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Medellín Through a Kaleidoscope

P.E.A.R.

PAPER FOR EMERGING ARCHITECTURAL RESEARCH

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P.E.A.R. is an architectural fanzine presenting work from a variety of contemporary architectural practices, researchers and individuals. P.E.A.R. aims to re-establish the fanzine as a primary medium for the dissemination of architectural ideas, musings, research and works. Through its presentation of a wide range of architectural discourses, P.E.A.R. seeks to present the complexity and variety of contemporary architectural practice.

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MEDELLÍN THROUGH A KALEIDOSCOPE

JUAN ESTEBAN SANDOVAL

This issue of P.E.A.R. focuses on Medellín, Colombia's second largest city and capital of the state of Antioquia. For some time now Medellín has captured the imagination of the international architectural press as a laboratory of progressive architectural and urban interventions that were initiated under the mayoral administration of Sergio Fajardo (2003-2007).

The architects Rashid Ali and Julian Krueger, two of P.E.A.R.'s core editors, have for a number of years been fascinated with the urban strategies that have been drawn up and in some cases implemented in a number of Latin American cities and in particular Medellín. However, it was only after a chance meeting with myself and my colleague, the scholar and curator Lucrezia Cippitelli, that they invited us to collaborate on an edition of P.E.A.R. that explores the varying dimensions of the processes that have contributed to the changes in Medellín.

Inviting an art practitioner with a particular interest in social development and a curator working on progressive art practices and social change to be guest editors of a publication that usually focuses on the spatial dimensions of cities might at first seem risky but we were delighted to take up the challenge.

Our initial thought, informed partly by my experiences of working in the city with the collective El Puente...Lab, was to analyse the rapid developments that reshaped the structure of the city from the perspectives of the various actors that contributed to this transformation, including collaborators and partners of El Puente...Lab. With this in mind we approached a diverse group of individuals from different disciplines that include architects, urban designers, planners, artists, designers, historians, activists and local institutions with a particular interest in social issues.

Projects such as the España Library Park and the elevated cable car as a mode of public transportation have been presented as the key symbols of a process that has led to the city's spatial, social, economic and cultural transformation. In addition to these large scale interventions, a number of other smaller projects have also been implemented in low income neighbourhoods that in the past suffered from decades of violence and a lack of social, economic and cultural investment. As a result, Medellín has in the past ten years changed, not just in its spatial dynamics but also in the mentality and perception of its inhabitants who now see culture as an important tool for development. This particular approach to urbanism has caught the attention of experts who have now come to see Medellín as an exemplar model in urban planning and governance.

Conscious of this new assigned status, the first question that arose was: how does one present Medellín's inherent complexities from a new angle, while adding another interpretation to the prevailing discourses in the art and architectural press on the role of these disciplines in the (re)constitution of urban societies? Starting with this question our preoccupation has been how to conjure up a different perspective to that presented in the literature that has been published on the transformation of Medellín in recent years.

It is possible that those interested in an architectural vision defined by built form could be frustrated by the little emphasis that is given to architectural symbols in this issue. However they will find plenty of material on the processes and ideas that have contributed to the "revolutionising" of urban dynamics in Medellín. Our main aim has been to present a kaleidoscopic vision of the city, with the perspectives of some of the key cultural figures who have worked in the city during this period of intensive transformation.



Medellín in regional context

For this reason, rather than presenting an archive of "case studies" of architecture and infrastructure symbols, we decided to widen the scope towards cultural practices and ideas that have become integral to this transformation.

To give a complete idea of the transformation of Medellín, from its origins in 2002, and even earlier, we have invited contributions from key figures involved in this process, including architects Alejandro Echeverri and Francisco Sanin, who over two decades were both integral to devising the strategies for reimagining Medellín's future urban composition, initially in academia and later as part of Mayor Fajardo's planning team during his time in office. Echeverri and Sanin had strong input into some of the multiple strategies and methodologies that would be used to take on the challenge of transforming Medellín from the beginning of the last decade.

