

New Worlds: Frontiers, Inclusion, Utopias



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Perspectives on Institutional Critique: Lea Lublin and Julio Le Parc between South America and Europe

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During the sixties and seventies, a significant number of artists saw museums more as problematic spaces rather than as mere environments for exhibition. In diverse and distant cities, there were many art projects that pointed to cultural institutions as managers of conservative social representation, particularly of bourgeois self-representation. The tactics used to destabilize¹ these Enlightenment-born institutions and their unfulfilled promises of creating a public sphere for culture went from boycotts and self-exclusion to thorough analysis of the exhibition apparatus.

These art proposals have been studied—mainly by the Anglo-Saxon academy—in terms of “institutional critique.” This notion was coined in 1975 by Mel Ramsden from the English Art and Language group² and has been useful in articulating the aesthetic practices of the progressive political radicalization of those years, without restricting such analysis to iconographic issues. However, in resonance with the widespread anti-Americanism of the mid-sixties, Ramsden had thought of the institutional critique particularly in relation to the New York scene: how the art institution, co-opted by the market and the art “bureaucrats,” was being used there to reinforce American and capitalist hegemony.³ In this sense, although Ramsden conceived it more as a critical practice than as a theoretical definition, the notion of “institutional critique”—in the same way as “cultural field”⁴ or “avant-garde”⁵—tends to be understood as a universal category,⁶ one which presupposes a series

1 Andrea Giunta, “Imaginarios de la Desestabilización,” in Rodrigo Alonso, cur., *Sistemas, Acciones y Procesos 1965–1975* (Buenos Aires: Fundación Proa, 2011), 49–58.

2 Blake Stimson, “What Was Institutional Critique?” in Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson, eds., *Institutional Critique. An Anthology of Artists’ Writings* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 2009), 20–42.

3 Mel Ramsden, “On Practice” (*The Fox* n. 1, 1975), in Alberro and Blake, *Institutional Critique*, 170–199.

4 Pierre Bourdieu, “Campo Artístico y Proyecto Creador” (1966), in Jean Paulhan et al., *Problemas del Estructuralismo* (México: Siglo XXI, 1967), 135–182.

5 Hal Foster has disarticulated Peter Bürger’s stands on the avant-garde by insisting on the retrospective character of its actual conceptualization, which was only developed from the postwar period on by the neo-avant-gardes: Hal Foster, *El Retorno de lo Real* (Madrid: Akal, 2001). Also, several texts published during the 1990s by authors such as Rita Eder, Annateresa Fabris, Andrea Giunta, Gerardo Mosquera, Mari Carmen Ramírez, and Jorge Schwartz were fundamental to understanding the specificities of Latin American avant-gardes.

6 One of the critics of the concept of “artistic field” points out that it tends to universalize the French case or, in other words, that it idealizes the cultural field: María Teresa Gramuglio, “La Summa de Bourdieu,” *Punto de Vista* 47 (December 1993): 38–42.

of standardized characteristics even of institutions alien to the art scene (and to the art market) within which these concepts and historiographic tools were born. This is even more problematic when considering that one of the strongest criticisms of cultural institutions during the sixties and seventies was, precisely, that they naturalized modern art and bourgeois taste, disguising this alienation as “universality.”

Through the analysis of two cases, this work proposes a situated reflection on institutional critique practices that consider the differential inscriptions of art institutions within their particular cultural scenes and contexts. Some productions of Julio Le Parc and Lea Lublin, two Argentinians based in Paris since 1958 and 1964, respectively, will enable us to approach the geopolitical asymmetries between the institutional landscapes of Paris and Buenos Aires or Santiago de Chile. Both migrant artists not only knew well those different cultural scenes but also looked at them with a critical eye, integrating these asymmetries into the very fabric of their artwork or public exhibitions.

First, we will focus on kinetic art, a production with a universalist vocation which found in Paris—the capital of universality—one of its more active epicenters.⁷ We will contrast the experience called *Une journée dans la rue* (1966), organized on the streets of Paris by the Groupe de Recherche d’Art Visuel (GRAV, formed by Le Parc, Horacio García Rossi, Francisco Sobrino, Yvaral, Joël Stein, and François Morellet), with the retrospective exhibition of Le Parc in 1967 at the crowded halls of the Centro de Artes Visuales of the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella (CAV-ITDT) in Buenos Aires. These cases enable us to disaggregate the notion of institutional critique and investigate the different inflections of that “demystification of the arts,” as Le Parc liked to say, claimed by kinetic art when exhibited in such different places as the streets of Paris and the halls of the ITDT in Buenos Aires.

