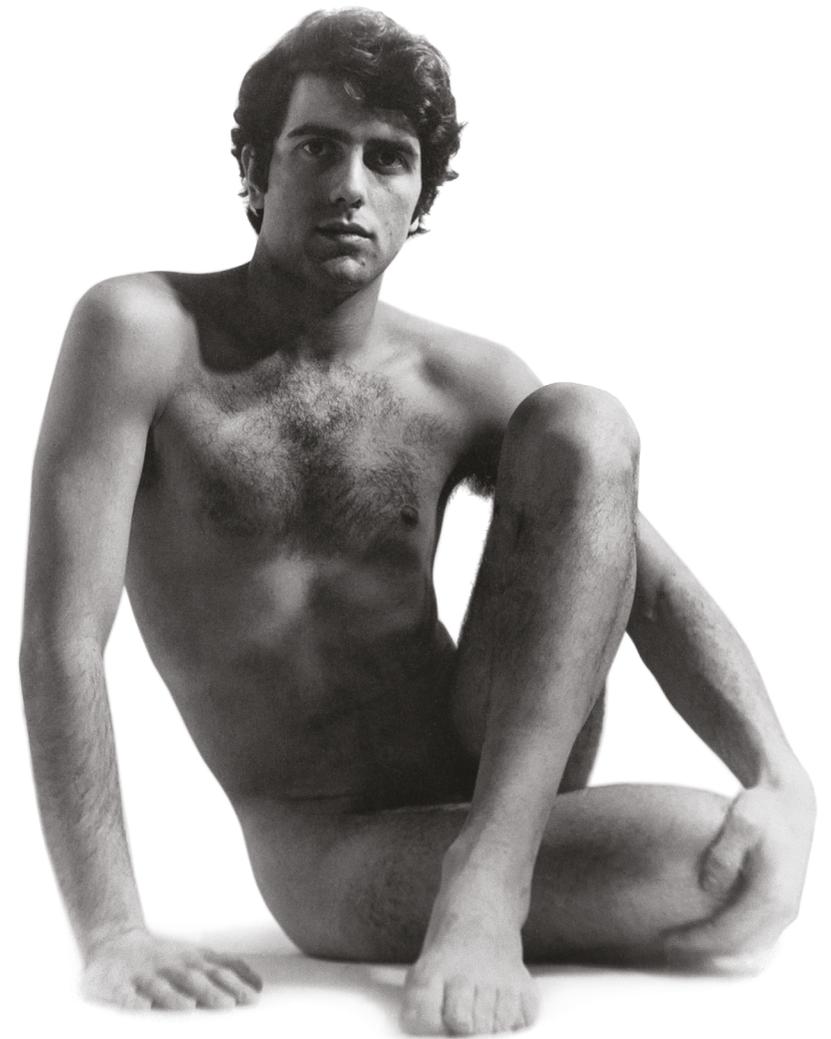


ROBERTO JACOBY

ART FROM THE END OF THE WORLD

Six Decades of Sound and Fury



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Roberto Jacoby, Art from the End of the World: Six Decades of Sound and Fury

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The Institute for Studies on Latin American Art (ISLAA) expands scholarship and public engagement with art from Latin America through our program of exhibitions, publishing, research, and partnerships.

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General Introduction

CCS BARD / ISLAA

Roberto Jacoby, Art from the End of the World: Six Decades of Sound and Fury collects the writings of artist and sociologist Roberto Jacoby alongside new art historical texts. The publication emerges from a graduate seminar at the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College (CCS Bard) and is supported by the Institute for Studies on Latin American Art (ISLAA). Consisting of over fifty of Jacoby's artistic projects and texts from the 1960s up to today—many of which have been translated into English for the first time—the volume traces many of the conceptual and theoretical touchstones of his career, including the media, networks, language, poetry, lyrics, and the politics of joy, resistance, and relationality.

Roberto Jacoby, Art from the End of the World: Six Decades of Sound and Fury was researched, edited, and features written introductions by Abel González Fernández, Kyle Herrington, Claire Kim, Ursula Pokorny, Clara Prat-Gay, Olivia Rodrigues, Clara von Turkovich, and Calvin Wang, with editorial oversight from K.ari.n Schneider and Roberto Jacoby.

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General Introduction

Roberto Jacoby

A few months ago, K.ari.n Schneider, a New York-based artist, invited me to participate in a seminar she was teaching at the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College (CCS Bard). The course focused on research into my work and the translation of several of my seminal texts into English.

As it stands, my writing practice consists of a broad and diverse range of texts: manifestos, projects, lyrics, poems, conferences, sociopolitical essays, and brief commentaries on artworks I have published in a variety of media. The specificity of language within each modality is one of the challenges of translation. As we all know, the act of translation is fraught with difficulties. The ones I perceive most as an author are the complexities of conveying context, wordplay, tongue-in-cheek jokes, rhymes, and poetic meter. Thus, our approach to these texts relies heavily on footnotes to convey these intricacies. However, we chose to omit some textual density so as to not emulate “Nota al pie” (Footnote) by Rodolfo Walsh, a short story in which the fictional translator’s footnotes are so extensive that they nearly take over the entire page.

We hope that the astuteness of the readers and the hard work of the students will succeed in capturing as much of the original meaning of the texts as possible. And if that is not the case, we accept without protest that every text is a battlefield of meaning. Either way, we hope that this English translation of the bulk of my writing from the last sixty years will be able to reach a new audience.

I would like to sincerely thank CCS Bard and the Institute for Studies on Latin American Art (ISLAA), as well as the graduate students involved in this project and, most of all, K.ari.n Schneider for their invaluable work.



General Introduction

K.ari.n Schneider

Roberto Jacoby, Art from the End of the World: Six Decades of Sound and Fury is the result of a seminar created for Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College (CCS Bard) on the writings of Roberto Jacoby and his work with social institutions. Since the 1960s, Roberto Jacoby has produced a significant body of writings and artworks that reflect and intervene in the socio-political and cultural fabric of Argentine society. His work is deeply situated in his local community and in the production of social relations. The book brings together a selection of essays from six decades of Jacoby's work, starting with collaborations with other artists and theoreticians focusing on mass media as a material for the creation of artwork. It continues with theoretical essays on social conflicts, marketing campaigns for AIDS awareness, and songwriting for the new wave music group, Virus, which is still a cult band today. Jacoby has also written lyrics for other musicians, and most recently he launched two albums, *Golosima Canibal* and *Lastima*, on the first of which he is the singer. He has published six books of poetry and a novel, *Moncada*, written in collaboration with Jorge Di Paola. Jacoby was instrumental in the conceptualization of *ramona*, an art magazine without images that was a central place of reception for the art scene in the 2000s in Argentina, and of Web 2.0 projects such as *Bola de Nieve*, dedicated to promoting networks of artists; *Proyecto V*, a micro-society of artists and non-artists with their own currency; *Vivo Dito*, a database on performance art in Argentina; and *CIA* (Centro de Investigaciones Artísticas [Center for Artistic Research]), a ten-year project with 250 grantees, founded in collaboration with other artists. All these Web 2.0 projects are currently offline because of changes in the policy of the company that used to host their sites. The publication concludes with selected exhibitions of the artist's work from the 1960s to the present.

Jacoby's practice constantly intertwines social culture with diverse linguistic and performative operations. When interacting with Jacoby's work, the interlocutor is invited to rethink the static pronouns (I/we), notions of authority (authorship/



collective work), politics of friendship, and classic relations of affirmation/negation in the production of artworks in the Culture Industry. These terms are interpenetrated with the production of complex economies of pleasure and associations generated from the artist's multiple interactions with other(s), mainly artists from younger generations. This online publication itself is an example of a book created in collaboration with Roberto Jacoby.

The book is divided chronologically into six parts. Each section has an introductory text by a curator providing historical and political-cultural context for each decade and explaining some specific operations used by the artist and their collaborators. The original writings (Spanish) are on the left side of the book, and their respective translations (English) are on the right side. The book also includes QR codes for texts that are online. These codes can be activated with a cellphone while reading, to show important documents translated for the first time into English (*Media Manifesto*, among other seminal texts) along with other works by the artist.

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Bar Moderno
by Ursula Pokorny

During the 1960s, Roberto Jacoby and his fellow artists, writers, musicians, and everyday storytellers met in cafes and bars around the “Manzana Loca” (“block of madness”) close to Florida Street, downtown Buenos Aires. Among them was Bar Moderno, which Jacoby visited most days, and which was in the process of becoming an institution in its own right. Most likely, Jacoby would go there to meet friends like Eduardo Costa, Raúl Escari, Madela Ezcurra, Oscar Masotta, Alicia Páez, or Eliseo Verón for coffee in the afternoon or wine in the evening. Bar Moderno was a popular bar that was surrounded by contemporary galleries and art spaces, such as the highly influential Galeria Lirolay¹ and El Instituto Torcuato Di Tella (ITDT).²

Some artists that exhibited at Di Tella, like Marta Minujín, became very well known in Argentina and abroad through their early involvement with the Institute. A common saying has developed since, framing them as “artists of Di Tella.” Yet, there was no such clear engagement; the Di Tella was not a gallery with a set roster of artists, nor was anybody formally enrolled at a program there. Roberto Villanueva, the director of the Center for Audiovisual Experimentation (CEA)³ from 1965 to 1970, encouraged the artists to use the Institute’s facilities for their own artistic purposes and to explore the possibilities of theater and Happenings.⁴ In his programming at the CEA, Villanueva fostered large-scale eclecticism through experimentation. There was no set company; he gave a great deal of space to lesser-known artists and experimental productions were presented frequently. Jacoby showed his closed-circuit broadcast *Parámetros (Parameters)* and mixed media show *Be at Beat Beatles* in the CEA’s theatre space in 1967.

Jacoby was involved in many collective creations, such as *About Happenings* (Pablo Suárez, Oscar Bony, Oscar Masotta). Working with sound, film, actors, and spectators

1. The Lirolay gallery was at the forefront of the artistic scene in Buenos Aires in the 1960s. It was owned by the Fano family and directed by French artist Germaine Derbecq, who was also a critic for the newspaper *Le Quotidien* in Argentina. Many artists showed first in Lirolay before they were asked to show at the Di Tella Institute.

2. The Instituto Torcuato Di Tella opened on Florida Street in Buenos Aires in 1962. It was a philanthropic project by the Di Tella family, who produced cars that were prominently used as taxis and industrial products such as refrigerators and television sets. The two brothers who founded the Institute named it after their father, Torcuato. It was an investigative center for social sciences and the arts with specialized laboratories for disciplines such as economics, public administration, advanced musical studies, visual arts, and audiovisual experimentation. Their endeavor to culturally modernize a newly industrialized Argentina can be understood along the lines of development theories. The Di Tella Institute also received funding from the Ford and Rockefeller foundations.

3. The CEA is also translated as Center of Audiovisual Expressive Arts.

4. The press reacted negatively to the CEA’s low-threshold engagement: “The admission is not too strict: it’s enough to be young, enthusiastic, have two or three running gags, a sheaf of slides, and a sound band with sufficient gluglus, sirens, and cacophonies.” Marion Hannah Love, “Experimental Theatre in Buenos Aires, Argentina: A Brief History of the Center of Audiovisual Expressive Arts the Torcuato Di Tella Institute” (PhD diss., Ohio State University, 1972), 73.

Mission Transmission by Calvin Wang

The sense of community built around casual social interactions would come to inform much of Jacoby's thinking about the swirling questions of relationality, immediacy, and participation brought on by the rise of non-object based art and "happenings." From this backdrop of an intensely present and social art scene, Jacoby's work would enmesh itself within the systems of dissemination and transmission inherent in mass media. Through this juxtaposition of, on one hand, a community of artists who often worked collaboratively and took this collaboration as an organizing principle of their work, and on the other, a body of work that intimately intertwines with various forms of media, from print to television, Jacoby's practice tied together two seemingly disparate modes of relation and transmission.

To think of media relationally might now seem contradictory. After all, so much of our time is consumed by "social media" that online and offline interaction now seem diametrically opposed. Social media, whether messaging or tweeting, has developed its own set of social parameters to the point that it no longer resembles in-person interaction; in fact, it has come to alter how we have face-to-face interactions. To insist on digital communications now seems like a conscious rebuke of in-person interaction, and vice versa. However, in the early years of new media communication technology, when the possibility to reach the masses was not only becoming instantaneous, but also held the potential to spread from the written word to sonic and visual transmission, expansive social interaction and relation was front of mind when thinking of the advances in new media technology. While the once seeming vastness of the digitally connected world now manifests as a narrow and personalized digital bubble, half a century ago, new media technologies like video and television still harbored the hope of facilitating a radical new sense of connectivity amongst the masses.

Just as the communication realm expanded and brought an element of liveness to visual mediums through television, Conceptualism¹ was simultaneously shedding the physical and material constraints of previous movements. In the 1960s, art historians observed the traditional art object giving way to a proliferation of overly conceptual, idea-centered works that attempted to shed the art object through both an emphasis on creative process over final product and on non-object forms of participation, Happenings, and media technology. While media technologies were often used as a mode of documentation for ephemeral actions and Happenings, soon artists began exploring the performative or in-

1. See [Conceptualism, Dematerialization, Arte no-objetual? Historicizing the '60s and '70s in Latin America - post](#)

teractive possibilities of the communication mediums themselves. This was especially true for television and analogue video, which offered audiovisual communication that was nearly instantaneous, in contrast to the time-consuming editing and developing process of analogue film. As technological media proliferated, so did the theories around them. Marshall McLuhan's proposals of media as extensions of the body, as the message, and as hot or cold situated technological media as a fundamentally social form—one that already extends from the body and demands various levels of participation from people. Roberto Jacoby's work with the video medium during the 1960s, specifically *Circuitos Informativos Cerrados* (*Closed information circuits*, 1967) and *Parámetros* (*Parameters*, 1967), demonstrates an early understanding and willing engagement with the medium-specific qualities of the video camera and draws significant connections between the technological capabilities of video and the relational or social "circuits" of information in the age of mass media.

In *Closed information circuits*,² Jacoby proposed two installations that not only illustrated the capabilities of video technology, but did so in contrast with the two communication mediums video is most often compared with: film, for its ability to capture images, and teletype, for its use of electrical signals to transmit live text. The first installation, *TV-teletype*, would take place across two locations. In the first location, a television camera would point at a teletype transmitter. In the second location, which would be as far away from the first location as the transmitting signal would allow, the respective receivers (a television set and a teletype printer) would be available for the viewer to watch. In this case, the viewers would see, through the television, the faraway teletype transmitting text and find that the teletype receiver would be reproducing the transmitted text right in front of them. The second installation, *Cinema-TV*, again would use a TV camera to capture a film projection (with specific instructions to capture the projector apparatus within the frame) and transmit it to a number of television sets. Another version of this project would use a film camera to capture a television set to illustrate the technological differences between the media and the process of how one medium becomes the content of another medium. These two works highlight one important aspect of analogue television technology: the ability to capture, transmit, and broadcast live audiovisual content, combining the capabilities of film and teletype, and open it up to a mass audience. Furthermore, the technique of turning one media technology onto another recalls the meta-awareness of the systems of televisual feedback that early video artists achieved by turning the video camera back

2. Jacoby considers this work as overtly self-referential. In this sense, the work pushes back on common readings of Latin American Conceptual art as purely political versus Conceptualism in North America as largely linguistic.

onto its monitor. A purely technological feedback—the sort of closed-circuit video systems that would produce colorful patterns—created a proto-virtual space that preceded any conception of the internet or the digital sphere. Video artists like Nam June Paik, Steina and Woody Vasulka, and Bill Viola would populate this virtual space with people, creating a hybrid form of social-technological feedback, a sort of virtual self-interaction aided by camera and monitor. Video technology, in this sense, was always social.

