



# mono

SPECIAL ISSUE

**e-valencia.org**

**mono** is an independent contemporary culture magazine whose first aim is to give its own critical, committed vision about our society. **mono** was born in the city of Valencia at the end of December 2002, and since then, six issues have been published following the same structure. The first part contains short news; the body of the magazine has got essays according to the title of each issue. After that, there is a part that contains articles and interviews, which have more to do with highly topical questions. The last part of **mono** is devoted to authors as well as trends that we want to pay tribute to.

This special edition translated into English was born as a part of the Daniel G. Andújar's **e-project** (Technologies To The People) for the exhibition project On Difference # 1: Local Contexts – Hybrid Spaces at the Württembergischer Kunstverein in Stuttgart.

# x-devian

by Technologies To The People

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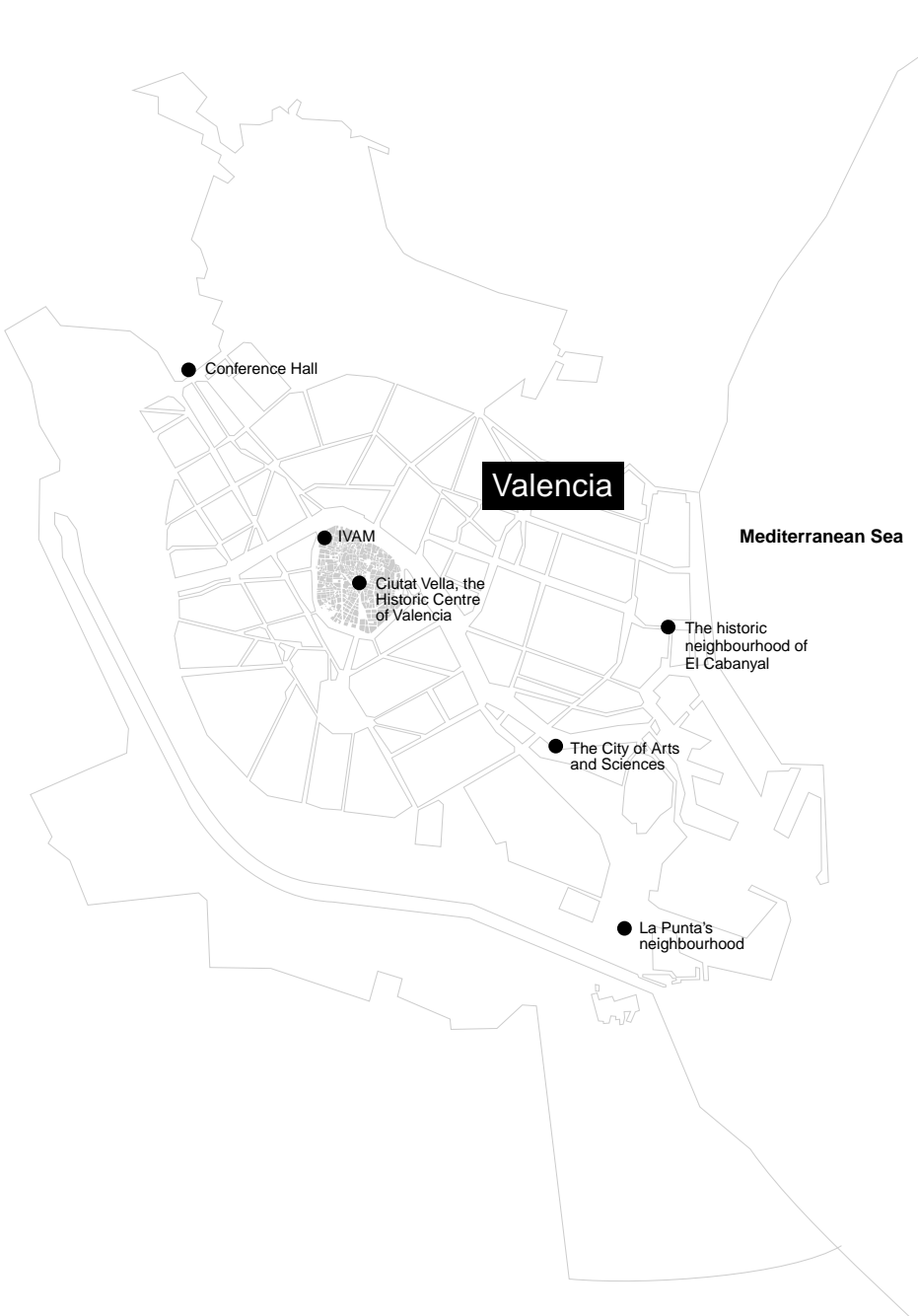


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# Valencia

● Conference Hall

● IVAM

● Ciutat Vella, the  
Historic Centre  
of Valencia

● The historic  
neighbourhood of  
El Cabanyal

● The City of Arts  
and Sciences

● La Punta's  
neighbourhood

Mediterranean Sea

# mono

**e-valencia.org**

## Editorial

Expressions such as "The Valencian Power" (into the Spanish context) or "The Happy Eastern Coast" have been related to Weather conditions, riches lands and promising industry or a high standard of living typical from Valencian Community. However, not everything happening in there fits into this tendentious and politicized microclimate gave by the Regional Government, the only visible opinion.

**mono** is an independent contemporary culture magazine whose first aim is to give its own critical, committed vision about our society. **mono** was born in the city of Valencia at the end of December 2002, and the first issue was entitled "The American night". Since then, six issues have been published following the same structure. The first part, entitled express, contains short news about general aspects of "low" and "high" Culture; the main body of the magazine has got essays according to the title of the issue. After that, there is a part that contains articles and interviews, which have more to do with highly topical questions, called Chronicles of Paradise. The last part of **mono** (Myths) is devoted to authors as well as trends that we want to pay tribute to.

Our latest issue is Fear and other Catastrophes and nowadays, we are working on a new one about the cities (In the Cities) in which we are trying to analyse the different aspects of the cities and their problems at the beginning of the XXI Century.

This special edition translated into English was born as a part of the Daniel G. Andújar's e-Project (Technologies To The People) for the big exhibition project On Difference # 1: Local Contexts – Hybrid Spaces at the Württembergischer Kunstverein in Stuttgart. This one collects essays and articles, which have already been published in the magazine, as well as three new brand ones. The complete issue is devoted to analyse Valencia from different angles: Culture, Architecture, Art, Politics, town planning and the speculation from a critical point of view. The issue has the intention to think over the city, which wants to maintain or improve its standards of living.



Official view of The City of Arts and Sciences' Complex, by the architect and engineer Santiago Calatrava and architect Félix Candela.





Neighbourhood.







# e-valencia: a Cartography

Álvaro de los Ángeles



## Social-political context

The Region of Valencia is one of the seventeen that comprise Spain. Each has its own regional president and government. After democracy was established in Spain in the late 70's and with the current Constitution approved in 1978, the Central Government has transferred to the regions ever more power and autonomy in issues such as Health, Employment, Education, Culture, Economy and Finances. These executive areas are arranged by the regional government of Valencia in *Consellerias*, akin to regional ministries, each presided by a *Conseller*.

The Region of Valencia, lies along the East Coast of Spain and has more than 4 million inhabitants distributed in its three provinces: Alicante, Castellón and Valencia, all eminently Mediterranean. These fertile lands, prosperous in agriculture, industries and services, also have the great tourist attraction of their coast and beaches, making them one of the preferred tourist destinations for many Europeans. Their own language and ancestral customs identify and define them as an autonomous people with a long an meandering history that includes having been a Muslim kingdom, reconquered into a Christian reign.

This history-in-a-nutshell is necessary to understand the current development of the cultural management of the Region of Valencia and specifically of the city of Valencia, its political and administrative capital. For the last ten years, the Popular Party (of a conservative ideology) has governed the Region of Valencia. During the last six years it has governed with an absolute majority. This allows political decisions without consideration of possible opposition opinions and without need, therefore, of any political agreement with other parties, more or less minority, to develop electoral programmes. During this period, big projects have been carried out and remarkable goals have been achieved, particularly favoured by the global economical bonanza and a management directed towards certain specific aims, relegating others equally necessary.

Focusing on the cultural field, the number of cultural spaces, under many guises, of the Region of Valencia has increased considerably. Some of these are carry-overs from previous governments and others are the results of the current government's own planning.

In any case, what is certain is the general feeling that the multiplication of cultural continents has not generated interesting encounters and events. Nevertheless, this expansion has diluted and tinged of conservatism the contents of both new and old spaces. Cultural projects are generally perceived as tending towards the spectacular. Their exaggerated propaganda and the increase of investments in leisure, recreation and ancillary issues, is certainly disproportional. These huge projects are addressed to generate an illusion, a screen-effect, among citizens. The star projects of the regional government, particularly the recreational-cultural complex *La Ciudad de las Artes y las Ciencias* (The City of Arts and Sciences), by the architect and engineer Santiago Calatrava and architect Félix Candela, in Valencia, and the theme park *Terra Mítica* (Mythical Land), in Benidorm, are depleting the region's coffers and increasing public deficit. Their constant capital increases and delays in delivery dates, to say nothing of the need of operating and maintaining in optimum conditions really enormous infrastructures, add up to this.

### **The web site [www.e-valencia.org](http://www.e-valencia.org)**

The web site [www.e-valencia.org](http://www.e-valencia.org) was officially born on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November of 2001. From the beginning it was set out as an opinion and discussion forum dealing with the cultural policies of the Region of Valencia.

The inauguration of this website and forum of opinion took place in the *Galería Visor* (Valencia), on the 30<sup>th</sup> of November of 2001, in the context of the exhibition *The Power of Security* of the artist Daniel G. Andújar. Both exhibition and website were sponsored by the company Technologies To The People (TTTP), dedicated to safeguarding the privacy and security in the net and specialised in monitoring the control systems that operate both within and out of the Internet. TTTP has also a foundation that acquires and promotes multimedia works of art, which are some times presented in public exhibitions.