Secondly, we will examine the *Cultura: Dentro y Fuera del Museo* project, which Lea Lublin carried out at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes of Santiago de Chile in 1971, and then managed to partially reprise in Paris. Lublin’s complex proposal for

7 On the universal vocation of kineticism, see my “The Multiplication (and Rebellion) of Objects: Julio Le Parc and the European Triumph of Kinetic Art” in Isabel Plante y Cristina Rossi, *XIII Premio Fundación Telefónica a la Investigación en Historia de las Artes Plásticas* (Buenos Aires: FIAAR-Fundación Espigas, 2011), 15–74.

such a traditional institution as an encyclopedic museum of art within the context of the democratic arrival of socialism into power invites questions as to the extent this can be analogous to emblematic cases of institutional critique such as Marcel Broodthaers' *Musée d'art Moderne. Département des Aigles* (1968–1972) or the artistic protests carried out at the MoMa around those years.⁸

Interwoven between Europe and South America, the artistic careers of Lublin and Le Parc enable us to question the boundaries of such distant but interconnected cultural scenes. Their itineraries also bring visibility to the gap between the cultural and institutional contexts in which these artists have had an impact on either side of the Atlantic Ocean. Both Le Parc and Lublin participated, in their own way, in the questioning of cultural institutions, but introduced what could be called “the geopolitical density of institutional critique” into their work. The analysis of these cases brings into focus the utopic horizon related to the figure of the “Third World” and its distance from Europe—a horizon that turned out to be culturally productive within those times of Latin America’s international emergence and was not alien to these migrant artists.

Kineticism Here and There

In 1966, Julio Le Parc represented Argentina at the 33rd Venice Biennale with some forty kinetic works and manipulable objects. According to reviews, the Argentine artist’s room was one of the most widely visited and, against all predictions pointing to Roy Lichtenstein as the favorite, Le Parc obtained the Grand International Painting Prize. Individual recognition such as this, however, was not consistent with GRAV’s collaborative work and institutional critique, which, pursuing “art demystification,” intended to create participatory art of changing shapes, multiple editions, and not always identifiable authors.

Their cognitive notion of perception enabled kinetic artists to claim that optical and kinetic resources were not mere tricks of illusion. Subjecting peripheral vision—the vision of one’s sur-

8 See Francis Frascina, “My Mai, *Guernica*, MoMA, and the Art Left, New York 1969–70,” in *Art, Politics and Dissent. Aspects of the Art Left in Sixties America* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), and Rachel Haidu, *The Absence of Work. Marcel Broodthaers, 1964–1976* (Cambridge, MA: October Books and MIT Press, 2010).

