

SANTAMÒNICA

SHOTS

Democràcia

There Are No Spectators

03.03-19.04.2015

Cycle:

Shots in the Middle of the Concert

From correct distance to proximity

Democracia
There Are No Spectators
From 3 March to 19 April 2015



**LIBERTAD
PARA LOS
MUERTOS**

**ESTADO
ASESINO**

‘Art is not political because of the messages and feelings it conveys about the state of the world. Nor is it political owing to the way it represents social structures, conflicts or identities. It is political by virtue of the very distance that it adopts with respect to those functions’.

Jacques Rancière

Shots in the Middle of the Concert. From *correct distance*¹ to *proximity*² is a series of exhibitions centred on the work of six artists who set out to engender a critical vision of the reality around them, while reducing the distance between themselves and the issues they raise in their respective projects in order to declare themselves and in one way or another adopt a position by means of their involvement.

The title of the cycle paraphrases Stendhal’s famous remark that politics in a work of literature is like a pistol shot in the middle of a concert. The stories told in his novels had as their backdrop descriptions and analyses of the French society and politics of his time, but above all they were a pretext, a way of using literature to problematize reality, to assault it, to enclose it and resist it. **Shots in the Middle of the Concert**, awkward but difficult to ignore, aims to highlight

1 ‘Critique is a matter of correct distance,’ Walter BENJAMIN, ‘One-way Street’, in *One-way Street*, London, Penguin, 2008.

2 ‘If things have become too close for comfort for us, a critique must arise that expresses this discomfort. It is not a matter of proper distance but of proper proximity. The success of the word ‘concernedness’ (*Betroffenheit*) grows from this soil.’ Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason*, Minneapolis & London, University of Minnesota Press, 1987.

the responsibility of artistic and cultural practices to work with the contemporary, not from the critical distance advocated by Adorno but from proximity. To deal with reality and engage with it in the sense that Marina Garcés gives those words: *treatment* and *involvement* in two directions, towards the real in order to speak and towards oneself to let oneself be affected.

For some years now we have witnessed the implementation of a new paradigm of political emergence which aims to confront the complex system of interdependent and invisible powers (financial, political, informational) that hold sway in contemporary society. Precisely because they do not show themselves, these powers appear to us to be immeasurable, uncontrollable and difficult to combat. But ‘rule by nobody is not necessarily no-rule,’ as Hannah Arendt observed; ‘it may indeed, under certain circumstances, even turn out to be one of its cruellest and most tyrannical versions.’ Precisely in reaction to this rule there has been a proliferation of increasingly influential associations, groups and platforms that aim to create a new culture of collective possibilities to protect and manage the natural, social and cultural *commons*, working in grassroots activism to defend what is common to all and, without belonging to anyone, is the tangible and intangible heritage of each and every one of us. In fact, Rancière situates the beginning of politics at this point – ‘when they who have ‘no time’ to do anything other than their work take that time that they do not have to make themselves visible as sharing in a common world.’ In view of this new wave of civic involvement, **Shots in the Middle of the Concert** considers the nature of artists’ commitment to the media which their work places at their disposal. How they *treat* the reality that concerns them. How they become *involved* with it. And to what extent their actions go beyond the artistic sphere and expand its limits. • CRISTIAN AÑÓ, CÈLIA DEL DIEGO AND JORDI RIBAS

«There Are No Spectators» is a show by Democrazia that draws attention to the collective's vindictive use of language in the public sphere by way of a selection of works from the last eight years in which words are charged with ideology and political position-taking to become slogans. The show also presents a project produced especially for this exhibition that pays tribute to the anarchist Francesc Sabaté on the centenary of his birth.