The second important feature of television, which is hinted at in the *Cinema-TV*, is that it is a mass medium where one transmitter or television camera is able to reach many receivers/television sets, and thus many people. To illustrate this point, Jacoby would break from the closed-circuit setup and propose a project that would utilize existing television network infrastructures. Titled *Parameters (tribute to John Cage)* (1967), this proposed work³ would interrupt a television channel during a prime-time slot and broadcast a twenty-minute-long message, interspersed with segments of silence (an homage to Cage's 4'33), directly addressing viewers and asking them to consider the medium specificity of television. It begins by addressing the viewer:

You were watching the show ... or perhaps you just turned on the television. Do not be concerned. Continue watching the screen. It's white. But listen also intently to the sound your device makes. Have you heard it before?

It goes on to instruct the viewer to flip through all the channels, dares them to change to another channel, instructs them to turn on their radio and do the same. The piece directly asks viewers to consider the distance a televisual signal is able to travel, the differences in viewership between television and other mediums, and the reasons why we do not yet consider television a form of art. Ultimately, it ends with the question, "*Television will no longer be a machine for passivity. Is it now?*"

In *Understanding Media* (1964), McLuhan, who Jacoby has often cited, divides forms of media into categories of "hot" and "cold." Hot media are low in participation. In this model, a viewer is generally only a receiver. Cold media, on the other hand, require participation. Furthermore, hot media are often "high definition" or high in sensory data, while cool media require more engagement from the viewer—radio is hotter than a telephone, film is hotter than television.⁴ While this schema of McLuhan's generalizes and reduces the possibility of many mediums, it also offers a productive scale to consider how

3. A closed-circuit version of this work was realized at the Di Tella institute. The images published here are from this iteration of the work, not its original proposal.

4. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (London: Routledge, 2010), 22–32.

various media can be increasingly participatory and relational. As Jacoby asks at the end of *Parameters*, is television passive now?

The answer, of course, is a resounding “no.” Television as a medium is inherently participatory and relational. In her essay, “The Autobiography of Video,” video-art historian Ina Blom argues that video’s “ambivalent position” between analogue recording (like film) and digital simulation (from its live signal) makes video a *reflexive* medium, “constantly reflecting the troubled issue of the factual veracity of its visual output.”⁵ Furthermore, Blom also argues that the rise of video and television in contemporary art during the 1960s resulted in “a particular association between art and media technologies that ultimately identifies the work of art with the immediacy and urgency of signaletic technologies; art is identified with media events, performative operations, and interventionist strategies.” Together, these two aspects of video, its reflexivity and its pushing of art toward media, happenings, and interventions, establish the medium as one that is not only tied to the social fabric of mass culture, but, through its medium-specific qualities, has constructed a new conception of the “public,” making it a natural complement to Jacoby’s larger practice.

5. Ina Blom, “The Autobiography of Video: Outline for a Revisionist Account of Early Video Art,” *Critical Inquiry* 39, no. 2 (2013): 276–95, <https://doi.org/10.1086/668526>.

**Media Manifesto:
A Sensory Avalanche**
by Abel
González Fernández

Manifiesto de los medios de comunicación (*Media manifesto*, 1966–ongoing) is one of the most fascinating artworks in the modern history of Latin American art. Due to its complexity, this process artwork by the Argentinian artists Eduardo Costa, Raúl Escari, and Roberto Jacoby has largely been misreported by art historians. Its structure is still poorly understood, and its wholeness has been fragmented, which has led art historians to neglect important aspects of the work. Misreporting is a key element of this work, echoing Roland Barthes's "The Death of the Author" (1967); the *Media manifesto* focuses on the agency of the receptor, just as Barthes foresaw in his famous text—although Costa, Escari, and Jacoby's work came first.

The origins of *Media manifesto* can be traced through the history of Argentinian literature, back to short stories such as "Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote" (1939) by Jorge Luis Borges, who anticipated notions of collective creation of certain realities and thematized the performative act of reading as production of content. Another influential writer was Macedonio Fernández, whose book *Una novela que comienza* (1941), cataloged as a conceptual novel, narrates interrupted stories and explores chance as a creative act. In 1967, a year after *Media manifesto* was conceived and fifteen years after Fernández's death in 1952, the first edition of *Museo de la novela de la Eterna* was posthumously published in Buenos Aires. The text consists of a report on a novel that is never written. Even though it was published in 1967, the novel evokes the linguistic play in Argentinian mid-century literature, in which Costa, Escari, and Jacoby actively participated. Reception as deviation, mistake, boutade, reinterpretation, manipulation, misinterpretation, and derealization are some of the operations from which the *Media manifesto* was built.

What is the *Media manifesto*, then? What does it encompass? How was it originally planned? In July 1966, the three authors signed a mimeographed text called "Un arte de los medios de comunicación" (An art of mass media) to be distributed in the streets of Buenos Aires. The text, reproduced in full in this book, announced the existence of an artwork that would consist in the creation of a false happening by giving to the press "a report of a happening that has not actually happened." This action would reveal the instrumental nature of mass media as creators of ideologies and facts for the benefit of the dominant class. Aligned with the Marxist idea of the ideology of a "false consciousness," Costa, Escari, and Jacoby proposed to pay attention to the "un-realization" of facts operated by the media in order to deconstruct, reveal, and question the structure of social and political power in contemporary society. The text proposes the implementation of the media as

an auto-referential circuit, whose content framework is a conversation divorced from the so-called real facts.

Inspired by Marshall McLuhan's mass media theories and the communication scheme of Roman Jakobson, this first text proposed a triple structure that completes the cycle of emission, transmission, and reception of a message: first, "the writing of the false report"; second, the transmission of the false report through mass media; third, the reception of a reader-spectator that built up the false fact of the happening from a nonexistent reality. The *Media manifesto* work is the realization of this whole cycle as described in "An art of mass media," which is only one of its components.

Following this text, Costa, Escari, and Jacoby designed the false report of the happening, compiling a press clipping entitled "The Total Participation Happening,"¹ which was later presented to the press. This press clipping was composed of a written report of a happening that never took place and thirteen pictures of different local public personalities in eight different spaces,² the majority of them presented in this book. The combination of written and photographic language is evidence of the acute awareness of the authors of the function of mass media in shaping reality, echoing what Walter Benjamin, quoting Siegfried Kracauer, said early in the 20th century: "The illiterate of the future will not be the man who cannot read the alphabet, but the one who cannot take a photograph." Costa, Escari, and Jacoby also combined a formula of well-known personalities with media exposure, using the local celebrities' symbolic capital to advance an artistic and ultimately political agenda.

Some of the Argentinian media refused to participate in the experiment, but, on Sunday, August 21, 1966, the popular newspaper *El Mundo* published the report of the happening in complicity with the authors under the name of "*Happening for a Dead Boar*," signed by the reporter Edmundo E. Eichelbaum. The journalist described a chaotic happening of celebrities who engaged in a day of different performances, dancing, acting, and reading, which culminated in a "meal with the boar" as an "uncommon dish, complemented by excellent wine" for the "whole company plus the spectators." Through publishing this review, Eichelbaum became the first active receptor and second transmitter of the piece; instead of faking an event, the journalist co-created the happening for the three hundred thousand readers of *El Mundo* through the action of describing the "The Total Participation Happening" press clipping and the adaptation to a media format using a title of his own

1. The press clipping is lost. Only twelve of the photographs survive, all of which are reproduced in this book

2. This information is provided by the authors in a text entitled "Realización de la primera obra," in *Happening*, ed. Oscar Masotta (Buenos Aires: Jorge Alvarez, 1967).

creation. Several media outlets rehashed the story as truthful without fact-checking, and the process became an expanded experiment of collective authorship based on new readings—new deviations of Eichelbaum's article.

The historic form of *Media manifesto* also includes two influential Argentinian intellectuals, Eliseo Verón and Oscar Masotta. In the same Sunday newspaper section, but on October 30, 1966, Verón revealed to the readers of *El Mundo* that the event reported in the Eichelbaum review never happened. In Verón's article, entitled "Comunicación de masas" (Mass communication), he underlined and described the functioning of the mass media apparatus: "Countless social events start existing for the broader part of the community only from the point at which they read about them in the newspapers." "Comunicación de masas" was later published in the book *Happenings* (1967) edited by Oscar Masotta. In the book, Costa and Jacoby presented the description of what they called "Realización de la primera obra" (Realization of the first work), indexing for the first time the articles, media outlets, press clipping with photographs, and readings triggered by the work, followed by select textual interchanges that now are part of the *Media manifesto*—an avalanche of shape-shifting, challenging artwork.

It is important to discuss the *Media manifesto* in the context of the 1960s and of Conceptual art in the USA, but to not limit it to this. Professor and writer Alexander Alberro connects this work to the tenets of "dematerialization of the art object," defined by Lucy Lippard in 1968.

For Lippard, it was important to set out the conditions for the market appreciation of "immaterial labor," drawing upon the similarities between abstract scientific language and Conceptual art: "The aesthetic of principle is still an aesthetic, as implied by frequent statements by mathematicians and scientists about the beauty of an equation, formula or solution."³ From a contemporary perspective, authors such as Alberro and Tom Holert have pointed out the connection between late capitalism and the "informatization" of commodities, exploring how American Conceptual art was near to the politics of publicity, and post-Fordist society, in which the "new professionalization as an entrepreneur, intellectual, designer, engineer, researcher, or scientist contributed significantly to the general transition toward knowledge-based societies whose 'virtualized' economy is marked by the increasing importance of networked information."⁴

Although the proposed "derealization of the object" in *Media manifesto* implies the

3. Lucy Lippard and John Chandler, "The Dematerialization of Art," *Art International* 12, no. 2 (February 1968), 31–36.

4. Tom Holert, *Knowledge Beside Itself: Contemporary Art's Epistemic Production* (London: Sternberg Press, 2020), 37–38.

Vivir aquí To Live Here

by Clara Prat-Gay

In 1965, Roberto Jacoby was invited to participate in *Semana de Happenings* (Happenings week) at Guernica gallery in Buenos Aires. This would mark a turning point in the artist's emerging career. Up until then, he had mainly been working with painting and sculpture; that year, his attention turned to Happenings, which would come to make up the core of his practice.¹ Under the guidance of Roberto Yahni, director of Guernica and literature professor at the University of Buenos Aires (UBA), Jacoby and other artists, including Marta Minujín, Rubén Santantonín, and Pablo Suárez, each staged twenty-four-hour-long happenings over the course of one week. Located at 947 Florida Street, Guernica was part of the avant-garde artistic and cultural scene in Buenos Aires. Located near the so-called “Manzana Loca”² (“block of madness”), Yahni's gallery contributed to the convergence of musicians, artists, and intellectuals in the neighborhood.

The artists' contributions to *Semana de Happenings* were diverse. During Marta Minujín's occupation of the gallery, the artist invited the local basketball team, Gimnasia y Esgrima, to participate in the week's programming. Along with a basketball game inside the gallery, Minujín hosted interviews with the players. Rubén Santantonín organized a party; Pablo Suárez chose to recline in bed, reading literature aloud to the audience. Roberto Jacoby—in his first foray into the genre of happenings—moved furniture and possessions from his home and studio into the gallery. His bed, kitchen utensils, clothing, television, art supplies, finished canvases, and works in progress were all moved to Guernica. Throughout the day, he would lie in bed, eating, drinking maté,³ and chatting with the audience. By bringing his home and studio into the gallery, he created a spectacle out of his daily routine, challenging the conventions of the gallery space, which traditionally privilege finished

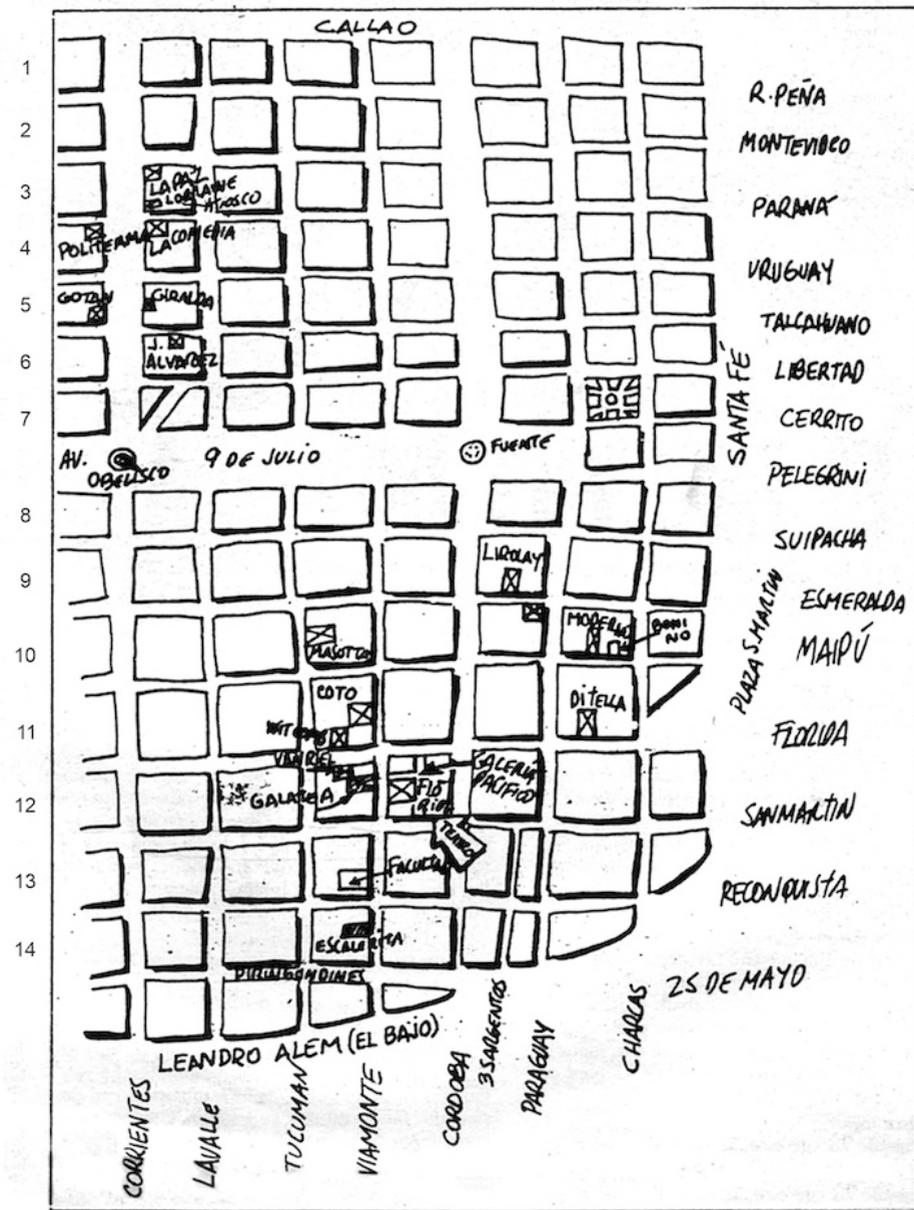
1. During this early period, Roberto Jacoby was interested in questioning traditional faith in the art object. His happening *Vivir aquí* (1965) evidences the artistic process of some of his paintings and sculptural pieces, such as *Todo va mejor con coca-cola* (Everything's better with Coca-Cola, 1965), a polychrome sculpture depicting a distorted human body adorned with a pair of sunglasses, a Coca-Cola bottle, and two light bulbs in the form of a penis. Following its exhibition in Luis Felipe Noé's show at the Museo Moderno de Buenos Aires (Buenos Aires Museum of Modern Art) in 1965, Roberto Jacoby obtained his first critique, and his work acquired more visibility among art gallerists and the general public. This led to an invitation from Roberto Yahni to participate in *Semana de Happenings*.

