C'undúa: Activist Art in Downtown Bogotá

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In 2007 I attended a presentation of Colombian art collective Mapa Teatro's Testigo de las Ruinas (Witness of the Ruins), a performance piece created in response to events that occurred in an infamous neighborhood in downtown Bogotá known as El Cartucho. The neighborhood was for many years the home of drug addicts, crooks, beggars, prostitutes and peasants displaced by the Colombian war. El Cartucho—which means 'calla lily' in Spanish, but also 'bullet shell'—was Santa Inés's most derelict street, by extension lending its name to the sector.

Directed by Mapa Teatro's founders and directors Rolf and Heidi Abderhalden, Testigo de las Ruinas began with a video projection of a woman sitting on a yellow couch, accompanied by a recorded female voice that referred to life in El Cartucho. The video was complemented by the woman's actual presence to the right of the stage. As the projection was turned off, she put on an apron and disappeared into the darkness of the unlit stage, only to appear again on the other side, next to a table with cooking utensils. We would see her brewing chocolate and mincing corn to make *arepas*—baked cornmeal cakes, a popular Colombian staple—while other screens displayed scenes of the neighborhood's demolition. Cloaked figures silently walked in front of the screens; the projector beams blended their contours into the images behind them.

El Cartucho (also known as 'the alley of death') remained for many years neglected by the city's administration, despite being just a few blocks away from Casa de Nariño, the presidential palace. The Santa Inés neighborhood, and especially El Cartucho street, was—and still is—in the minds of Bogotá's inhabitants an invisible border that divides the city in two: the organized, comfortable north and the impoverished, dangerous south. In the late 1990s the local government decided that it was time to recuperate the area. Entire blocks of republican houses and buildings were demolished to make way for the Tercer Milenio Park. Santa Inés's residents met the project with protests; many of them were forcibly removed. The project was also met with criticism from other sectors, who denounced the lack of a plan to relocate the neighborhood's inhabitants.[1] Indeed, brute force took the place of social aid: El Cartucho's *desechables* (which translates to 'discardables', the street term for the city's undesirables) were rounded up and transported to the city's stock yards being later released in different parts of the city, leaving them to their predicaments.[2]

Mapa Teatro, an "experimental artist laboratory" created by the Abderhaldens in 1984 dedicated to the collaborative production of socially-committed performance and visual art pieces, took up the task of memorializing the transformation of El Cartucho. Testigo de las Ruinas was the final piece of a series of five works that, between 2002 and 2013, adopted different art forms, media and practices with the purpose of recording the transformation: Prometeo I and II, Re-corridos, La limpieza de los establos de Augías and Testigo de las Ruinas. Mapa Teatro calls the series *C'undúa*—the Arhuaca culture's word for the realm of the afterlife. This article considers the social work of this series vis-à-vis the violent process of spatial and social change that Santa Inés underwent.

Due to their heterogeneous, ephemeral and participatory nature, it is inadequate to refer to the *C'undúa* pieces in terms of self-contained, representational artworks. I propose that these works may be better understood as *aesthetic events*. Following recent work in visual studies and aesthetics that posits the relational

character of art, I use this term to highlight that, in each case, these works produce a complex relationality that creates its own time and space, assembling diverse elements: the materiality of the objects and actions presented, the discursive content of those objects, the affects and sensations they elicit, the discourses that frame the latter, as well as the discourses and frames that the spectator/participant brings to the above elements.[3] The aesthetic event is an eruption, an emergence, one that assembles disparate elements whereby a suspension of the relationality that configures the habitual world is put into place.[4] Mapa Teatro's works may be considered aesthetic events insofar as they involve the emergence of a temporally delimited space of complex objective and subjective interactions in the sites where they have occurred.

I posit that these works have a fourfold political agency: 1) they give visibility and audibility to an invisible and inaudible—indeed, an erased and silenced—sector of Bogotá's society; 2) they connect separate urban and social spaces, bringing them into contiguity; 3) they produce new spaces of social interaction, mutual recognition and construction of collective subjectivity; 4) they endow at least some of the former inhabitants of Santa Inés with spatial agency. I will consider these theses with the purpose of illuminating the relevance of Mapa Teatro's work as a form of social intervention. Although in considering each thesis I will emphasize one or another of the *C'undúa* pieces, it is to be understood that these forms of agency are not exclusive traits of the works on which each section focuses.

Presence

Testigo de las ruinas constituted a space in which the former inhabitants of El Cartucho, as well as their histories and predicaments, were made visible and audible, literally: the screens on stage and the reenactments gave presence to those rendered invisible by governmental action. Here, *presence* means the capacity to be seen

and heard in such a way that requires engagement from those who see and hear. In *C'undúa*, the visible *evinces* that which has hitherto escaped from view, while the audible functions as *testimony* of that which hitherto has not been heard. Together, what is shown and what is told work to counter effacement and silence.