The word 'slogan' comes from the Gaelic *sluagh-ghairm*, a combination of *sluagh*, meaning 'troops', and *ghairm*, meaning 'cry'. The collective uses slogans or battle cries, often appropriated from well-known thinkers, philosophers and activists and enhanced with iconographic resources drawn from mass culture, in the uncompromising counterinformation campaigns it designs to pick up and amplify the voices of the communities with which it works. In this way the group

counteracts the propaganda stratagems mounted by government agencies, and ultimately by the state, and appeals directly to people in the public space and visitors to its shows, sharing its subversive material with us: as a result, we are not mere recipients of the message but also transmitters and collaborators and rather than being passive onlookers we assume joint responsibility for politics, society and the community.

The title of the show refers to an aphorism from Fanon's last book that has become a favourite slogan among activists.³ If there are no spectators, no onlookers, it is because we are all actors: actors who are expected to teach their eyes not to look from the stalls but to look around them from the centre of the stage and enter into action. It is in this sense that Marina Garcés's analysis of the concept of *involvement* points to the architect Juhani Pallasmaa's idea of peripheral vision, whereby the eye sees beyond its focal point, and this unfocused beyond is what allows us to contextualize what we focus on and recognize ourselves not as a spectator observing from a privileged position of immunity but as a vulnerable body, involved in and part of what we see.

'You participate, like it or not, [...] you are responsible, like it or not' are some of the quotes from the manifestos of avant-garde Dada and Surrealist artists and the slogans of the situationist and punk movements with which a group of activists heckle visitors leaving the Art Brussels 2010 trade fair, the video *Il n'y a pas de spectateurs*. In the same line of thought the group carried out another action in

3 'The collective struggle presupposes collective responsibility at the base and collegiate responsibility at the top. Yes, everybody will have to be compromised in the fight for the common good. No one has clean hands; there are no innocents and no onlookers. We all have dirty hands; we are all soiling them in the swamps of our country and in the terrifying emptiness of our brains. Every onlooker is either a coward or a traitor.' Frantz FANON, *Les damnés de la terre*, Paris, Éditions Maspéro, 1961.

New York with an intervention on a hummer limo used to ferry art collectors between the different Armory Show venues featuring a couple of classic punk slogans, *Eat the Rich / Kill the Poor*, popularized by the rock bands Motörhead and Dead Kennedys, respectively. The vehicle, which brought together the antithetical messages ‘Eat the Rich’ and ‘Kill the Poor’, was also a moving advertisement inviting us to explode the dichotomies that confine thinking within binary oppositions.

Democracia’s work reflects on the structures of power and their influence in our society. If these two interventions in the context of art fairs mounted a critique of the sector that supports and is supported by the capitalist system, most of the collective’s projects are engagements in social issues or rereadings of episodes of recent history that challenge and problematize the official version. For the present exhibition they pay encrypted tribute to the last active maquis, the anarchist Quico Sabaté. The aphorism used for this tribute to the guerrilla, ‘The best struggle is the one fought without hope’, draws attention to the failure of the maquis’s anti-Francoist actions in that its armed resistance failed to prevent the constitution of a democratic society under the auspices of a dynastic monarchy imposed by the dictatorial regime. In this case the slogan is printed on a poster put up in public spaces that have no connection with the art project or with Sabaté, thus leaving interpretation of the message to the passers-by, Rancière’s *emancipated spectators*, who ‘constantly link what they see with what they have seen and said, done and dreamed’, who were free to load the words with signification on the basis of their subjectivities. In the space, a black flag, international symbol of rebellion and resistance, with an icon of the Sten submachine gun that Francesc Sabaté used in the armed struggle against the dictatorship, connected the phrase printed on the posters with the commemoration of the maquis leader, born in L’Hospitalet de Llobregat on 30 March 1915. With this same intention of

rereading episodes of the country's political history and marking the dates on the current calendar, Democracia has produced facsimiles of historic editions of two local newspapers, from Granada and Palma, distributed as inserts in the same papers on the same date. Thus, the copy of *Ideal* published on 22 April 1937, which printed the letter of resignation of civil governor José Valdés, one of the men responsible for the murder of Federico García Lorca, was reproduced and distributed on 22 April 2008 to denounce the savagery of the falangist repression of anyone who opposed the movement in any way. In the same vein, the edition of the paper *Baleares* of 21 April 1942, with its front page celebrating Hitler's birthday, was reprinted on 21 April 2010. In this context, the two facsimiles are both art objects and daily newspapers that appeal to readers's critical faculties to engage anew, from their historical perspective, with events and strategies of communication that occurred and were used some seventy years before in the place where they now live.