For this exhibition, the upper room of the gallery had been transformed into a twilight space, the walls all covered with subversive printed information, a table in the middle of the room



*The Power of Security*, 2001.  
*Galería Visor*, Valencia.

and two computers with a DSL connection so the website could be visited during gallery hours. This was meant to be a presentation, bait for the audience, so they would keep visiting it afterwards, at home or work. The irruption of [www.e-valencia.org](http://www.e-valencia.org) in the local art scene meant an interesting novelty: it gathered in a single space all the articles of cultural interest published in local and national newspapers for consultation. Its first aim was to become a great database, updated daily, where everything published could be found, downloaded, printed out, copied and used. It allowed visitors to leave remarks on the updated news in a quick and effective manner, creating personal mail accounts and contributing texts or articles. The novelty was, thus, not the program, but rather, its use, becoming since the very first moment a tool for daily use. Apart from its functional virtues, the website arrived in a crucial moment, only forty days after the closing ceremony of the controversial Biennial of Valencia. It was also only a month before a piece of news, which had been partially hidden came out: one of the sites of the *Institut Valencià d'Art Modern* (IVAM) was going to be absorbed by the imminent expansion of the Museum of the XIX Century. Its first phase had been already inaugurated, and to continue growing it had to run over the two exhibition rooms of the IVAM-Centre del Carme.

This news triggered the reaction of the people linked and committed to contemporary art. The *Centre del Carme* had been inaugurated together with the main building of the IVAM-Centre Julio González in February, 1989. From the beginning, especially during the first years, it had been an unavoidable reference in Spain and Europe. In a city that was starting to take off in the 80's, after forty years of complete denial of contemporary models for cultural management and transmission, this space was designed as a buoy, a signal and a hand grip: a reference. In the end it meant much more. The ultimate accolade came with the art direction by Vicente Todolí (formerly director of the *Museu Serralves*, Oporto, Portugal and currently director of Tate Modern, London) together with the work of a great team. Among others were Nuria Enguita (currently director of the *Fundació Antoni Tàpies*, Barcelona, Spain, and one of the curators of Manifesta 4), Bartomeu Marí and Corinne Diserens. The wise work of politicians that trusted a group of excellent professionals and allow them to work well augmented this. Artists like Richard Prince, Allan McCollum, Robert Wilson, Juan Muñoz, Muntadas, Francesc Torres, Dara Birnbaum, Cildo Meireles, Juan Downey, Gary Hill, James Lee Byars, Matt Mullican, etc. left their mark upon the



IVAM-Centre Julio González, Valencia.



Embajador Vich's Hall, former IVAM-Centre del Carme, Valencia.



Model of Museum of the XIX Century.

public knowledgeable of the more contemporary art forms. The space itself, a former convent comprised by a Renaissance cloister and two rectangular rooms with small side chapels where the School of Fine Arts had been lodged, had a lot to do with its success. The IVAM's exhibition policy was clear in the beginning: the exhibitions in the new building (*Centre Julio González*) paid great attention to art history, art trends and consecrated artists. On the other hand, the old space (*Centre del Carme*) was dedicated to specific installations. It was a place where gothic, renaissance and neo-classical architectural motifs coexisted with art pieces and contemporary installations by artists of great international projection.

The news that this site was being closed, and particularly that it was being exchanged for a Museum of the XIX Century had a wide repercussion on e-valencia. A system for collecting signatures and comments was quickly developed in order to protest for this loss. And this protest system meant the creation of the Plataforma cívico-cultural *Ex-Amics de l'IVAM* (Former Friends of the IVAM - Civic and Cultural Platform). It included gallery owners, artists, art critics, exhibition curators and citizens committed to contemporary culture. The creation of a new museum was not criticised –although recently opened new exhibition spaces and their programmes had not contributed, to any extent, to what was already known, seen or heard by the audience. Criticism was drawn against the end of an exhibition space of renowned trajectory which was actually, the only one that tended (at least in its origins) towards the purely contemporary art.

Rapidly, the top cultural brass considered e-valencia a non-grato interactive space. The criticisms gathered in e-valencia, centred on the work of two public administrators: Consuelo Ciscar and Kosme de Barañano. At that point, Consuelo Ciscar was the Sub-secretary for Cultural Promotion, in charge of all the museums of the region: their programming, their creation, change of use or closure; always with the approval of the regional president, Eduardo Zaplana (1995-2002), José Luis Olivas (2002-2003), Francisco Camps (2003-2007) and of the *Conseller* for Culture, Manuel Tarancón (until 2003), Esteban González (2003), Alejandro Font de Mora (since summer 2004). Kosme de Barañano was the Director of the IVAM from 2000 to 2004. The criticisms received due to the imminent loss of the site of the IVAM-*Centre del Carme* drove him to publish an article in the regional edition of the newspaper EL PAÍS, titled *IVAM: balance and objectives*.



*Ex-Amics de l'IVAM.*



Consuelo Ciscar. Director of the IVAM.



Kosme de Barañano. Former director of IVAM (2000-2004).

In this article, Mr. Barañano listed a number of achievements, data and statistics that seemed excuses to mask his complete acceptance of a closure, something no other director would ever have tolerated. He also stated that the decision had been approved before he became director, although the news of the closure was made public a year and a half after his appointment. Also, the previous director, Juan Manuel Bonet, denied having been notified of this during his stint.

In the same article, Mr. Barañano made a naïve mistake that in the end spurred the users of e-valencia. He referred to the criticisms received via Internet in this manner: "(...) to those who slander me and the other employees of the IVAM from the impunity and cowardice of anonymity, I'll say that they are wasting their time. I am one of those who believe, as did Ramón y Cajal, that silence is the best and most economical reaction to slander" (EL PAÍS, Sunday 03/03/2002). With this public accusations Kosme de Barañano clearly stated that he was aware of the existence of the website and of the criticisms to his management. At the same time, he established himself as spokesman of the opinion (widely spread among certain sectors of the population and those that hold power) that the Internet is a dangerous tool whose unlimited use escapes restraints, and that it should be controlled more closely than it is now. In short, by trying to discredit the media, he highlighted its purpose and meaning.

Since May 2004, the director of the IVAM is Consuelo Ciscar, former Secretary of Culture.

### **Anonymity and resistance. Local versus universal**

The anonymity referred to by the Director of the IVAM was based on the many comments resulting of the published articles, and also on the pseudonyms of the users of e-valencia. This feature is intrinsic to an open and plural media as Internet. Criticising it, means denying the citizen's right to express opinions on the administration's activities. In other words, this criticising of anonymity, leads us to think that, in their opinion, every single citizen should be always easily identified, so those having discrepant opinions might be rapidly and effectively spotted.

In short, this would mean that those that can and actually do exercise their authority and power, would not have any obstacle to do so. However, it is indisputable that a public position (and it is public from the very moment it is accepted) is subject to an additional responsibility: acceptance of the citizens' criticisms, whether these are publicly or privately, individually or collectively

expressed. The ingenuity of the article became obvious through its pretence of discrediting the users' opinions giving arguments to what all of them expected to hear or read, and entrenching even more their position.

To talk of resistance, on the other hand, implies in this context, discrepancy and criticism to political decisions that, under the protecting wing of a majority legitimately obtained in the elections, waive or simply ignore the opinions of others involved. Obviously this group of people will always represent a small minority compared to the mainstream, but their voice is the only acceptable discrepancy, since the decisions under discussion affect them very closely. Internet stands, thus, as the ideal weapon for this kind of criticism and actions. As Manuel Castells excellently states it in his "Internet and the Net society", "Internet is the global-local connection, that is the new way of control and social action in our society". This implies that local problems need local solutions, but it is surprising to see how the different local problems end up being global due to their similarities; whether they take place here or there, only some names and data change. In this sense, e-valencia, as a personal project of Daniel G. Andújar, is only a first step within a net that will make possible a local-global connection or at least a local-general connection. An e-barcelona is already running for debating the cultural and artistic policies in Catalonia and the possibilities of having an e-sevilla are under study. They would contribute to this global view of the cultural policy in Spain, starting from specific local examples. The number of events that have happened since the creation of this website and the consequences in the public opinion have no precedent in the region of Valencia. It has grouped the press information regarding cultural policy and it has created a focus of attention, unavoidable for citizens and public entities that see in it a daily barometer of opinion and criticism, even though they do not accept it. This open critical capacity and independence before power and its public budgets set another precedent. This is particularly important in a country such as Spain where, excepting certain cases in Catalonia, mainly centred in Barcelona, public money destined to culture is organised and distributed through official management entities, mainly public with some private ones. The executive positions of these entities often depend on the governing political party, as it happens with the Social Work of the Popular Savings Banks. This is to say, the public help (if granted) must swallow up projects and their distribution, making them their own. This generates a tendency to the general that is

hardly avoidable. This in-bred management model revolving power and its uses can only be fought with tools that do not need big budgets or costly maintenance systems.

These technical advantages are available with the Internet: connecting dispersed opinions, creating lines of thought and/or discourse that become ever richer and more specialised and maintaining an updated and functional work in progress. Another advantage is that it is permanently available. Specifically, opinion forums and chats are perfect tools for developing autonomous features with sharply defined particularities of their own.

e-valencia's first tendency is to give precedence to opinion over the author. This is totally opposed to a contemporary society that values authorship and signature over the opinion itself, especially in the fields of culture and art. Thus, the use of anonymity and pseudonyms in the comments make it a matchless tool that, however, has not come accompanied by great polemics. In all the time that e-valencia has been operating, there have not been confrontations or particularly strong accusations. The criticism and demands have been kept on a civil and reasoned line.

If all this potential of Internet is directed, as it is in the case of e-valencia, towards broadcasting and publicising criticism and controlling the cultural policy of a certain location, the result is immediate. It uses the same weapons as the "show" culture to tend their nets and to oppress. Also, it has a predisposition for dialogue and a transparency in data and statistics which should be demanded of politics (cultural or not) in a democratic country. It is, in short, such an accurate simulator for the manner in which our society works that the reflection of certain fields of power can be actually frightening.

**This text was first published in Mute issue 24, 2002**









# Neofeudalism and return of the Inquisition

**Domingo Mestre**

“The worst thing about the American left-wing is that it betrayed to save its swimming pools. And there was no American right-wing in my generation.