The contribution from Ximena Covaleda offers a glimpse of the past, recalling the history of urban development in Medellín from its farming origins to the recent interventions that have made the city better known to outsiders. Alongside Covaleda's chronology, there is a recent project from the architects Plan B - one of the most interesting young practices in the city in terms of recent contemporary architecture. To complete an urban panorama and give an example of one of the many themes that preoccupy the diverse practitioners in the arena of urbanism in Medellín, Sergio Pineda writes on the hydro-geological risks facing communities that reside on the city's steep slopes.

As well as the contributions that address the physical aspects of Medellín's urban transformation, we were also to explore the positions of local and foreign artists, architects and curators that have recently made or are in the process of realising projects in the city, and who, through their approaches have questioned or confronted the theme of urban space and its implications in the process of recent transformation. Locally, we invited Victor Muñoz, with the series *clausurado* and Camilo Restrepo with *figuritas en el suelo*, two projects that, through images, create panoramas of the social realities of Medellín. We also invited John Mario Ortiz to contribute with an essay on urban forms and their contradictions.



Escalators in informal neighbourhood, Medellín

Internationally, we invited some professional experts, who, having participated in projects in Medellín, could offer a different vision, that comes from a lived experience, of the potential and contradictions that represent the realisation of cultural projects in this kind of territory. Ana Dzokic and Marc Neelen of STEALTH.unlimited, Miodrag Kuc and Maria Rosa Jijón, reflect on the territories that they worked in, on the community participation in the decision making processes and most of all on the impact of external participants in cultural processes in a challenging urban context. Finally we asked for contributions from the curator Bill Kelley with a text on the MDE011, an art festival that with a new programme of cultural events, has become an interesting model that responds to the dynamics of urban and social development, while Lucrezia Cippitelli reflects on some of her observations of the Moravia neighbourhood on a recent trip to the city.

All the contributions included in this issue of P.E.A.R. conform to the multiple and layered kaleidoscopic visions of Medellín and it is important to transmit them as a vision of Medellín in a process of transformation, with strong social contradictions, but with many opportunities for developing new approaches and ideas on its future.

TO TEACH AND TO LEARN: THE MDE11 AND THOUGHTS ON CURATING WITHIN THE LOCAL

BILL KELLEY JR.

The Encuentro Internacional de Medellín (MDE11) was an opportunity to make a simple yet assertive realignment of what an international biennial or art event of this magnitude could be.¹ Of course, a “biennial” implies an entire team of people being on the same page and a variety of collaborating organisations willing to do their part. After being brought together by Jose Roca, a member of the curatorial team², and following two years of work that included numerous trips to the city and countless hours conversing online, and now a few months after its closing, I see the MDE11 asking certain questions about the nature and sustainability of the entire biennial endeavour itself. This self-reflexivity is a normal outcome and a constant reminder of a healthy self-doubt that takes over when you undertake something this complex and intensely interconnected. Questioning, ‘who is the public?’ is naturally a central enquiry for the MDE11, for reasons I’ll explain momentarily.

Given the central theme of pedagogy, and a title taken from Paulo Freire’s principle tenet on the emancipatory linkage between teaching and learning, it would only be natural to start to question what are art’s pedagogical limits and possibilities.³ I personally think the discussion is far more fruitful if we don’t talk about art, but rather, talk about the various methodologies and communities art has at its disposal. What are artists doing now and, more specifically, what are they doing in Medellín? How can we apply this to the logic of the MDE11?

When Roca first called me to discuss this project the only concept that was on the table was that it should take ‘education’ as a principle area of research. Given the numerous educational programmes in the city, it made sense. But education is a very general term that has no guiding trajectory. It is an idea and a signifier that is as open and vague as ‘art’. Our conversation quickly shifted towards ‘pedagogy’ – a more specific term that implied methodologies of work. When I proposed that we start discussing Freire as a possible connecting point, we understood that we were dealing with a very specific and unambiguous methodology. The shift from education towards pedagogy, and later towards a methodological perspective that was intrinsically tied to emancipatory and community-driven forms or practice, was the turning point.