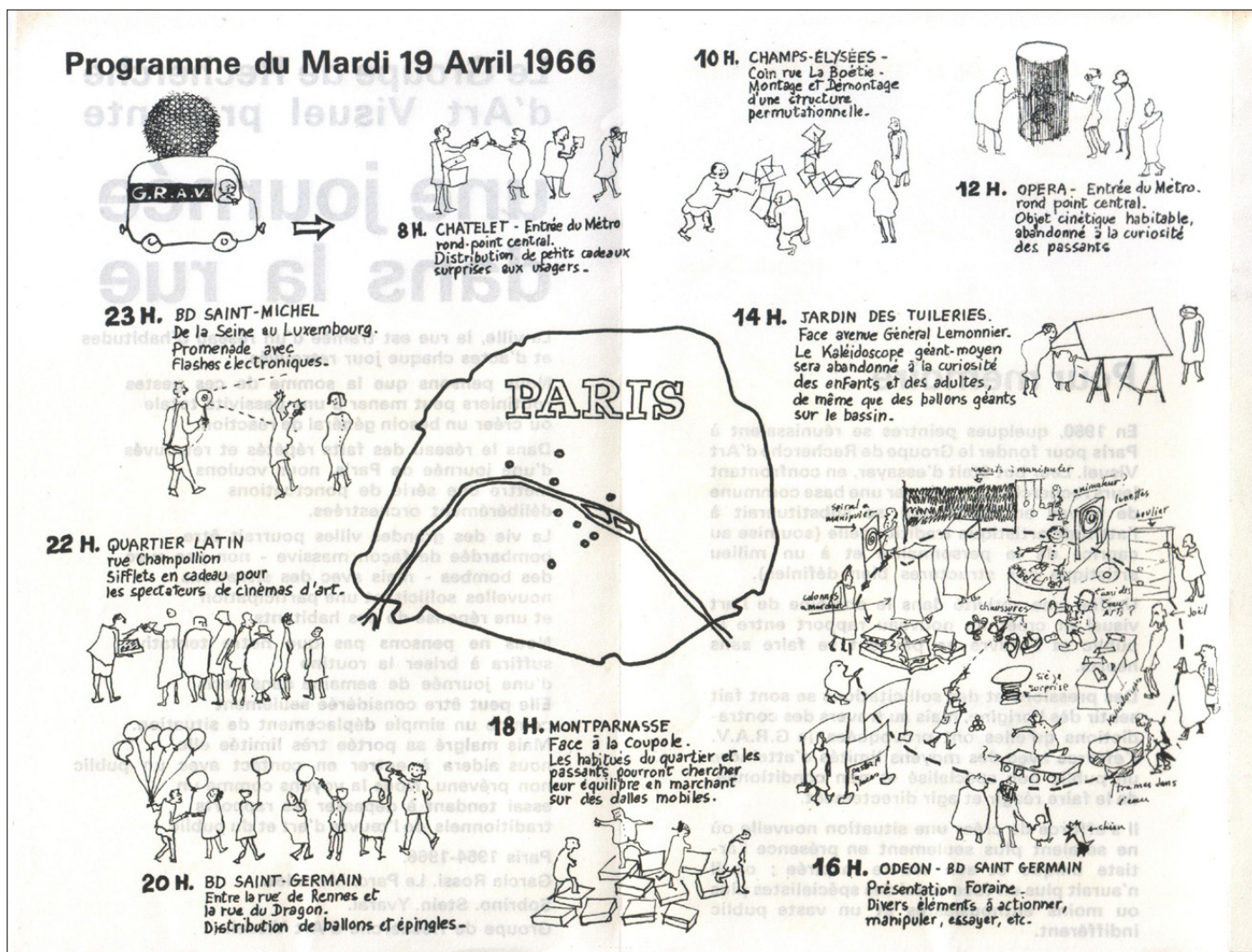
roundings that facilitates spatial orientation—to conditions of perceptual instability meant attacking the viewer's sensation of himself and his environment. Thus, kineticism attempted to denaturalize everyday perception and, therefore, call into question a society that the artists thought had become unacceptably automated.

Two months before the opening of the Venice Biennale, on April 19, 1966, the GRAV organized *Une journée dans la rue* with various participative activities beginning every two hours in strategic places around Paris. The circuit began at 8 a.m. by handing out surprise gifts to the passers-by at the Chatélet subway station, one of the busiest in the city. Then, on the elegant Champs Élysées Avenue, a “permutational structure” made of square Plexiglas sheets designed by Francisco Sobrino was waiting to be handled by the public.⁹ At noon, Yvaral's *Structures Cinétiques Pénétrables*, installed in front of the Opéra, invited viewers to look at the imposing house of high culture with a new eye. Later, not far from the Louvre Museum, a giant kaleidoscope created by Sobrino multiplied and fragmented the image of the viewer who looked through one of its ends. On Boulevard Saint-Germain-des-Près, the group laid out a series of manipulable objects created by its members. This station turned out to be the one that attracted the largest audience, according to critic Pierre Restany.¹⁰ In Montparnasse, they mounted a floor composed of small unstable platforms designed by Le Parc. In the evening, across from Saint-Germain-des-Près church, the group distributed inflated balloons to women and pins to men. In the Latin Quarter, filled with small movie theaters, they handed out whistles to viewers of “art” films.