We could follow this analytical route in relation to Testigo de las Ruinas, but I wish to turn here to the series of works titled Re-corridos (De-ambulations, December 2003). Approaching the old republican house that serves as Mapa Teatro's residence, visitors would encounter several backlit photographic images of the Tercer Milenio construction site. At the door, an interactive sound installation would reproduce the voice of the old neighborhood's bell ringer. Inside, a video installation showed the demolition of the Cartucho's last standing house; in another room, the demolition sequence was rendered on another screen, opposite to which

Image 1 – Las escalas (Re-corridos), Mapa Teatro, Mapa Teatro residence, Bogota, 2003, photograph by Mauricio Esguerra © Mapa Teatro Archive

Image 2 – Los restos (Re-corridos), Mapa Teatro, Mapa Teatro residence, Bogota, 2003, photograph by Mauricio Esguerra © Mapa Teatro Archive

another image showed the demolished house rebuilding itself, an accomplishment of playback. Another room was cluttered with remnants from the demolition: doors, window frames, parts of furniture. Along the house's staircase, photographic projections of Santa Inés's former inhabitants would gaze at visitors while the interactive sound reproduced their voices as they narrated fragments of their personal histories. Other projections would show scenes from the former neighborhood. On the second floor rested several wooden carts like the ones used by the neighborhood's recyclers, which bore television sets showing recyclers as they went about their activities. Visitors could also weigh themselves on a scale; an image of an equivalent amount of recyclable trash would be projected on the contiguous wall. Another room featured thousands of clattering and chiming glass bottles hanging from the ceiling. In the next room, backlit cracks in the walls resembling scars would interactively produce the voices of former Santa Inés

Image 3 – Los carros (Re-corridos), Mapa Teatro, Mapa Teatro residence, Bogota, 2003, photograph by Mauricio Esguerra © Mapa Teatro Archive

inhabitants as they narrated how they got their own body scars. In yet another piece, television sets amidst wooden crates cramped in a corridor displayed the laboring of Santa Inés's recyclers. In a compelling piece, outmoded radio sets standing on metallic legs would light up while reproducing the voices of former inhabitants as they, once again, narrated their life histories.

The titles of the installations speak of each piece's specific referent: The Witness, The Bell Ringer, The Debris, The Steps, The Carts/The Weight Scales, The Bottle, The House, The Bedroom, The
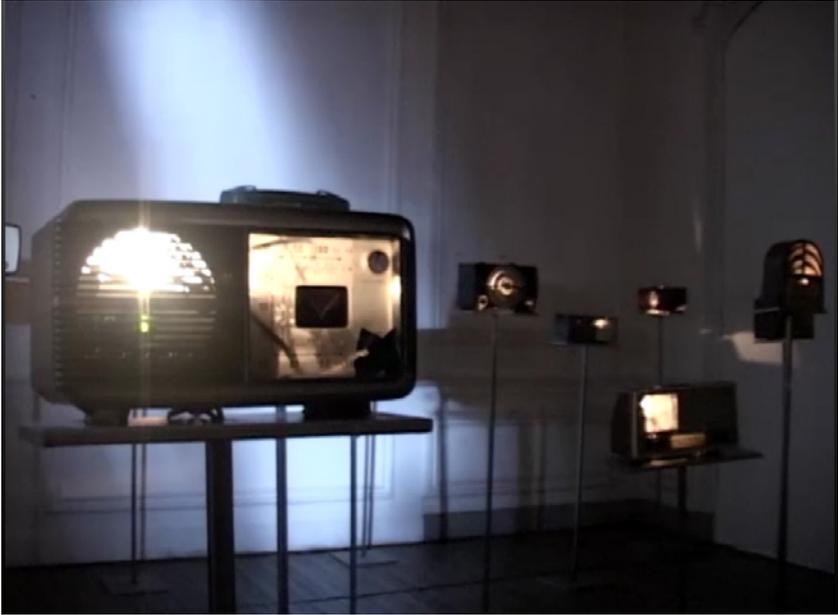
Image 4 – La voz (Re-corridos), Mapa Teatro, Mapa Teatro residence, Bogota, 2003, photograph by Mauricio Esguerra © Mapa Teatro Archive

Skin, The Match, The Remains, The Voice. These objects, images and sounds act as surrogates of the former inhabitants of Santa Inés, giving presence to their histories and life experiences. However, the twelve installations functioned as a whole, integrating into the republican house that served as their site and which resembles many of Santa Inés houses in their better days. The installation was an immersive experience that created a unique sense of space and temporality, which extracted visitors from the usual activities and pace of Bogotá's bustling center. This is the event character of Re-corridos: the emergence of a visual, auditive, tactile and at times olfactory experience that brought into relation the different objects, images and sounds put forth by the installations, the evocative space of the Mapa Teatro residence, the sensitive experience of spectators and the histories, hopes and plights of Santa Inés's former inhabitants. As an immersive aesthetic event, this assemblage of elements had the power to both affectively and discursively engage

those who came into relation with it, thus giving presence to the old neighborhood and especially, to its effaced community.