1 The MDE11 is purposely not a biennial as it attempted to challenge certain biennial structures. One very important distinction was the extension of the event, September 1 – December 10, 2011. Its first, and more recent iteration, the MDE07, lasted almost six months. My point is not to approximate or use them interchangeably but to highlight certain challenges that still exist among similar formats.

2 Jose Roca, a Bogota based curator and critic, along with Museo de Antioquia’s former director Lucia Gonzalez are responsible for organising both the MDE07 and the initial structure of the MDE11. The curatorial team, of which Roca originally was a member, was organised by him and included Nuria Enguita Mayo (Valencia, Spain), Eva Grinstein (Buenos Aires, Argentina) Conrado Uribe (Medellín, Colombia) and myself (Los Angeles, USA).

3 One central point of interest in my ongoing research has been the relationship between community art practices and liberation theology. One very interesting historical connection was Medellín in 1968, site of the first art biennial of Medellín, named the Coltejer Biennial, after its central sponsor, and the Second Latin American Episcopal Conference, also known as CELAM 2, an important historical meeting of Catholic Church officials that defined liberation theology for generations. The MDE07 was founded on the concept that it was a continuation and an examination of those early Medellín biennials that brought the very best of contemporary art to the city while CELAM2 was heavily influenced by the emancipatory and pedagogical theories of Paolo Freire. The two events had no relationship but the pedagogical underpinnings to both events find us curiously converging the two at the MDE11, over 40 years after this missed opportunity.

A CURATORIAL PERSPECTIVE ON BIENNIALS AND COMMUNITIES

When the MDE11 took a ‘pedagogical turn’, so to speak, meaning that the topic of its conceptual emphasis started to be developed around research, knowledge formation, and their respective methodologies, it became clear that Medellín had much to offer to the conversation. As a curator, I understood from the beginning that to impose other regional intellectual trajectories, however radical they might seem elsewhere, would be a mistake. Imported or translated discourses were no match, and they would have to be framed through and in dialogue with the contextual filter of Medellín, its history and its cultural practices.

That is no easy task given the pressure we, as international curators, face on being invited to organise such events. The role of the floating, desk-less curator has been much discussed but rarely is it ever challenged as one that continually magnifies and promulgates the established “lingua franca” of the art world. There is something rather subversive in opening up the proverbial Pandora’s Box, in part because biennials are expensive and, more often than not, their effects must be quantified.

The role of the curator has been so-often discussed that it almost feels redundant to bring it up. The resurgent discussion on curating as Institutional Critique seems outdated to me. Very little can be learned from formats and enquiries that are made to lead you back to where you started. By this, I mean that the role of the curator was defined within a certain historical paradigm of art and aesthetic theory that, we all know, can be critical *only* up to a certain point. Yet on the other hand, the fear of the institution as some contaminating zone of influence speaks of a kind of conceptual purity, a return to pure autonomy, that has no place in the world today. The reason you can’t win in this either/or situation is because you’re not meant to.

Social practices, relational art, dialogical processes and the like, seem to be gaining momentum and attention and one can certainly make the case, as others have done, that biennials have played an important role in creating a platform for this kind of work. This is partly true. Yes, the biennial is nimble and temporary and it allows for curatorial structures to be potentially more experimental. The inherent local versus global nature of its context – at once situated in a city while simultaneously belonging to a global circuit – instantly allows it to create tensions that bring both sides into play while allowing its temporality to set its own limits on what can be done and how much it will cost. But this traditional model also comes at a price. Local communities are rarely engaged on their terms – terms that require a sustained presence and an invested discourse. Curatorial strategies become formulaic, more interested in *translating* international projects⁴, safely tucked into the fold of some sort of biennial canon while the museums/institutions that host them are equally pressed to bring, what one might call, an established ‘curatorial paradigm’ to organise the entire event.