2. The Manzana Loca was located in Buenos Aires's city center and was delineated by the following streets: Esmeralda, Paraguay, Florida, Charcas, and Maipu. Within these few blocks, artists, intellectuals, and university students gathered together, and several local avant-garde initiatives were set up alongside a large number of bars, art galleries and institutes, and bookshops. The many activities that took place in this “block of madness” included art exhibitions, lectures, film screenings, music concerts, social gatherings, happenings, and avant-garde exhibitions.

3. Maté is a traditional South American drink made by steeping dried yerba maté leaves in hot water; it is served with a metal straw in a calabash gourd container. It is Argentina's national beverage and is characterized by the act of sharing and collective drinking.

works of art. In a happening, the viewers become active agents in the production of the meaning of the work: their gaze, interactions, and, most importantly, their interpretations—what is considered the work's "reception"—become an essential component.

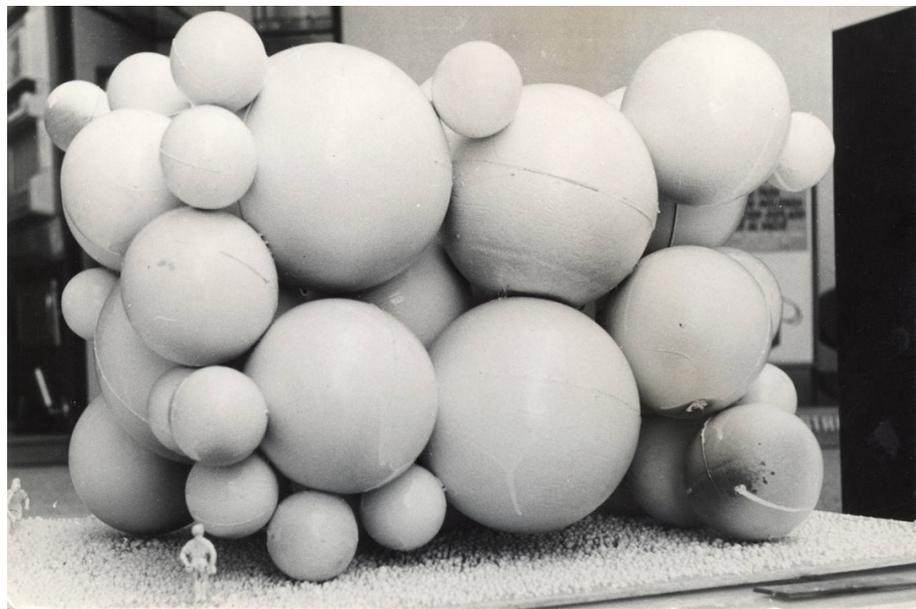
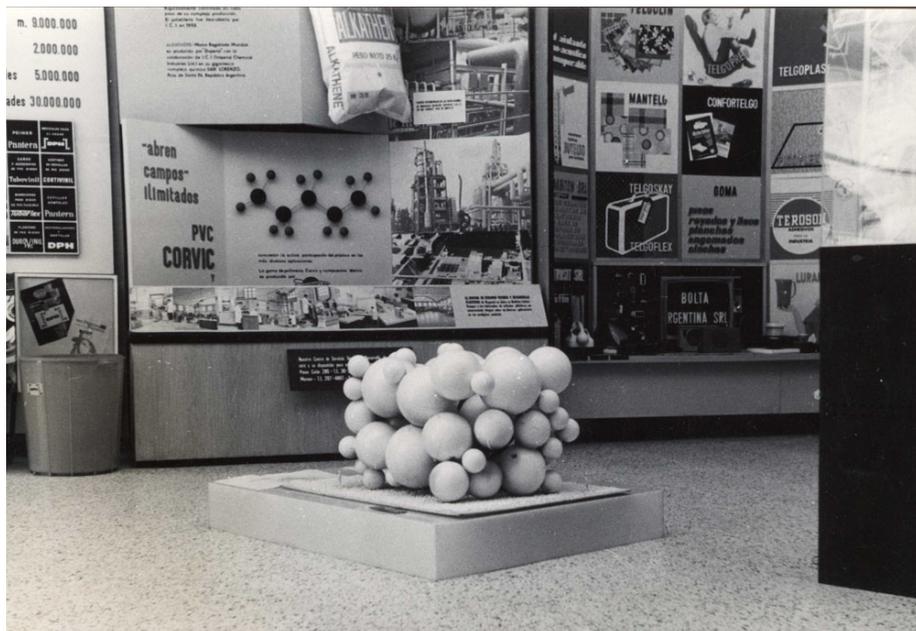
Titled *Vivir aquí* (To live here, 1965), Jacoby's happening proposed both a temporal and spatial work, characterized by the construction of a social interaction in which the production of meaning depended solely on the audience's engagement. This early work sparked the artist's lasting practice of critically minded social-mediation works. *Vivir aquí* would be followed by a long arc of works that blurred the boundaries between artistic practice and exhibition space, spectator and spectacle, art and life.



Drawing by Roberto Jacoby. *Manzana Loca*, 1984. Courtesy: Roberto Jacoby.



Selected Writings



Installation view of Roberto Jacoby, *Maqueta de una obra*, 1966 at the Exposición *Plásticos con plástico*, The Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, 1966. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

Maqueta de una obra Scale Model of an Artwork

Roberto Jacoby, August 1966

Mimeographed text (from an idea elaborated circa May 1966) that was included in the group exhibition *Plásticos con plástico* (Made of Plastic), Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires, August 1966. This text included a scale model and a plan. Published in *El deseo nace del derrumbe. Roberto Jacoby: Acciones, conceptos, escritos* (Desire Rises from Collapse. Roberto Jacoby: Actions, Concepts, Writings) ed. Ana Longoni (Barcelona: Ediciones de La Central / Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora / Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia/Red Conceptualismos del Sur, 2011), 47. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

This piece can be viewed in two ways: as a work in itself with certain plastic values, and as a work that arouses aesthetic feelings from the ideas it implies.

In this work, there are two ideas that may produce an aesthetic feeling: on the one hand, the idea of the “work of art” (large-scale spheres inscribed within a prism), and, on the other hand, the idea of a work that is a model of a “work of art.”

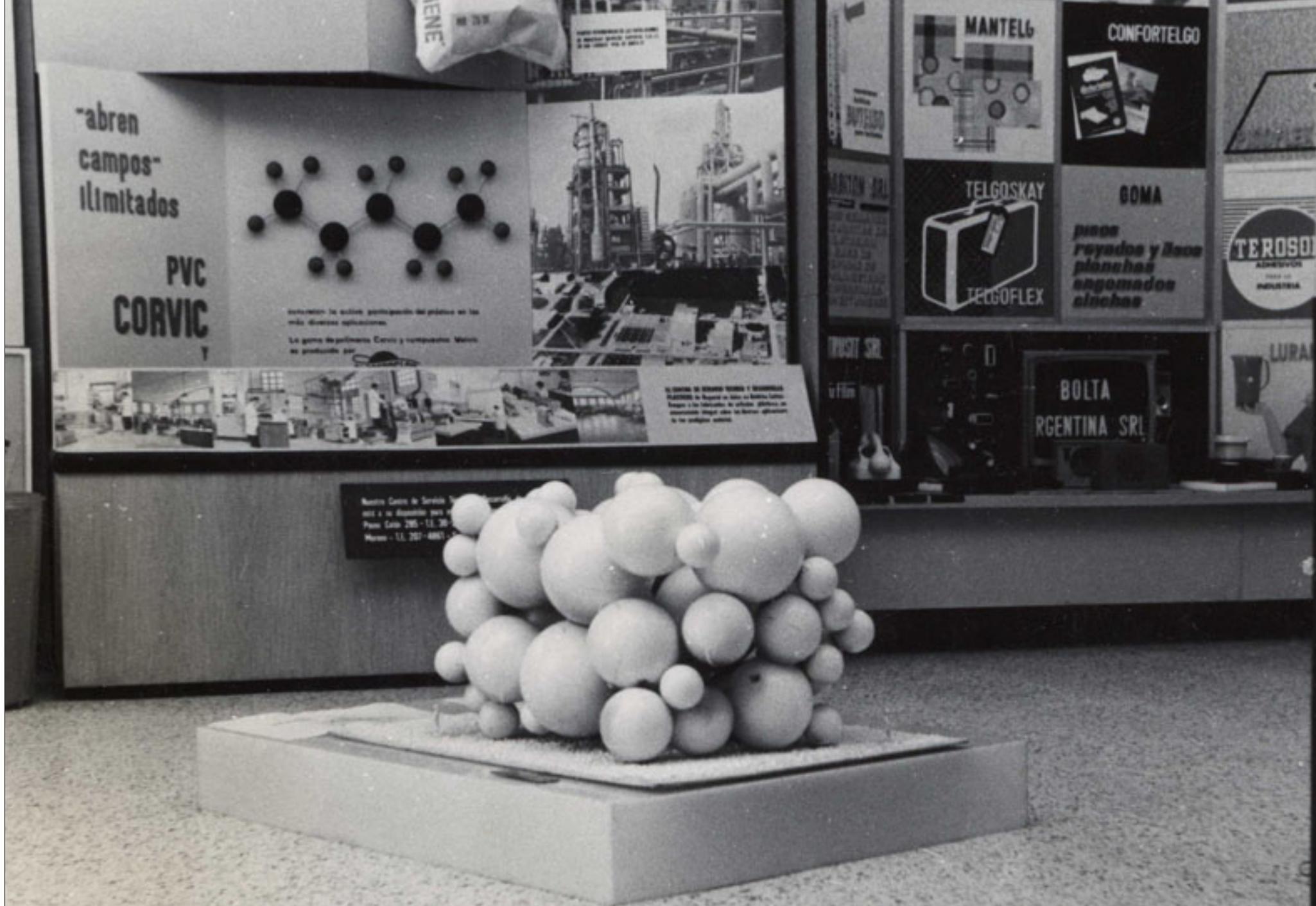
This means that the “real” work is constructed by the spectator from the data provided. In addition, it suggests that unrealized work or the work only partially realized or impossible to realize is as important as one already built or possible to be built, that the idea of the work is more important than its making.

The difference with other scale models by sculptors or architects stems from the fact that we are dealing with an intentionally arrested project that, in its ultimate dimensions, will only be completed in the mind of the spectator. It is a finished work whose topic is an unfinished work, if we consider that the total work would include, in addition to the plan and the scale model, the full-size piece.

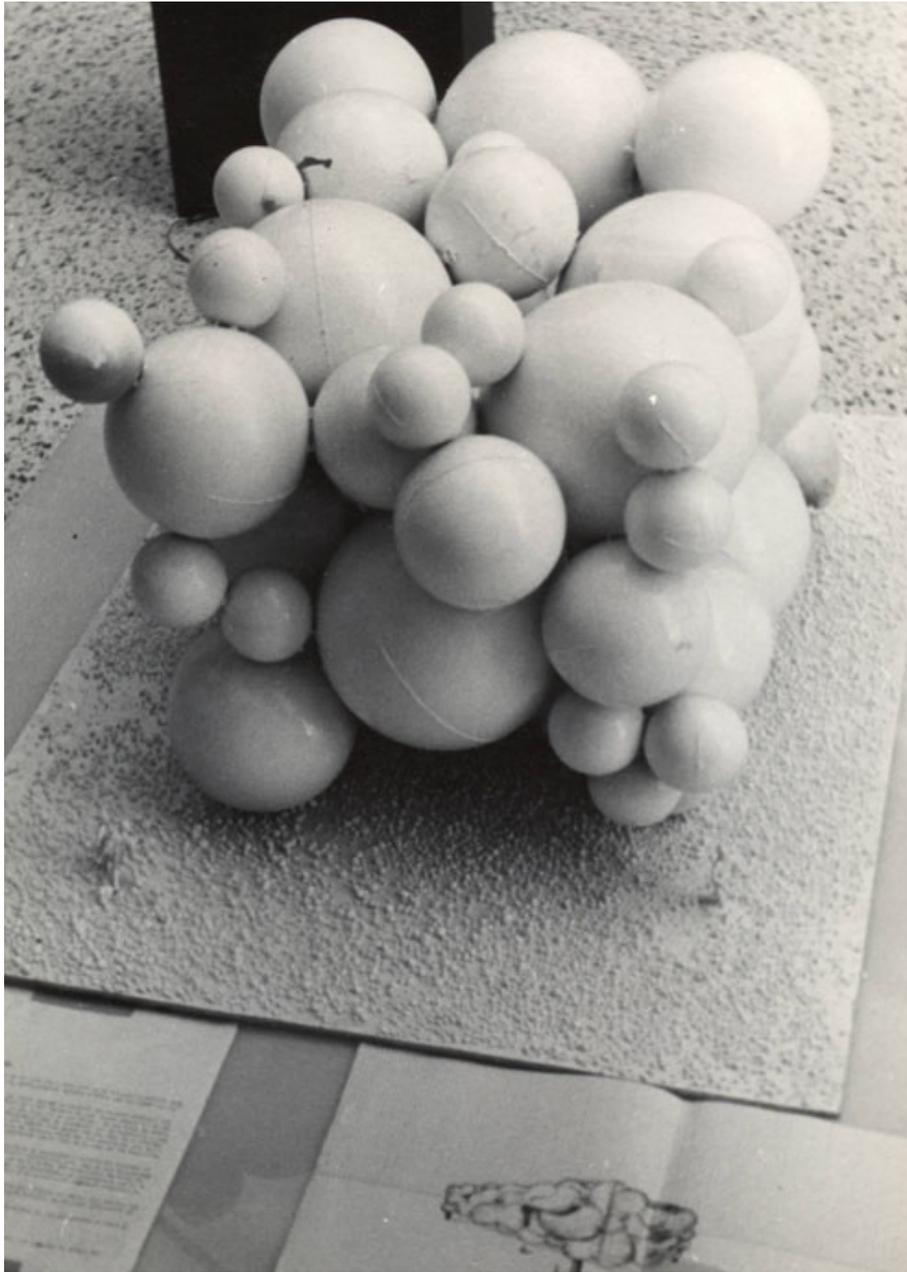
A new form of audience participation emerges here, mental rather than physical, which consists of imagining a full-size work by mentally carrying out the change in scale.

The included drawing (which is a plan) repeats in two dimensions the same idea expressed in the work (which is a scale model).

Work by Roberto Jacoby presented at the exhibition organized by the Cámara del Plástico in August 1966.