The piece that most evidently alludes to visibility is La limpieza de los establos de Augías (The Cleansing of the Augian Stables), a complex, multi-spatial installation that took place in August and September 2004. The work links two disparate spaces: the site of the demolished Santa Inés neighborhood and Bogotá's Museum of Modern Art (MAMBO). At the museum, visitors would walk amidst a series of video projections and television screens transmitting in real time the construction of the Tercer Milenio park, as well as images of people looking into a series of niches installed on the metal barrier that secluded the construction site. However, they could not see what these people were seeing; for that, it was necessary to visit the actual construction site. There, twelve television sets installed into the metal barrier featured a loop sequence of the last house to be demolished in El Cartucho. Spectators were in turn recorded by three cameras, secluded in concrete columns placed in front of the barrier, which transmitted back to the museum in real time. An interplay of visible and invisible elements thus emerged; to have a complete experience of the work, spectators had to visit both sites.

All of the works in the *C'undúa* series, particularly the one described above, remind us of what Nicholas Mirzoeff calls "*the right to look*": the right to see that which power strives to obscure from sight.[5] Mirzoeff suggests that hegemonic configurations of power operate by determining which social and political processes and subjects are rendered visible to the community, and which remain invisible. The right to look is thus about upsetting *visuality*— the visual logics and dynamics of power.[6] In the *C'undúa* series, there is a consistent countering of the invisibility to which state power sought to reduce the spatial transformation of the Santa Inés neighborhood and the subjects that inhabited it. The virtuality of the images presented in the Augian Stables installation, for instance, endowed actuality to a process of urban and social effacement. By refusing to submit to the logic of invisibility as effectuated by state intervention, the Augías installation opened a space in which the

Image 5 – La limpieza de los establos de Augías, Museum of Modern Art/Tercer Milienio park, Bogota, 2004, photograph by Rolando Vargas © Mapa Teatro Archive

public was endowed with a vantage point from which they could see hegemonic power at work.

Visibility and audibility are preconditions for politics: seeing others *looking*—for example, the spectators at MAMBO looking at the Tercer Milenio spectators—not only spurs curiosity about what others might be looking at, but more importantly, signals the need to critically examine the functioning of power. While the loop sequence of the demolition of the last standing house in the Augías piece calls for an adequate historical narration of the imposed transformation of Santa Inés, the visibility of the Tercer Milenio construction process acted as an allegory of the need to monitor state action. Mapa Teatro's intervention drew attention to the fact that, as citizens, Bogotanos have a *right to look*—and, we may add, a *right to listen*. Only by closely looking and carefully listening where power demands that we look away and not hear may we open the

Image 6 – La limpieza de los establos de Augías, Museum of Modern Art/Tercer Milienio park, Bogota, 2004, photograph by Rolando Vargas © Mapa Teatro Archive

possibility of a heterogeneous history, one that reveals the violence, omissions and refusals of power. Such an exercise of the right to look is what makes the *C'undúa* works precursors of political action; their agency consists in the production of presence as a means of provoking further engagement and actions.

Relationality

Augías functions as an allegory of *C'undúa*'s capacity, as aesthetic event, to interrelate distinct spaces. Doreen Massey writes that space functions as "the sphere in which distinct trajectories coexist, the sphere of coexisting heterogeneity."[7] Augías interconnects two spaces that are geographically separate from one another: the Tercer Milenio construction site and MAMBO's exhibition space. These sites were complemented by the virtual presence of the

endangered urban space of Santa Inés. Hence, the installation may be seen as a mediation between two (or three) spaces.