At a time when artists have moved away from accepting the authorial position within their public space art projects, the curator has become increasingly present in authoring biennials and other forms of cultural events. The fact that curators, like ourselves, spend as much time thinking and writing about curating as we do about art-making, speaks to a blurring of roles and a certain self-reflection that is required to do the job. Despite the curator being seen as a mediator between the institution and the public, or even between art

4 Olga Fernandez. ‘Just What is it That Makes “Curating” so Different, so Appealing?’ *OnCurating.org* 08/11 (2011) 40. http://www.on-curating.org/issue_08.html

and the public, it is the curatorial mission that gives biennials their emotional and intellectual weight.⁵

Biennial formats are still very popular, they reach an increasing number of people and show no sign of decline, but the actuality remains that art – or at least the mainstream version of it – remains outside the purview of what is deemed to be vital in people's daily lives. This essential and uncomfortable fact cannot be ignored. To put it in Steven Wright's words: 'one of the most enfeebling accusations with which art is often, implicitly or explicitly, targeted: that it's not for real; or to put it bluntly, that it's just art.'⁶ As long as the funding is there, the art world is in no rush to address such complications.

This text is not the space to critique the global marketplace, Kantian hermeneutics or to begin to describe how this came to be or why we constantly have to defend art as a worthwhile pedagogical investment. What I hope to concern myself with is raising certain questions about what we can do in a site like the MDEII. What is our role here in Medellín, really? The question is: can we use what's given to us in this format while using the opportunity to address this ossified system that has self-constructed and regulated the field of critique at a meta-level? By this I mean that the market/discourse of art has regulated and normalised the limitations by which its own critique is even possible.

Politics, at the level of linguistic critique, clearly distances itself from politics acted on the streets. This is an unfortunate theoretical byproduct of our collective post-68 disillusionment. By somehow failing at the revolt on the streets, we came to the conclusion that true activism could only happen on and within the text. By doing so we, in the art world, have come to accept one form of politics (linguistic) over any other and thusly formed an ineffectual critical paradigm of our own making. By confusing being political in aesthetics with being political within a community, the art world has no way to conceive of an art practice that can do both. It is for all intents and purposes the "lingua franca" of art. This inability to reconcile the historic tension between poetics and politics, in any meaningful way, has limited our critical zone to the realm of *only* aesthetics, *only* the poetic, *only* the symbolic. If we are to take this situation seriously then, at the very least, for the purposes of examining what an art event focussed on critical pedagogy can do in a community, the form and content of curatorial mediation should begin to be questioned.

Additionally, this concern can't be disconnected from the bigger cultural shifts we see happening around us, or the contexts and terms in which we currently work. Given the border-less nature in which many biennial curators work, those terms are often transnational and our concerns have become globalised. Platforms for art making that situate the *pedagogical* as a central aim are being formed daily around the world, while at the same time institutions of education are being dis-invested and neo-liberalised beyond anything our parents would recognise. The capitalist excesses of the 1990s, and their subsequent and inevitable crises, reinvigorated many artists to form collective groups that began anew to question the role of art and politics. While technology has brought on consideration of the malleability of the consumer as producer, one also has to question to what extent technology is able to shape new forms of community. The list of ancillary considerations is immense.

At the same time, Medellín must contend with this same list of questions while it also writes (and re-writes) its own tragic and hopeful history, the results of which can be seen in the richness and diversity of current artistic proposals, many of which are engaged with the MDEII. Projects ranging from community theatre groups greatly enriched by the pedagogical trajectories of Augusto Boal and Paulo Freire, or collaborative video and film collectives engaged in memory recuperation projects, a massive network of formal and informal learning centres, music schools and urban study centres dot the map of the city. The challenge here was not to vaguely centre our proposal within a general understanding of 'Public' or 'Art' but rather to assist in building a structure, as curatorial guests of the city, to enquire, give feedback and enrich on the teaching and learning already happening; to situate these local practices in dialogue with concerns and ideas from other sites of cultural work. We needed to find a way where the local versus global was not just a slogan, but a

formula for enriching both. We needed to find a way to learn from the projects already happening in the city and share them with others, even if they didn't fit comfortably within our curatorial model of art.