Installation view of Roberto Jacoby, *Maqueta de una obra*, 1966 at the Exposición *Plásticos con plástico*, The Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, 1966. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



Installation view of Roberto Jacoby, *Maqueta de una obra*, 1966 at the Exposición *Plásticos con plástico*, The Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, 1966. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

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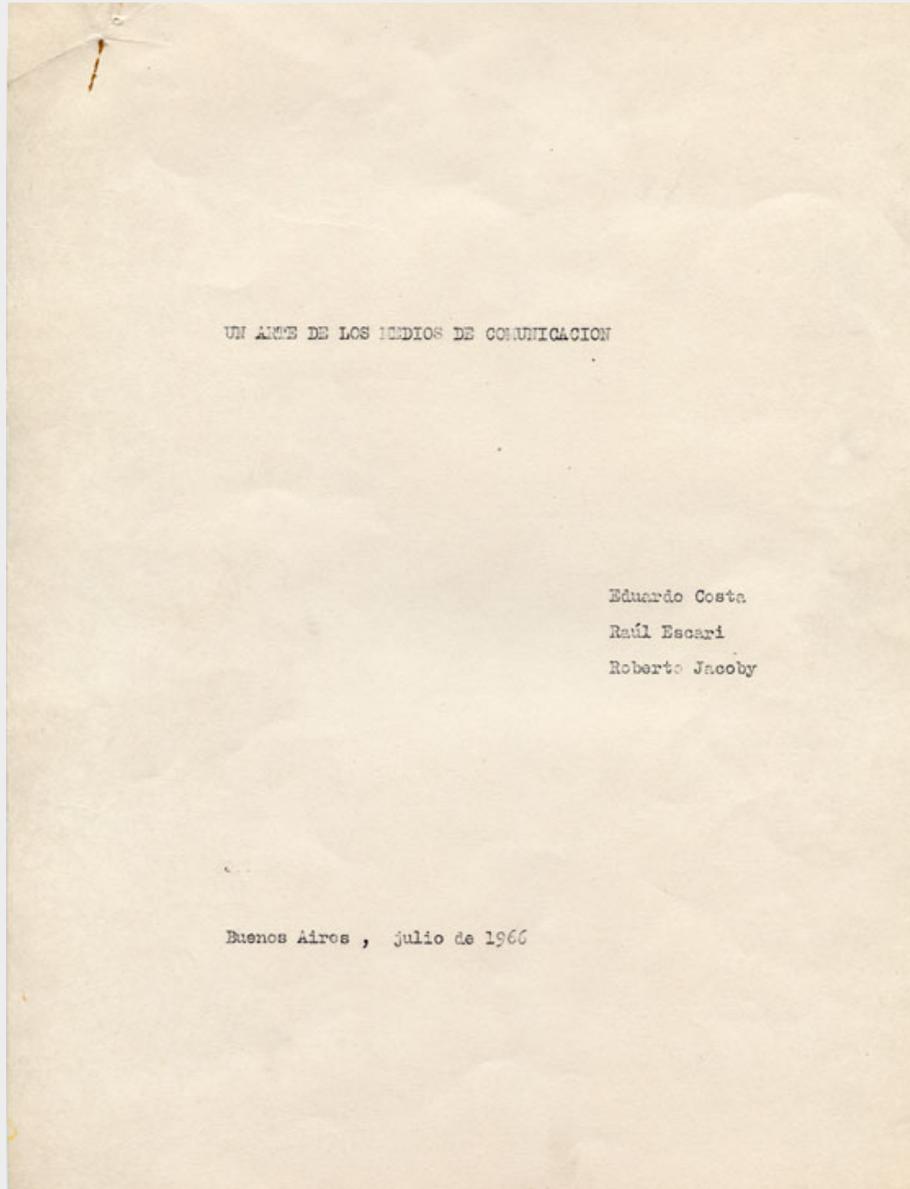
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Eduardo Costa, Raúl Escari and Roberto Jacoby, Typescripts of *Un arte de los medios de comunicación (Manifiesto)*, 1966.
Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

Un arte de los medios de comunicación An Art of Communications Media

Eduardo Costa, Raúl Escari, and Roberto Jacoby, July 1966

Written in collaboration with Eduardo Costa and Raúl Escari, Buenos Aires, 1966. Published in *Happenings*, ed. Oscar Masotta (Buenos Aires: Jorge Álvarez, 1967), 113–118. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

Eduardo Costa
Raúl Escari
Roberto Jacoby

Buenos Aires, July 1966

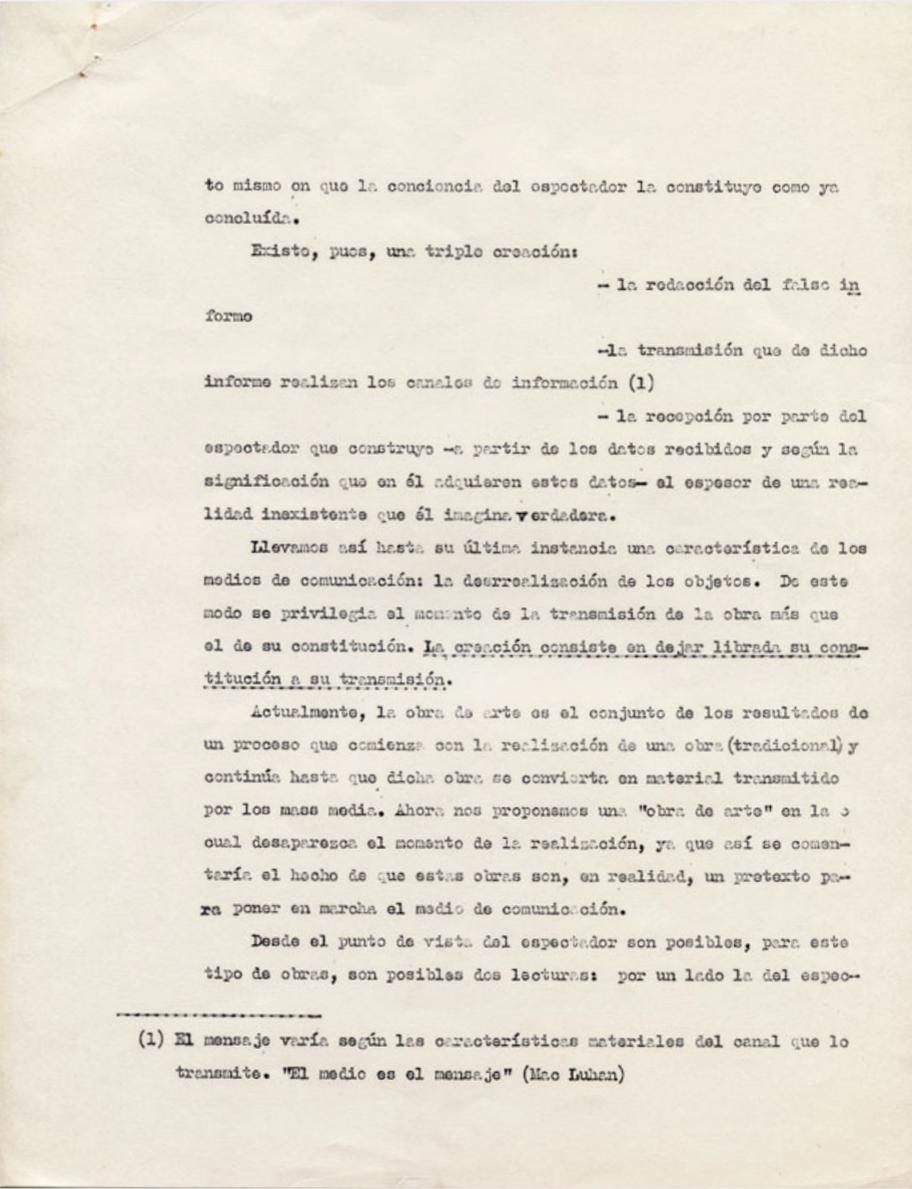
En una civilización de masas, el público no está en contacto directo con los hechos culturales, sino que se informa de ellos a través de los medios de comunicación. La audiencia de masas no ve, por ejemplo, una exposición, no presencia un happening o un partido de fútbol, sino que ve su proyección en un noticiario. Los hechos artísticos reales dejan de tener importancia en cuanto a su difusión ya que sólo llegan a un público reducido. "Distribuir dos mil ejemplares de una obra en una gran ciudad moderna, es como disparar un tiro al aire y esperar que caigan las palomas" dijo Nam June Paik. En último caso, no interesa a los consumidores de información si una exposición se realiza o no; sólo importa la imagen que de este hecho artístico construye el medio de comunicación.

El arte actual (fundamentalmente el Pop) tomaba, a veces, para su constitución, elementos, técnicas, de la comunicación de masas, desconectándolos de su contexto natural (por ejemplo, Lichtenstein, D'Arcangelo con los códigos de rutas). A diferencia del Pop, nosotros pretendemos constituir la obra en el interior de dichos medios. De este modo, nos proponemos entregar a la prensa el informe escrito y fotográfico de un happening que no ha ocurrido. Este falso informe incluirá los nombres de los participantes, una indicación del lugar y momento en que se realizó y una descripción del espectáculo que se finge que ha ocurrido, con fotos tomadas a los supuestos participantes en otras circunstancias. Así, en el modo de transmitir la información, en el modo de "realizar" el acontecimiento inexistente, en las diferencias que surjan entre las diversas versiones que del mismo suceso haga cada emisor, aparecerá el sentido de la obra. Una obra que comienza a existir en el momen

In mass society, the public is not in direct contact with cultural events but is instead informed of their taking place through the media. The mass audience does not attend, for example, an exhibition, is not present at a happening or a soccer match, but instead watches its screening on the news. Real artistic events stop having importance regarding their circulation because they can only reach a limited audience. "Distributing two thousand copies in a modern city is like shooting a gun into the air and expecting the pigeons to drop," said Nam June Paik. In any case, it does not matter to information consumers whether an exhibition was held or not; what matters is only the image of this event that the media fabricates.

Contemporary art (Pop, mainly) sometimes uses for its configuration elements or techniques of mass communication, disconnecting them from their natural context (for example, Lichtenstein, or D'Arcangelo's highway series). Unlike Pop Art, we aim to build the art piece in the center of said media. Therefore, we intend to give the press a written and photographic report of a happening that did not take place. This fake report will include the names of participants, an indication of the time and place of its realization, and a description of the production that is feigned to have happened, with photographs taken of the supposed participants in other circumstances. Thus, in the ways of relaying information, in the manner in which the nonexistent event is "realized," in the differences that arise from the various versions that each broadcaster creates from the same event, the meaning of the artwork will appear. A piece that starts existing in the precise moment that the viewer's consciousness conceives it as having already happened.

Eduardo Costa, Raúl Escari and Roberto Jacoby, Typescripts of *Un arte de los medios de comunicación (Manifiesto)*, 1966. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



Eduardo Costa, Raúl Escari and Roberto Jacoby, Typewritings of *Un arte de los medios de comunicación (Manifiesto)*, 1966. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

There is, then, a triple creation:

- the composition of the fake report,
- the transmission of said report that the information channels make,¹
- the reception by the viewer who constructs—out of the received data and according to the significance that these data have to him—the width of a nonexistent reality that he imagines to be real.

We thereby take a characteristic of the media to its fullest extent: the derealization of objects. Thus, what holds the most privilege is the piece's transmittance rather than its taking place. Creation consists of leaving its constitution up to its transmission.

Currently, the artwork is the sum of the results of a process that starts with the realization of a piece (traditional) and continues until said work becomes material transmitted by mass media. Now, we propose an “artwork” in which the moment of realization disappears, since what will then be discussed is the fact that these pieces are, actually, a pretext through which the media can be set in motion.

From the viewer's standpoint, two different positions can be held for these types of artworks. First is a viewer that trusts the media and believes in what he sees; the other is a viewer aware, who knows of the nonexistence of the transmitted piece.

This opens up the possibility of a new genre, an art of mass media where what matters is not fundamentally “what is said” but rather thematizing the media as media.

This report also prepares those who will hold the second position, “notifies” some readers, and constitutes the first part of the artworks we have announced.

1. The message varies depending on the material characteristics of the transmitting channel. “The medium is the message”—McLuhan.

tador que confía en el medio y cree en lo que ve; por otro, la del espectador avisado que está al tanto de la inexistencia de la obra que se noticia.

Se abre así la posibilidad de un nuevo género: el arte de los Mass Media donde lo que importa no es fundamentalmente "lo que se dice" sino tematizar los medios como medios.

Este informe prepara, además a los destinatarios de la segunda lectura, "avisa" a algunos lectores y constituye la primera parte de las obras que anunciamos.

Buenos Aires, julio de 1966

Eduardo Costa

Raúl Escari

Roberto Jacoby

Buenos Aires, July 1966

Eduardo Costa

Raúl Escari

Roberto Jacoby



Eduardo Costa, Raúl Escari and Roberto Jacoby, Typescripts of *Un arte de los medios de comunicación (Manifiesto)*, 1966. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

Contra el happening Against the Happening

Roberto Jacoby, 1967

Originally published in *Happenings*, ed. Oscar Masotta (Buenos Aires: Jorge Alvarez, 1967): 123–131.

Against the Happening

By Roberto Jacoby

Within the field of the creation of works of art inside the mass communications media, the one we executed was just one possibility. To carry it out, we needed to obtain the support of the supposed participants and of the journalists. We explained our objectives to each, adapting our explanation to what each wanted to hear. If someone thought that it was all just a big joke, we convinced him that in fact it was just that (a public relations technique). These ad hoc explanations became confused with our true intentions when we created the piece; later they contributed to complicating its intelligibility.

One of those explanations consisted in reducing the work's intention of demonstrating that the press deceives and deforms. This phenomenon, which is obvious and a matter of common sense, is actually only tangentially addressed. The fundamental content of our work is slightly more complicated: a play between the reality of things and the unreality of information, between the reality of information and the unreality of things; the materialization, through the mass media, of imaginary events, an imaginarium constructed on another imaginarium; the game of constructing a mythical image and the job of seeking the support of the audience's imagination, only to tear it all down and leave them simply with "the spectacle of their own deceived conscience."

One could also say that here thousands of spectators literally construct the work, but not as usually happens, springing from a concrete stimulus; rather it arises from an account of the piece. The account of something that did not take place (and therefore false, fictitious) was not however a simple literary fiction—as it would have been had it been included in a collection of stories—but the communicational context endowed it with a factual rather than a literary materiality. Another idea, that of playing a joke on the audience, excited some people who think that avant-garde art should be, above all, fun. That in itself should not be dismissed out of hand, but this piece does not contain the slightest trace of a sense of humor. As for the explanation that it is a sociological experiment, that is not altogether the case, since it is obvious that it does not meet the requirements for a true sociological experiment. But as Harold Rosenberg wrote us: "[I]t is a sociological work, and that does not make it less valuable." But just the same, it lacks rigor as a sociological experiment, so it is sociological as a work of art. Its very "materiality," the mass communications media (concrete and material magazines and dailies), is more social than physical.

To put our idea into practice, we resorted to certain techniques used in "public relations" and not to "artistic" techniques. We had to interview people who are news-

worthy, be polite to them, earn the support of journalists: in short, move inside these groups with the strategy of robbing the group of its dynamic, freezing it. We were trying to offer each the image of the overall situation that each imagined in his or her own mind. According to that strategy, it was appropriate that the topic we would be informing about be a myth: the Happening myth. In order to refer to that myth, we proceeded inversely to the way plastic artists work nowadays, by extracting a segment of the context to evaluate it aesthetically. We, on the other hand, homogenized a series of real events that had been mythicized through language (that of the news in the media) into an event that only existed through language. Thus, language became a factor of homogenization as much as of mythification. "Really the best defense against a myth is to mythicize it in turn, that is to say, produce an artificial myth: and that myth reconstituted will give way to a true mythology. Since myth robs language, why not rob the myth? This would be sufficient to convert it into a starting point for a third semiological chain . . . a second degree myth."¹ But the myth of the Happening was not in itself the work's "message." What was communicated was the paradox between the characteristics of the Happening (the lack of mediation, direct communication with objects and persons, short distance between the viewer and the viewed) and a great deal of mediation between objects and events, the nonparticipation of the receptor; in short, the conditions imposed by the mass media as a means of communication. In this way the message consisted of two levels: one aesthetic, the other mass-oriented, therefore implying a certain interpretation of one by the other. The "aesthetic" level was mediated by the "mass" level, that which concretely reached the receptors. In this way, what at first glance might look like a Happening became an anti-Happening because of the relationships it created with objects. "The point is to think then of an art of objects that we are not yet prepared to imagine, the material of which must not be physical but social and whose form should be constructed through systematic transformations of communications structures. Objects, in short, that will be difficult to preserve in museums for future generations."²

When someone decides to paint a picture—whatever the style, the subject chosen, the skill of execution—he decides, by the very decision to "paint," on a message. A "medium" (oil and canvas) not only transmits significant messages, but the medium itself, as opposed to other mediums, is significant. What is more, the medium "sets the stage"; it induces minds and bodies to a certain precise perception of time and space. The decision to choose one medium and not another implies ideas about the material and social possibilities of establishing communication. But just the same, they are ideas about society. When, for instance, an artist chooses a planar medium rather than a sculptural or a theatrical one, there are totalizing conceptions that do not reside in the "content" of what is said, but rather in the medium chosen to say it. Mass communications media have been analyzed in this regard, but the same has not been done with aesthetic mediums. These have been constructed on true myths, and as happens with all myths, they have wound up being naturalized to the point that no one challenges their validity. While it is possible to argue about the advantages, defects, and characteristics of television, it would not occur to anyone to question painting, dance, or theater. There is an acritical conception of aesthetic mediums by which they are accepted just as they are presented to us. There are attempts at innovation in the fine arts by changing "contents" and "formats," when the problem really is: one medium or another. The concept of medium includes the categories of content and form, but for that very reason the discussion must be lifted out of this last level and be elevated to media as such.