It did not intellectually exist. There were only left-wingers who betrayed each other. Because the left-wings were not destroyed by McCarthy; they destroyed themselves making way for a new generation of nihilists”. **Orson Welles**

I

## **Business nobility**

The bad times are a coming, but not only for poetry, as the old song says, but also for the rest of the subjective production and individual freedom. The development of the information technology society is contributing to a deep social transformation which already affects practically all areas of our lives. The new global society, also known as the “capital empire”<sup>1</sup>, is not so much based on the production of goods as on their consumption, especially of information<sup>2</sup>, and on speculation. In this *new world*, which is permanently evolving, it is easy to detect the return of certain neofeudal<sup>3</sup> features which are being combined, more or less turbulently, with the unrealised enlightened dream of social emancipation and with the neo-liberal dogma to search for profit at all costs. Despite the survival of the old Nation-States and their monopoly on legal violence – although not the real power to exercise it –, it is true that, because of its peculiar features, this imperial reorganisation can only be administrated efficiently with the collaboration of those who Echeverría named the new “Air Lords”<sup>4</sup>; a small group of private companies and semi-public corporations who are the owners and administrators of the virtual space whose job is to channel the information flows. Along with the old War Lords (arms manufacturers) and the Speculation Lords<sup>5</sup> (the owners of banks and financiers) they make up a new

money-based aristocracy which has been redesigned in practice, always according to its strategic needs, by the universe in which we live. Naturally, this decisive pre-legislative – and even pre-executive – function which is carried out by the big economic *lobbies* must remain in the shadows, as always, given that it would not be the done thing to continue talking to the people about freedom and democracy if they knew that the basic guidelines are imposed by a small group of moneyed *gentlemen*.

It is important bear in mind that, in its current context, the resolution of antagonist conflicts is developed, mainly, in the symbolic environment of media space. This explains the importance which its control has acquired, because not only do the results of the next elections depend on it but also the prices on the world markets of the new nobility's relative values. And this also leads to a company's interest to make over their public image using patronage and sponsoring of all types of philanthropic and cultural activities. In this respect, Rodríguez Casanueva, businessman and president of *Philantropos*, affirmed a few days ago that "2003 is the year of Company Social Responsibility (CSR) in our country (...) company patronage is essentially a game in which all the parties involved can and must obtain clear profits"<sup>6</sup>. An unfair game, of course, in which the supposed social benefit for the needy does not have to be linked to their real needs, but it does have to be subordinated to the interests of those who promote it.

### **The slang of the instabilisation**

The lucid intuition from the different resistance groups who believe that the constructed situation demands local responses for global problems and that the system's weak point can be found, mainly, in the symbolic sabotage in the great sacred ceremonies of capital globalisation (WTO, IMF, WB meetings) has achieved unexpected media victories in the unstoppable fight between those that rule and the multitude of those that obey. It has been an unquestionable success which has filled the cup with new hope. However, it has also created a strong spatial and temporary dependency regarding this pageantry, which remains independent of movement and makes neutralisation easier by allowing their actions to depend on the meetings of the 'Lords'. It also demands making a spectacle of the forms which have not always been well planned or adequately counteracted by the

1 HARDT, M. and NEGRI, A.: *Empire (Imperio)*. Paidós. Barcelona 2002.

2 And as consumers, from the birth of "productive consumption", we are the main merchandise which, at the moment, is being speculated with.

3 ECO, U., COLOMBO, F., ALBERONI, F. y SACCO, G.: *The new middle ages (La nueva edad media)*. Alianza Editorial. Madrid 1990. This publication covers other aspects related to the issue which it is impossible for us to deal with adequately here.

4 ECHEVERRÍA, J.: *Los señores del aire: Télépolis y el tercer entorno*. Destino. Barcelona 1999.

5 It should be noted as a differential fact the enormous power in our State of the Brick Lords, with the capacity to sabotage local elections in the Community of Madrid and instate the candidate who looks after their interests as president. p. 69.

6 RODRÍGUEZ CASANUEVA, F.: "Playing for everyone to win" "*Jugar a que todos ganen*", *El País*, 23-10-2003, p. 69.

7 HOUTART, F.: "Civil Society and public spaces", in FORO SOCIAL MUNDIAL (MONEREO, M. and RIERA, M., ed.), *Porto Alegre, Another world is possible (Otro mundo es posible)*. El Viejo Topo. Barcelona 2001.

provision of specific contents and different ways of doing things; something which has had an effect, to a certain respect, on the current limitations of the formula.

However, the positive side of all this adventure is the practical demonstration that other forms of heterorganisation really are possible. In fact, it is no longer the parties who call themselves left-wing or trade unions who call the shots in social conflicts but the different approved collectives, those of no bread and no land, no home and no job, no work papers and no culture, meaning the unstable in one sense who continually take the initiative and manage their own support networks and (dis)organised defence, thanks, in many cases, to the capacities which are now offered by new technologies.

Without a doubt, in the near future it will be respecting plurality and differences which will mark the guidelines to making up the backbone of a true "civil society *from below*"<sup>7</sup>. The only way to manage to slow down the runaway ambitions of those who are always *above* in some way. For this reason, I believe that the collective challenge would pass by recovering initiative, freeing it from servitude regarding the great global lords to expand its field of action down to medium-sized and even small events (especially cultural events), which are those which are now legalising the policies which affect us most directly as the far-reaching clergy of yesteryear did with feudal decisions. Equally, it seems desirable to try and construct some type of macro-formula of anti-system resistance between all the social groups which are victims of the current system. A collective company in which communication technicians and professionals (engineers, computer experts, journalists, theorists, artists, etc.) have much to contribute and of which we only really know that, out of necessity, will have to sustain itself in a structure which is different from that of current society built for the bourgeoisie, which, let us not forget, is that which sustains the current unquestionable capital class.

### The cultural clergy

In this new imperial order, the only unquestionable god is Money, as respected and adored by the Lords as by its slaves. Its official religion is no longer economics, as might be imagined, but culture, which awards the first order dictates with the category of unquestionable. Intellectuals and artists make up a relevant

part of the new evangelising clergy – and mendicant in many cases – with the particularity, moreover, that heterodoxy, which is consubstantial for free-thinkers, now forms part of ecclesiastical orthodoxy. A cruel paradox which, frequently, converts artistic dissent into submission – and the uncritical representation of the conflicts into the true sleepy stupor of the parishioner.

Just as in the Middle Ages, the current co-habitation between the *nobility* and the *clergy* is almost total, limiting itself to divergences in questions regarding quantities mainly. In these conditions we should not be surprised that art is successfully dying, exhausted by the needs of institutional cultural marketing and company patronage, and that culture should be the object of desire even for the most coarse and uncultured gentlemen. Given that this use of art as propaganda – or, in the best cases, as lenitive – contributes little to the common cause, the survival of the old emancipatory spirit which used to accompany the Utopian project of modern art is shown to be an absolutely necessary contradiction which takes refuge nowadays, with difficulty, in very few heterotopias in progress, almost always virtual, which still maintain certain independent management.

In any case, it is comforting to know of the existence of corporate artistic fictions such as Technologies To The People (TTTP), a leading company<sup>8</sup> in the field of private patronage, which has made an agnostic declaration of faith revealing occult contradictions in the system. Its original range of symbolic products, always ironically intended for *public* use, and its campaigns of mass digital literacy make up small necessary counter-points compared with the multiple populist measures which continually try to put it under the yoke of the promise of salvation. Along with them, the sponsoring and maintenance of informative and communicational participation tools on the web, such as the site e-valencia.org, mark a qualitative difference compared with other similar companies or projects which, also from the artistic environment – but without managing to escape from it –, are trying to shed some kind of light on the fog of the new system.

This latter project is especially interesting for different reasons. Originally, it made up part of *The Power of Security*<sup>9</sup> exhibition and was devised as a website housed in the server of the Museum of the University of Alicante (MUA). The site, developed in the same way as all the TTTP projects using free software, contains

**8** Take the title quite literally given that the whole company concentrates on that. It emerged from the title of an exhibition by Daniel G. Andújar, and since then has served to promote different initiatives, more or less subversive, from the respectable backing which it is awarded from its simulated belonging to these new 'gentlemen' of money making up the multinationals.

**9** Galería Visor, Valencia 2001.

**10** The public's great acceptance brought about the setting up of other sites with the same basic principle such as e-barcelona, e-arco or e-toulouse.

**11** Interview with Daniel G. Andujar. "The project deals with the limits of freedom and how the use of new technologies can affect our society, how our society can self-regulate formally in as specific a context as that created for e-valencia". <http://somiatriuites.blogalia.com/historias/12561>.

**12** VIRNO, P.: *Virtuosity and Revolution*. (*Virtuosismo y Revolución*). Dealers in dreams. Madrid 2003.

**13** Whose political efficiency can be valued according to the hysterical reactions which it provoked: the IVAM pedagogic department recently edited a comic in which the evil Doctor Hipno, a "former friend of the offended IVAM", tried to hypnotise the public in the Museum avenge his lack of recognition. Finally, he is beaten by the management personnel knocked down by a sculpture by Julio González! An incredible strategy in child manipulation which, however, recalls the ideological links of Disney films with senator McCarthy's "witch hunt".



*Ex-Amics de l'IVAM* (Former Friends of the IVAM). Civic and Cultural Platform. Action during IVAM-Centre del Carmen closing.



*Ciutadans per una Cultura Democràtica i Participativa* (Citizens for a Democratic and Participatory Culture). Action at II World Arts Meeting, Conference Hall, Valencia.



a press magazine which is updated daily and a news archive relating to cultural events in Valencia. All its contents can be freely accessed and it is characterised by ease of user participation. This is something which has permitted the more than 2500 *anonymous* users who visit it everyday to expressed the well-argued opinions, publicly and without going through any other system, over the past two years<sup>10</sup>.

The intelligent use of the possibilities of anonymity has allowed us, despite the polemics which have arisen<sup>11</sup>, to explore unknown fields of collaboration including those who possess privileged information and the desire to make it public (but they cannot identify themselves for risk of losing their jobs), and those who possess the intelligence to interpret it appropriately, without holding a public name which opens doors for them into media visibility. The continuous transfer of information in both directions has caused a permanent *feed back* which translates into an exponential increase in the quality of the information, a phenomenon which has allowed us to discern an enormous hidden potential of those provocatively labelled “mass intellectuality”<sup>12</sup>.