Throughout the day and evening, they distributed a fold-out leaflet in which, in addition to mapping the times and places of the activities, the GRAV argued that the “material city” was pervaded by a network of daily practices that might lead to downright inertia. The various interventions of the *Journée* sought to sprinkle the city with perplexing situations in need of answers from its dwellers. Restany observed most of the experience and noted that the reactions of clerks, domestic help, and “yé-yé”

9 We follow the pieces' authorship as indicated in *GRAV 1960-1968* (Centre d'Art Contemporain de Grenoble, 1998).

10 Pierre Restany, “Quand l'art descend dans la rue,” *Arts et Loisirs* 31 (April 27, 1966): 16–17.



1. GRAV, *Une journée dans la rue* (1966). Interior of the fold-out leaflet. Le Parc Archive.

girls were positive but isolated. Paradoxically, despite taking place on the streets rather than in a museum, from the critic's perspective, the experience confirmed the detachment between art and life.

The GRAV was part of that set of artists who, from different aesthetic traditions, tried to reconcile art and life to create a new unity in which banal objects were integrated into the aesthetic production, and art actions affected the daily environment to provoke an aesthetic and ethical transformation. The group intended to reach the mass public through devices that did not require a high level of cultural capital. In their logic, the street could be the ideal place to achieve their goal. However, in spite of drawing large audiences to art galleries,¹¹ kineticism did not achieve the same level of success in the public space and the street experience was not repeated.

11 The exhibition *Lumière et Mouvement* (Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1967) attracted a formidable amount of visitors and was extended for three months longer than planned.

A year later, in August 1967, Le Parc's retrospective exhibition was opened at the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella, with remarkable attendance: more than 150,000 visitors over two weeks.¹² In the short-film about the exhibition produced by the ITDT, Le Parc commented:

Since the Buenos Aires public is less attached to artistic and cultural tradition, I think that they can receive this type of experience in a much freer and more spontaneous manner, and thus make direct contact with the objects on exhibit.¹³

First, to the rhythm of jazz, the film showed images of the crowds in the halls; then, the reactions of visitors reflected in the stainless steel surfaces; following this, there were close-ups of the works' visual effects in a dim light; lastly, at the end of the film, viewers were shown under the baffling stroboscopic lights given off by *Mouvement Surprises* (1967). This last sequence of images in combination with the pop music soundtrack seemed to record an evening at a nightclub rather than a visual arts exhibition. Buenos Aires viewers responded in accordance with Le Parc's expectations: spontaneously and enthusiastically. The strategy consisted of producing objects that could reach people who did not frequent exhibitions and, at the same time, get rid of the pompous name of "art."

In the definition of "art field" published by Pierre Bourdieu in 1966, the French sociologist worked with what was familiar to him. To a large extent, his intellectual field matched the boundaries of Paris. In this sense, his perspective was similar to the vantage point of many peripheral cultural actors: in some way, the City of Light was equivalent to the art field. As the capital of modern culture, Paris was an exceptional case: it was the geographic point where the crisscross of forces enjoyed the longest tradition and ascendance.

Le Parc had moved to France attracted by the opportunities and challenges offered by *the* art field par excellence. On his glorious return to Argentina, however, the fact that Buenos Ai-

12 159,287 visitors were recorded. *Memoria y Balance 1967* (Buenos Aires: ITDT, 1968).

13 Interview by Le Parc in *Exposición realizada en el Instituto Torcuato Di Tella con el auspicio de la Asociación Ver y Estimar y el Fondo Nacional de las Artes* (ITDT, 1967). Short film directed by Jorge Alberto de León. ITDT Archives.

res' artistic tradition had not reached Parisian levels lent an advantage to his project. A little further from autonomy in the cultural sphere, Buenos Aires could be the place where the kinetic utopia came true, with art and life coming together in the ITDT's crammed halls. Still, this private, modernizing, internationalist, and appealing institution was the heart of the local avant-garde and had a public of its own, a public used to novel forms of art.¹⁴

Museums Inside and Outside the "Third World"