The existence of mass communications media on one hand and aesthetic media on the other gives rise to split between two parallel cultures, one of the masses and the other "superior," of the elite. The awareness of this split between the values of mass culture and those of the elite has become heightened among artists and intellectuals during the last ten years. Pop seemed to want to erase the separation by reproducing images produced by the mass media. It is as if these artists had tried to burst the limits of their own medium to turn their works into messages that would be distributed and accepted on a mass scale. Lichtenstein and Warhol, by reproducing comic strips and labels, turned the products of mass communication into the content of an aesthetic medium. For a Pop artist it is possible to regard the products of mass culture as beautiful, but only with the mediation of the aesthetic medium. In contrast to this idea, I believe that mass communications media have a materiality that is susceptible to being aesthetically shaped. We have only to look as far as writing and film, which were initially commercial techniques and scientific oddities. Taken later to aesthetic ends they became the new aesthetic media and, up to a point, worked as substitutes for the earlier media. The new media today are those of mass communication. And as new media, they offer a new way of perceiving and behaving. Cinema (a medium that sometimes behaves like an aesthetic medium and sometimes like mass media and in some cases is able to overcome this dichotomy) required the creation of new teams of manpower and technical equipment. In the same way, mass communications media art demands that the artists, if we are to call them that, be situated inside it, discover its functions and techniques.

We know full well that mass communications media are essential to controlling a society and are therefore implemented—no less than was writing, in other times—by the groups in power today. "Their manipulation, then, entails many perils for the artist and for the correct comprehension of his activity on behalf of the public. I would even say that they are sufficiently complex systems as to make it difficult to escape their ideological traps, even when one believes himself to be condemning them." This requires of future artists that on one hand they be very well acquainted with the material they are going to work with and, on the other hand, that they be affiliated with social groups powerful enough to make their cultural messages heard. This obliges us to think in an entirely different way about words like "artist" and "art," and to rethink the whole creative process. Once again, as when the Gothic cathedrals were being built—the artist ceases to be an isolated individual. "Artists are abandoning the ivory tower," says McLuhan,³ "for the control tower."⁴ For this reason, in the modern aesthetic message, the *expressive function* focused on the transmitter, which has tended to diminish in all modern art, and the *cognitive or referential* (that points to the context) may subside, though without disappearing, before the *conative function* of the aesthetic message. It will not be about, most likely, expressing the artist's emotions or "showing reality" but about acting on the receiver, about "making making." The predominance of the conative function will move art closer to propaganda and to the study of the structures of persuasion, just as at the turn-of-the-century art moved closer to mathematics and industrial techniques. What is more, perhaps, the old conflict between art and politics ("Art should reflect reality"; "all art is political"; "none is"; etc.), which people have tried to transcend by introducing a political "content" into art, will be settled by the artistic use of a medium as political as mass communication. The "moments" of the art of mass communications media would then be:

- a) the transmitter; set up inside of teams familiar with communicational techniques;

b) the message, the materialization of which will be more social than physical. Discontinuous works (televised messages, waves of graphic information, posters, billboards, projections, radio transmissions, demonstrations, etc.); the predominant function of the message will perhaps be conative, encouraging making. Disappearance of the boundaries between mass culture and the culture of the elite.

Reflecting on the origins of Happenings, it is easy to see how artists coming from different artistic fields converged to form a hybrid genre. Painters, dancers, musicians, filmmakers, theater people, etc., crossed the boundaries between traditional genres, looking for the outlet they could not find in their own medium. Since 1952, when John Cage gave his famous performance at Black Mountain College, to the present, it must be said that the somewhat dying history of Happenings is the history of a desperate search for a new means of aesthetic communication. Today we know that if there is any hope for contemporary art, it is not the Happening, since the Happening, instead of becoming a new, independent, and totalizing genre (that could absorb all other art forms), is being incorporated as an enriching experience by artists who continue to work in their traditional genres. Despite this failure, those of us who think about the possibilities of creating or discovering it, believe that some valuable conclusions can be drawn.

The broadening of the notion of a work: The traditional temporal and spatial demarcations in which the work of art develops—theater, plastic arts, music, and film—are now open and discontinuous. A work can last fifteen seconds or twenty-four hours (Vostell); it can take place in five different points of a city or in three cities at the same time (Kaprow). In the traditional media—a book, a painting, a theater piece—unity is achieved through a plot and the unitary material characteristics of the work. The Happening, on the other hand, is an “open work” in that it literally opens relationships of time and space and different levels of materiality with which it works. In addition, and this is part of its mythology, the Happening attempts to modify the relationship between the spectator and the spectacle. It is not about hurling lettuces and chickens. It is about achieving unmediated communication, or communication with as little mediation as possible. This occurs on levels as various as those having to do with modes of behavior, called “performing,” to the placement and roles of the spectator. That’s where the advantages end, since the idea of communicating with a minimum of mediation converts the Happening into an exclusive and elite show: Rauschenberg and Oldenburg themselves are onstage to perform a Happening two or three times for two hundred friends, and all this in a city of twelve million inhabitants.

At this moment when the world is being transformed by new technologies and artists themselves are calling for the need for an anonymous, standardized art, the Happening runs the risk of becoming the most individualistic and exclusive art in history. Fortunately, laboratory experiences are useful and today we can imagine an art, collective in its creation and its reception, of the mass communications media. “As growing technologies began creating new environments, man became aware of the arts as anti-environments or against-environments, giving us the means for perceiving the environment itself. Because, as Edward Hall explains in *The Silent Language*, men are never aware of the basic laws of environment-setting systems.⁵ Nowadays, new technologies follow each other in such rapid succession that each environment makes

us conscious of the next. Technologies are beginning to play the role of art by making us take notice of the social and psychic consequences of technology.”⁶

The Happening is, in this case, an anti-environment-setting art—its structure being exactly the opposite of that created by the mass communications media. A mass media piece, like our own piece, summarized earlier, is therefore an anti-Happening, since the Happening is a medium of the immediate, while “mass communications media is a medium of whatever is immediate in the mediatizing of the object.”⁷

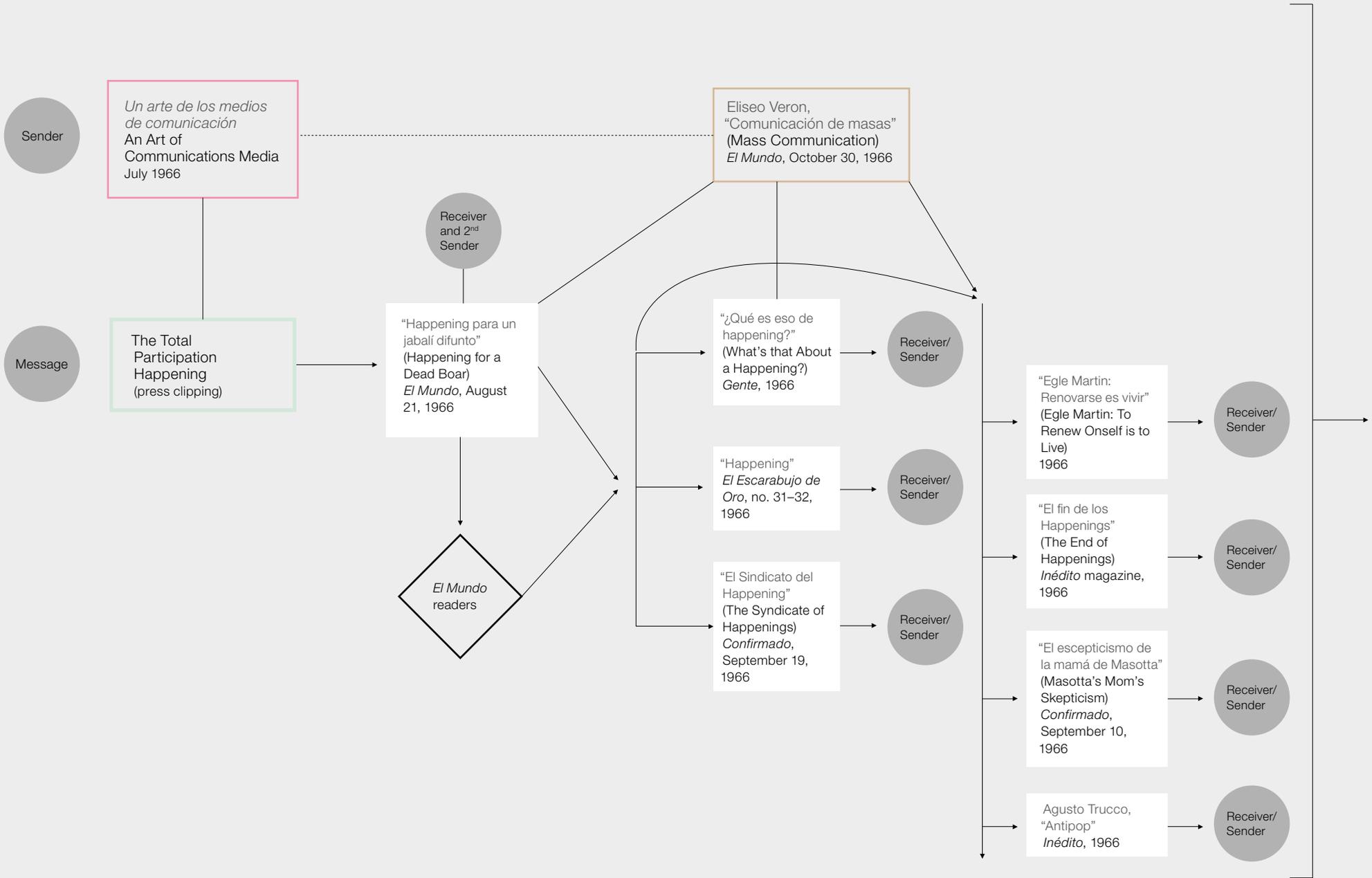
Notes

1. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*.
2. Eliseo Verón, article reproduced in this book. [Not included in the present anthology. Ed.]
3. Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, 3rd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), p. 65.
4. But the one who controls is in turn controlled. The information media, in every kind of society that has existed to date, are controlled by concrete social groups that ideologically infiltrate the media. This presents a new and serious problem since the artist can no longer work in isolation from the groups that own and control the information media, be they dominant groups, sectors of the state, parties, companies, or unions. To some degree film had already obliged artists to take into account the different interests of different groups and in a way, film is always a kind of conciliation of those interests. No doubt mass information media art will accentuate the phenomenon. The artist will be unable to create outside of concrete social groups. Seen from an individualistic viewpoint, this position, which is nothing more than a description of the situation, may seem painful, or outright cynical and totalitarian. But isn't it fortunate that artists—who in a bourgeois society went from total marginalization to integration on the condition of rendering their messages useless—can make art that will be positively social from the very moment of its conception?
5. Edward T. Hall, *The Silent Language* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959). [Ed.]
6. McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, p. 65.
7. The two quotes of Masotta are taken from his seminar on avant-garde art and the information media, given at the Instituto Torcuato Di Tella in 1966. [It is unclear which other quote he is citing as Masotta's. Ed.]

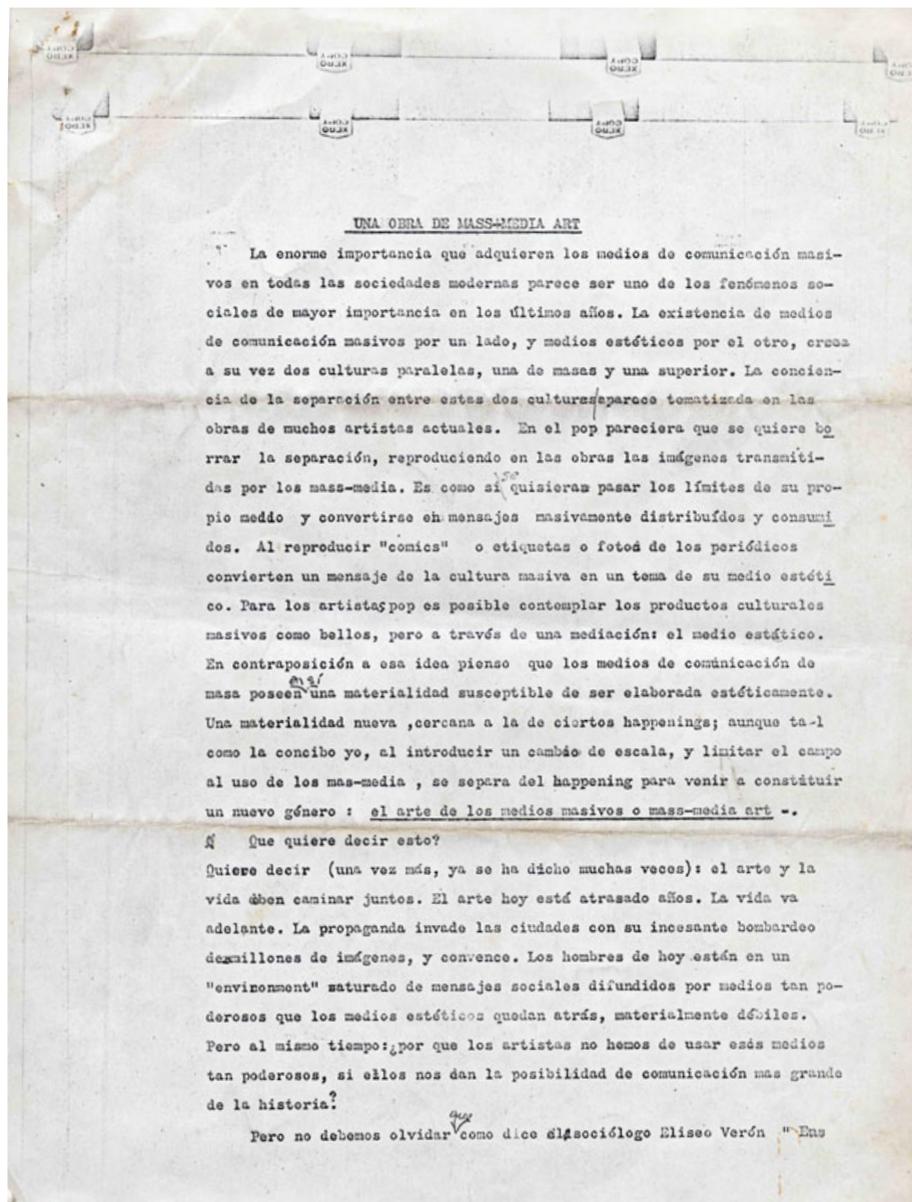
—Originally published as “Contra el happening,” in Oscar Masotta et al., *Happenings* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Jorge Alvarez, 1967). Translated by Eileen Brockbank.