The particular spell of this project comes from the exceptional reception which it obtained from an extremely necessary social ferment of this type of tools and who has never cared a jot about their possible artist character. Its more than 750 000 visits, over the last few years, have generated a real *public art* without meaning to and, in time, they have collaborated actively in order to unmask the networks which are hidden behind the cultural policies of the Community of Valencia. Using this tool, citizens' resistance was organised against the closing of the IVAM Carmen Centre, against the II World Arts Meeting and against the II Valencia Biennial Exhibition. From there, there have been continual complaints lodged against the shortfalls of public education such as incoherence of a cultural policy involved in the creation infrastructures without content, making easier lines of investigation which later have been developed for the traditional *media*. From the synergies brought up on the forum emerged the critical collective *Ex-Amics de l'IVAM* (ex-friends of IVAM) which has managed to bring together a whole kaleidoscope of different artistic stances, which have been able to come together, at specific moments, to give their demands more weight<sup>13</sup>. And from this embryo of wills the *Ciutadans per una Cultura Democràtica i Participativa* (Citizens for a Democratic and

Participatory Culture)<sup>14</sup> association was born, which, at the same time, was integrated in a platform of civic associations and citizens (1+1+1) which is exploring new formula for citizen participation in public matters. It is all a rhizome of flexible social fabric which, with minimal and seemingly bearable organisation, is continually changing itself following the rhythm of event and the flow of collective wishes.

## II

### **The crusade against (in) security**

The tragic slaughter of 11<sup>th</sup> September, transformed into the most impacting media event in history for its capacity to deeply affect practically the whole planet simultaneously and in real time, has tipped the imperial balance, at least for the moment, towards the most radically reactionary aspect of the conservative theorem. From then on, an epic of security has taken over the discourse which emanates from the hard centre of the empire and, under the cover of the preventative and permanent war against terrorism, espionage and censorship have stopping being practised in the semi-darkness in order to turn itself into *popular* measures of preventative hygiene. New prohibitions and restrictions of acquired rights which are sold to us as essential, but whose real use is more than questionable given that its main virtue lies far more in the sensation of insecurity and lack of protection which they generate than in their true efficiency. These measures are generating repressive paranoia which converts all dissidence in dangerous antagonism. A deliberate distortion of the principles of social dialogue using many of the instruments which before had served to protect civil liberties are now turning into dangerous weapons at the hands of those who want to exercise political domination.

And it is happening like this, not only with the fetishes of the latest generation such as Internet, whose mystified democratising power of knowledge is being reconverted under pressure into an efficient tool for espionage (the former *Echelon* network and the new *Carnivore* programme)<sup>15</sup> and for control (the controversial LSSICE law)<sup>16</sup>, if not also with other classic stratum such as North American public libraries, which were, until recently, exemplary focuses of free circulation of culture, whose workers have been obliged today, following the new anti-terrorist law *USA Patriot*



**14** In which citizens and professionals are integrated coming from very different culture fields who were the organisers of the “*Realitats de la Ciutat*” days coinciding with the celebration of the II Valencia Biennial Exhibition.

**15** GARCÍA ANDÚJAR, D.: “Freedom versus security” (Libertad versus seguridad) in FONTCUBERTA, J.: *Securitas*. Gustavo Gili. Barcelona 2001. “*Echelon* is a spying system designed to operate on civil objectives which acts by intercepting enormous quantities of communications indiscriminately and randomly and then selecting what is of value using artificial intelligence”. *Carnivore*. “This is a computer system designed to allow the FBI, in collaboration with an Internet provider, to pass the judicial order which demands the collection of certain information relating to e-mail or other types of electronic communication from a specific user who is being investigated”.

**16** Spanish law which regulates communications in Internet and whose confused wording allows it to be the Administration, and not the Law Courts, who impose restrictions on the free circulation of Internet contents, as well as establishing the possibility that the *webmasters* are considered responsible for their pages’ hyperlinks. Its latest modification has consisted of... legalising *spam*! Another victory for the Air Lords over the most basic interests of the rest of the community.

**17** In spite of this, it was these very professionals whose pressure has managed to raise the censorship maintained in the press for a year on Michael Moore’s latest book, *Stupid White Men* (Ediciones B. Barcelona 2003), which related the manoeuvres and conspiracies which allowed President Bush to take imperial power.

**18** A special mention must be given to the coverage of this war carried out by the channel Tele 5 in the atmosphere of our State, nerve which cost the life of the cameraman José Couso in an unclear incident which our incompetent government has been incapable of clearing up.

**19** STONOR SAUNDERS, E: *The CIA and the Cultural Cold War (La CIA y la Guerra fría cultural)*. Debate. Madrid 2001.

Act, to turn themselves into unpaid spies who must inform the authorities immediately about people who are reading what is considered potentially dangerous material – and also about what individuals who are considered a priori to be suspicious are reading. Repressive madness has reached such a point that, right now, North American librarians<sup>17</sup> can be taken to court for merely contacting a lawyer for information about the real reach of their professional obligations.

Something similar has occurred with the right to free information, which, having been submitted to previous self-censuring during the war with Iraq, has been transformed into a parody of journalistic communication whose *climax* could be situated in the recent prohibition from president Bush to photograph the coffins which return North American victims of the occupation. Bloody tragic-comedy interpreted masterfully not only by his country’s press but also by practically all televisions in our environment<sup>18</sup>. It is a shameful sight which, despite not totally convincing anybody, has however achieved a real manipulation of the global perception of the collective reality judging by the latest election results.

### The return of the Inquisition

Propaganda and censorship are both activities which have been going on for many years. However, freedom of expression is a recent conquest, parallel to the bourgeois revolutions, which only began to be generalised, in the *democratic* countries, after World War II. It seems that, this expansion was speeded up by the allied coalition as a preventative antidote to the dangerous efficiency of the combination of repression and propaganda developed by Minister Goebbels in Nazi Germany – the famous *Exhibition of Degenerate Art* was a risky bet of his which fulfilled all its expectations and opened the door to later political manipulation of the antagonist art. In a very short time, the ever-growing freedom of creation became, especially through the Berlin Cultural Freedom Congress – patronised in secret by the CIA<sup>19</sup> –, under the flag of the so-called *free world* and the symbol of democratic faith which should have marked its difference from the *dictatorships* during the whole development of the cold war. A difference which was more symbolic than real given that, as a parallel corrective to this expansion of freedom, this time also saw the appearance of the “witch hunt” by the Anti-American Activities Committee

whose most outstanding legacy consisted of the profound interiorisation of the self-censoring in this country.

In any case, the arts have always had a double function: on the one hand, they have served to promote the greatness of those who control them; on the other hand, they have behaved as a catalyst for the individual and collective dreams of those who enjoy them – or those who suffer them. On the margin of these specific functions, the most outstanding is not its supposed importance, something which nobody really believes in these days, but the fact that they house the potential capacity to open cracks and fissures in the watertight fields of what in every moment seemed thinkable. Because of these functions, fragments of knowledge which were inaccessible by other means have sprung up, historically – despite its traditional use for subjugation – and from there comes the idea that its special need for freedom is a subject of real general interest.

If, as Ramonet affirms<sup>20</sup>, the post-modern censor of the 21<sup>st</sup> century should be based more in the informative saturation than in the suppression of information<sup>21</sup> – even though it might only be for the mere question of rationalising resources –, the return to the compulsory silencing of the dissidence is an anachronism which recalls the methods described in the *Inquisitor's Manual* (13<sup>th</sup> Century) where the God-fearing are averted to: “Any people, any nation which allows the bud of heresy into its heart, cultivates it and does not remove it in time, is perverted, falls into subversion and could even disappear”<sup>22</sup>.

Victims of the current practices of these antiquated principles, the *Dixie Chicks*, a popular feminine North American *country* trio who dared to publicly criticise the occupation of Iraq, have seen how their music went, in the space of a few days, from n° 1 in the hit parade to disappearing completely from the radio stations, whilst their ranches were looted and they received death threats: “It has been shown that it was a manoeuvre orchestrated by the republican right-wing. The party is very well organised. They called and sent emails to the radio stations requesting that they should not play our songs (...) Honest radio workers began to investigate the origin of the tens of thousands of calls and mails. They discovered that the majority of the protests came from the central headquarters of the Republican Party”<sup>23</sup>.

State-wide, the situation is not particularly different as, after a short parenthesis of pro-European normality, in the past few

**20** RAMONET, I.: *The tyranny of communication* (*La tiranía de la comunicación*). Debate. Madrid 1998.

**21** Which does not mean, in the least, that classic censoring has ever totally disappeared, but on the whole it has adopted other forms which are more sibilant and appropriate to the situation. In this respect, *The File Room* project which was started by Muntadas, collected updated information from most of the cases which still happen <http://www.thefileroom.org>.

**22** EIMERIC N. y PEÑA F.: *The inquisitor's manual* (*El manual de los inquisidores*). Muchnik. Barcelona 1983, quoted by ALCARAZ RAMOS, M.: *Op. cit.* p. 37.

**23** GÓMEZ L.: "Combative 'country'" in *El País* [Semanal], 26-10-2003, p. 25

**24** <http://www.e-barcelona.org/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=2226>.

**25** By the time these lines are printed, the page [e-valencia.org](http://www.e-valencia.org) is probably active again, returning from forced exile, and we hope that it is not too battered by the mutilations of inactivity.

**26** ALCARAZ RAMOS, M.: *Op. cit.* p. 228-229.

months we are seeing more and more cases of abuses of power from the cultural institutions. In August of last year, at the peak of the Spanish-Moroccan crisis over *Isla Perejil*, the management of Cajastur Social Events decided to cancel the *Fez*, inner city exhibition by Toni Serra in the Revillagigedo Palace in Gijón. During the latest San Sebastian film festival, the Culture Minister triggered a furious discrediting campaign against the film by Julio Medem, *La pelota vasca* which was qualified, with no exaggerations, as *counter-reformist*. Already bordering on the puritan, the fundamentalist association *e-cristians* have used the mass *e-mailing* to put pressure on those in charge of the Culture Institute of Barcelona (ICUB) and managed to change the title of an installation by the artist Jaume Alcalde entitled *Mecagum Déu. Home videos about nationalism*. But the straw that broke the camel's back for this regression (at least for the moment) is the unpunished disconnection of the webpage [e-valencia.org](http://www.e-valencia.org) from the server of the Museum of the University of Alicante (MUA), a decision, induced by hidden pressure from high authorities of the administration in Valencia, which is above the strict scope of censorship: by treating *e-valencia* as a project of *art in progress*, its interruption is equivalent to the deliberate destruction of a work of art.