Democracia seeks strategies that allow its work to transcend the art scene and put into circulation messages that are integrated directly into and affect the rhetoric of the city and its social space, understanding these, with Henri Lefebvre, as sites of collective encounter and contact, but also of conflict and protest, of dominion and subalternity. With projects like *Estado asesino / Libertad para los muertos* or *Sin estado* Democracia participates in the causes mobilizing two disadvantaged communities, the relatives of the victims of femicide in Ciudad Juárez and the residents of the illegal settlement of La Cañada Real Galiana in Madrid, in process of being evicted. In both cases the actions carried out and awareness campaigns and publicizing of abuses committed against the two groups are the result of a process of assembly and dialogue with the people affected, providing slogans, posters and logos for them to appropriate and use in the actions they organize outside of the art project. The Democracia team is

committed to fostering this kind of horizontal collaboration between art and society and opposed to constructing relationships that reproduce the power structures it denounces or that exploit, from the art institution, the social movements with which its projects are developed. This opposition between people and governing power forms the background to all of Democracia's work and is especially apparent in the countercampaign *Demos contra Cracia* it carried out in Madrid during the run-up to the 2008 general elections and is now repeating in Barcelona to coincide with the forthcoming municipal elections. In parallel to the dissident purpose behind the template created to disseminate the message, *Demos contra Cracia* glosses and deconstructs the etymology of the term from which the group takes its name and sums up a way of working that invokes the consciousness of the *demos*, civil society, against *kratia*, political society • CÉLIA DEL DIEGO

Power is like the Marx Brothers's cabin: a tiny space with a phenomenal force of attraction. Everyone is drawn to it without really knowing what it is that draws them there and, once inside, they all fight tooth and nail to make a place for themselves. Some people speak of the 'erotics of power' but nobody can say if its sex is female and if we all — men and women — turn into macho males every time we thrust ourselves between these four walls. In the Marx Brothers film the actors show us how the room of power would be if it were left to our desire: a hilarious comedy we have forgotten the origin of the parody.

But we are not in a Marx Brothers film, our world is real and has a name: Catalonia, Spain, Lithuania or whatever. On stage, as in the Marx Brothers's cabin, a throng of actors pretend to fight one another for the best place in the limelight. It isn't hard to see that the whole thing is a fraud. The script of their comedy was written long ago and has been staged so many times that the players go through the motions with none of their old enthusiasm. It's plain to see that they didn't write the script. The real authors, who have never had any interest in getting up on the stage, prefer to stay behind the scenes and remain, like their companies, simply anonymous. But the show has lost its bite. The authors are starting to wonder if this

time round it will be enough to change some of the cast to inject new life into the old farce. In our real-world cabin the actors chosen to occupy the room of power are performing a comedy that is sinister in its excess of reality. The laughter is frozen, the actors are unschooled.

Let's imagine a third version of this cabin. What we are dealing with now is not false politics fighting for the tiny space that lies behind the small screen. Nor is it the parody in the cabin of the subversive brothers. In this third version the politics of art shows us ways of being in the room of power without ever occupying it. Anyone can speak and, forgetting for a moment their own particular ideology, let themselves talk and, through words, dance in the room of power without ever stopping. In this version the cabin is empty because no one stays inside it, everyone is just passing through. This is a musical comedy in which the cast of amnesiac dancers vainly strives to recall a tune — the melody of democracy — that they never learned.

The emptying of the Marx Brothers' cabin is the task that the collective Democracia sets itself in each of its projects. We, the spectators, dance to the sound of forgotten music. We're moving. •ROGER BERNAT, PLAYWRIGHT

Note: For a reflection on the public space, simply re-read the article replacing the word *power* with the expression *public space*.