Diagram Media Manifiesto

ROBERTO JACOBY
Six Decades of Sound and Fury







Roberto Jacoby, typescript of *Una obra de Mass-Media Art*, 1967. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

Una obra de Mass-Media Art A Work of Mass Media Art

Roberto Jacoby, 1967

Published in *El deseo nace del derrumbe. Roberto Jacoby: Acciones, conceptos, escritos*, ed. Ana Longoni (Barcelona: Ediciones de La Central / Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora / Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia/Red Conceptualismos del Sur, 2011), 67. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

The huge importance that mass media gains in all modern societies seems to be one of the most significant social phenomena in recent years. The existence of mass communication media on the one hand and of aesthetic media on the other has in turn created two parallel cultures: one, a mass culture; and the other, the so-called superior one. The knowledge of the separation between these two cultures appears thematized in the work of many current artists. In Pop, it looks as if the separation wants to be erased, by reproducing in the artwork those images transmitted through mass media. It's as if it seeks to breach the limits of its own medium to become messages with mass distribution and consumption. By reproducing comics or tags or pictures from newspapers, artists turn a message of mass culture into a subject of their artistic medium. For Pop artists, it is possible to consider mass cultural products as beautiful, but through a mediation: the static medium. In contrast to that idea, I think that mass communication media have, in themselves, a materiality that is susceptible to aesthetic development. A new materiality, like those of certain happenings; although the way I picture it, by introducing a change in scale and by limiting the scope to the use of mass media, it separates from happenings to constitute a new genre: the art of mass media.

What does this mean? It means (I repeat it although it has been said many times): art and life must walk side by side. Today's art is years behind. Life goes on. Propaganda invades cities with its never-ending bombardment of millions of images, and it succeeds in convincing. Men these days are living in an environment saturated with social messages transmitted by media so powerful that aesthetic media is left behind,

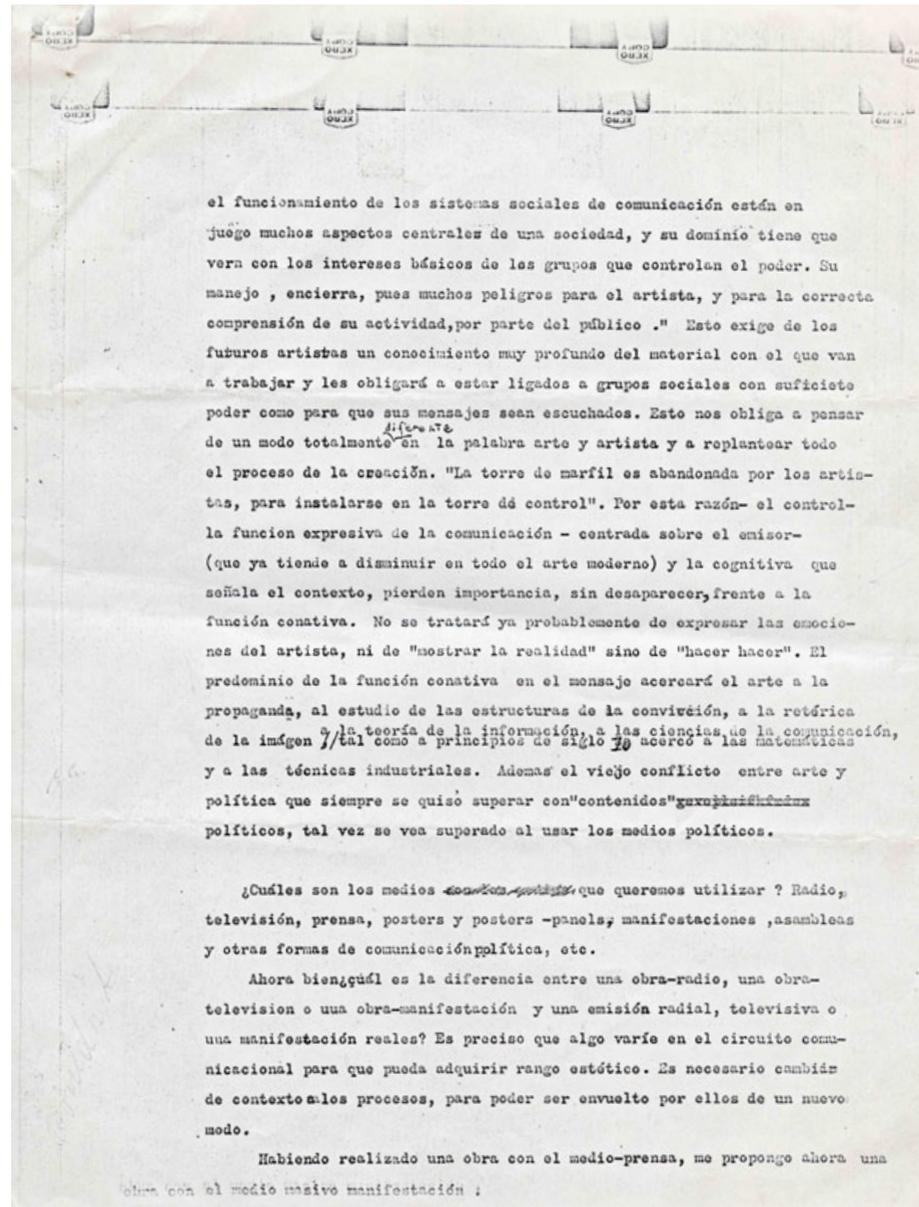
materially weak. But at the same time: why should we, as artists, not use such powerful media, if they give us the biggest communicative possibility in history?

We should not forget what sociologist Eliseo Verón says, that “many central aspects of society are in play in the inner workings of the systems of social communication, and that their dominance is related to the basic interests of the groups that control the power. Their handling encompasses thus many dangers to the artist, and to the correct comprehension of his activity on the part of his audience.” This demands that future artists have a very profound knowledge of the material with which they intend to work, and it will force them to be in contact with social groups with enough power to make their messages heard. This compels us to think about the words *art* and *artist* in a completely different way and to rethink the whole creative process. “The artist tends now to move from the ivory tower to the control tower of society.” For this reason—control—the emotive (or expressive) function of communication, centered on the sender (which already tends to be diminished in all modern art), and the referential (cognitive) function, which points to the context, lose significance (without disappearing) in the face of the conative function. It will probably no longer be a question of expressing the artist’s emotions nor of “reflecting reality” but rather of “making the making.” The predominance of the conative function in the message will move art closer to propaganda, to the study of structures of persuasion, to the rhetoric of images, to the theory of information, to the sciences of communication, as at the beginning of the 20th century it drew math and the new industrial techniques closer together. Furthermore, the age-old conflict between art and politics, which was often sought to be overcome with political “content,” will be perhaps resolved by using political media.

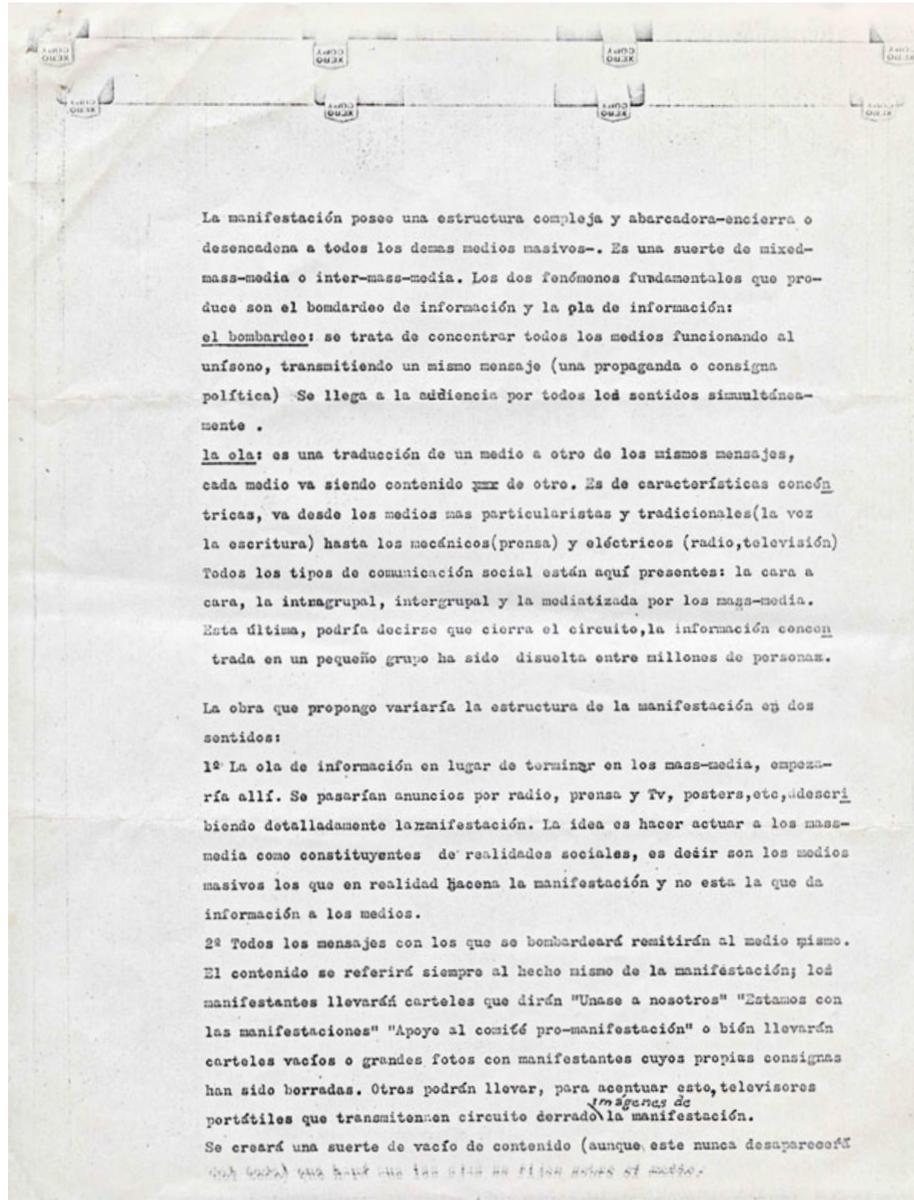
Which mass media outlets do we hope to utilize? Radio, television, press, posters, display boards, demonstrations, assemblies, other forms of political communication, etc.

Now, what is the difference between an artwork–radio, an artwork–television, or an artwork–demonstration, and real radio or television emissions or a real demonstration? It is essential to have variation in the communicative channel for it to gain an aesthetic rank. It is necessary to change the context of the processes in order to be surrounded by them in a new way.

Having produced a work with the medium *press*, I now intend to make another with the mass medium *demonstration*. A demonstration has a very complex and all-encompassing structure; it encloses or sets off all other mass outlets. It is a sort



Roberto Jacoby, typescript of *Una obra de Mass-Media Art*, 1967. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



of mixed-mass-media or inter-mass-media. The two main phenomena it generates are the informational bombardment and the informational wave.

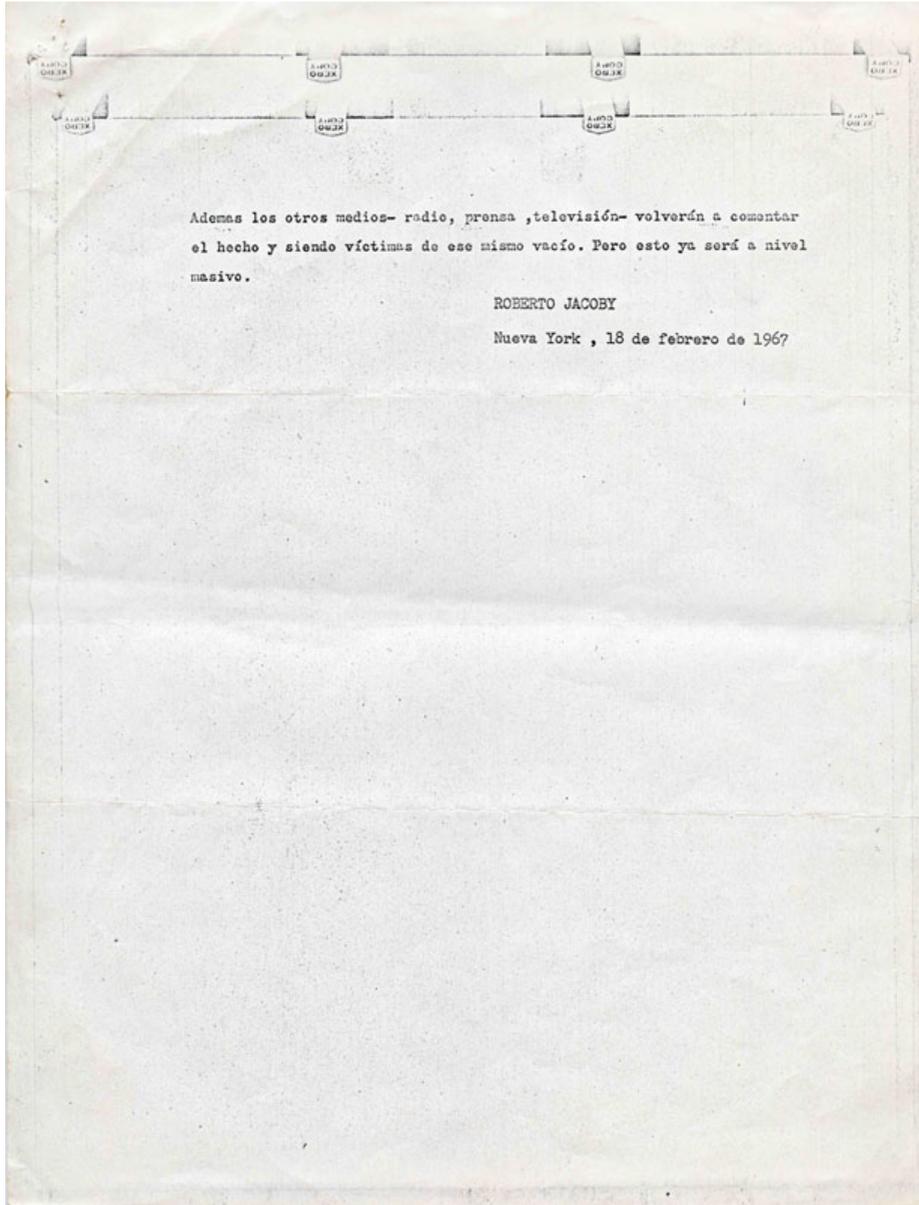
Bombardment: It's about clustering all outlets and having them work at the same time, transmitting a single message (propaganda or political slogan). The audience is reached through all senses simultaneously.

Wave: It's the translation of the same messages from one outlet to the other, and each starts being the other's content. It's concentric, it ranges from the most particularist and traditional outlets (voice, writing) to the mechanic (press) and electric (radio, television). All types of social communication are present here: face-to-face, intragroup, intergroup, and mediated by mass media. This last one could be said to close the loop: information once retained in a small group has now been circulated through millions of people.