When theorist Grant Kester speaks of artists working within 'politically coherent communities', he is pointing out how they problem-solve issues on local levels of interaction and communication with communities already invested and working in their own context.⁷ The Museo de Antioquia, the host venue of the MDEII, has, for the past decade, developed programming that promotes contextual community-wide and pedagogically intensive practices through a series of initiatives. The "Museo Itinerante" frames the logic and the meaning of the art object within the history and dynamics of specific neighbourhoods. The numerous artist-run "corporaciones" in Medellín have been busy operating in specific areas of the city, working in video, theatre or music, and have developed long-standing relationships with their community. The network of "parque-bibliotecas" have equally well-established relationships with local community groups and artists.

We curators needed to create a structure that built on what was already in place and to create moments that Habermas called 'ideal speech situations' where open dialogue can happen – where teaching and learning takes place, where those invited, and those hosting, were encouraged to do both.⁸ It was important not to reinvent the wheel for the sake of the 'new'.

The fact that these sites of exchange, however temporary, are also central to Habermas' theory of how public and civic space is developed is no coincidence. It is also no coincidence that Medellín has been an important site where these kinds of projects develop. The reasons for this are too extensive to be drawn out here, but needless to say, the process of memory recuperation and civic re-identification are not undertakings reserved for any particular kind of person or specific to any political position. Artistic efforts are undertaken in various media and in any number of settings and communities – many of which never set foot inside a museum. The crisscrossing of disciplines, media, vocations, and knowledge is not so much an assault on traditional forms of art, as it is a survival tactic in a region that needed to address such issues.

Social practices and collaborative methodologies have allowed us a space of reevaluation. And though they have been with us for quite some time, many more artists are investigating new ways to engage public spaces and communities, and at a pace that was not foreseeable a decade ago. Many projects ground themselves within experimental trans-disciplinary practices that question the tentative and uneasy relationship that we, in the art world, have with expanding the parameters of aesthetic theory. Understandably, for many of us, this brings up certain political and theoretical ghosts from the past, while the risk of losing art to some other discipline keeps hard lines drawn in the sand.

THEORY OF THE SELF AND THE COMMUNITY

Community as a concept is so lamented in Western theory that even discussing it here feels like opening another Pandora's Box. When Friedrich Schiller first published *The Aesthetic Education of Man* in 1794 he was lamenting the social alienation that came with the violence and emerging capital-democratic revolutions in France. His promise that aesthetic education could set humanity free is, to a great extent, still with us today. Terms he coined, such as the play-drive or the aesthetic impulse, have helped individualise the process of self-awareness and development. In Schiller's world – and that of others like Emmanuel Kant whom he borrowed liberally from – it is the singular, the individual that through reason must find him/herself. The idea that art and education, and more specifically aesthetic education, is tied to freedom is still a central argument for art's inherent qualities. It is the reason why museums fancy themselves educational institutions. It is also the reason why art is taken seriously as an area of humanistic study and why, above all else, art is still at its very core, an endeavour in pedagogical study and labour.

5 Michael Brenson. *Acts of engagement: writings on art, criticism, and institutions, 1993-2002*. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004).

6 Stephen Wright. 'The Future of the Reciprocal Readymade: An Essay on Use-Value and Art-Related Practice' 16 Beaver (2005) <http://www.16beavergroup.org/monday/archives/001496.php>

7 Grant Kester. *Conversation Pieces*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004).

8 Jürgen Habermas. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991).

In Schiller's time, on the heels of the French Revolution, the notion of the *self* was still in development and since a 'public' – our modern understanding of public – can only exist as a collection of autonomous and individual *selves*, we see that the two ideas were intrinsically tied and are born together from the same set of emancipatory preoccupations. But Schiller's conditions are not ours. He lived at a time when the self was subject to someone else – a monarchy – and a king's subject cannot be one's own. Centuries later, individuality isn't under threat. Today we have quite a different problem. One only has to consider the current social, economic and ecological urgencies, and those yet to come, to realise that *we will be* required to radically re-think our *collectivist* game plan. Are there sites where art can make a difference?