### III

#### A ray of light in the fog and the dark

As the Catalonia Association of Visual Artists (AAVC) affirms, at this moment: "There is a clear retreat in the freedom of expression and creation in the Spanish State"<sup>24</sup>. A phenomenon which is worrying not for the fact of the specific censoring in itself<sup>25</sup> (although the IVAM director at that moment, Kosme de Barañano, deserves a special mention for his witch hunter role), but for the foreseeable future self-censorship which this dark repressive environment could manage to induce. And, above all, the uneasiness caused when we find out that institutions with independent management such as the University of Alicante are being submitted so easily to these atrocious manoeuvres.

These are not good times, like the prince said, but the troubadours know that the dark night is always followed by the dawn. The positive side to all these repressive manoeuvres could be extracted from the clarification which is obtained when the

pressure of the facts obliges people in culture to position themselves publicly; but even if we try to learn a little from recent history: “Intellectuals, as a collective, were not in favour of the witch hunts, but nor were they prepared to stand up against them, limiting themselves to assuming a golden marginalisation from the conflict. It was enough: for decades, the American culture would also be globally docile”<sup>26</sup>.

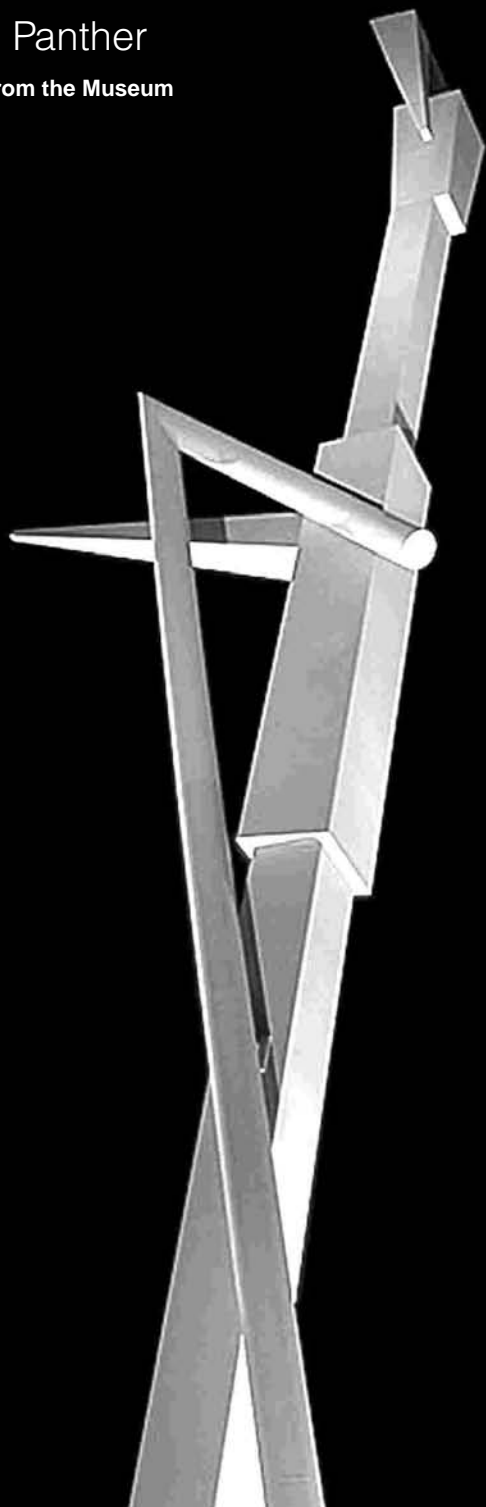
In this sense, collecting signatures against a flagrant abuse of power as is the unjustified closing of e-valencia.org has turned out to be the most revealing. And not only because of the comments which accompany the support, some of them very tasty, but also for the outlandish arguments used in order to not do it by those belonging to the new cultural monasticism boasting about their liberal mood and their antagonist commitment to freedom. No dogmatisms no raucousness, this text is dedicated to all of them.

**This text was first published in Individual Citizen Republic Project:  
El sistema, Olot 2003**



# The Blue Panther

United Artist from the Museum



I heard it for the first time from a very young friend, a sensitive, intuitive girl, walking on the *Ciudad de las Artes y las Ciencias* bridge, who cried out, obviously impressed, “The blue panther!”. Ever since then, I cannot but admire the precision of this spontaneous denomination for the latest adornment that sculptor Miquel Navarro has placed in the city of Valencia. It is a provisional nickname that – I totally agree –, if this were a fair world, should be the victor in the uneven battle over the symbolic control of the public space, a battle that is fought everyday.

That might be the reason why I don’t sleep at night, thinking that there are two panthers in Valencia. One is pink, colour of utopias; its strong build is – very obviously – working-class; and more especially, it was extremely controversial at the time. Its detractors (then in the opposition, now in the government) criticised it for being an unnecessary provocation. That only confirmed the artist was right, and favoured a fruitfully altered monotonous mental landscape of that provincial city. The sculpture that was originally conceived as homage to the river that fertilizes the fields of Valencia; very soon got to be known as “the pink panther”, a change of name that became official thanks to the indefatigable tenacity of drivers and pedestrians. This popular misappropriation was felt as a small victory by the lower echelon, a victory against the administration that erected the sculpture, as much as a victory against the reactionary opposition. It became the totem of our recently found aesthetic modernity; a symbol that, somehow, also cleared the way for the hope of a broader participation in public affairs by the citizens. It was too artistic an intervention that time has confirmed as being the only sculptural milestone that truly prevails, despite its outward industrial coarseness and its undeniable formal immobility.

Another friend – also a renowned sculptor – said to me that the sculpture is a big cock, ejaculating permanently. She carefully explained after her seeming crudeness, “mind you, it is not the usual sort of phallus, but a playful penis; promiscuous and transsexual. It leans its gland towards Mother Earth to fertilise her, and relinquishes the patriarchal martial bearing that is supposed to be inherent to the symbols of male arrogance”. In other words: a fine job accomplished by the more promising sculptor of our land at the time.

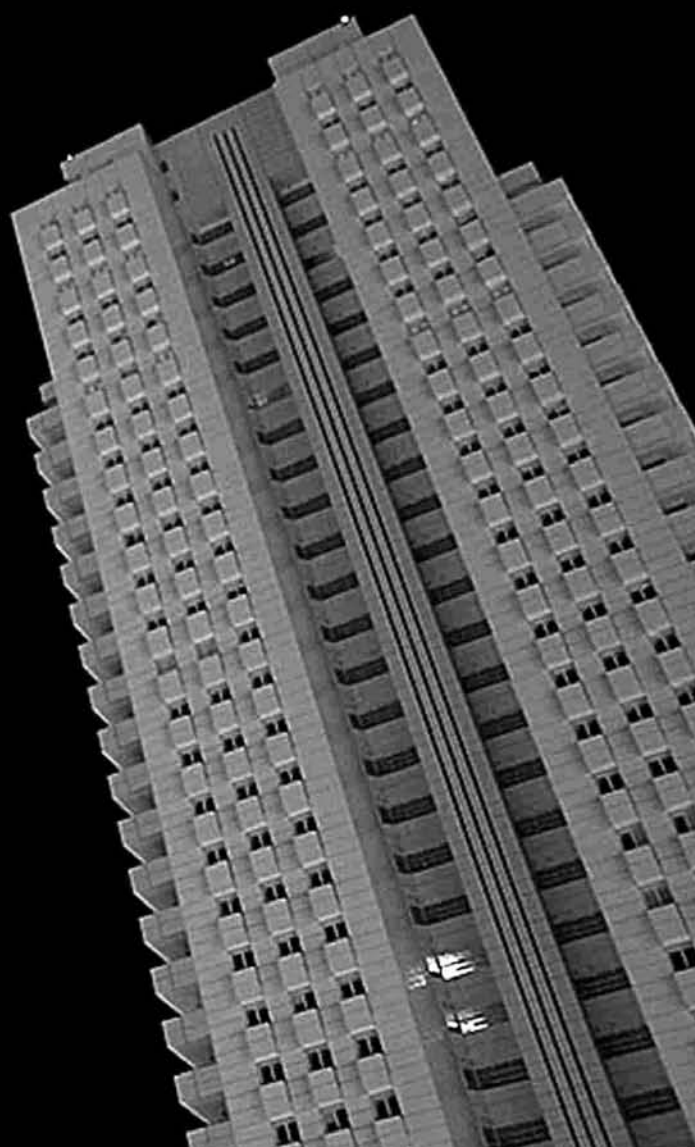
The other panther, the blue one, was born with a name already advertised, the *parotet* (in Valencian language, the dragonfly), and it's been placed in the most spectacular roundabout of the city, amidst a significant marketing campaign. As opposed to its predecessor, it has foregone the water and fertility symbolism; its installation meant clearing the previous decoration with autochthonous plants, that professor Albelda of the Polytechnic University of Valencia (*Universitat Politècnica de València*) had defended as being perfect. It has been replaced by the monotonous golf-field grass, which is seemingly the new imagery for institutional promotion. Professor Albelda told me over the phone that more than a *parotet*, it looks to him like a praying mantis. He is a little hurt by the poor reception to his rational appreciations on the decoration of urban roundabouts.

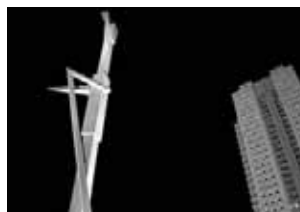
In any case, slim and impressive and glowing blue – I perceive it as the by-product of an overdose of seagull blue projecting over the entity that funded it – the sculpture manages to become the pinnacle of the immaculate landscape designed by Santiago Calatrava. It is a successful ode to the spectacular fossilisation of arts and sciences whose major aesthetic achievement is, very appropriately, renouncing colour. I don't intend to deny the rest of the plastic virtues that others may have seen in this new work by somebody who has proved to be a good sculptor, but I'm afraid that it will not stir anything close to the pride Valencian people felt when they explained the story of the pink panther to visitors.