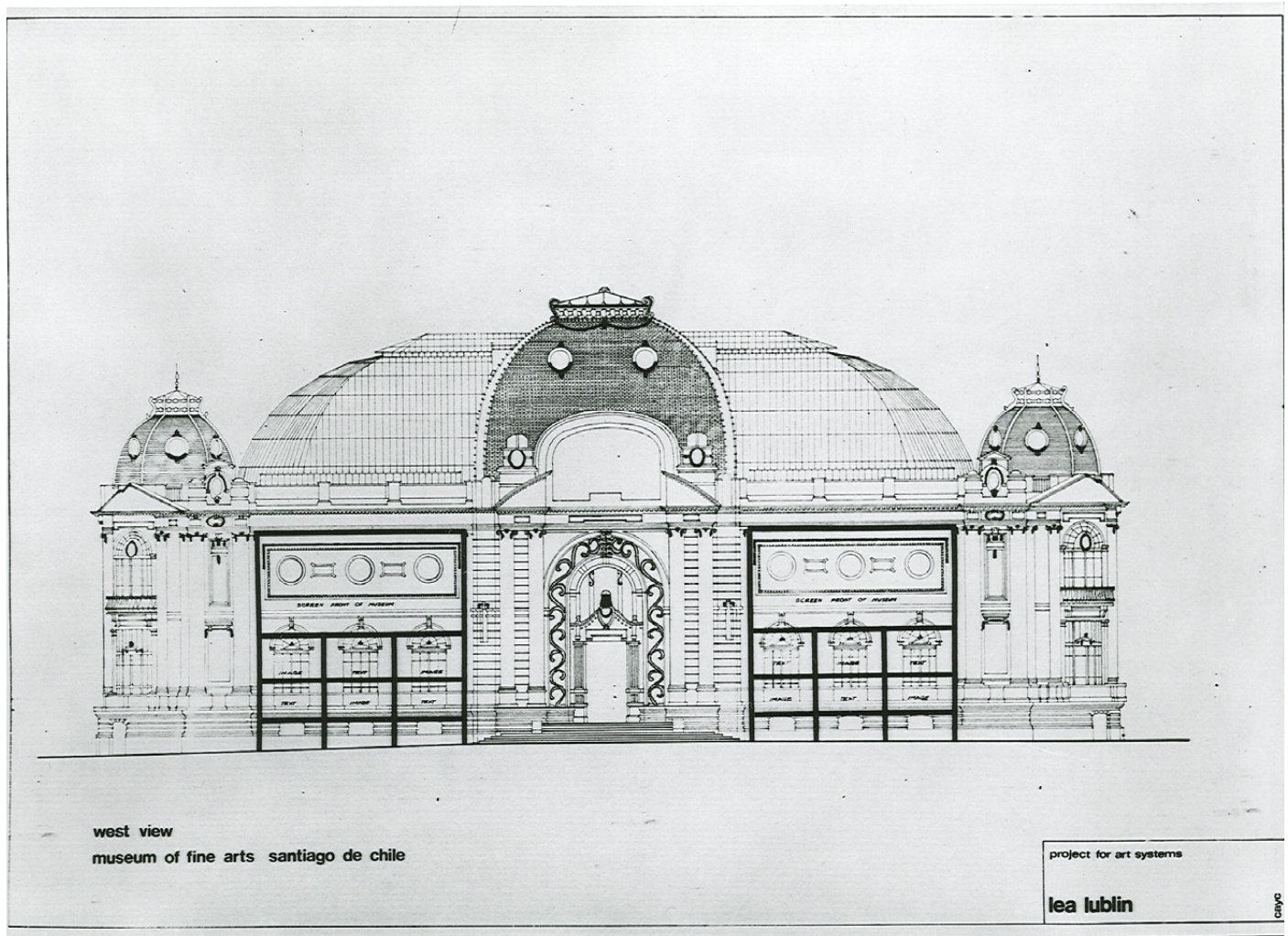
Lea Lublin produced her ambitious project *Cultura: Dentro y Fuera del Museo* (Culture: Inside and Outside the Museum) at the Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in Santiago, Chile, at the end of 1971. This was one year after socialist Salvador Allende of the Unidad Popular party was elected president.

In the artist's own words, that interdisciplinary project was intended to "raise questions about how the world is represented and how the different plastic and visual languages used in transmitting it are constituted."¹⁵ She proposed, then, an "active reflection" (e.g. mediated by participatory devices) on the differentiated circulation of the representation of social processes "outside the museum" on the one hand, and the intellectual and technical processes of art and knowledge "inside the museum" on the other. To this end, *Cultura* deliberately accentuated the differences between the traditional National Fine Arts Museum's "inside" and "outside," while also producing porosity in the boundaries separating the museum from Chilean society and political reality. Thus, Lublin was totally aligned with the institutional critique's reflections, but articulated them along geopolitical lines. What was happening "outside" the Museo in Santiago in 1971 was unprecedented anywhere in the world: socialism had come to power through democratic means.