But it is more precise to say that the installation opened up a complex relational space, one in which heterogeneous spaces interacted with each other in an ordered system of references and correspondences. Consider the use of video projections. The museum contained the virtual spaces of the video projections, framed by the quadrilateral limits of the images. These limits functioned as a framing device insofar as they constituted a liminal border that not only separated the moving images from their immediate surroundings (the museum space) but also *communicated* both sites: the spectator's attention shifted from their virtual presence as neutral observers of a process taking place at the construction site to a fully embodied sense of being in the museum space. Similarly, the video footage of the demolition of the last El Cartucho house took viewers into a space that existed in a previous moment in time, while their embodied position at the construction site kept them aware of the actuality of the space in which their viewing experience occurred. Indeed, spectators attending the museum were prompted to take the journey from museum to construction site, which would expose them to the rich architectonic and social variation of the urban space between the two sites. The journey was a process of physical and symbolic distancing—and of preserving that very distance. From virtual image space to architectonic cultural space; from past space virtually recreated to actual urban space;

Image 7 – La limpieza de los establos de Augías, Museum of Modern Art/Tercer Milienio park, Bogota, 2004, photograph by Rolando Vargas © Mapa Teatro Archive

from the space of the museum installation to the on-site installation: Augías brought these heterogeneous spaces into relation with each other as an aesthetic event.

Let us turn from spatial to social relationality. The *C'undúa* project was initially funded by the Mayor's Office and the United Nations' Development Program in an effort to use art as a means of commemorating the old neighborhood. City officials wanted to place a permanent monument in the area. However, Mapa Teatro did not yield to this intention, arguing that the project should stem from a productive dialogue with the community. Mapa Teatro assembled an eclectic team of historians, anthropologists, social workers, university students, actors and artists. The year-long series of workshops they carried out with the community eventually produced the two initial works of the *C'undúa* series: Prometeo I and Prometeo II.

The first of these works took place one December evening in 2002 at the site of the recently demolished neighborhood. In this first instance, several stories told by Santa Inés's inhabitants were either enacted or recited. A significant number of people attended. Were it not for the performances—or "install-actions," as R. Abderhalden calls them—it would be unlikely that those who came from other sectors of the city would visit the no-man's land that Santa Inés had become. Neither would they have come into contact with the Santa Inés community, nor taken part with them in any sort of collaborative project. The space opened by Prometeo allowed for the construction of social relations of mutual recognition, collaboration and collective memorialization.

For Prometeo II, white candle lanterns were used to map the outlines of the formerly existing houses. The former inhabitants brought in some of their furniture and personal belongings, setting them exactly in their original resting places. Two large screens served as a backdrop. Visitors could walk through the grid as the histories of Santa Ines's inhabitants were enacted and recited by Mapa Teatro's actors, or by the former inhabitants themselves. Archival footage

Image 8 – Prometeo II, Tercer Milenio park construction site, Bogota, 2003, photograph by Fernando Cruz © Mapa Teatro Archive

Image 9 – Prometeo II, Tercer Milenio park construction site, Bogota, 2003, photograph by Fernando Cruz © Mapa Teatro Archive

of Santa Inés and of the neighborhood's inhabitants narrating their life stories was projected onto the screens. At times, the former inhabitants would mimic the images of themselves being projected onto the screens, enacting, as R. Abderhalden says, "the spectacle of themselves witnessing stories of loss."[8] At other times, they would carry out simple actions such as lighting matches while standing on top of chairs, playing cards and dancing. These actions were complemented by the interactive sound presenting a combination of music and voices recorded when the neighborhood was still upright. The event ended in an open ballroom style dance. In sum, a multidimensional assemblage of actions, images and sounds produced a complex event in which the stories of the former inhabitants of Santa Inés were at the center of the relationality.

Mapa Teatro's collaborative work with Santa Inés's inhabitants became seminal for the other *C'undúa* pieces. In Testigos, the woman making arepas literally took the stage, relating to her audience through the reenactment of her personal history. Re-corridos created an analogous relation, but one that was mediated by the installation's objects: as remnants and bearers of personal history, these objects acted as surrogates of Santa Inés's inhabitants. In general, the *C'undúa* series brought into relation sectors and subjects of Bogotá society that would likely otherwise have remained separate: the community of a stigmatized, impoverished and effaced neighborhood, and individuals with the time and type of cultural background that motivates them to visit museums and engage with art.

As events, Prometeo I and II brought into relation diverse elements: the history of Santa Inés, the personal histories of the neighborhood's former inhabitants, their furnishings and personal belongings, the social imaginaries that marked off the area as prohibited and dangerous, and the former inhabitants of Santa Inés and those attending the install-actions. By interrelating these otherwise disparate objects, discourses and persons, Mapa Teatro's intervention opened up an unlikely space of encounter and recognition, of visibility and participation. For some viewers this

suggested a reaffirmation of their identities while for others it was seen as a deconstruction of stereotypes.