The work I propose would change the structure of a demonstration in two ways:

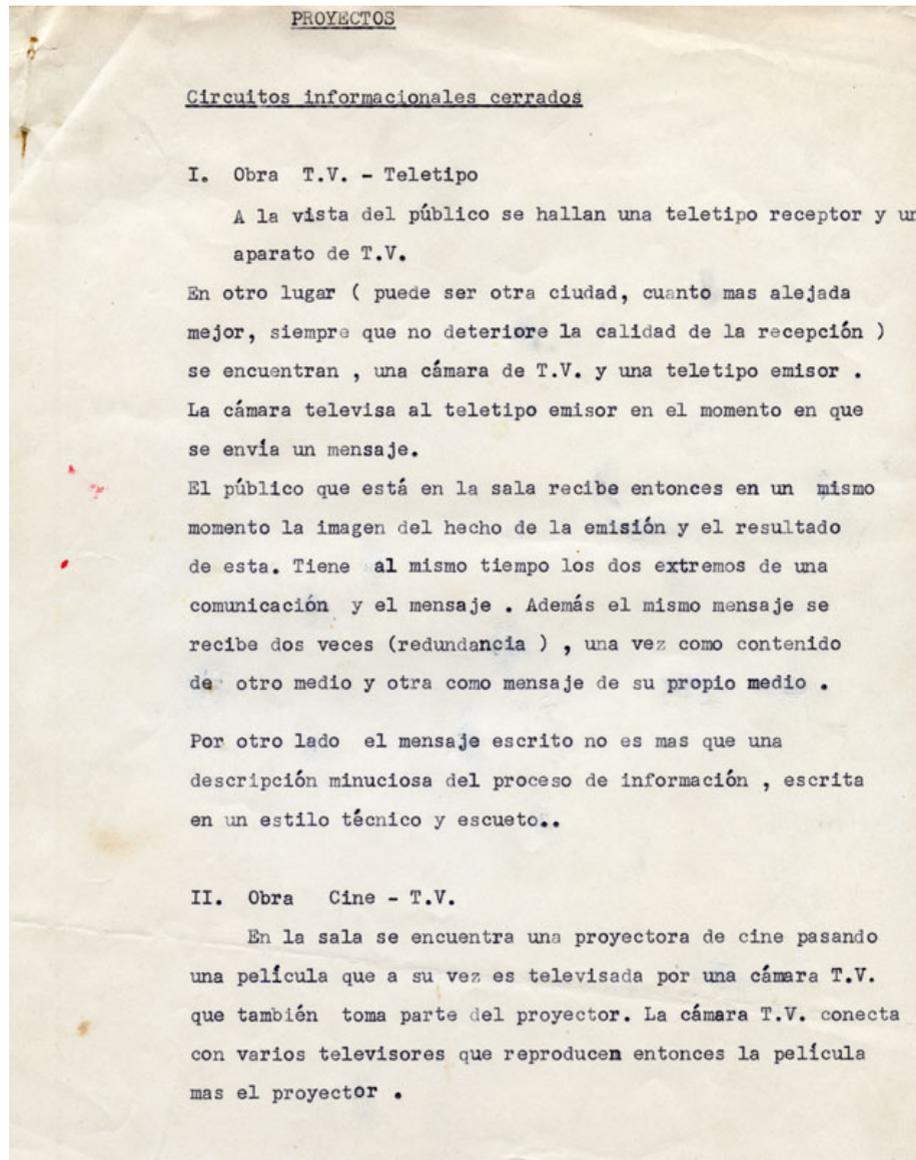
- 1) The informational wave, rather than ending in mass media, would start there. Radio, press, and TV broadcasts would be circulated, as well as posters, etc., describing the demonstration in detail. The idea is to make mass media act as a constituent of social reality, meaning it would be the media that makes the demonstration instead of it providing the media with information.
- 2) All messages to be bombarded will refer to the media itself. Content will always refer to the very fact of the demonstration; protesters will carry signs reading "Join us," "We stand with demonstrations," "I support the pro-demonstration committee," or else will carry signs either empty or with big pictures of protesters whose own messages have been erased. Others might carry, to emphasize this, portable televisions transmitting images of the demonstration in a closed loop. This aims at creating a content void (although it will never completely disappear) that will cause the eyes to focus on the media. Besides, all other outlets (radio, press, television) will comment on the event and will thus become victims of this same void. But that will now happen at the mass level.

ROBERTO JACOBY
New York, February 18, 1967



Roberto Jacoby, typescript of *Una obra de Mass-Media Art*, 1967. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



Roberto Jacoby, typescripts of *Circuitos informacionales cerrados*, 1967. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

Circuitos informacionales cerrados Closed Information Circuits

Roberto Jacoby, March 1967

Written in March 1967. Published as “Escritos de vanguardia” (Writings of the Avant-Garde), in *Listen, Here Now! Argentinian Art of the 1960s: Writing from the Avant-Garde*, ed. Inés Katzenstein and Andrea Giunta, Primary Documents (New York: The Museum of Modern Art / Buenos Aires: Espigas Foundation and Proa Foundation, 2007), 256–257. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

I. TV – TELETYPE INSTALLATION

A teletype receiver and a TV set are placed in public view.

Elsewhere (it can be another city, the farther away the better, as long as it does not deteriorate the quality of the reception), a TV camera and a teletype transmitter are set up.

The camera televises the broadcasting teletype at the very moment that a message is sent. The audience in the room then simultaneously receives the image of the broadcasting event and the result of the broadcast. Thus, the audience has, at the same time, both ends of a communication and the message. Moreover, the same message is received twice (redundancy): once as content from another medium and once as a message from its own medium.

On the other hand, the written report is nothing more than a detailed description of the information process, written in a technical and concise style.

II. CINEMA – TV INSTALLATION

A cinema projector is located in the room, showing a film that, in turn, is televised by a TV camera, which also captures part of the projector. The TV camera connects with several TV sets that, therefore, display the film plus the projector.

A closed circuit of information has been created in which both steps of migration from one medium to the other, and their differences, can be seen at the same time.

A symmetrically opposite experience would be to project the “output” of a TV camera onto a screen.

A su vez el film es un proyector de cine en funcionamiento.

Se ha producido un circuito cerrado de información donde se pueden ver al mismo tiempo los dos pasos de la traducción de un medio a otro y sus diferencias.

Una experiencia simétricamente opuesta sería proyectar contra una pantalla el "output" de una cámara de T.V. En el primer caso el cine es un contenido de la T.V. En el segundo la T.V. pasa a ser un contenido del cine.

de información
Estas dos obras a diferencia de mis obras/anteriores
no son sociales, sino cerradas.
En las obras de información social el público de masas estaba envuelto por los mass-media y sólo captaba una parte del proceso- la recepción- aunque esto le revelaba los demás momentos. En este caso sólo un público pequeño puede presenciar la obra, pero tendrá noción de una totalidad: el proceso de información.

Estos proyectos serán realizados en Nueva York y Buenos Aires durante el año 1967.

Roberto Jacoby
Marzo de 1967

In the first case, cinema is TV content. In the second case, TV becomes the content of cinema.

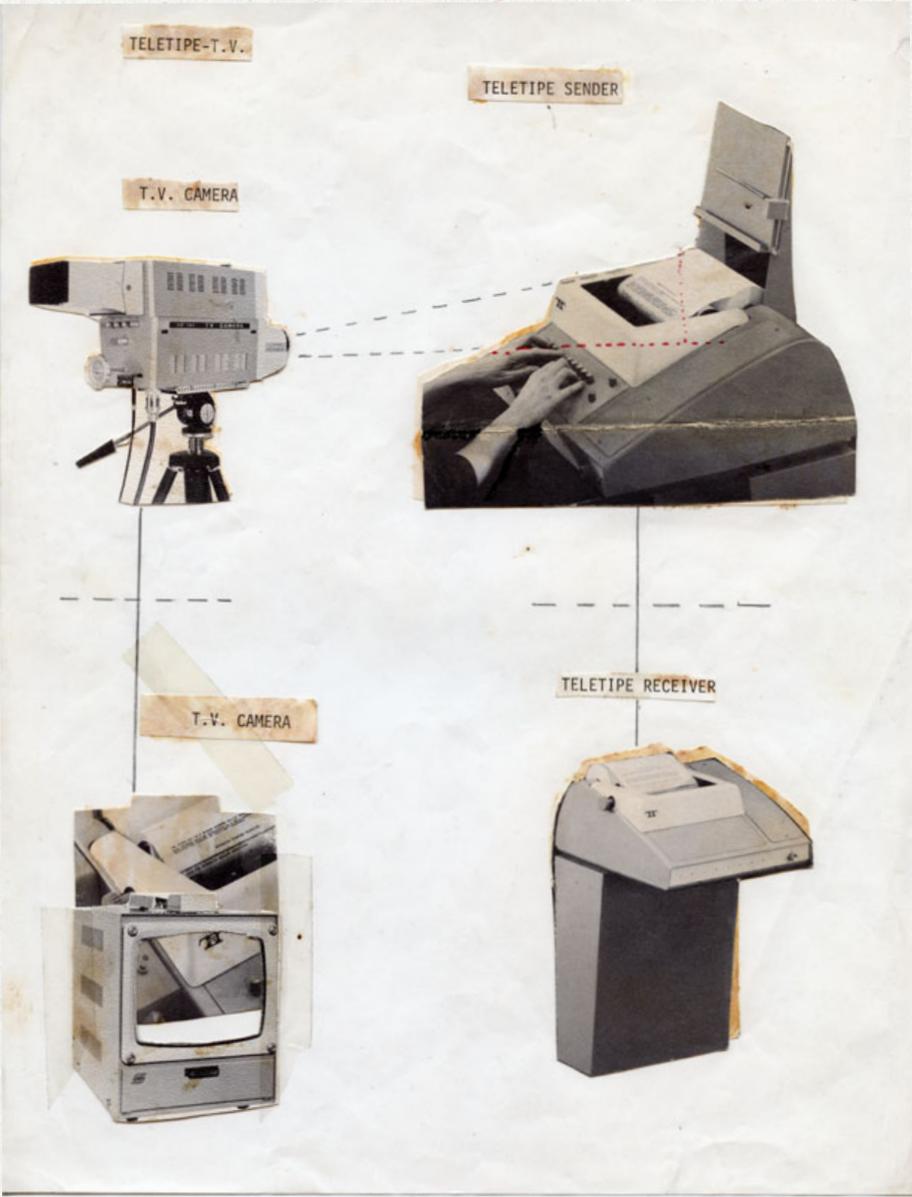
These two works, unlike my previous communication pieces, are not social but closed.

In the social information works, the mass audience was caught up inside the mass media and only grasped a part of the process—the reception—although this revealed the other moments to them. In this case, only a small audience can witness the work, but it will have a notion of a totality: the information process.

These projects will be carried out in New York and Buenos Aires during 1967.

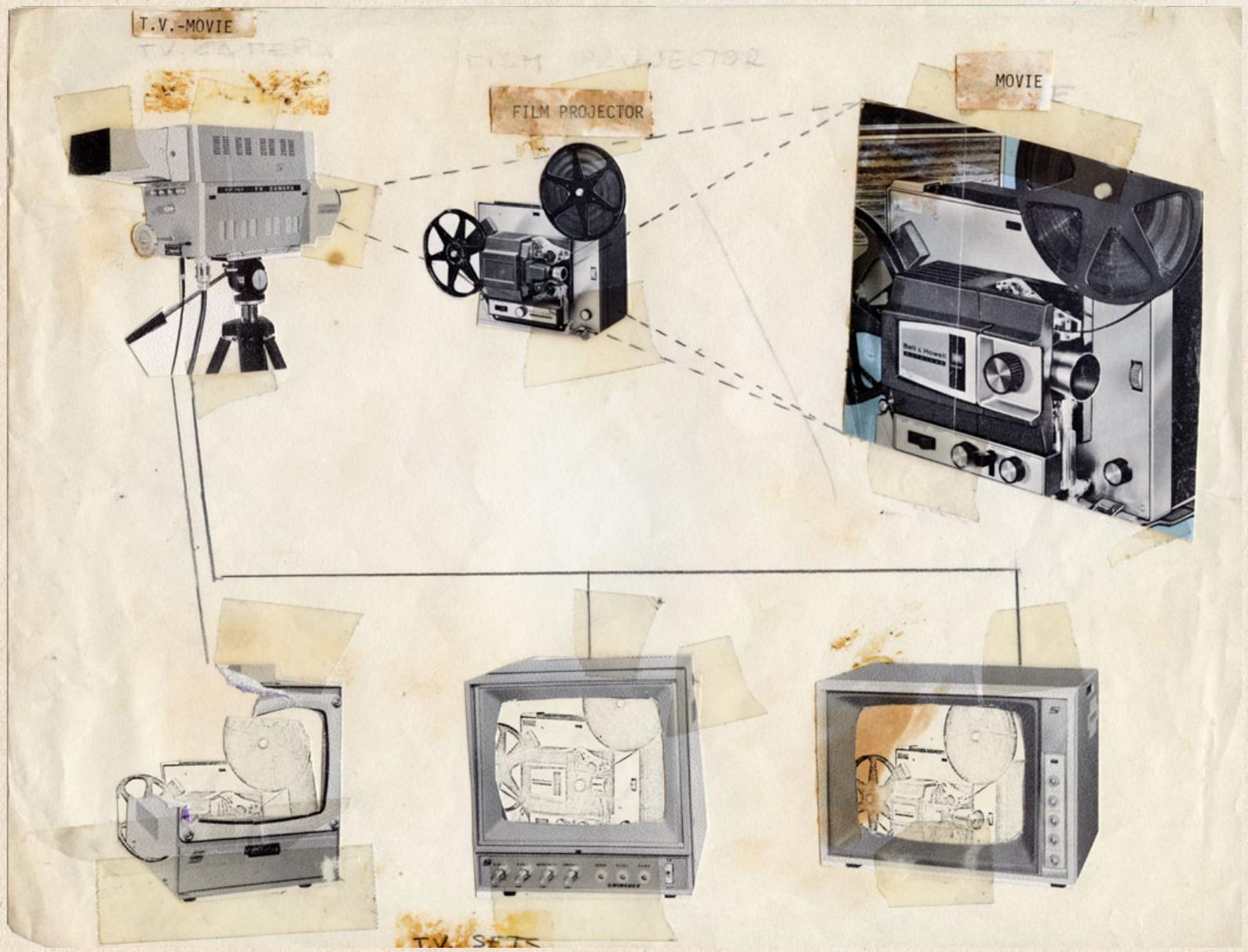
Roberto Jacoby
March, 1967





Roberto Jacoby, *Circuitos informacionales cerrados*, 1967. Collage on paper. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.





Mao y Perón Mao and Perón

Roberto Jacoby, New York, March 26, 1967



Roberto Jacoby, Contact sheet for *Mao y Perón*, 1967.
Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



PROYECTO

Se pegan pequeños afiches o cartelitos escritos a mano por toda la ciudad, teniendo cuidado de ponerlos en lugares como subtes, baños, columnas, etc.

Los papeles impresos a mimeógrafo contienen un número de teléfono y un texto que invita a llamar.

Al hacerlo una conmutador conecta con una cinta grabada donde ininterrumpidamente se pasa un texto que describe lo que se ha hecho.

El texto diría algo así: Esto es un disco. Usted ha puesto en marcha un circuito de información. Se han pegado cartelitos en toda la ciudad y esto ha hecho que muchos receptores llamen por teléfono. Sólo queremos decir que hemos hecho actuar a los medios de comunicación. Que además los hemos hecho actuar para comunicar un mensaje referido a los medios de comunicación. No hay ningún sentido en esto, sólo un circuito actuando en vacío, pura información. Usted es parte de este circuito. Esto es además una obra de arte, un nuevo tipo de obras de arte que exige que la gente piense de una nueva manera. Esto es un disco.....

Marzo de 1967

Roberto Jacoby



Circuito automático
(Obra no. 1 para circuito telefónico)
Automatic Circuit
(Work No. 1 for Telephone Circuit)

Roberto Jacoby, 1967

A small poster with photos of Roberto Jacoby and Beatriz, his high school girlfriend, intended for installation in public places. Project realized at Instituto Di Tella, Buenos Aires, 1967. Recreated (in English) with the voice of Dan Graham, at Orchard Gallery, New York, 2006. Published in *El deseo nace del derrumbe*. Roberto Jacoby: *Acciones, conceptos, escritos*, ed. Ana Longoni (Barcelona: Ediciones de La Central / Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora / Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia/Red Conceptualismos del Sur, 2011), 87. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

PROJECT

Small handwritten posters are pasted all over the city, carefully placed in public spaces such as subways, restrooms, columns, etc.