This project was viable in the context of the renovation initiated by artist Nemesio Antúnez when he became director of the Museo in 1969. The Museo was looking to articulate the rela-

14 A sociological study carried out at the ITDT concluded that "the predominant part of the audience is composed by young people with university education and artistic inclinations." Germán Kratochwil, "Arte Pop en Buenos Aires", *Mundo Nuevo* 26–27 (Paris, August–September 1968): 106–112.

15 Lea Lublin, "Dentro y Fuera del Museo," *Artinf* (Buenos Aires, July 1971).



2. Lea Lublin, *Cultura: dentro y fuera del museo* (1971). Architectural plan of the Fine Art Museum façade, Santiago de Chile, including part of Lublin's project. This blueprint was part of the *Hacia un perfil del arte latinoamericano* exhibition, organised by the Centro de Arte y Comunicación (CayC) in 1972.

tionship between the institution and the citizenry in general through a program of exhibitions which included Lublin's project and others such as Gordon Matta-Clark's *Claraboya*, (one of his first architectural "cuts"), also presented in 1971.¹⁶

In turn, the cultural policies implemented during Chile's access to socialism articulated notions like "critical culture" and "popular culture," which made it possible to revise the functions of museums from the inside of these public institutions themselves.¹⁷

Lublin spent three months in Chile and managed to secure the cooperation of local institutions like Chile-Films, television stations, and the School of Fine Arts. However, despite her efforts, the project was exhibited for only a few days and some

16 Tatiana Cuevas and Gabriela Rangel, cur., *Gordon Matta-Clark. Deshacer el Espacio* (Lima: Museo de Arte de Lima, 2010).

17 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), accessed October 8, 2014.

parts of the project could not be completed.¹⁸ In any case, the press spread her explanations: “Inside lies what is classified, arranged in order, frozen. The physical play is on the streets while the intellectual play is inside; outside lies reality while inside there are representations of reality.”¹⁹ In Lublin’s work, representation is no less important than reality. In line with the interest in semiotics of some of her collaborators, she believed that symbolization was an essential process for apprehending reality. In this sense, culture was not something to be discarded as a whole, as the anti-intellectual camp of the New Left claimed.²⁰ In Allende’s Chile, public art institutions could represent obstacles to the process of social change, but they also held the possibility of becoming instruments for facilitating the new state’s aims. In this context, in an attempt to harness the full potential of the museum to affect the symbolization and representation processes, Lublin leveraged a wide variety of resources and devices.²¹

The project’s “Fuera del Museo” (Outside the Museum) section had three parts. First was the “Muro de los Medios de Comunicación Masiva” (Wall of Mass Communications Media). Screens were installed in front of the elegant façade of the 1910 building, showing audiovisual footage of the most important recent events to take place in Chile. The “Muro de la Historia” (Wall of History) was on the southern lateral façade of the building, projecting images related to key figures in the history of Chile and Latin America. The white surface of the northern lateral façade became the “Muro de la Expression Popular” (Wall of Popular Expression), renewed daily so that the public could make drawings or graffiti on it.

The “Dentro del Museo” (Inside the Museum) section was also organized in three parts or chapters. First, visitors following the route of the installation were offered information on the most important conceptual breakthroughs in the arts and sciences since the mid-nineteenth century. This information was articu-

18 Ana Herlfant, “Cultura Dentro y Fuera del Museo,” *Eva* (Santiago de Chile, January 7, 1972).

19 Ernesto Saúl, “Juegos Respetuosos,” *Ahora* (Santiago de Chile, December 28, 1971).

20 See Oscar Terán, *Nuestros Años Sesentas. La Formación de la Nueva Izquierda Intelectual en la Argentina, 1956–1966* (Buenos Aires: Puntosur, 1991).

21 We follow Jorge Glusberg’s description in *Del Pop a la Nueva Imagen* (Buenos Aires: Gaglianone, 1985), which was contrasted with press information and archive photography.

lated through diagrams that Lublin called “Paneles de Producción Interdisciplinaria” (Interdisciplinary Production Panels). Lublin had produced them in collaboration with specialists in physics, social sciences, linguistics, psychoanalysis, and visual arts (such as Eliseo Verón, the Argentine semiologist residing in Paris; Mario Pedrosa, the Brazilian art critic exiled in Chile; and the Chilean physicist Carlos Martinoya).²²

Then the Panels alternated with a series of curtains made of translucent strips, which the artist called “Pantallas Transparentes” (Transparent Screens), on which slides of a selection of art ranging from Impressionism to 1971 were projected. Visitors had to walk through these in order to continue along the installation route. Finally, in the middle of the room, closed-circuit television showed a live transmission of what was happening outside the museum on the three Walls.