If, as Henri Lefebvre argues, power produces a representational space that limits and even prescribes social practices, then the production of a heterogeneous space of encounter equals the exploding of those representational mechanisms of power.[9] It is not that Bogotá's South would no longer be seen as dangerous to those who actually went there to meet and collaborate with Santa Inés's former inhabitants, or that this encounter annulled all differences and proscribed future separations. Rather, Prometeo's relational space implicated those who took part as visitors in ways that prevented stereotypical representational distancing, and that, further, encouraged engagement with the complexities and the violence of the social processes of their city.[10]

Collective subjectivity

It is not merely the case that the *C'undúa* series produced a space of encounter or contiguity of different subjects; it is also the case that this space of encounter may itself be seen as a production of subjectivity. That the subject is relational is something that we are very aware of in this day and age.[11] The subject is intersubjective, constructed through the mediation of our relations to others. But our analysis suggests that the relational character of the subject has yet another dimension: our relations to objects and places. Others, objects and places: these are the terms of the relational processes that *C'undúa* sets into motion.

The work of *C'undúa* in relation to subjectivity has two moments. First, a moment of recognition, whereby the link between the subjectivities of the former inhabitants of Santa Inés, diverse objects from their everyday lives and the physical and social space of the neighborhood becomes central. This is one aspect of the relationality that *C'undúa* constitutes, as discussed above. But, following from this first moment, there is the production of a collective subjectivity,

achieved specifically in the two Prometeo install-actions and more tangentially in the Testigos performance. In the first case, the link between subjectivity and space is explored with the mediation of the mythic narrative that informs the Prometeo pieces. In the second case, this narrative and the exploration that it mediates became a platform for the construction of a collective subjectivity, however transient and ephemeral it may have been.

Rather than seeing Mapa Teatro's use of myth as an allegorical strategy, it is more relevant to see it as a generative structure. This is what R. Abderhalden implies by highlighting the capacity of myths, which "repeat themselves like dreams, continually forming and deforming in a mobile structure that always reanimates itself," to act as generators of narratives and images.[12] Myths are narratives tensed between the repetitive nature of their retelling and the differences introduced with each reiteration. The purpose of Mapa Teatro's appropriation of myth was to spur and prompt the production of images and ideas, both from their *C'undúa* team as well as from the former inhabitants of Santa Inés participating in the creation of the artworks.

Myth's generative nature is especially salient in considering Mapa Teatro's use of the story of Prometheus. In the myth, Prometheus's punishment for stealing fire from the Gods of Olympus is eternal suffering, which comes in the form of an eagle that eternally eats away at his liver while he is chained to a rock. After 3000 years the Gods take pity on Prometheus; his savior, Heracles, must surmount a wall of liver parts and eagle excrement in order to rescue him from his bondage. In Prometheus I the myth became, as R. Abderhalden says, both "an image that corresponds to the devastated landscape of Santa Inés-El Cartucho" and "a catalyst for stories."[13] The myth became a generative structure, one through which two complex events were fashioned and effectuated.

It is worth noting that Rolf and Heidi Abderhalden followed the version of the myth written by Heiner Müller, the German playwright known for his fragmentary, open-ended scripts. In Müller's rendition,

Prometheus has become accustomed to the eagle and is not sure whether he wishes to be freed by Heracles. The reference is clear: as bad as living conditions were in El Cartucho, its inhabitants had become accustomed to them—indeed, they had molded their subjectivities in relation to the neighborhood—and were not sure they wanted to leave. Surely, Müller's text functions as an allegory of the ambivalence that many of Santa Inés's inhabitants felt about their forced departure. But more importantly, the narrative opens a space in which this aspect of the subjectivity of Santa Inés's former inhabitants is recontextualized and reconfigured through the working and creative relations between them and Mapa Teatro's team.

As R. Abderhalden says, an "experimental community" took shape, one in which memory, imagination and action were explored without following a prescriptive procedure.[14] In this context, the mythical narrative became a catalyst for experimentation in unforeseen directions. The experimental community that the project produced allowed for an exchange of stories, ideas and images. It offered a relational space for critical self-reflection and for the re-creation of personal narratives of identity and place: the Santa Inés community explored their memories and longings as they worked and exchanged stories and ideas with Mapa Teatro's team, while the latter generated performative and aesthetic ideas as they related to the community, learning about their lives and coming closer to them in the process.[15]

Subjectivity follows action. Through the experimental actions undertaken by the creative community assembled for the Prometeo project, a common group identity at once creative, transient and agential emerged. Here, action prompted what, following Sartre, we may describe as the passage from a collective—an assemblage of individuals in contiguity with each other—to a *fused group*—an assemblage of individuals oriented around a common goal emerging from within the group, whereby any individual may represent the group identity as a whole.[16] A relational space articulated around a common project prompted diverse subjects *to identify themselves*

through others, thereby transforming themselves in the process. In the Prometeo project, the formation of collective subjectivity reveals itself as the result of a process of experimentation that eroded the separations between subject positions.