Poisoned as I am by the secondary effects of having at some point agreed with the emancipating project of modernity, a project where art played a truly major role, I do not care to go deeply into the subject. The outcome could be a new panther, probably red and yellow, at my doorstep. Despite the obvious risk, I must advocate some formula to prevent having two panthers in the same city; at least not until every city in the world has its own one.

This text was first published in mono issue 4, 2004







The historic neighbourhood of El Cabanyal, threatened by a plan for the enlargement of Blasco Ibáñez Avenue.



Plan for the enlargement of Blasco Ibáñez Avenue.





*Salvem el Cabanyal.* Citizens' groups, cultural associations, university bodies and many public figures have voiced strongest opposition to the plan.



Cultural activities organized by *Salvem el Cabanyal*.

*Cabanyal Portes Obertes* (Open Doors). This project brings together artists of different disciplines who exhibit or perform their work in the streets and in

the houses of the local people who open their doors to the public.





*La Punta's* neighbourhood. Natural area destroyed by the enlargement of the Port Authority of Valencia.



Conference Hall, by architect Sir Norman Foster.



Neighbourhood.



# In The City of Last Things

**Marcos Rubio**

## **The Champions Final**

Playing in two UEFA Champions League Finals, that's two victories, whatever the results, since two slots of an-hour-and-a-half each on global television can make any product shine in the showcase of interesting things. Valencia is growing – population wise it is already the third biggest Spanish city. It is bursting at the seams, approaching a horizon of questions where doing nothing will be another tragic way of losing the goal of balanced growth.

The city's skyline is full of cranes that ignore what is happening in the old city centre as they busily push up buildings of steel and glass. The underground spreads its tentacles, piercing the city's guts. The future will see the sea being reclaimed by the satisfied middle-classes in search for a backdrop that reflects their status of nouveau riche – little fisherman's cottages will not fit the bill. After that, will come the covering up of the unsightly rail tracks of the *Estación del Norte*, the creation of the Central Park in Valencia, and this is only the beginning. *Santiago Calatrava* dreams of white animals of glass and concrete, of bridges that look like birds, of glazed gardens, while the Valencia getting to play in the final of the Champions League, that Valencia, pushes buildings up.

## **Ostriches and prophets**

As in *Radio Futura*'s song, the future is already here and it arrived in the shape of a theme park where adventure and safety walk hand in hand, and are being used for the city's promotional advert. If what we see on tv is all that really exists, then let's build cities of the arts, of sciences, of justice, of whatever – bring on the glassy gardens and lakes. Another Sea World, the *Oceanographic*, and a Conference Hall, designed by the best around, because we can afford it. Spectacular architecture to celebrate that we are a city that – under the glass dome – smiles at the challenges of modernity.

The problem with models is that they display a future without imperfections, clean, weightless, spacious and landscaped, exempt

of problems and filled with of a comfort where something as indelicate as movements or changes do not fit in. Thinking up future in this way is confusing dreams and reality, its like having missed out on watching *Blade Runner* or not having walked the streets of New York, Paris, Berlin or London. Despite all Sorolla's exhibitions, despite the new wings of the *Museo de la Ilustración*, the Valencia of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century will have to become a cultural melting pot, or it will be no more than just a beehive with ghettos of misery, suspicion, violence, degradation and contempt. Those who confuse reality with what they see on their televisions or read in the newspapers, bankrolled by advertisers, those will be the ones turning the ostrich into a prophet.

### **Valencia is on Fire**

If the truth is concealed behind symbols, when you see a deep red bonfire lighting up the night of a Valencian street, do not hastily conclude that you are standing before a documentary on the Fallas, the famous Valencian pyrotechnic festivals; it well may be that your car is ablaze. Since the year 2000, nearly six hundred cars have been burnt out. Could anyone explain to us, what is the meaning of this *kale borroka* (meaning "street fight" in Euskera, the Basque language.) that lacks any discourse?

Close-cropped haircuts and paramilitary attitudes, sweat tops with names of unpleasant dogs, and that grating noise of *bakalao*, techno that grinds up melodies as speed grinds brain, stomach and nervous system is catching on among some inner city youths. If someone wants to make a war film and has no budget for its backdrops, they should take a wander through the *Barrio del Carmen* (Valencia has one of the most important old city centres of Europe) and there they would find buildings on the verge of collapse and building sites littered with debris and stinking of urine. They would find people who face the degradation of their life and their surroundings with fury, as promises begin to wear thin. If it is a zombie film that wants to be made, they even have the extras here: more than two thousand junkies walk about, their frozen pupils seeking peace in the drug supermarkets that the city hides in its less advertised folds – and with no solution in sight for a complex problem of public health.

Cop shows proliferate on the mainstream TV stations. If scriptwriters run out of ideas for their plots, they should get down to this city on the Turia River; with 80,000 offences per year, it is the champion. However, if what they seek is raw material for the tear-inducing reality TV shows that take pleasure in the testimonies of personal desolation, then the 1,000 or so prostitutes that wear



themselves out on the streets of the city centre, by the harbour and its surroundings, will supply them with stories of exploitation that will leave their audiences amazed and speechless.

### **Inventing mayonnaise**

Valencia is becoming more of a mythical land for all those people – nearly two hundred thousand in the last two years have ignored the unemployment rates of 18.1 per cent, and have chosen this city as the destination with better possibilities for escaping poverty. Why did they choose us? Is the President of our Government referring to them when he talks about the Spain of possibilities? ...Nobody runs away from desperation in the hope of settling in misery. Just ask your grandparents or your parents who also had to leave the countryside and their villages.

Walking down the street you see women of Andean features, of a dark beauty and elegant accent taking care of old people. In the bars where farmers go, North Africans gather at dawn to go fruit-picking. Young people with Asian features prepare spring rolls, mount 1 plastic gadgets, or sew fake-designer trousers. It is such a small world and one where all of us should fit in with dignity.

How scary it is for me seeing poverty settling upon poverty, while nobody does anything. The glass buildings are always far away. The formula always produces the same results; give it a bit of a shake and there you go; a bunch of arseholes chanting racist slogans, violence, scorn, a lack of understanding, no security, delinquency and a thousands other afflictions.

We are not the first to be faced with this situation of the nouveau riche, and that is why we do not need reinvent the wheel, or in our case, mayonnaise. It is about copying the recipes that have worked in England, Switzerland, France, and Germany and putting them to practice with determination, avoiding their mistakes. Getting here with a four decade delay gives us the perspective to face the challenges of the future with confidence. Not doing anything will be the worst way to face reality.

The day the headmaster is the son of Ecuadorian parents, the policeman's name is Akil, Chin-li, the name of the Falla Association's chairman, your brother's girlfriend, Fátima and the bank cashier is away on holidays visiting her grandparents in Sierra Leone, that day, let them call me into the picture, for I'll be proud of living in a city that – despite the objective difficulties – has known how to tackle one of the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century – even despite having lost two Champions League Finals.

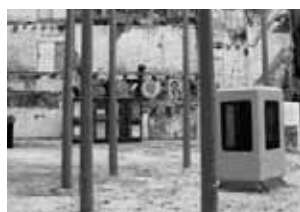
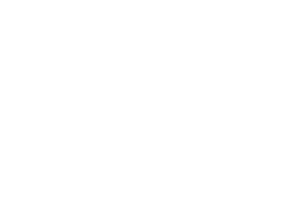
**This text was first published in mono issue 1, 2002**

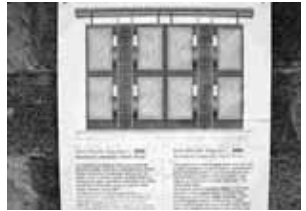


*Ciutat Vella*, the Historic Centre of Valencia.









The 2nd edition of the Biennial of Valencia  
The Ideal City. Build site (or on optimism)





# Spectacultural Policies in Valencia

## Álvaro de los Ángeles

**The regional and local elections of May 25<sup>th</sup> have become the key event that could make possible a change of direction in the cultural policy of the Region of Valencia. Whether or not the Popular Party (conservative party) wins the election, important modifications are glimpsed among the directive positions and even the administrative models that, up to now, have been the only possible ones, may change. Meanwhile, the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the Biennial of Valencia, fully dependant on another absolute majority obtained by the conservatory party, and the polemics which arose with the presentation of the enlargement project for the Valencian Institute of Modern Art (IVAM-*Institut Valencià d'Art Modern*), continue being the cornerstones of a culture management model that primes show and exhibition over serious analysis of needs and a programme adequate to its demands.**

### **II World Arts Meeting**

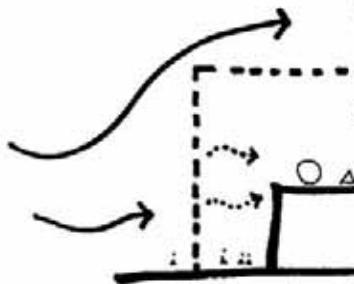
During the II World Arts Meeting, held in Valencia from October 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 6<sup>th</sup>, 2002, the vacuity of this kind of events was patent – their premises highly exceeded the ulterior development of their theses – and the impossibility of drawing conclusions that could enlighten the so touted crisis of the Arts. This is mainly due to the excessive “courtesan” attitude of a great many of the different theoreticians, curator, reviewers and artists that attend these events. Under the suggestive title *The Civic Dimension of Arts*, the first paradox took place, however, with the dialectic wrestling between the organisation and a group of representatives of the collective *Ciutadans per una cultura democràtica i participativa* (Citizens for democratic and participative culture), who were denied access to the debates. Last minute changes, perhaps favoured by the rumours of a massive “citizen” turn-up, propitiated that the debate on Plastic Arts be held in a fairly reduced room where, if all the guests had turned

up, at least twice as many seats as were arranged would have been needed, or turns, as those occupied during the meeting of the first day. This, especially considering that the subtitle of the sections was *Invitation to debate*, middlingly organised by Tomás Llorens; a kind of debate that strictly only allows the attendance of those invited by the organisation itself doesn't seem to be, to say the least, fostering any discussion foreign to their own interests. This decision, directly expressed by denying access to artists, gallery owners, theoreticians that are actively involved in the ever shrinking art world of Valencia, only reveals the ethical disposition of the organisation, capable of carrying one ideological flag while doing the opposite in the rearguard. How is it possible, then, to understand that the renowned intellectual José María Vidal Beneyto – the main Coordinator of the foundation *World Arts Council* (CMA-*Consejo mundial de las Artes*), specifically created for these biannual meetings, should publish as a conclusion of the CMA (EL PAÍS, 11/11/2002) the very same text that he presented as the introduction to debates and as the starting point of the Meeting? Does this mean to prove that the results of the sessions of pretended debate and discussion totally coincide with the initial theses stated? If that is so, why was it necessary to invest more than 800,000 in a four-days event whose only conclusion is a faithful illustration of what was announced? The pretended perfect union of intentions and results did not happen at all. Not even a joint text against the American invasion of Iraq that was then beginning, it all seems to indicate that the outcome did not really matter, since conclusions had been reached and were known beforehand.