In 1972, Lublin returned to Paris and began working on a new version of this project. 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. She set up the “Pantallas Transparentes” 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: the work *Polílogo Exterior* (Exterior Polylogue), which consisted of tape recordings of gallery owner Yvon Lambert, Lublin herself, writer Philippe Sollers, and poet and essayist Marcel Pleynet—the latter two both co-founders of famed magazine *Tel quel*—all expounding, in a sort of collective monologue, on the difference between word and image and on the current state of painting and art.

It seems highly unlikely that the Chilean version could have been brought to fruition in a Parisian museum. In this sense, Bernard Teyssèdre quipped that he could hardly imagine the Musée National d’Art Moderne ceding one of its exterior walls to allow people to express their thoughts on President Georges

22 The list of collaborators changes depending on the sources. The Argentine team announced by Lublin gathered Juan Carlos de Brasi (philosophy), Jorge Sabato (physics), Jorge Bosch (mathematics), Eliseo Verón (humanities), Diego García Reynoso (psychoanalysis), Oscar Masotta (social history of madness), Juan Carlos Indarta (linguistics), Alberto Costa (architecture), and Analía Werthein (visual arts).

Pompidou via graffiti.²³ Another Parisian museum, the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, intended to offer a refreshing program at the ARC (Animation, Recherche, Confrontation), its department of contemporary art created in 1967, under the direction of Pierre Gaudibert.²⁴ But in general terms, French cultural institutions turned out to be particularly conservative for those artists interested in breaking with modernity during the sixties.²⁵

The Country and the City? Western and Asymmetric Institutions

In his book, *The Country and the City*, published in 1973, Raymond Williams analyzed from a cultural studies perspective the ways in which capitalism transformed British society. The author highlighted the symbolic dimension of the terms “country” and “city” as they appeared in literary and social discourses. Both “country” and “city” were, at the same time, cultural spaces, settings, and historically defined iconographies.²⁶ Although Williams’ analysis focused on the nineteenth century, chapter 24 jumped to the period of the book’s writing for the author to reflect on his contemporary times: by 1973, those figures of “the country” and “the city” defined during the previous century could be applied on a worldwide scale.

Even though political colonization was supposedly over, argued Williams, it could be said that metropolitan states were to Third World countries what cities had formerly been to the countryside. The promise of progress—all of “the country” will eventually become “the city”²⁷—was a fallacy, as the production and economy of those rural states were structured to a great extent around supplying raw materials to the urban states.

23 Bernard Teyssède, “Le Parcours de Lea Lublin”, in *Parcours 1965-1975* (Anvers: International Cutureel Center, 1975), 1–12.

24 Annabelle Tenèze, *Exposer l'art Contemporain à Paris. L'exemple de l'ARC au Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1967–1988* (Mémoire de DEA, Ecole de Chartres, 2004).

25 Isabel Plante “Imágenes, Lengua y Distancia. París desde Latinoamérica”, *Argentinos de París. Arte y Viajes Culturales durante los Años Sesenta* (Buenos Aires: Edhasa, 2013), 25–56.

26 Beatriz Sarlo, “Prólogo a la Edición en Español”, in Raymond Williams, *El Campo y la Ciudad* (1973) (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2001), 14–15.

27 Raymond Williams, *El campo y la ciudad*, 345.

But the political landscape of those years posed a paradox to the Marxist orthodoxy: while the history of capitalism had been understood as the triumph of the city over the countryside, the rising to power of socialism had not occurred in central states, but in the “underdeveloped” ones. On a global scale, continued Williams, the “country” seemed to be fulfilling the dreams of the “city.”

