

EXHIBITION

CARLOS BUNGA. *Heterotopias*

July 3 – October 18 2009 **ESPAZO ANEXO**

MEETING POINTS III



DATES

July 3 – October 18 2009

PLACE

Espazo Anexo

HOURS

Tuesdays to Saturdays from 11am to 2pm
and from 5pm to 9pm;
Sundays from 11am to 2pm

CURATOR

Agar Ledo Arias

PRODUCTION

MARCO, Museo de Arte Contemporánea de Vigo

Left.: Carlos Bunga, *Economically Desirable*, 2009
Ink pen on photograph. Courtesy of the artist and Galería Elba Benítez

PRESENTATION

Friday July 3rd is the opening date of the **third proposal of the series 'PUNTOS DE ENCUENTRO / MEETING POINTS'**, this time with artist **Carlos Bunga** (Porto, Portugal, 1976). Within the context of this programme, the five invited artists — Pedro Barateiro, Manuel Eirís, Carlos Bunga, Nicolás Combarro and José Dávila — work on the concept of the contemporary city as a heterogeneous space, where a series of crossed relationships are established. All of them share a common interest in the social and architectural context with site specifics for MARCO's Espazo Anexo, directly related to its surroundings and to the city of Vigo.

WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

Under the title '**Heterotopias**', **Carlos Bunga** approaches Vigo's early history, its architecture and urban planning, its changes and transformations. The proposal was developed through a research process, fieldwork, library/newspaper library visits, photographs/videos, and meetings with local citizens. The exhibition in the Anexo, which includes various series of drawings, photographs and collages, has been made with the materials gathered during the research process.

SYNTHESIS OF THE EXHIBITION PROJECT

The proposal by Carlos Bunga (Porto, Portugal, 1976) forms part of 'MEETING POINTS', a Project that will be ongoing throughout 2009 and the beginning of 2010 in the Espazo Anexo at MARCO. In the context of this project, five artists present their work with the objective of establishing a dialogue between the site of the exhibition — the exhibition space — and its surroundings — the city. The central idea is to convert the Anexo into a place of conclusion or formalization of the experiences, as opposed to the traditional consideration of the museum as a place to display objects. The guest artists develop proposals that originate outside the limits of the museum and which modify the logical coordinates of perception. All of them share a common interest in the social and architectural context.

Carlos Bunga shows works related to different features regarding the overall concept of the city, and to Vigo in particular. Aware that cities take part in the changes in History, and that crossed relations are established there, Bunga defines contemporary cities as heterotopias (term coined by Michel Foucault in 1967), which, opposed to utopias, are real places inside other places; confronted-places where town-planning redefinitions, and social and economical conflicts are interwoven.

In this project he tries to tackle the town-planning history of Vigo, which has been strongly marked by industrial development and real-state speculation. With an aim to rationalise the urban context, the artist superimposes and mixes perspectives, points of view, local and peripheral stories. The project was developed through a research process dilated in time — fieldwork, information gathering, photographs, videos —, including several meetings with citizens of Vigo. Groups of drawings, collages, photographs and videos make us reflect on the concept of production and specially on consumption — food in this case —, so linked to the industrialization of the city and its transformation. Also, we are invited to think of a town-planning evolution planned on the fringes of citizenship and dependent on economic, industrial or political needs. It is not by chance that this survey took place in Vigo, a clear example of that excessive growth which contemporary cities have suffered.

The exhibition in the Anexo brings together over fifty pieces, considered individually or grouped into series. Among them, *Tiempo ausente* [Absent Time] — fragmented photographs of different parts of the city —, the series *Stargate*, the series of 24 photographs entitled *How Does Your City Grow?*, focused on the relationship between Vigo and the sea, or the 20 drawings on paper reproducing pages of the newspaper *Faro de Vigo*. Along with a wide sample of photographs and drawings regarding the city's early history — like *Una pequeña historia del Hotel Continental* [A Brief Story on Hotel Continental]—, or regarding the binomial architecture-food, the exhibition also includes the video *Maqueta* [Model] and the sound archive entitled *La cena* [The Dinner], a recording of a gastronomic meeting organised for citizens of Vigo.

