabrielle Mark included *Mon Fils* in the well-known exhibition *Wack! Art and the Feminist Revolution*, exh. cat. MOCA (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007).

<sup>57</sup> See Teresa Riccardi, "Miradas e historia(s) de santas: Lea Lublin y Orlan entre géneros," *La autonomía del arte: debates en la teoría y en la praxis. VI Congreso internacional de Teoría e Historia de las Artes* (Buenos Aires: Centro Argentino de Investigadores de Arte (CAIA), 2011), 209-219.

<sup>58</sup> Here we coincide with certain mistrust of a particular essentialism with respect to women artists' production that Georgina Gluzman has pointed to in relation to including a work by Marta Minujín and Richard Squires in the previously mentioned *Wack!* Exhibition. See Georgina Gluzman, "Acerca de las lecturas feministas de la Soft Gallery de Minujín y Squires," *Actas de las III Jornadas de Historia, Género y Política en los '70* (Buenos Aires: Instituto Interdisciplinario de Estudios de Género, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 2010), at [https://www.academia.edu/1625244/Acerca\\_de\\_las\\_lecturas\\_feministas\\_de\\_la\\_Soft\\_Gallery\\_de\\_Minuj%C3%ADn\\_y\\_Squires](https://www.academia.edu/1625244/Acerca_de_las_lecturas_feministas_de_la_Soft_Gallery_de_Minuj%C3%ADn_y_Squires)

<sup>59</sup> Regarding this experience, see Plante, "La multiplicación (y rebelión) de los objetos."

<sup>60</sup> Frederic Jameson, *Periodizar los '60* (Córdoba: Alción, 1997).

<sup>61</sup> "Desde París: diálogo con Lea Lublin," *Caballero*, No. 47 (May 1968): 7.



and alternating stays in the capital cities of France, Argentina and Chile. As a migrating artist, she developed work that was particularly sensitive to the differences between each site's specific political circumstances, institutional panoramas and intellectual traditions in addition to the cultural baggage carried by the public in each city. Her work addressed the asymmetries between Europe and South America in its operation, incorporating them into her analysis of the rhetoric of culture. It might be said that she put semiotics' program to the test, both as a source for artistic experiences and as a method in contexts less "universal" than Paris.