Where we take the art world and its priorities, and where it will take us, will continue to be intensely debated. It will have to come to terms with its post '68 disillusionment, dismantle its euro-centric borders, reconsider its neo-liberal alliances and classist gatekeepers, and rethink its entrenched apprehensions towards speaking in terms of 'we'.

There is a difference between this historic, but now universalised, notion that one owns consciousness individually and alone, as opposed to the notion that one begins a 'process' of consciousness building with others. How one goes about understanding these concepts depends on a lot of things, and we don't want to create an either/or dialectic. What's clear is that our understanding of art today is, and has been, greatly impacted by those ideals developed centuries ago. The dream of the autonomous self is as complicated by today's world as the autonomous object of art, and understanding and unravelling that individualistic paradigm will require some work.

Both in Habermas' case when he speaks of ideal speech situations and when contemporary thinkers like Enrique Dussel discuss the idea that citizens have a stake in their 'obediential' system of government and power because it ultimately is born from them, they are talking about having a stake in how *we* collectively form, and *have formed*, systems of organising ourselves.⁹ Habermas sites this originary transformation in Europe, Dussel speaks from a Latin American perspective, but what is important here is that this line of thinking is a legitimisation of community decision making, at the theoretical level, and it allows artists and others to begin to think of their labour in dialogue with a larger structure of social and cultural work in politics.

This reflection should not be confused as a 'call to arms' but rather a recognition that artistic processes that begin to question how and why we collaborate as communities and individuals is already taking place. As noted earlier, the art world is a wide-open space where many things can happen. Artists working in a collaborative method should be able to practice alongside artists working in their studios. This is not an either/or situation. The fact that collaborative and community driven processes, many found in Medellín and elsewhere, are only *just now* finding their way into the discursive paradigm of art and theory, should be embraced and seen as a teaching and learning opportunity – to consider the re-constitution of a civic space and identity, a learning, a re-learning and consciousness building process that is fundamental to this kind of work and its larger cultural project.

How one taps into this kind of creative work is where curatorial methodologies come into play. Being aware of what the city of Medellín could give us requires a sustained form of research, a dialogically-based presence within various communities that isn't easy to maintain on this kind of platform, where one is working outside the host city for a great deal of the planning period. This focus on time and sustained work is not without its demands. Apart from the practical difficulties this implies, it also requires us to question Modernity's focus on and privileging of 'ideas' as an artistic act in and of itself – art as idea as idea. Ideas can be easy to come by and conceptualism's staying power, despite the brevity of many of its gestures, is testament to the facility with which the art world's economy turns over new ideas and new works of art with blazing speed. It certainly can be argued that today this conceptual privilege of the 'new idea' has more to do with a certain 'entrepreneurial' spirit that we misguidedly value above all

else.¹⁰ Not coincidentally, this 'entrepreneurial' mindset, requires a skill-set perfectly matched for curatorial work, banking its future on managing data and producing new bits of information.

A related enquiry is the history of the curatorial act as a 'gesture' – a model inherited from modernism's affinity for the *speech act* and the artistic enunciation as a linguistic metaphor. In this model, as mentioned above, art and other forms of cultural action are seen through the lens of linguistic criticism and so everything is discursive, everything is speech, and every political or social action is inescapably wrapped within the critique of language and its power to frame the world. All social action (speech) is unable to operate unless it is thoroughly critiqued because action – and speech – is always, a priori, an operation of power. This makes any form of collaborative or community action nearly impossible. A more appropriate response would be a move towards a focus on *listening*. The pedagogical methodologies of Freire, various iterations of the feminist art movement, and countless other contemporary artists make the case for a 'discursive' model that tries to equally balance the listener as much as the speaker – creating ideal speech situations – and in doing so to create operative moments where understanding happens and collective knowledge and action take place.