PRESS RELEASE



HETEROTOPIAS

“The project *Heterotopias* bases its research on the city of Vigo, which could be understood as a kind of lab. Various questions could be posed by this project: What is the relationship between food and architecture? Is architecture related to food, the act of eating and its symbolism, and also the idea of consumption? In which way do human being understand the importance of architecture and the city? The demolition of a building, could it be comparable to the act of food consumption? Is it about changes and transformations to create something new? Could the buildings be seen as food? How can the concepts of food and shelter be related between them? Can the cities be understood in the same way as we understand food? Could the buildings be observed as a banquet, ready to be eaten, experienced, consumed?”

Architecture has the capacity to influence our thought moulding it in a way that we can imagine an invented ‘utopia’, assumed as truthful, which becomes an integral part of our senses of the way in which we adapt to those places. A kind of ‘friction’ that turn out to be integral part of our reality.

The way in which the history of cinema has been able to take advantage of the city and has helped the cities to be box (centre) of the world’s action, has had great impact on individual’s minds, who cast in the cities that ‘fictional’ reality of wanting to be part of a world where every event seems to be possible, creating a kind of existential ‘crisis’ between fiction and reality. The growing of population in the cities has had consequences in the individual’s thought and behaviour. Those cinematographic or mental *projections* occur in the cities, which work as stages for individuals to interact.

Constant transformations, movements and changes so strongly felt in the cities, where memory seems to merge in time, make them be places within History in constant process of (re)invention. Cities have the capacity of reinventing themselves; they are ‘heterogeneous’ places where crossings of experiences are created. The wastes of food could be a metaphor of the remains of the buildings that have existed in a specific place. There is the biological need of the act of eating, just as the act of building. Works like *Economically Desirable*, 2009, included in this exhibition, make a precise a parody of the implicit ephemeral characteristic of the buildings as something constant and necessary at the same time for economic growth and the growth of a ‘presumed’ sustainable market.”

Carlos Bunga
Vigo, July 2009

PRESS RELEASE



TEXT BY THE CURATOR

“Uncountable are the definitions that have been established throughout history regarding the city. Apart from the gathering of citizens which according to Aristotle determined the rise of the metropolis, or the place to talk and discuss described by Ortega y Gasset, when interpreting the city as the agora, Vigo is introduced as the place where different structures converge, where tradition somehow has undergone a process of industrialization leading it to become the most populous city of Galicia and among those with the biggest expansion over the last few decades.

Vigo’s singularity and its ‘uncharacterised’ architecture encouraged Carlos Bunga to research the strong transformation experienced by the city throughout the XX century. The work realised by the artist was organised in different stages, during which he met with citizens to gather opinions and data to help him understand the urban-planning evolution and the way it is planned on the margins of citizenship and dependant on economic, industrial or political needs. The results of the research process — drawings, collages, photographs and videos — work as documentation, as a ‘prelude’ of a non existing conclusion, and provide thoughts on the concepts of production and consumption so closely linked to the city. The development of this research is not casual, since it is a clear example of the growth suffered by cities nowadays.

Aware that cities take part in the changes in History, and that crossed relationships are established there, Bunga defines the contemporary city as *heterotopia*, term coined by Michel Foucault in 1967, in order to substitute the historicist analysis which prevailed so far. Opposed to utopias, heterotopias are real places inside other places; confronted-places where town-planning redefinitions, social and economical conflicts are interwoven. In the artist’s hands, the city becomes mouldable. He deconstructs it. With an aim to rationalise the urban context, the artist superimposes and mixes perspectives, points of view, local and peripheral stories.

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The exhibition is shown in a fragmented way, as a metaphor of the contemporary city, divided into series. One of the episodes is the result of the visits to libraries and newspaper libraries, originating in 20 drawings on paper reproducing pages of the newspaper *Faro de Vigo*, showing the evolution of the city through one its icons. The city, archive of memory, is linked to the idea of time, and the newspaper is here shown as a heterotopia in itself, superimposing perspectives, points of view and temporalities. Drawing these newspapers is, according to the artist, an attempt to rewrite History. Drawn and erased, the works show pieces of time or fragile memory, of the presence-absence of the architecture.