Sin Estado, 2009

Logo.

Graphic design: Noaz

Advertising hoarding

Photograph: courtesy of the artist



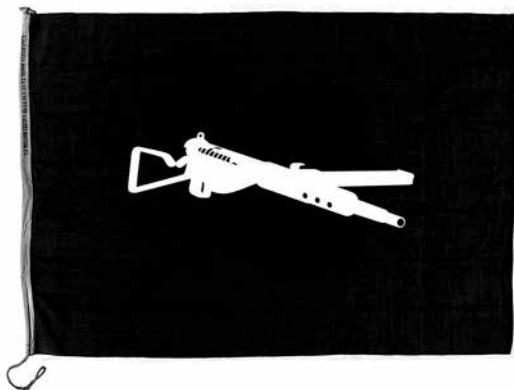
Proyecto Ideal, 2008

Facsimile. Photograph: Luis Asín





**LA MILLOR
LLUITA
ÉS LA QUE
ES FA
SENSE
ESPERANÇA**



***La millor lluita és la que
es fa sense esperança, 2015***

Poster. Flag.

Graphic design: Noaz

T-shirt.

Photograph: Shots in the Middle
of the Concert.







Eat the rich / Kill the poor, 2010

Photo infinity RC matt.

Photographs: Rodrigo Pereda





Il n'y a pas de spectateurs, 2010
 Action. Art Brussels.
 Photographs: Nancy Casielles
 and Denis van Cauteren



Demos contra Cracia, 2008

Urban intervention

Photograph: courtesy
of the artist

Stencil

Graphic design: Noaz

***DEMOS
CONTRA
GRACIA***

Democracia is a working group founded in Madrid in 2006. The main focus of Democracia is the use of the public sphere in its most varied configurations as the platform for a kind of agitprop of emancipatory content.

Democracia's practice is grounded in confronting, debating and contrasting ideas and forms of action. The very fact of working in a group embodies a commitment to intervening in the realm of the social. Democracia functions as a node of interests temporarily grouped around a shared objective, which is necessarily engaged from different perspectives — those of each of the participants in the project in question, including the agents and producers who make up Democracia (permanent or occasional) and specific communities with whom the group undertakes collaborative ventures.

One of the strategies habitually used by the group is to infiltrate proposals in different areas of the artistic realm, starting from—or returned to—the art system as a clearly defined public sphere while seeking way to penetrate other areas and engage other audiences.

Democracia is also active in publishing (editing the magazine *Nolens Volens*, 2006-2012) and in curating (Madrid Abierto 2008, «No Futuro», «Creador de Dueños»), and together with Aitor Méndez operates

the blog *contraindicaciones.net* Democracia has had individual shows at the Frankfurter Kunstverein, the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, DC, the Station Museum in Houston, Texas, BF15 in Lyon, the St James Cavalier Centre for Creativity in La Valleta and the Fundació Pilar i Joan Miró in Palma, and in the galleries ADN in Barcelona and Prometeogallery in Milan. The collective has taken part in biennials in Istanbul, Taipei, Havana, Poznan and Göteborg, and has recently contributed to several group exhibitions, including *Turning Points*, National Gallery, Budapest; *Espejos: Los trabajadores de la luna / Moonworkers*, MAC (Museo de Arte Contemporáneo), Santiago de Chile; *Baadlands: An Atlas of Experimental Cartography*, Tin Sheds Gallery, Sydney; *Politics: I do not like it, but it likes me*, Laznia Centre for Contemporary Art, Gdansk, and *La elipsis arquitectónica*, Centro Cultural Universitario Tlatelolco, Mexico City.

Democracia has worked with the Plataforma de Artistas Antifascistas on the projects *Artistas contra Franco* and *Monte de Estepar*.

microRavals. Taking as its starting point the Democracia show *There Are No Spectators*, **microRavals** seeks to deploy its objectives* by articulating and putting in motion the different layers of thought and action while creating links and resonances within the Raval neighbourhood.