Prometeo I and II emerged as the continuation of a process of social and creative exchange, as well as the opening of that process to a broader public. The performances became what anthropologists Arthur and Joan Kleinman refer to as an *enacted assemblage*, a space in which "interconnected cognitive, affective, and transpersonal processes of body-social memory come together."[17] This description, we may note, is consonant with my definition of the aesthetic event as assemblage. As aesthetic events, these performances brought together the embodied reenactment of memory of both the individuals participating and of the group as a "body-social." But further, insofar as those who attended the performances also participated in them—through their engagement with the situations being enacted before them—the performances

Image 10 – Prometeo II, Tercer Milenio park construction site, Bogota, 2003, photograph by Fernando Cruz © Mapa Teatro Archive

brought together a broad group of people who, at least temporarily, embodied a collective subjectivity.

Spatial agency

Few people in Bogotá would have denied that El Cartucho was in need of official intervention for many years. However, the way in which governmental intervention was carried out in El Cartucho and the lack of a relocation plan meant that many people who, for better or for worse, knew only the ways of life developed in that area found themselves suddenly destabilized. This destabilization took the form of deracination, displacement and the loss of means of subsistence. To lose one's space is to lose one's bearings: with the neighborhood's leveling, the former residents found themselves dislodged from the ways of life that they knew.

Michel Foucault suggests that power does not only function by direct repression and action upon individuals, but by the active and continuous modulation of the *milieu* in which populations exist: power both predisposes and limits the spaces of social interaction, the points of contact between distinct social sectors, the confluence of different social subjects and identities and the movements of individuals and groups.[18] In this sense, power seeks to foster and regulate populations insofar as they serve the purposes of production; the sectors of society that do not serve these purposes are not actively eliminated (although in Colombia they sometimes are) but passively disowned. By leveling Santa Inés, state power sought to control a population seen as both dangerous and unproductive, dispersing them throughout the city with no regard for their fate.

C'undúa, resists the operation of power through the *spatialization of agency*. We have already seen how, in the Prometeo projects, the space of the leveled neighborhood is occupied with the purpose of rendering the invisible and inaudible visible and audible, and with the purpose of producing a relational space that counters

separation, exclusion and stigmatization. As events, the two Prometeo install-actions produced an *emplacement* of Santa Inés's former inhabitants, an opening of a space from which they resisted the actions of power. Such is the spatial dimension of agency; let us look at it further in the other *C'undúa* install-action (or performance/installation), the work with which I began this article: Testigo de las ruinas.

This work was not formally extraordinary—the moving of screens on stage and the sound effects notwithstanding. Rather, what is salient about it is the fact that, as most people in the audience would have probably suspected, the woman on stage was not a trained actor but a former inhabitant of Santa Inés, whose name we would learn later as the performance unfolded: Juana María Ramírez.[19] Ramírez was the last person to leave the neighborhood when the state intervened. She performed on stage the same labor from which she made her living: making and selling hot chocolate and arepas. When I saw the performance, my initial thoughts were that Ramírez was not being allowed to be herself. It felt too scripted, too contrived. However, this impression was progressively dispelled as the performance advanced, completely disappearing when Ramírez stepped off the stage to offer arepas to the audience. In retrospect, I embrace the way in which her inclusion in the piece was carried out—after all, Ramírez was not an actor, and was in fact learning from the experience. Her very presence on stage was the first important aspect of her contribution to the piece.

Ramírez's performance serves to counterpoint Testigo's electronic elements: video projections and sophisticated lighting are sharply contrasted by her mincing of corn and by the gas powered grill. The install-action, to put it in Diana Taylor's words, "makes a street on the stage on the street."[20] As an event, Testigo constitutes a continuous process of spatial modulation. On the screens, demolition balls and bulldozers knocked and destroyed houses and streets; as this occurred, Santa Inés's former inhabitants recreated the neighborhood through their testimonies. While electronic technology is used to evince a process of destruction,

simple actions on stage and spoken words are used to convey the human experience of inhabiting the derelict neighborhood. This counterpoint serves to further underscore Ramírez's onstage presence: while the past is marked by the virtuality of the projected image, Ramírez is unobjectionably before her spectators, her actuality taking preeminence over the images of the past. *Actuality* and *virtuality*: Henri Bergson refers to the present moment as the actual, that which "feels most real to us", while the virtual is that which feels relatively "less real", memory in the case of the past, or fantasy or desire in the case of the future.[21] The actual and the virtual are not mutually exclusive; rather, they coexist in present duration, wrapping and modulating each other. The interrelation of the actual and the virtual makes the event of Testigo a complex assemblage in which different spaces coexist as they gravitate on the undeniable presence and present of Ramírez's performance.