Returning to the role of the curator, we see that this shift towards listening has important implications for curatorial methodologies. Apart from requiring more time, being present requires a variety of different skill-sets. It requires spending a great deal of time visiting and building relationships with various actors in the city, not just artists, but the various communities, sites and organisations that frame their work. This kind of contact and conversation rarely happens at the curatorial level and that's partly because there is no time for it. Museums and foundations that sponsor these events have neither the resources, nor the time, to fund this kind of research. The other reason is that curators have never really worked that way. Contemporary art has never really required such sustained dialogue with a local site. The 'dialogical' practices we are discussing here may very well change that.

This new form of curating requires understanding that knowledge is formed through interactions with people not just objects, and the dynamics of those conversations are, and should be, conceived and cared for with the same detail as the selection and placement of a painting in a gallery. There are 'dialogical' methodologies that must be learned and a learning curve that is equally based on knowing what is 'in' a community (time) as it is based on learning 'how' artists operate there (methodology).

We will invariably have to learn this new form of curating once again from artists – and that's the way it should be. As curators we must always remember, despite our ever-growing influence, that our curatorial methodologies have to be aligned with the artists we work with. Despite the institutional and professional challenges this may imply, it cannot be any other way.

REFLECTIONS ON THE MDE11 AND ITS STRUCTURE

When asked by Jose Roca to be a part of this curatorial team I was looking forward to the opportunity to work with such a talented group of people, both within and outside the museum. Artists, writers, teachers, administrators, organisers, all have played an important role in shaping the MDE11. As a curatorial group, our varied experiences and backgrounds created a dynamic balance of ideas and proposals.

When we began the discussions two years ago of how we wanted to define the MDE11, it became clear that certain aspects and relationships from the MDE07 had to stay. The *Espacios Anfitriones* programme, for example, was a success in that it generated a network of collaboration amongst independent art spaces in South America that is still active today. Other elements weren't as appropriate for this version as we focused on learning and pedagogy. So we set about organising a three-part structure (*Laboratorio, Estudio, Exposición*) that gave us the freedom to build on and develop these three central categories.

9 Enrique Dussel. *Twenty Theses on Politics (Latin America in Translation)*. (Raleigh: Duke University Press, 2008).

10 Ultra-red, 'Art, Collectivity, and Pedagogy: Changing the World in which we Live', *Chto Delat* 08-32 (2011): 16. http://www.chtodelat.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=234&Itemid=414&lang=en

An important consideration, given our varied curatorial backgrounds, was that we didn't want to create an oppositional dialectic that positioned one kind of practice or methodology against another. This would not have been useful to anyone and art is a big enough camp to accommodate them all. What we wanted was to carve out a space where the theme of 'teaching and learning' could be considered from various perspectives. We also wanted to push the pedagogical metaphor as far as possible through exhibition formats (*Taller Central*), extended research proposals in the city (*Trabajo de Campo*), experimental collaborations with other organisations (*Interlocuciones*), and lectures and workshops (*Aula Dialógica* and *Taller de Construcción*). Through this structure we could move away from the either/or ghetto and begin to think about what one form of work could learn from another. An investigation in one area of the MDEII was encouraged to find its way into other areas and formats of working. For example, a concept that drives a project in the exhibition is also investigated in a panel discussion, it is then a point of enquiry for artists in the city, and later a strategy shared with collaborators that then gets presented back to the public for discussion, and the cycle goes on...