Time is, perhaps, the vertebrate in Carlos Bunga’s works from his very early performances, questioning the concept of space and durability of objects. Actions developed in Manifesta 5 (San Sebastián, 2004), in Museu Serralves, Porto (EDP Award, 2003) or in Galería Elba Benítez, Madrid (2005) have the same background: thought on the transitory, the ephemeral thing that in *Heterotopias* becomes the leit-motiv.

PRESS RELEASE



But what really matters to Carlos Bunga is the emptiness, the remaining absence, creating a new space. The artist himself refers to Schwitters' *Merzbau* constructions, or Matta Clark's *Cuttings* as the main referral of some actions that find their singularity in this 'empty space'. In Basel Art Fair (2008) he showed in the section ArtUnlimited a piece which proved that work can be done from the nerve centre of the market while questioning it. Abandoning the spectacularity and grandiloquence was a challenge in a space conceived for visually attracting big names collector. The work, entitled *Ruins*, apart from evoking the space inside the space, consisted of the recreation of a non existing structure of a plan, a 'dissected' structure. With this, it is the visitor who completes the meaning and the one who creates the spaces from the emptiness.

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In the proposal for MARCO, the series *Tiempo ausente* shows this big hole in a more obvious way. The artist tears in half photographs of different parts of the city and shows us the reality along with the imaginary projection, which acquires corporeity when reaching the viewer. Essayist and architect Fernando Chueca Goitia describes the city like frustration: 'It has always been and will be, due to the nature of its essence, artistically fragmented, tumultuous and unfinished. The definite and round shape that aesthetic feelings long for cannot be found in it.' (F. Chueca Goitia, *Breve historia del urbanismo*, p. 37). The idea of leaving the result of the investigation in the hands of the atmosphere, the inhabitants and the connoisseurs of Vigo is like inventing a new relation between subjects. The artist is here an actor involved in the spatial, social and historical context, interpreting the city as a lab and its result as documentation.

The city is built and, given its assumed dynamic nature and its need for constant adaptation, every construction entails a destruction. *How Does Your City Grow?* is a narrative sequence of 24 photographs intervened by the artist, which insists into the relations between the city and the sea. Vigo's fast growth foresees a future of urbanization which invades a territory beyond its natural boundaries. In *Una pequeña historia del Hotel Continental*, Bunga summarises one of the most recent episodes of the History of Vigo. Built in the 70's, the Hotel Continental was a must. 'Without any favour, the best in Galicia and one of the principal hotels in Spain', read an add published on a newspaper back in 1912. Right in the city's seafront, it welcomed visitors until it was demolished in the 60's. The disappearance of emblematic buildings in the city, frequent in many places but highly stressed in Vigo's case, has been gathered in the *Vigo, la ciudad que se perdió*, by historian Jaime Garrido. This publication, along with several other documents and books provided by Instituto de Estudios Vigueses, have been a guidance in the artist's research process.

The utopia of maintaining an organised city according to the dictations of reason, so Cartesian, collapses with the dispersion imposed by History. In the series entitled *Plano ortogonal [Orthogonal Plan]*, composed by 3 works, the artist superimposes a grid cut out on vellum over black and white photographs of the city, therefore recalling the idea of the city of the XVII and XVIII centuries, the city of the grid, the geometrical city, opposed to the 'busy', disorganised city linked to Capitalist economy.

PRESS RELEASE



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The performative part of this project reflects on other works in the exhibition. In the video *Maqueta* [Model], the sponge cake over which the chocolate is spread, in a never ending, hypnotising loop, shows the relationship between food and architecture, in which the artist has based part of his research. Beginning with a thought on the city's speed of change in a time of speculation or industrialization, Bunga decides to establish a relationship to food's durability. The objective of industrialization is consumption, a relationship the artist uses to make fun of that fugacity with which it is built. 'The consumer society cherishes things which are made to be swallowed as quickly as possible. The biological need of the act of eating exists in the architectural field; it is comparable to the act of building', says the artist referring to works as *Economically Desirable*, *Hemorroides* [Haemorrhoids], *Comida* [Food] or *Build with Your Food*. 'Among them I establish a relation between food wastes and the remains of a building that have once existed in a certain place.'