Such is Ramírez's—and Testigo's—spatial agency: not merely the occupation of a space—stage, theatre, performance space—but the production of a space in which acting and narrating are empowering. In speaking of spatial agency, I follow Lawrence Grossberg, who argues that identities "spatialize"—their space being not only the locus of narration or action but also the emplacement and circulation of the narrating and acting agent.[22] The spatial dimension of identity is constituted by the series of emplacements from which someone occupying a given identity position may appear and be seen, speak and be heard; in short: the emplacements from which one may act and exert influence. Different identities are endowed with different spatial girth: some of them have a broad scope of action; others, a very narrow one—or, as in the case of the former inhabitants of Santa Inés, almost none at all. But, in Testigo, Ramírez does not simply yield to the annulment of the spatial dimension of her identity; rather, she occupies a new emplacement, opened up by both the install-action as an artwork and her performance as a former inhabitant of Santa Inés. Ramírez's new emplacement opened new spaces for her personal narrative, spaces in which her voice and actions resist power's intention to annul and forget. The complex event-space of

the performance/installation constitutes the spatial dimension of her agency, Ramírez being its main spatializing element insofar as her presence constitutes the most actualized dimension of the event.

Through her participation in Testigo, Ramírez both broadens her identity and shifts her subjectivity. Mapa Teatro's install-action circulates: apart from Mapa Teatro's Bogotá house, Testigo has been presented in Vienna's Wiener Festwochen, Prague's Four Days in Motion Festival, Berlin's Hebbel Theatre, Zurich's International Festival, Toronto's Aluna Theatre, Yale University's Repertory Theatre, Buenos Aires's Teatro San Martín, Mexico City's Museo de Arte Contemporáneo and the Festival Iberoamericano de Bahía, Brazil. Ramírez's presence on stage has contributed to Testigo's national and international resonance; Mapa Teatro's reputation has allowed Ramírez to circulate and reach audiences far beyond her scope as a former Santa Inés neighbor. While such travels are undeniably advantageous for Ramírez, the point is not how much she travels, but how much the space of her agency expands, how much both her identity and subjectivity *spatialize*. The spaces Ramírez reaches, the new relations she establishes, the visibility and audibility she obtains: all of these aspects contribute to her imagining of herself otherwise, to a modulation of her own representations of her place in the world. In sum, through Testigo, Ramírez replaces her old spatial identity with a new spatial dimension that henceforth informs her subjectivity.

Fifteen years after the leveling of Santa Inés and the scattering of its population, El Cartucho continues to represent in Bogotá's social imaginary an invisible border and a dangerous urban sector. The Tercer Milenio park continues to be underused and scarcely visited, although there have been official efforts to give it cultural and recreational value. The process of spatial transformation and social effacement put in place by state power has been effective in evacuating the unsightliness of the old neighborhood and in scattering its outcast population, but it has not attended to the social issues at the core of El Cartucho's emergence and lengthy existence.

What did Mapa Teatro's intervention achieve? Surely, it did not heal Bogotá's class-related social wounds. Nor did it change the predicaments in which many of the former inhabitants of Santa Inés found themselves after the state intervened, or the predicaments they were in before such an intervention. But these effects were not promised. The agency of the aesthetic does not lie in the transformation of social structures, but in *the motivation towards further agency*. Its agency must be understood in terms of the production of engagement, not in terms of its transformative effects. Visibility and audibility, relationality, the re-creation of individual and collective subjectivity: these dimensions of the *C'undúa* project function, not to transform the political, economic and social structures that produced El Cartucho, not to improve the lives of the area's former inhabitants—even though, as we have seen throughout this article, it actually did for a few of them—but to engage Bogotanos with the need to attend to the social issues that both produced El Cartucho and that were produced by the destruction of the neighborhood.

As aesthetic events, the *C'undúa* works opened a series of spaces in which such engagement was provoked. If there have not been significant transformations of Bogotá's social landscape, it is not because Mapa Teatro's project failed, but because Bogotanos have failed to follow through with the need to exert change. But this does not need be seen in a defeatist light: *C'undúa* might not have been enough, but it was an important starting point; as such, it calls for further aesthetic—and social—interventions. As Massey says, space "is always in the process of being made."[23] Speaking to this notion, *C'undúa* draws attention to the need to continue opening spaces of engagement, spaces of visibility and audibility, spaces in which both social relations and subjectivity may be reworked and recreated.