It is necessary, and fair, to explain that each of the different sections (Architecture and Design, Plastic Arts, Film Making, Dance, Music and Theatre) is managed by a different person, each with his/her particular style. The Film Making section, for instance, actually took place in a large conference hall, allowing free entry to all the conferences and debates.

### **The new IVAM**

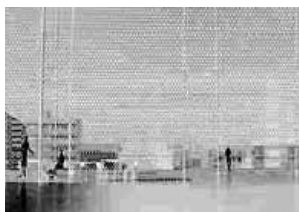
The new IVAM, designed by the Japanese architects Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa (SANAA team), presents an intervention that means to cover the current building with a huge glass and steel cube, transforming the top part of the museum in a big sculptures square set in the general structure. The total







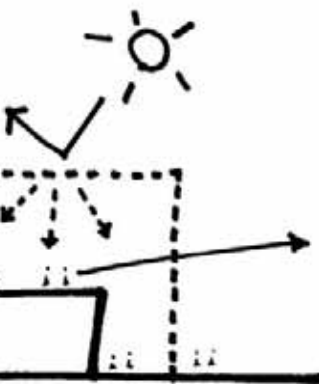
Model of the enlargement of the IVAM.



Model of the enlargement of the IVAM (detail).



Opposition to the enlargement of the IVAM.



height of this huge minimal shell will reach 32 m, it will double its current height. It pretends to open up to the *barrio del Carme*, a neighbourhood in the old city centre, through two new gates, on Na Jordana street and to the *Beneficència* Exhibition Centre. The main aim is to achieve – apart from getting more exhibition space and to improve certain internal services like the registry, load and unload, storage, etc. – is to transform the IVAM in an emblematic space, overlooking the old city centre and the old Turia river bed. Instead of considering this project from aesthetical, architectonic or economic profitability or functional points of view, it is convenient to approach other aspects, those referring the original concept of the IVAM, its relationship with the neighbourhood, and the international projection of its exhibitions and events.

**First of all**, and since the budget has sky-rocketed from 30 to 45 million Euros before even starting to build – only with the first adjustment to the project –, it could be relevant to wonder why wasn't held a contest of ideas (even if by invitation) for an “event” like this one, outlined by the high officials of the Popular Party and the direction of the IVAM as an architectural landmark for the city. Independently from the professionalism of the SANAA team, if so many incentives were wanted for this enlargement, other ideas from more architects studios may well have been listened to, considering it will greatly change the look and operation of the museum and the neighbourhood where it is set.

**The true debate**, however, revolves around contents. The closure in May 2002 of the *Centre del Carme*, the second location of the IVAM, started a change process in the museum model that is now primes management centralization in only one site, instead of diversified specialisation in two or more spaces. If an enlargement to improve internal and external aspects is required, apart from the mentioned need for more dialogue and a better structure and connection with the *barrio del Carmen*, the host neighbourhood, there's no better way to create dialogue than keeping the centre that is now closed, and even promoting the creation of another one in the neighbourhood, placing it in one of the many abandoned or derelict spaces that abound in *el Carmen* and by extension, the whole *Ciutat Vella*, the old city centre. What this policy implies is an obvious attempt to cancel the recent cultural memory of the region of Valencia, pretending to raze what exists to make it disappear or, better yet, try to prove it never existed.

The enlargement project by the Japanese architects could have never been a better mask or metaphore on the hidden. Since they could not “avoid” keeping the original building by Emilio Giménez and Carlos Salvadores (1989) and the ulterior enlargement by E. Giménez and Julián Esteban (2000), the solution of creating a skin that covers and reveals what already exists seems to find a midpoint of international diplomacy. However, nobody would think for a second that this project masks a lot more than the functional architecture that has proved to be valid up to now. It masks regrettable management that, lead by Kosme de Barañano, has destroyed the good name that the IVAM – as a contemporary art museum – had since it was founded. From this director – who cowardly calumniated the sculptor Oteiza the day after his death in a couple of press articles – we can only expect mediocrity and clumsy ambiguities in debates and polemics that could pose some professional problems for him. Another good marketing move, developed by his faithful sub-director Otaola, cannot delude us from the true reason for this operation, visible head of other changes destined to maintain public money management in the hands of private companies and individuals that are growing wealthier and more detached from cultural and social realities every day.

**The lack of attention this cultural model** pays to the social development becomes obvious with the example of the 53 families whose houses now occupy the space destined to the enlargement of the IVAM. Up to now, they still have not been offered a clear solution with regard to how much they will receive for their houses and if they could be given accommodation in the same neighbourhood. Given the amounts that are being considered these days in housing, it does not seem to be feasible that the money they would receive from the expropriation could suffice for them to stay in a neighbourhood they have made their own, and that they have managed to keep alive thanks to their reluctance to move, specially during the moments when its true “attractions” were degradation and marginality.

Over these specifics hovers an attitude that seeks ideological confusion. It has been said that those opposing this enlargement (and therefore, this neo-liberal cultural policy) are governed by a procrastinating attitude that tries to extend itself in models that were valid in the recent past but which are now obsolete; that those are not progressists, but nostalgics. Moreover, they don't want “the best” for their region. This kind of slogans that have

been so profitable for the Popular Party ("Water for Everyone", Paella for Everyone; Say Yes to Peace, but Bombing Irak, etc.) do not seem to be neutralised by an opposition (absent, confused, non-existent) nor by a majority of citizens that still prefer XIX Century cultural models rather than those that are operating – a century later – in most advanced countries.

All of it happens with the acquiescence of a "public" radio and television surrendered to its fascist-cut governments, who would not hesitate a second in selling public property to their friends and kin.

### **The 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the Biennial of Valencia**

Better to wait for the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the Biennial of Valencia to actually happen, since we are now witnessing improvisation in contents, change of dates, increased number of exhibitions, which strengthen doubts on it actually taking place. It will only confirm again that the dreadful 1<sup>st</sup> edition has taught us very little, if anything, to start paying earlier the participants who two years ago were left unpaid. Meanwhile, Consuelo Ciscar rises as the creator of the project and the questions surge: why do we need curators, technicians, culture experts if there is already a politician that comprises all those functions? I would like to mention just one of the exhibitions, titled *Building site (or on optimism)* pretends transforming the "negative" implications that building sites bring into the urban fabric into positive spaces. It will surely become a blazing controversial project. Specially, since the residents affected by the enlargement of the IVAM, and those affected by the project to recover the ancient Arabian city walls, or simply, those citizens that cannot aspire to buy a home (due to market prices or the amount of existing empty building sites), all of them will only see the exhibition as a clumsy attempt to make a show out of what actually is a collective frustration. Let us only hope that, in a few years' time, when those building sites actually start becoming houses, they will not be sold with the increased value of "Kabakov (or any other artist) exhibited here when this was a building site".

**This text was first published in mono issue 2, 2003**





Xavier Arenós. Modular House MA1 (Post-Authoritarian Architecture)

# About Contemporary Art Centres

Pep Benlloch

The development of contemporary art and culture in the past fifteen years, throughout all the Spain State is undeniable, as undeniable are the huge investments in infrastructures dedicated to this. Regarding museums and contemporary art centres, after the creation of the National Museum Centre of Art Reina Sofía (*Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía*) in Madrid, many others opened and many more have not opened yet. Some of these centres, in different moments along their trajectories, achieved great importance due to the quality of their exhibitions, thus, placing some of them on the map. They became a local, national and international reference point for the people and collectives interested in contemporary art: such were the first steps of the National Exhibitions Centre (*Centro Nacional de Exposiciones*), before the MNCARS – directed by María Corral – was open, the IVAM – with artistic director Vicente Todolí –, or nowadays the MACBA – directed by Manuel Borja-Villel.

Facing the criticism, often excessive, against the senseless proliferation of contemporary art centres, this reality is normalising a situation that in other countries of our sphere, like France and Germany was carried out before. In our country this was completely abandoned due to the effects of a long dictatorship that didn't allow its normal development of this and other cultural streams. Parallel to these infrastructures, many professionals and a huge amount of services have developed.

This normalisation, however, is weighed down by unsolved problems that are almost always related to the political manipulation of culture. This is a problem that is not limited to our territory, but rather, widely spread in our country, making the normal development of long-term cultural projects impossible.

A flagrant problem, common to all contemporary art centres is the designation of their directors, usually by the – national or regional depending who the centre is ascribed to – political administrations.

However, it is worth pointing out that this method actually worked in some cases, like the ones previously mentioned. In

those cases it happened because people with acknowledged experience in management and programming exhibitions, able to develop a specific project for each institution, were specifically sought.

What we would like to vindicate is that, now that we enjoy a mature democracy, which must develop further, this must affect also the museum institutions. Culture shall be plural and, especially, autonomous. In fact, only when institutions are autonomous from the political powers can they develop coherent projects that are not subject to the mere propaganda issued by the politicians of the time. Our representatives of any political sign must study deep changes in managing cultural institutions and, particularly museums. First of all, because the position of manager must stop being a prize for anyone, and secondly, because investments are huge and public funding must stop being squandered by spending according to personal taste of people who are not prepared for the post.

We want to propose that the election of museum directors and the actual management strategies should be totally independent from political power, as it is the case in other European centres. The Spanish museum directors must be designated by a national and international panel of experts. The director must be chosen, among the possible candidates, as the one who is more apt for the features and functions of the centre, considering the local needs and his/her capacity to generate networks of dialogue and exchange with other national and international centres.

