

EXHIBITION

THE MUSEUM AS MEDIUM

June 20th – September 21st, 2008 **EXHIBITION HALL ON THE GROUND FLOOR**



WHEN

June 20th – September 21st, 2008

WHERE

At the exhibition galleries on the ground floor

OPENING TIMES

Tuesday to Saturday (including holidays), from 11 am to 9 pm
Sunday from 11 am to 3 pm

CO-PRODUCED BY

MARCO, Museo de Arte Contemporánea de Vigo / Koldo Mitxelena Kulturunea, San Sebastián

CURATORS

Pablo Fanego y Pedro de Llano

Roman Ondák. *Measuring the Universe*, 2007. Performance at Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich. Courtesy Gallery Martin Janda, Vienna / gb agency, Paris. Photo: Haydar Koyupinar

ARTISTS: 20

- **Lara Almarcegui** (Saragossa, Spain, 1972; lives and works in Rotterdam, The Netherlands)
- **Monica Bonvicini** (Venice, Italy, 1965; lives and works in Berlin, Germany)
- **Arabella Campbell** (Vancouver, Canada, 1973; lives and works in Vancouver)
- **Maria Eichhorn** (Bamberg, Germany, 1962; lives and works in Berlin, Germany)
- **Annika Eriksson** (Sverige, Sweden, 1956; lives and works in Berlin, Germany)
- **Ceal Floyer** (Karachi, Pakistan, 1968; lives and works in Berlin, Germany)
- **Andrea Fraser** (Billings, Montana, USA, 1965; lives and works between New York and Los Angeles, EUA)
- **Luca Frei** (Lugano, Switzerland, 1976; lives and works in Lund, Sweden)
- **Mario García Torres** (Monclova, Mexico, 1975; lives and works in Los Angeles, USA)
- **Felix Gonzalez-Torres** (Güaimaro, Cuba, 1957 - Miami, USA, 1996)
- **Jeppe Hein** (Copenhaguen, Denmark, 1974; lives and works between Copenhaguen and Berlin, Germany)
- **Louise Lawler** (Bronxville, New York, USA, 1947; lives and works in New York)
- **Maidor López** (San Sebastián, Spain, 1975; lives and works in San Sebastián)
- **Loreto Martínez Troncoso** (Vigo, Spain, 1978; lives and works in Paris, France)
- **Roman Ondák** (Zilina, Slovakia, 1966; lives and works in Bratislava, Slovakia)
- **Sergio Prego** (Fuenterrabía, Spain, 1969; lives and works in New York, USA)
- **Karin Sander** (Bensberg, Germany, 1957; lives and works in Berlin, Germany)
- **Tino Sehgal** (London, UK, 1976; lives and works in Berlin, Germany)
- **Sancho Silva** (Lisbon, Portugal, 1973; lives and works in Lisbon)
- **Thomas Struth** (Geldern, Germany, 1954; lives and works in Düsseldorf, Germany)

WORKS EXHIBITED

THE MUSEUM AS MEDIUM is an exhibition project consisting of different types of works that address the museum or institution as the substance and referent of the artwork. The show's departure point is the changing function of the museum, and it comprises the proposals of twenty artists who have in common their attitude toward the museum, not only as a container or exhibitor of works of art, but also as a place of action and experience, as a 'medium', in direct relation to the space and the context in which the works take place. Produced jointly by the MARCO of Vigo and Koldo Mitxelena Kulturunea of San Sebastián, the project includes a large number of site-specific works produced for one or the other of these venues.

ABOUT THE CURATORS

Pablo Fanego is an independent exhibition curator. He earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Vigo and his most recent endeavours include the project on art and public space *A cidade interpretada*, in Santiago de Compostela, with the participation of the artists Nathan Coley, Hans Schabus, Roman Ondák, Jorge Barbi, Germaine Kruij, Apolonija Sustersic, Carme Nogueira and André Guedes, and the solo show by Alicia Framis, *Secret Strike*, at the CGAC, Santiago de Compostela. His previous professional career is for the most part linked to the Luis Seoane Foundation in Corunna. At this centre he directed exhibition and publishing projects such as *Trompe-la-memóire. Historia e visualidade*, *A construción do espectador* and *How soon is now?* He also organized several workshops and activities related to contemporary art, such as the meetings *Deseño das pasaxes ou Estructuras sen poder*, carried out with the participation of the UIMP. He is currently preparing two solo shows with the artists Ibon Aranberri and Hans Schabus.