From an aesthetical point of view, the pieces look strange because of the impossible association of elements. Houses, by themselves, do not conform a city, which in order to exist require citizen participation, socialization and disputes. *La cena* [The Dinner] is the sound archive of a gastronomic meeting in which the guests were suggested several discussion themes and a time for discussion settled by the menu (*Menú*, 2009). For hours, the guests analysed issues like the urbanization plan of Samil urban beach, the building of the City Council of Vigo, the massive edification, the lost theatres and cinemas, the current state of the Panificadora or the urbanization plan 'Abrir Vigo al mar' [Open Vigo to the Sea]. Their memories, opinions and comments provided the basis for this specific work by Carlos Bunga, realised for the city of Vigo, as a new example of the social dimension, of the extension of the artistic proposals beyond the museum's boundaries, which characterise the series 'MEETING POINTS.'

Agar Ledo Arias

Curator of the exhibition

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

About the artist

Carlos Bunga (Porto, Portugal, 1976) came to international attention when his work was shown at Manifesta 5 in San Sebastián, Spain, in 2004. Bunga uses materials such as pressed cardboard, paints and wrapping tape to build rooms that extrude like outgrowths stuck onto existing constructions or architectures. Bunga's construction process — which though carefully planned leaves a number of choices to be made during the production stage — is documented systematically and thoroughly by a photographer. The end result of his intervention on the space reflects some stylistic affinities with Kurt Schwitters' *Merzbau*, or Gordon Matta Clark's work. Carlos Bunga trained as a painter. His early works — oil on canvas — were often installed on specially selected walls of the city and he would then document the effect that exposing the paintings to the environment (climate, the passing of time, pollution) had on them. Following this experience he became more interested in the buildings themselves and in the walls, the structures and the spaces surrounding those painting.

After studying Fine Arts at the Escola Superior de Arte e Design (ESAD) in Caldas da Rainha (Portugal), Carlos Bunga has continued with his training, awarded a visual arts grant by the Fundación Marcelino Botín (ISCP, New York, 2006-2007), and Residency Programs such as the Aldaba Art at Ciudad de México (2007) and Fundacion Ilidio Pinho at New York (2008). He has done solo shows of his work held at institutions such as Culturgest (Portugal, 2005) and Milton Keynes Gallery (UK, 2006); and with group exhibitions at the Artists Space (New York, 2005), San Diego Museum of Art (*Farsites: Urban Crisis and Domestic Symptoms in Recent Contemporary Art*, part of *inSite_05*, San Diego, 2005), New Museum (*Unmonumental, The Object in the 21st Century*, New York, 2007), Instituto Valenciano de Arte Moderno-IVAM (*Construir, habitar, pensar*, Valencia, 2008) and Fundación Marcelino Botín (*Low Key*, Santander, 2008). At the last edition of Art Basel, his piece *Ruins* was included in the special projects section Art Unlimited.

About the curator

Agar Ledo Arias (Santiago de Compostela, Spain, 1975) has worked as head of the exhibitions department at MARCO, Museo de Arte Contemporánea de Vigo, from January 2006. With a degree in Art History, her career has moved along exhibition spaces such as Le Consortium, Dijon (France) or Musée d'Art Contemporain de Lyon. Her professional career has taken her to exhibition spaces at Fundación Luis Seoane (A Coruña), A Chocolaría (Santiago de Compostela) and CGAC, Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea, where she has curated the exhibitions 'Imagining spaces, recreating realities', 'ARCO Foundation Collection' and 'Roland Fischer. Path'. Coordinator at the first edition of BIACS, International Biennial of Contemporary Art Seville (2004), curated by Harald Szeemann, her career also includes some activities as independent curator, and collaborations in specialises magazines.

PRESS RELEASE

REQUESTS FOR GRAPHIC MATERIALS

EXHIBITION

MEETING POINTS III

CARLOS BUNGA. 'Heterotopias'

GRAPHIC MATERIAL AVAILABLE TO THE PRESS:

CD including texts and photographs of the exhibition in different formats.

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MARCO, Museo de Arte Contemporánea de Vigo

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