This post must be time-limited, or instance, to seven years, subject to a two-year's extension. During this time, the chosen person would develop his personal project for this centre. Regarding the economic matters, political power will contribute those amounts established in the contest conditions, along with those necessary for special events that could take place, through yearly budgets.

This manner of operation would bring about a rotation in the management of centres that would be enriching and enhancing to their collections and programmes, due to the different personal approaches. It would also guarantee that political power would not interfere in the activities developed by the art centres, an interference that leads to situations of flagrant despotism that make some centres veer to and fro, without direction, due to the endless change of directors that, since they are usually of opposite political affiliation, try to erase all trace of the previous directors.



Demonstration by *Ciutadans per una Cultura Democràtica i Participativa* during the 2nd edition of the Biennial of Valencia (The Ideal City).







*Ciutadans per una Cultura Democràtica i Participativa* had decided to co-ordinate a series of activities and initiatives in under the slogan *Realitats de la Ciutat* (The Realities of the City).



Students of the Arts and Trades College and of the Fines Arts Faculty.





Protests during the Press Conference  
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# A Critical Reading of www.e-barcelona.org and of the Context of Catalonia

Valentín Roma



To understand not only the context, but also the development of the website e-barcelona.org – and the project that has been built up around it – it is essential to refer to the situation of the cultural and artistic policy in Catalonia over the last five years, as during this period most of the particular dynamics for which the page has been criticised have been consolidated.

On the one hand, we find that the then government, *Convergència i Unió* (CIU), a conservative, moderately national party that was in power from 1980 to 2003, was facing growing pressure from municipalities under other ideological signs and from diverse initiatives that were based in Barcelona – such as the *Associació d'Artistes Visuals de Catalunya* [The Associations of Visual Artists of Catalonia] (AAVC) – against the non-existence of a cultural policy for Catalonia. Certainly, and despite its twenty-three years of government, the infrastructures generated during this time were non-existent, the funding was minimal and there was a complete lack of real desire to organise the territory and its cultural needs. To add greater complexity to this panorama, many municipal town councils throughout Catalonia, also governed for a long time by the *Partido Socialista de Cataluña* (PSC), the Catalan subsidiary of the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE), the current government of Spain, also joined an erratic spiral in their management in the area of culture, developing an increasingly unsolvable resistance to change, a non-productive mimicry with regard to the programmes carried out in Barcelona, a disproportionate dependence on any kind of media attention and finally, a complete lack of comprehension with regard to autonomous initiatives.

In the case of Barcelona<sup>1</sup>, governed with an overwhelming absolute majority of the PSC, over the last few years, it has enjoyed what one could call a progressive institutional readjustment, that has significantly affected most of the city's infrastructures, particularly in the artistic sector. So, for example, since 1998 the following exhibitions areas have changed their address:

the *Museu d'Art Contemporani of Barcelona* (MACBA), the *Fundació Antoni Tàpies*, the *Virreina Exposiciones* (*Palau de la Virreina* and *La Capella*), the *Centro de Producción Hangar* and the *Centre d'Art Santa Mònica*, without forgetting two changes in the management team of the Delegation of Plastic Arts of the Catalan Government<sup>2</sup>.

In some way, we can see that there is a certain reshuffle, guided not just by generational matters or by an organised political desire, but by the combination of what could be an exhaustion of the previous models of management and the inclusion of a series of professionals whose profile suits the new institutional, political and media needs. I believe it is important to refer to these matters because in a context such as that of Barcelona, a certain personal mystification of the figure of the museum director has been gradually generated, until reaching unjustifiable limits, to the detriment of an overall demand with regard to the institutions they rule, their programmes, their work methodologies, their ability to articulate the various existing initiatives, etc. In this sense, it is significant how the mass media, and above all the written press, has been used as – or has been voluntarily converted into – a sounding box for these exciting, nominalist discourses that have gradually been burying a more objective follow-up of the dynamics of the artistic institutions of the city and creating an overall state of acritical opinion, that seemed to develop itself under a series of instructions behind which determined spaces were prioritised and others were suspiciously ignored.

I believe that it is at these ideological, cultural and media crossroads – and I insist, that of a territory that is culturally broken up and a capital heavily organised around particularised managements in excess – that the project of *e-barcelona.org* is inserted and takes on a specific meaning<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, trying to draw now, with some perspective behind us, a possible chronology of the life of this website and an analysis of its function, we observe how, of the initial suspicions – logical in this kind of platform of decoded opinion with anonymity as its main argument, its dangers and lack of legitimacy – the various analyses have become deeper and made more complex until reaching, beyond the one-off aspects on the position of the specific spaces, the structural questioning of this image of agreement that Catalonia, and in particular Barcelona, were issuing, like an identifying sign. This idyllic, media pre-formed stereotype of a city in a constant process of cultural expansion, in which even all the dissidents

**1** I make a voluntary distinction between Barcelona and the rest of Catalonia, because, in the same way as the dynamics of the page itself, there is a significant disparity between the protagonism of any kind of cultural activity developed in the capital and other types of proposals that occur in the rest of Catalonia, and which surprisingly do not attract the slightest media attention or that take place with notorious shortages of infrastructures. This is perhaps, one of the most significant peculiarities of the cultural situation in Catalonia: its clear centralism.

**2** Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA), director since 1998 Manuel Borja-Villel; Fundació Antoni Tàpies, director since 1999 Núria Enguita; La Virreina Exposicions, director since 2000 Iván de la Nuez; Hangar, director since 2001 Manuel Oliveira; Centre d'Art Santa Mònica, director since 2003, Ferran Barenblint.

**3** It is interesting, to understand how a single platform of opinion works in different contexts of a diametrically opposed way, to compare e-barcelona.org with e-valencia.org, the project with which it could superficially be related. The case of Valencia – see documented text by Álvaro de los Angeles – much more polarised and with a more antagonistic degree of confrontation, generated that around the page there should develop what could be called a global social action, however, in a context such as Catalonia, the same project has been given another kind of reading, another position and other dynamics which, being different, have also achieved protagonism. In this way, those who felt that a situation like the Catalan one would not support in the same way the creation of this platform of public opinion have been able to see how far the tool that e-barcelona.org has generated specific working influences, which are born from the particularities of the very context in which it is inserted and adjust to its fluctuations and its one-off needs.

**4** The last five years of Barcelona cultural policy have been witness to the following macro anniversary events: 2000 - Barcelona Football Club Centenary, 2001 - Gaudí Year, 2002 - Design Year, 2003 - Dalí Year, 2004 - Universal Forum of Cultures, 2005 - Year of the Book and of Reading.

have found their territory for viewing and have become the only dissidents possible, legitimate and authentic, is the common place the page has been coming up against in recent times. In this sense, and for various reasons, I believe that there are four main themes which, in some way, have organised around them a whole series of trends in opinions that come together in what I mentioned earlier and that have clearly conditioned the dynamics of e-barcelona.org: the linguistic policy of the Catalan government, the Universal Forum of Cultures held in Barcelona in 2004, the creation of the General Arts Council and the project *Desacuerdos*, organised by the MACBA, the International University of Andalusia and ARTELEKU in San Sebastián.

The reflection on the language led to an intense and very complex debate about what would be one of the touchstones of Catalan cultural policy, which directly related the management of the previous government with the present one and which also dealt with fundamental elements in what would be the definition of the identity of Catalonia and its relationship with the rest of Spain. The Universal Forum of Cultures offered as a matter for deep reflection the so-called “Barcelona model”, that was organised around thematic macro events, with great economic-propagandist displays, through which it projected an image of a disfigured, artificial city<sup>4</sup>. The General Arts Council was a project for creating an association that in some way rescued the artistic management from purely political dynamics and that enabled the direct participation of the diverse agents involved in the sector, above all through the *Asociació d'Artistes Visuals*. Finally, *Desacuerdos* is a macro project of historic rereading of political practices in Spain from the 1970s to the present, organised by three institutions set in different contexts, and that was the trigger for a huge amount of positioning, that has seen in this project a significant example of conceptual distortion, after which a great deal of the difficulties the MACBA – the main artistic infrastructure in the city – have come to light in tuning in and understanding the dynamics of artistic production that are not inscribed in their strict historicist, ideological and media parameters.

As I mentioned above, these four main themes have required, through various itineraries, the development of e-barcelona.org, focusing the successive debates and organising a network of information that in some way come together at the same point, that of the apparent and fictitious standardisation of the Catalan cultural policy. In this sense, I believe that having kept itself apart

from all the initiatives generated in Barcelona during 2004 as a response to the Universal Forum of Cultures, it has contributed in a positive way, in other words, as a sign of the project's independence. These anti-Forum movements, from very diverse points of view and with different languages, ended up constituting a kind of common front, with surprising attention from certain means of communication, that was blatantly used as a throwing weapon by the sectors that were ideologically opposed to Barcelona City Council, suddenly disappearing from the social spectre once the annals of this monumental event had finished. Also along these lines, it is a paradox to observe how a whole series of initiatives is growing in the city which have civil disobedience and political activism as their conceptual hub and that are unexpectedly finding a considerable following. Thus, projects such as the previously mentioned *Desacuerdos*, *Las Agencias*, also organised by the MACBA, or The Influencers, a festival that brought together the activities of alternative citizen actions groups, held at the CCCB, are also becoming part of the "cultural framework" of Barcelona, as they use the same institutional channels to develop themselves and the same foci of media amplification to promote their contents. Therefore, it is incomprehensible that none of these initiatives have used e-barcelona.org as a context for action and that there has not been a real approximation to the audience of the page and the concerns that have arisen from it either.

And to finish off, I think that the next challenge to be taken on by the e-barcelona.org project, after having found a place in the complex local artistic situation, is to develop a way of extending the protagonism that the debate on Barcelona has today towards the rest of Catalonia, where the situation urgently requires a tool such as this of surveillance, opinion, questioning and denunciation. It is essential that Barcelona should redefine its role with regard to what could be considered its most immediate global context, that it should take on the responsibility of leader from its privileged economic, media and infrastructure position in a process of cultural diversification in Catalonia, and that it should abandon, for once and for all, the branch politics that it has historically practised with the various local realities, to which it has only got closer in a one-off way, through temporary interests, without offering any kind of chance for dialogue or pollution and only to resituate its excesses in the area of the production of culture.



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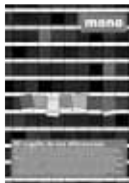
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