Pedro de Llano earned a bachelor's degree in History of Art at the University of Santiago de Compostela. He is currently preparing his doctoral dissertation at USC on Clement Greenberg's materialist criticism, based on research he developed at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles. He is participating on several research projects at USC on the relations between the cultural industry and the cityscape, and he is collaborating on USC's master in contemporary art programme. He is co-editor of the book *En tiempo real: El arte mientras tiene lugar* (Fundación Luis Seoane, Corunna, 2001) together with Xosé Lois Gutiérrez. He was also documentation advisor for the exhibition *A creación do necesario* (MARCO, Vigo, 2004) and editor of *Wrong Site: Arte y globalización* (Fundación Luis Seoane, 2008). He is contributor to the magazines *Exit Express*, *Afterall online* and the *Vanguardia's* supplement *Cultura/s*. He recently had three essays published, about the artists Tino Sehgal, Dan Graham, Fernando José Pereira, Hans Shabus, Vicente Blanco and José Carlos Teixeira.

SUMMARY OF THE EXHIBITION PROJECT

THE MUSEUM AS MEDIUM is an exhibition project consisting of different types of works that address the museum or the institution as the substance and referent of artworks. At the core of this project are the changes that have taken place — especially over the past fifteen years — in the functions and very concept of the museum, but also in artists' attitudes, in social uses and forms of behaviour, and in the crossover among diverse artistic disciplines. The curators' intention is to consider the museum as media and material, and as a system of historically established conventions.

The show comprises the proposals of twenty artists who have in common their attitude toward the museum, not as a container or exhibitor of works of art, but as a place for action and experience, as a 'medium', in direct relation to the space and the context in which the work takes place. By selecting the pieces and inviting these artists to create site-specific projects at the MARCO, in the city of Vigo, the intention of conceiving the museum as a place for projecting oneself is reinforced. It is not a chance coincidence that all the pieces in this show have to do with the human scale, with corporeity, with the encounter and relation of the person — whether the artist or the spectator — with the space in which the work is located. Among the exhibition projects undertaken at the MARCO, this may be the one which involves the most intervention on the site — with works that modify, reconstruct or reinterpret the interior spaces — and yet, the building's original structure has never been so visible.

The exhibition is articulated around a number of works made specifically for the participating institutions — the MARCO of Vigo and the Koldo Mitxelena of San Sebastian — and a series of shared pieces adapted to both venues. The museums' architectural spaces, daily routines and social context serve as signifiers of the exhibition's contents. In other words, in each case the museum has been pared down as far as possible so that it is the building itself — the 'medium' — which is the real object on display: the space is thus dimensioned, specified, and interpreted in its totality through the artists' actions and the participation of the public. The museum is perceived not only as a place of instruction or learning, in keeping with the nineteenth-century definition, but also as a place where the spectators' 'performative' attitude is stimulated as the ample catalogue of social routines that take place within its walls is called into question.

Among the new projects made for the first exhibition venue are works by Arabella Campbell, Maria Eichhorn, Loreto Martínez Troncoso, Roman Ondák, Sergio Prego, Mainer López and Sancho Silva, which deal with themes such as the history of the former prison that today is home to the MARCO, the nature of Vigo society, the architecture of the museum and its exterior, and the behavioural patterns the spectator-user assumes once inside the museum. Alongside these interventions and completing the exhibition are pieces that have been previously displayed in other contexts and are now adapted to the spaces of Vigo and San Sebastián. These are the work of Lara Almarcegui, Monica Bonvicini, Annika Eriksson, Ceal

PRESS RELEASE

Floyer, Andrea Fraser, Luca Frei, Mario García-Torres, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Jeppe Hein, Louise Lawler, Karin Sander, Tino Sehgal and Thomas Struth. While the greater part of the artists represented trained or began their artistic careers some time between the nineties and the present decade, we have also wanted to include works by other artists (Fraser, Gonzalez-Torres, Lawler, Struth) whose attitudes with regard to the above-mentioned transformations proved pivotal in subsequent artistic developments.

BY THE CURATORS

“What is the function of the museum in contemporary culture? Until not so long ago, it was clear. One had only to refer to the statutes of the International Council of Museums of 1974, which described the museum as a ‘non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.’

More recently, however, the museum’s functions became so drastically altered that they were sometimes said to be in a state of ‘crisis’. Indeed, as the 1990s approached and the effects of the expanding economy of services and the spectacular introduction of new technologies began to be felt, museums, like other types of artistic institutions, saw the scope of their activity grow. Today, apart from collecting and exhibiting works of art, museums are expected to be meeting places, restaurants, bookshops, and even fashion hotspots. Museums can also help to market cities across the globe, construct a national identity, and boost real estate speculation.

Doubtless, such processes suggest that today the functions of the museum extend well beyond the realm of the purely artistic. Whether because of economic criteria or a greater involvement with society and history, museums have clearly lost their traditional autonomy and have become core players of modern-day societies. With nothing left of the self-absorbed neutrality ascribed to them by modern art history, museums are now strategic implements that give rise to unprecedented struggles for their management. The museum has become the emblematic edifice of the 21st century, just as the cathedral was of the Middle Ages. Indeed, one could even say that it is the symbolic seat of the ‘culture industry’ and a key reference point in contemporary urbanism. The Guggenheim of Bilbao, inaugurated in 1997, is surely paradigmatic of a trend that has since been consolidated by other institutions such as the Tate Modern of London and the MUSAC of León, to cite but a couple of more familiar examples.