The public space, with all its virtual and cathodic spheres open, seems to proclaim the dream of its supposed democratization, but all that is true is the saturation of images, noise and representations representing who knows whom, which effectively render invisible all of the mechanisms of administrative, legal and economic control that regulate its functioning.

Democracia's work reminds us, among other things, that we can find access to this area through mechanisms and actions for their visual power and approach include this silent noise not help thinking about the images, only to consume them. **microRavals**, from an ultralocal logic, is grounded in the daily realities of the neighbourhood. It works in and around representation and hypervisibility and reflects on who can successfully produce their own stories and put them into circulation in the public sphere, in a working process that takes sound and orality as primary raw materials. The fabric of the relations

between neighbours is speaking and listening, with implication constructed through verbal exchange. On the basis of networking and the involvement of three radio-related projects of different kinds with a local neighbourhood dimension—Ràdio Ciutat Vella, scannerFM and Ravalmedia—**microRavals** invites three groups and communities to engage in a process of self-representation in the public sphere, understood as a space of radio. On the one hand the collaborative interview is envisaged as a collective portrait of how each community develops a day-to-day activism on the strength of interventions to transform the environment. On the other, this work with the three communities engenders a series of assertions, slogans or demands that relate both to shared fears and desires, vindications and critiques: in effect, a translation of the idea of the graphic campaign as an intervention in the public sound space. In this way the radio stations, the exhibition space and the blogs of the groups and **microRavals** give voice to other formats of representation. • CRISTIAN AÑÓ (SINAPSIS)

* **microRavals**, the project of mediation of the exhibition cycle *Shots in the Middle of the Concert*, sets out to generate significant involvements/implications between the work of the artists, Arts Santa Mònica and the close relationships that this facility can establish with the context in which it is located, the Raval district.

The project takes as its starting point the development of processes of cultural and artistic working and is conducted jointly with other organizations, institutions, groups and communities rooted in the Raval neighbourhood. It fosters and/or shares in already up-and-running collective processes, each of which is placed in dialogue with one of the exhibitions and posits a relationship between the day-to-day realities of the participants, the work of the artists in the show and the idea of *involvement/implication* and *construction of the common good*.

microRavals suggests two levels of reflection on the concept of *involvement* and its representation. On one level, that of the production of culture and the sphere of cultural policy,

it addresses the question of how to fit together the cultural logic of a large facility and the micropolitics with which the project interacts: micropolitics that are in most cases cultural and artistic projects spearheaded by relatively small-scale agents and projects with limited resources. In this respect, the mediation project is a test of the possible forms of involvement that can be generated between an series of exhibitions and an arts centre and other artistic projects active in the neighbourhood, with a view to undertaking a joint project from the perspective of cultural ecology and sustainability; between the desire to constitute a resource and the opportunity to act as a possible catalyst for reflection and situated action, inscribed in each specific collaboration. At the same time, **microRavals** also acts as a showcase for the richness of cultural production in the Raval and invites dialogue between the art project on show and the working processes it makes visible. This is a relationship in which the power of representation of the artistic projects comes into direct contact with work processes that are deeply involved in the community.

Shots in the Middle of the Concert

From correct distance to proximity

Daniela Ortiz

20.01-22.02.2015

Núria Güell

12.05-05.07.2015

Cristina Lucas

22.09- 8.11.2015

Democràcia

03.03-19.04.2015

Frederic Perers

14.07-13.09.2015

María Ruido

17.11.2015 -10.01.2016

Implic/Accions

The programme of actions open to all is an opportunity to relate to the thinking that underpins Democràcia's artistic practice.

Wednesday, 4 March, 7.00 p.m. Conversation between **Pilar Bonet**, independent curator and critic, and **Democràcia**. The conversation will be held, with the support of La Ravala, in La Negreta Espai Social del Gòtic (c/ Nou de Sant Francesc 21 baixos). Admission free. Places limited.

Friday, 27 March, 10 a.m. **Agitation and Propaganda** – Public interventions. A Democràcia workshop, run by Noaz. A theoretical and practical workshop on supports, media and techniques for intervening in public in the framework of a collaboration with the Escola Massana – Centre d'Art i Disseny (c/ Hospital, 56).