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Notes

1. César Enrique Herrera De la Hoz, *Evolución del concepto de espacio público en Bogotá desde la perspectiva de análisis de las políticas públicas 1990 – 2006, Estudio de caso: el Parque Tercer Milenio,* (Master's Thesis, Bogotá: National University, 2011), available online at: http://www.bdigital.unal.edu.co/6424/1/697012.2011.pdf

2. Diana Taylor, "Performing Ruins", *Telling Ruins in Latin America* (Ed. Vicky Unruh and Michael Lazarra, New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 2008.

3. Namely, I follow Douglas Crimp's *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), Jacques Rancière's *The Politics of Aesthetics* (London: Continuum, 2009) and Julianne Rebentisch's *The Aesthetics of Installation Art* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013).

4. This is a working concept; in no way do I lay claim here to a theory of art as event.

5. Nicholas Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look.: A Counterhistory of Visuality* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

6. According to Mirzoeff, visuality refers to a "specific technique of colonial and imperial practice, operating both at 'home' and 'abroad', by which power visualizes History to itself" (*The Visual Culture Reader,* New York: Routledge, 2013, xxx). Putting the specific decolonial nature of Mirzoeff's project aside, I take from his definition the broad relation implicit in it between visuality and regimes of power.

7. Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005), 9.

8. R. Abderhalden, "The artist as witness" (Bogotá: Conference paper, 2006).

9. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Cambridge MA: Blackwell, 1991).

10. I have resisted analyzing the relational dimension of *C'undúa* in terms of relational art, as Rolf Abderhalden and other commentators have done. My reason for resisting Nicolas Bourriaud's label is that it too easily slips into an ideological register. I agree with Claire Bishop when she points out that relational art, at least in those artists and artworks that Bourriaud refers to, does not really constitute democratic relations, insofar as they rest too easily on an ideal of the community and subjectivity as a coherent whole, a new "totalitarianism of the social" which effaces difference. In Bourriaud's relational art, difference stays at the gallery entrance. In *C'undúa*, on the other hand, there is an evincing of difference, and it is only through hard work and ongoing collaboration—through the construction of "experimental communities" that difference is assuaged. See Bourriaud, (2002); Bishop (2004, pp. 51-79).

11. This awareness is a legacy of feminist and poststructuralist thought, which have in turn profited from the work of Marx, Nietzsche and Freud. Stuart Hall synthesizes this trajectory in a well-known essay, "Who Needs Identity?" (1996).

12. R. Abderhalden, "The artist as witness".

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. I want to comment on the title of the fourth work in the *C'undúa* series: "The Cleansing of the Augian Stables" refers to one of the twelve labors of Hercules. As the legend goes, Augeas, King of Elis, owned the single greatest amount of cattle in the Peloponnesus. The cattle's stables had not been cleaned in over thirty years; but Eurystheus, in whose service Hercules labored, demanded that he complete the task in just one day. This labor was intended to humiliate him and to be impossible, as the livestock ate in great quantities and therefore produced an enormous amount of dung. However, Hercules succeeded by changing the course of two rivers, whose waters he used to wash down the stables. Considering this a foul move, neither Augeas nor Eurystheus acknowledged the completion of the task. We could refer to this use of the Greek myth in terms of allegory, identifying Hercules's supernatural power with the reckless power of the government as it wiped out the Santa Inés neighborhood, perhaps identifying the divine cattle with the area's former inhabitants. Or perhaps state power is to be identified with Augeas and Eurystheus, while the Mapa Teatro team takes the traits of Hercules, in their astute outwitting of a government that proposed what may be seen as the

humiliating task of memorializing a process of urban effacement. But this sort of allegorical reading leads to dead ends: it is not completely clear who is identified with whom, and the traits of the characters and figures in the story cannot be transposed without contradiction.

16. Jean Paul Sartre, "The Fused Group", *Critique of Dialectical Reason,* Book 2 (London: Verso, 2006).

17. Karen Till, "'Greening' the City? Revisions of Sustainability in Bogotá" (Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics, 2009).

18. Michel Foucault, "Class of January 11, 1978", *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977–1978* (Oxford: Macmillan, 2009).

19. For the purpose of writing this article, I have revisited the performance/installation through a video recording, courtesy of R. Abderhalden.

20. Diana Taylor, "Performing Ruins".

21. Henri Bergson, "Chapter 1: The Intensity of Psychic States", *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (New York: Dover, 2001).

22. Lawrence Grossberg, "Identity and Cultural Studies: Is That All There Is?", in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, eds. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (London: Sage, 1996).

23. Doreen Massey, *For Space*, 9.

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