Inevitably, artists have responded to and interpreted such processes, and often even anticipated them. If for bourgeois society the artistic object par excellence had been the easel painting, representing as it did the individualistic values to which it aspired by virtue of its unicity, abstraction and exchange potential on the market, in today’s capitalist democracies it is the art institution itself as a whole which tends to reproduce — as a medium for the art work that it is — alternative values designed by audience participation, the importance of collective experience, and context, while generating works that integrate space, both physically and conceptually, as a core ingredient of their identity. This means that the so-called ‘crisis’ of the museum is in fact but the renovation of its representative dimension as it assumes the basic premises and antagonisms of contemporary living and presents itself as a privileged ‘public space’, an environment in constant transformation which, in addition to fulfilling its mission as an archive, can hold a mirror up to the present moment and to its user community.

PRESS RELEASE

The exhibition **THE MUSEUM AS MEDIUM** uses this context to explore the different ways in which artists have related to institutions since the early nineties, a key moment in the latter's recent history. By researching and contrasting complementary processes occurred in the artistic and social spheres (such as the resurgence of performative and contextual practices, both successors of conceptual art and the institutional critique of the 1970s, the flowering of museum architecture, the gradual mutation of the urban space, the consolidation of an 'immaterial' economy, and the optimism of the market versus the malaise of the public sphere), this project attempts to reflect on the museum understood not only as a medium and a material but also as a system of conventions historically established in a specific language to show how artists' formal and ideological actions executed therein interpret and question the new conditions and instigate significant changes.

Beyond any narrow numerical criteria or extra-artistic 'ends' to which they are often reduced, what these works suggest, being particularly alert as they are to their surroundings, is that museums can be 'mediums' that extend beyond the confines of the artistic to take in much broader cultural and historical debates. Hence it may be affirmed that artists no longer perceive the museum as an 'enemy', as occasionally happened during the avant-garde, but as a singular space that symbolically condenses and reflects the current patterns and modes of production and in which active intervention can be exploited to posit different visions of society — visions which, of course, draw on the past for inspiration in their endeavour to understand the present through memory. In other words, these works embody a transition from a confrontational attitude with regard to the museum to a dialectical one in which an internal, or 'deconstructive', critique is vital if a 'false conscience' and populism are to be avoided. It is thus that the museum becomes a medium — albeit one which, as happened with others that went before it, is nonetheless but an instrument, contingent and time-bound, that serves to represent and question a reality shaped by present conditions."

Pablo Fanego and Pedro de Llano

Curators of the exhibition

CATALOGUE

Owing to the special characteristics of the exhibition, and the need to compile the documentation on the works shown, especially the site-specific pieces, the catalogue of the show will be published after the opening. Published jointly by the MARCO of Vigo and Koldo Mitxelena of San Sebastián, it will include a critical article by the curators and essays by other contributors on the works and the exhibition concept, in addition to pictures and credits of the works on exhibit.

VENUES

MARCO, Museo de Arte Contemporánea de Vigo: from June 20th 2008 to September 21st 2008
Koldo Mitxelena Kulturunea, San Sebastián: from October 23rd 2008 to January 3rd 2009

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

'YOU ARE THE MUSEUM' summer workshops for children

For children age 3 and up, accompanied by an adult

During the summer months, coinciding with this show, the MARCO offers an experience for children, which entails the preparation of an exhibition project for the museum. The title of the programme alludes to the idea of participation and involvement in museum spaces through tours of the exhibition halls or other spaces, and fun sessions in the didactic workshop. In addition to getting to know the different phases of the organization and setting in motion of an exhibition from inside, the activities will focus on creative processes in contemporary art, especially those based on the interpretation of space, materials, the artist's action and spectator participation.

- Dates: From July 8th to August 29th 2008
- Place: Auditorium
- Hours: Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, from 12 noon to 2 p.m.

GUIDED TOURS

- Every day at 6 pm
- Guided tours 'à la carte' for groups, only by appointment calling 986 113900/11 (extension 307 or 314)

REQUEST FOR GRAPHIC MATERIAL

EXHIBITION

"THE MUSEUM AS MEDIUM"

GRAPHIC MATERIAL AVAILABLE TO THE PRESS:

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

IF YOU WISH YO RECEIVE DOCUMENTATION, PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM AND SEND IT BY E-MAIL, FAX OR MAIL POST TO:

MARCO, Museo de Arte Contemporánea de Vigo

Rúa Príncipe 54
36202 Vigo (Pontevedra). Spain

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