Saturday, 11 April, 1 p.m. An approach to the exhibition with the journalist **Andreu Barnils**. In a guided tour format the journalist suggests other ways of interpreting the work of the collective. Exhibition space at Arts Santa Mònica. Admission free. Places limited.

La Ravala. An association that is here to stay, and only an ‘association’ because it was obliged to have some form of legal entity. Essentially, though, La Ravala is an initiative, a movement, a commitment to transform this dark, uncritical and ineffective cell in which our society is in danger of being confined. The whole of the Raval — everyone, whether residents or visitors — is invited to participate in this project in which not only is there space for everyone, but everyone is needed. In this case, **La Negreta Espai Social del Gòtic** (avbarrigotic.blogspot.com) hosts La Ravala (laravala.drupalgardens.com). In late April, La Ravala will host the project PIGS in which Democràcia and Núria Güell will take part along with other artists, activists and cultural workers. An event with an international character that operates between artistic and political practices and their social impact.

Escola Massana – Centre d’Art i Disseny. Since its foundation in 1929 the Escola Massana has kept faith with the legacy of its founder, the philanthropist Agustí Massana, providing training in the applied arts. However, in the 60s this educational model was expanded to incorporate the design disciplines. The essence of the school is, therefore, the interrelationship of crafts, art and design, three complementary areas in which to establish a rich dialogue between tradition and innovation.

Pilar Bonet. Historian, art critic and exhibition curator. She works in the field of contemporary art and design with a special focus on interchanges between art, architecture and the public space. She has curated numerous exhibition projects and regularly writes about the social contexts of artistic practices. She presented the exhibition *Club 49. Reopening the Game* at Arts Santa Mònica in 2000, and in 2010 the project *Salvat-Papasseit, Catalan Avant-garde Poet*.

Noaz. A visual application on any surface of the commonest feelings using the simplest tools.

Andreu Barnils. Journalist with VilaWeb. He has worked as a scriptwriter, editor of the Culture section of *Punt Diari* and on the *VilaWeb* newspaper, where he launched VilaWeb TV. He is the author of the book *La revolució tranquil·la. Carme Forcadell i l’Assemblea Nacional Catalana* (2014). He has a degree in Audio-visual Communication from the Universitat Ramon Llull.

Shots in the Middle of the Concert. From correct distance to proximity is a series of exhibitions curated by Cèlia del Diego.

microRavals is a project of mediation in relation to associations, institutions, schools and local residents curated by Cristian Añó (Sinapsis).

implic/Accions is a cycle of activities curated by Jordi Ribas.

Texts, Cristian Añó, Cèlia del Diego, Roger Bernat and Jordi Ribas.
Photographs, Luis Asín, Nancy Casielles, Rodrigo Pereda, Pablo Ramos, Rif Spahni and Denis van Cauteren.

Graphic design, Bildi Grafiks S.L.

Space design, Xavier Torrent.

In conjunction with,

Escola Massana – Centre d'Art i Disseny

La Negreta Espai Social del Gòtic

La Ravala

Ràdio Ciutat Vella

Ravalmedia

scannerFM

Thanks,

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Arts Santa Mònica

Director Jaume Reus. **Assistant director** Manuel Guerrero. **General coordinators** Fina Duran and Marta Garcia. **Administration** Cristina Güell. **External relations** Alicia Gonzalez and Jordi Miras. **Publications** Cinta Massip. **Communication and press** Neus Purtí and Cristina Suau. **Audiovisuals coordination** Lorena Louit. **Technical coordinators,** Xavier Roca and Eulàlia Garcia. **Secretaries,** Pep Xaus, Maria Jesús Couso and Mònica Garcia.



***Murderous State /
Freedom for the Dead, 2010***

Urban intervention

Photograph: Pablo Ramos

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Admission free
Tuesday to Saturday from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Sundays and public holidays from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.
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