As I see it, the MDEII, as previously mentioned, had to be based both conceptually and curatorially on local artistic methodologies taking into consideration how pedagogy was being practiced and redefined everyday here in Medellín. The topic might be universal, but its form and content is not. One of the critiques of Relational Aesthetics is that it isn't critical of the post-Fordist informational and sociability economy – how it feeds into the way our very relationships are being marketed back to us – sociability as a medium or a field of capital investment. From my perspective, one of the reasons this critique has taken hold so strongly is that many art organisations and events have followed suit in riding the 'sociability' wave. This is partly the reason that public practices (many of them working out a counter-logic to this marketed-sociability template) have gained the global art circuit's attention. It's also one of the many reasons why the MDEII needed to take a clear position on what it was trying to achieve.

Local practices, tempered by what the curatorial team brought to the city, gave the MDEII its form and content. By doing so we didn't confuse representations of the social for the haptic work being done by artists to generate new social fabrics. We found a place for numerous methodologies to dialogue, understanding that artists work in different ways. Given the multiple factors at play, I think the MDEII found some synergy. We formed relationships with a wealth of willing collaborators who, given their day-to-day work in the practice of teaching and learning, were immensely generous. I hope they took away as much from these exchanges and the MDEII, as I have from working with them over the past two years.

There is one key example of how this generosity helped us to address a curatorial problem. The issue of not having enough time to commit to a more sustained curatorial presence could not have been easily anticipated. That is because we were not aware of the *kind of event* we were planning beforehand, but after a few trips to Medellín I started to identify some key relationships that the museum had with key groups. I also started to understand that the community-driven work of the various "corporaciones" in Medellín were a litmus test of what was happening in the city. The mediums of video, music, and theatre were identified as key areas of activity. Given the museum's ongoing relationships with Corporación Nuestra Gente (theatre), Corporación Pasolini (video), and Territorio Sonoro (music) it made sense to ask them to act as interlocutors between their community of supporters and the curatorial team. We asked the three interlocutors to invite three other groups in their respective media – for a total of nine – and for each group to present their work in the Aula Dialogica as part of the MDEII. It was an attempt to have collectives and "corporaciones" who have never had a relationship with the museum or the mainstream art world be a part of the conversation. These presentations would then be followed up with the group opening their sites/spaces in the city for programming of their choosing as part of the MDEII.

If the artists, the city and its discourse had benefited from the Museo de Antioquia developing key relationships before the MDEII, then it only made sense that the MDEII try to incorporate this methodology and platform into its programming, particularly given the pedagogical nature of these interactions. This programme was a way to have both the museum and the MDEII open its doors to a new community, while asking these other

independent groups to do the same. Both sides opening their doors to one another, building new relationships, and learning from one another.

It seems clear to me that the work of these "corporaciones" are as much about things the art world could openly and confidently debate as they are about things it has very real problems discussing – from art's role in remaking civic discourses and art as a site for re-modeling nonviolent forms of consciousness building to enquiries into the city's educational infrastructure and its pedagogical traditions and histories.

Working with multiple organisations and actors in a city is not easy. There have been failures and missed opportunities, false starts and several mid-stream adjustments. There were numerous meetings with municipal civil servants and heads of various organisations – too many to count. I made it a priority to meet as many artist-run "corporaciones" as I could during our intensely scheduled visits to the city.

As a curatorial team, we considered and discussed many ideas. We debated the role of the archive, both lost and established, the materiality of learning, as well as the role of performance, libraries and the academy. Projects are planned all over the city and we have invited theorists and artists from Colombia and around the world to expand on these topics and fill in the numerous gaps. Everything was, and is still, up for discussion. By that I mean that our curatorial position, and the MDEII as a whole, took Paulo Freire's idea to heart: every place is a site for learning and everyone is both a teacher and a student.

CONTRIBUTORS

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VÍCTOR MUÑOZ has been exhibiting and participating in collective projects since 2000 and in international art residencies since 2005. Photography, site-specific installations, video, public space, locality, and sculpture are some key themes related to his work, which result in images that explore the way city spaces are crossed, intervened and transformed by nature, local imaginaries and community appropriations.



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