Identified with focoism and the theory of dependence, the South American New Left—with which many intellectuals, including Le Parc and Lublin, sympathized—shared the Third World perspective proposed by Williams, which suggested that History with a capital H had moved to the “country.”²⁸ From this viewpoint, regional cultural institutions were thought to contribute to the very colonized and alienated society they wanted to denounce. However, the dichotomy between the “country” and the “city” figures was not enough to account for the complexity of the institutional panorama’s similarities and asymmetries between the large cities of the Southern Cone and those of the “First World.”

The Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes in Santiago had an encyclopedic profile: created as a public institution around 1880, it had come to reinforce the western and modern character of the Chilean state. In 1910, the Museo opened an elegant building of its own in the Beaux-Arts style, designed by the Chilean-French architect Émile Jéquier. As mentioned above, under the direction of Antunez since 1969, the social role of the museum had become an object of revision—a revision which acquired new nuances under the cultural policies of Allende’s administration beginning in 1970.

For its part, the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella was a private institution funded by an Argentine manufacturing company that did not produce raw materials, but rather cars and labor-saving devices of its own design.²⁹ In 1963, the Instituto brought its Visual Arts, Musical Experimentation, and Audiovisual Experimentation centers (CAV, CLAEM, CEA) together in one building in downtown Buenos Aires. In this sense, the Instituto offered

28 Claudia Gilman, *Entre la Pluma y el Fusil. Debates y Dilemas del Escritor Revolucionario en América Latina* (Buenos Aires: Siglo XXI, 2003).

29 John King, *El Di Tella y el Desarrollo Cultural Argentino en la Década del Sesenta* (Buenos Aires: Gaglianone, 1985).

significant resources and visibility to art modernization in Buenos Aires, a city whose cultural effervescence had fascinated French art critic Pierre Restany in 1964.³⁰

Cultural institutions had contributed to the shaping and representation of South American modern states since the nineteenth century as well as modernizing the metropolis of the region during the postwar period, and were also objects of distrust due to their conservative character. How, then, should one consider such fruitful terms as “institutional critique” in order to avoid simplistic global perspectives? How might we understand the specificities of the aesthetic productions in eccentric but interconnected scenes during the late sixties and early seventies? A key might be found in the comparative analyses offered by studying migrant artists: artists who made their way in new places without losing contact with their cities of origin.

For the past two decades, the study of international cultural connections and art networks has tended to problematize the center-periphery logic, and has enabled us to re-examine the aesthetic proposals of modern or pop art from their local inflections and transnational articulations.³¹ The Latin American cultural and factual history and the geographic itineraries of numerous artists challenge us to think, from here in the Far West,³² about both belonging and limits in relation to Western traditions.

Back to our case studies. Even though Buenos Aires presented a very stimulating art scene, the art market and international visibility of the Parisian art landscape were on another level entirely. Lea Lublin and Julio Le Parc, among many others, tried their luck there because, in Williams’ terms, Paris represented “the city” and had a tradition of hosting foreign artists and intellectuals. But if “the country” seemed to be fulfilling the dreams of “the city” as Williams stated, the Chilean and Argentine cultural institutions conveyed a dissimilar meaning to those of Paris or New York.

30 See Isabel Plante, “Pierre Restany et l’Amérique Latine. Un détournement de l’axe Paris–New York,” in Richard Leeman, dir., *Le Demi-Siècle de Pierre Restany*. (Paris: Institut National d’Histoire de l’Art – Éditions des Cendres, 2009), 287–309.

31 Books such as *Cosmopolitan Modernisms*, *Discrepant Abstraction*, or *Pop Art and Vernacular Cultures* (all compiled by Kobena Mercer and published by The MIT Press and inIVA between 2005 and 2007) are illustrative of the productivity of this perspective in the Anglo-Saxon academy.

32 We take the expression from Alain Rouquié’s book *Amérique Latine: Introduction à l’Extrême Occident* (Paris: Séuil, 1987), even if it doesn’t work very well in English.

These migrant artists developed proposals that were sensitive to those differences in the institutional panoramas, intellectual traditions, and cultural backgrounds of the audience in each city. Their work embraced those asymmetries between South America and Europe, enabling us to rethink the notion of institutional critique in relation to a panorama of interconnected cultural scenes with different hierarchies, traditions, political contexts, and imaginaries. Hence, we are interested in recovering the full meaning of the place from which they articulated their aesthetic proposals: a geographical place and a place of enunciation, which, due to the militarization of South American governments from 1974, has faded in terms of being a culturally productive figure.

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