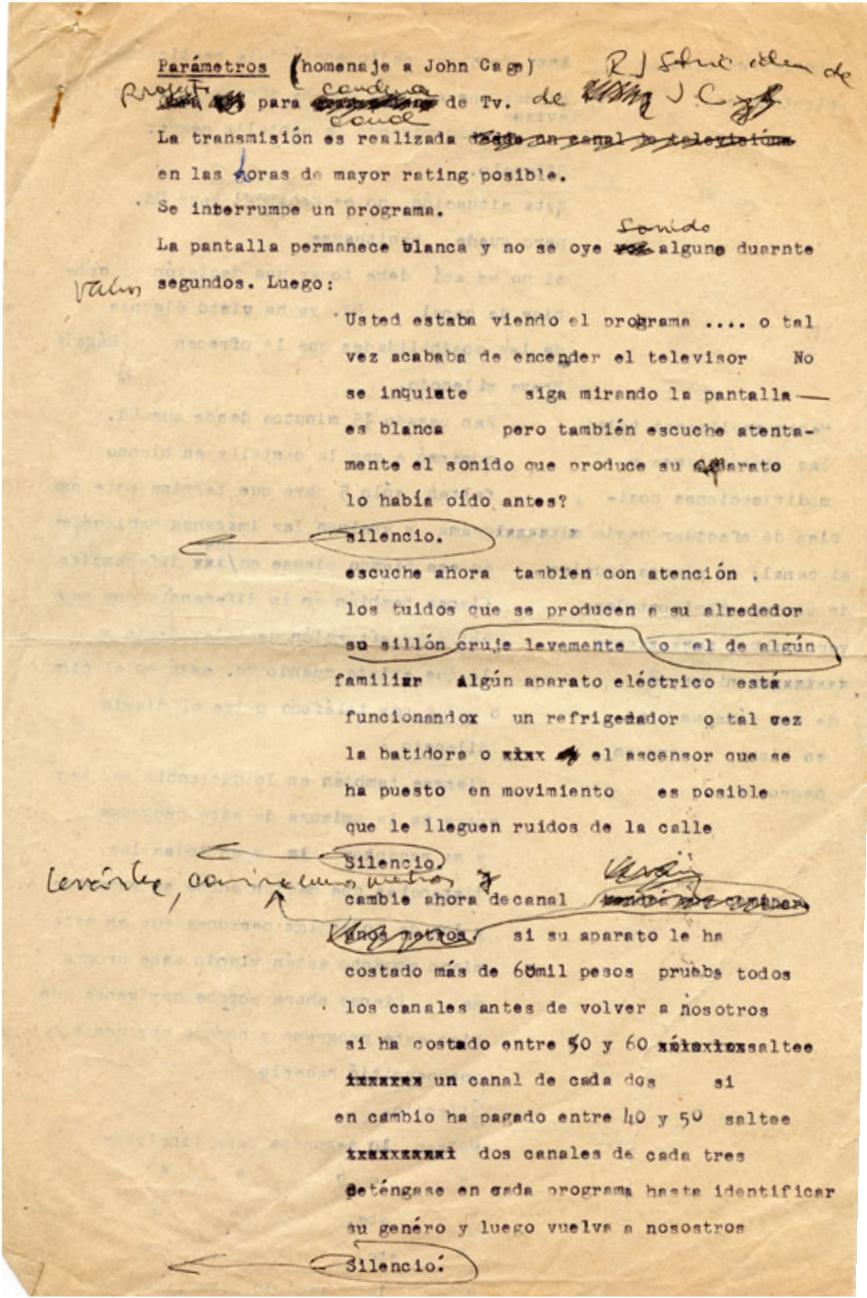
The mimeographed papers contain a telephone number and a text inviting the reader to make a call.

By calling this number, a switchboard connects to an answering machine that plays a message describing uninterruptedly what happened.

The text would read something like this: "This is a recording. You have set up an information circuit. Small posters have been pasted up all over the city and this has led to many recipients dialing in. We just want to state that we have activated the communication media. That, in addition, we have made them act to communicate a message referring to communication media. There is no purpose in this, just a circuit acting in a vacuum, just pure information. You are part of this circuit. This is also an artwork, a new kind of artwork that demands people to think in a new way. This is a recording....."

March 1967
Roberto Jacoby





Roberto Jacoby, Late Typescript of *Parámetros*, 1967. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

Parámetros (Homenaje a John Cage) Parameters (Tribute to John Cage)

Roberto Jacoby, July 1967

Typescript, written in collaboration with Julián Cairol, 1967. This project was adapted for a closed-circuit transmission conference, given at the Center for Audiovisual Experimentation of the Di Tella Institute, Buenos Aires, on July 7, 1967. Published in *El deseo nace del derrumbe. Roberto Jacoby: Acciones, conceptos, escritos*, ed. Ana Longoni (Barcelona: Ediciones de La Central / Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora / Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia/Red Conceptualismos del Sur, 2011), 83–85. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

A project for a TV network or channel by Roberto Jacoby, based on an idea by Julián Cairol.

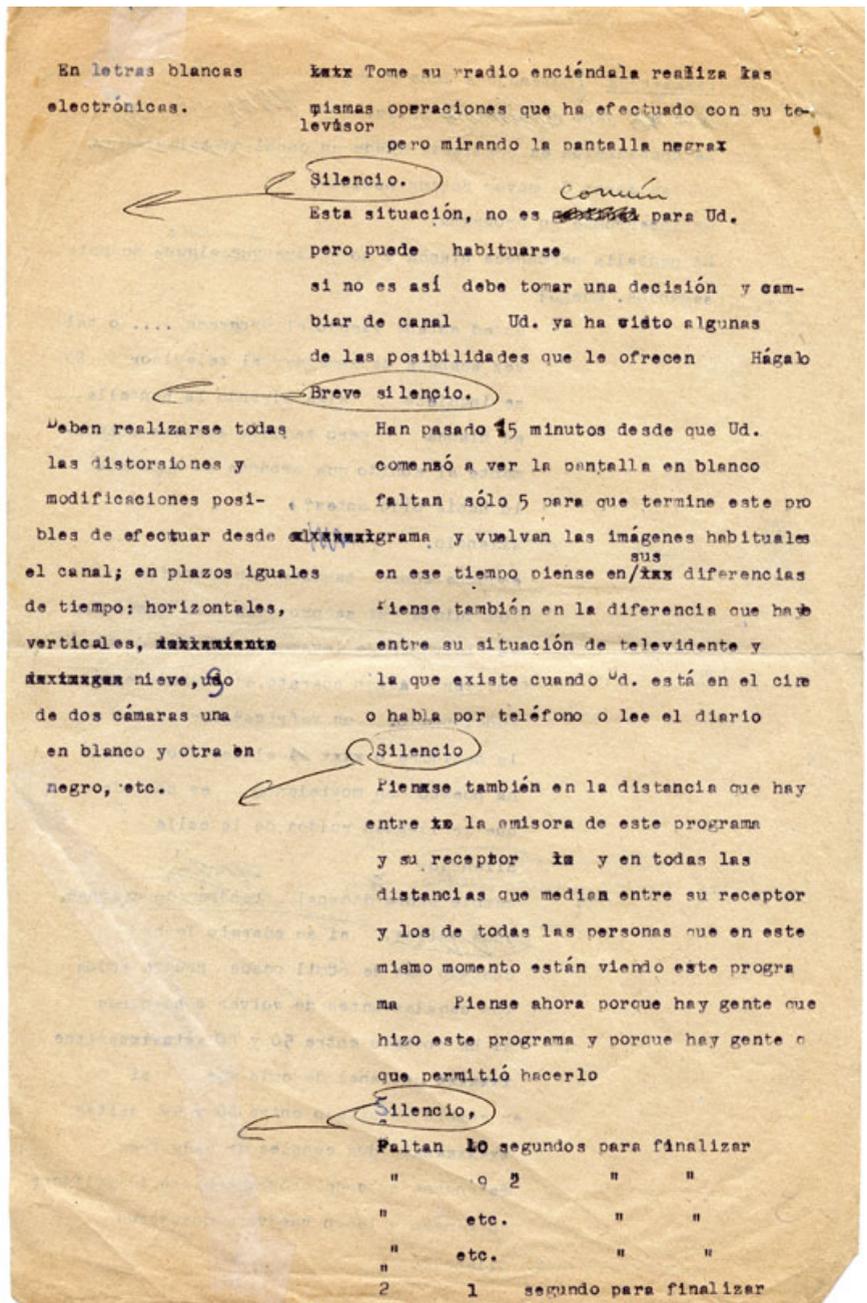
The transmission is made during hours with the biggest possible rating.
A program is interrupted.
The screen remains white, and no sound is heard for several seconds. Then: *You were watching the show ... or perhaps you just turned on the television. Do not be concerned. Continue watching the screen. It's white. But listen also intently to the sound your device makes. Have you heard it before?*

(Silence)

Listen carefully now to the noises around you. Your couch, or some family member's, creaks softly. Some electronic device is working, a fridge, perhaps the mixer, or the elevator that just started moving. Street noises might reach you.

(Silence)

Get up, walk a few steps. Now change the channel. If your device cost more than 60,000 pesos, try every channel before coming back to us. If it cost between 50 and 60, skip one of every two channels. If, instead, you paid between 40 and 50, skip two channels out of every three. Stop in each program until you identify its genre and then return to us.



Roberto Jacoby, Late Typescript of *Parámetros*, 1967. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

(Silence)

In white electronic font: *Get your radio. Turn it on. Carry out the same operations you did on your television, but looking at the black screen.*

(Silence)

This situation is not common for you, but you can get used to it. If you can't, you must make a decision and change the channel. You have already seen some of the possibilities that are offered. Do it.

(Silence)

All possible distortions and modifications should be made from the channel; in regular intervals of time: horizontal, vertical, snow, the use of two cameras (one white and the other black), etc.

It's been fifteen minutes since you started seeing a white screen. There are only five left for this program to end and for regular images to return. During that time, think about your differences. Think also about the difference there is between your nature of viewer and the one you have when you are at the movies, talking on the phone, or reading the newspaper.

(Silence)

Think also about the distance that exists between this program's transmitter and your receiver, and all the distances between your receiver and that of everyone else who is currently watching this program. Think now why there are people that made this program and why there are people who allowed them to do it.

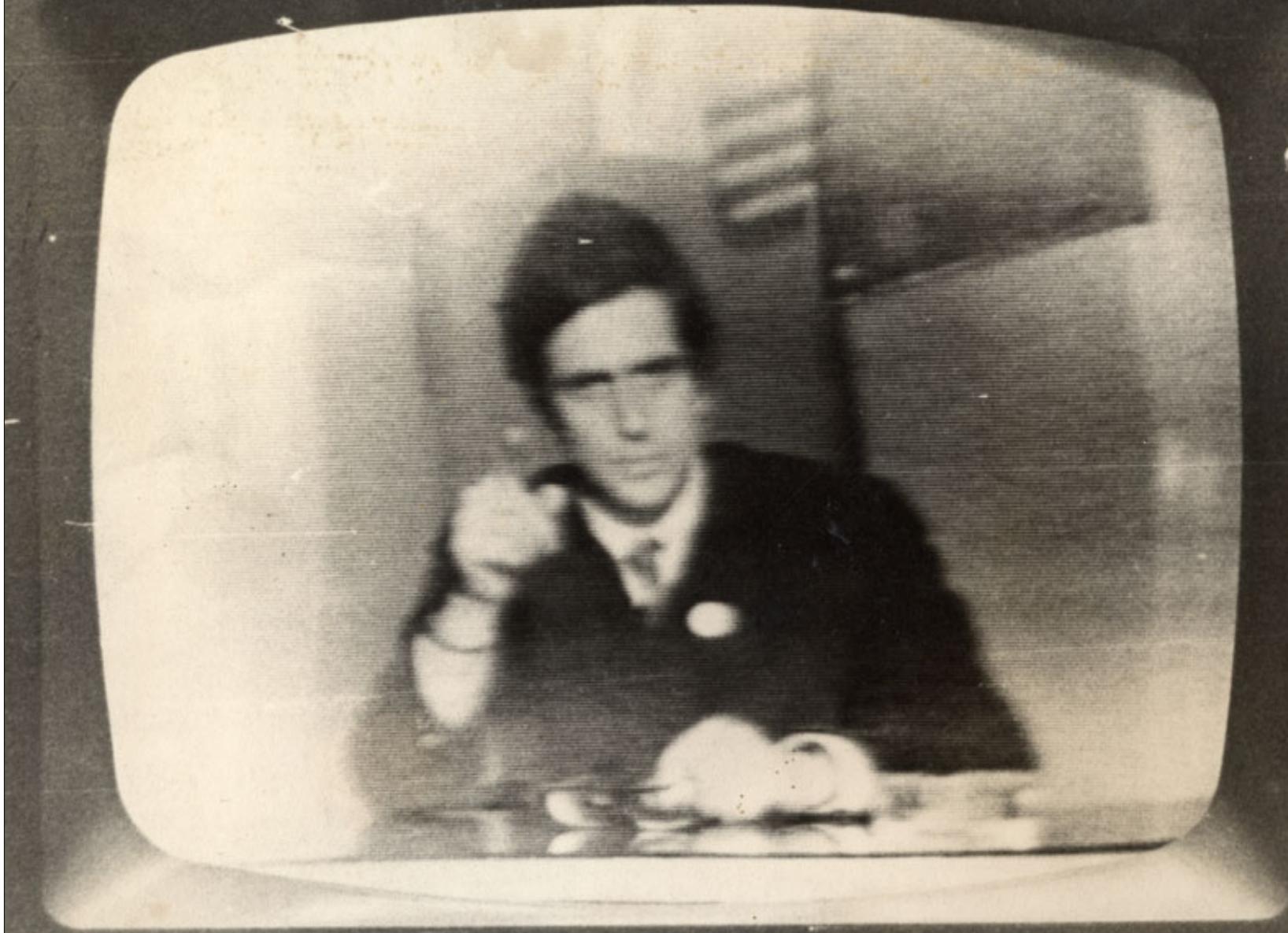
(Silence)

*There are ten seconds left until the end.
There are nine seconds left until the end.*



Installation view, *Parámetros*, 1967. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

Installation view, *Parámetros*, 1967. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



Piense porque la television usted mismo no la considera un arte porque cree que una obra literaria, un cuadro una obra de teatro es arte y porque la televisión o un diario que usted lee de mañana no es arte, y porque usted siente placer emoción totalidad cuando lee un diario

John Cage ha hecho conferencias sobre nada y sobre algo esto es una conferencia sobre John cage sobre la televisión sobre lo que usted esta viendo sobre mi que a quien no puede ver usted solo puede ver una pantalla blanca o una pantalla negra eso no le hace pensar sobre esa pantalla cuando usted puede ver toda clase de imágenes en movimiento, usted no me puede ver a mi que estoy en esta misma ciudad pero puede ver apenas este programa termine al general westmoreland hablando de que defenderá de que podrá defender la base de Ke sanh y a los guerrilleros vietcong atacando la ~~base~~ la embajada norteamericana en saigon pero no me puede ver a mi esto no le hace pensar en todo lo que puede la televisión puede ver la persecución de asesino por los techos de la ciudad en el mismo momento en que la policía los acorrala y dispara sobre ellos mientras está sentado en su casa y puede oírme mientras está sentado en su casa Pronto podrá verse a usted mismo podrá grabar y ~~reproducir~~ su propia imagen y reproducirla en su aparato cuantas veces quiera podrá grabar los programas y reproducirlos cuantas veces quiera la televisión no es mas un a máquina de pasividad

Etc.

Etc.

There's one second left until the end.

Think why you don't consider television an art form; why you believe that a literary work, a painting, or a play is art and television or a newspaper that you read in the mornings is not art.

And why you feel pleasure or excitement when you read a newspaper.

John Cage has held conferences on nothing and on something. This is a conference on John Cage, on television, on what you are watching.

On me, whom you cannot see.

You can only see a white screen or a black screen. That does not make you think about that screen when you can see all kinds of moving images. You cannot see me even though I am in this very city, but you can see, as soon as this program ends, General Westmoreland talking about how he will defend the base of Khe Sanh, and the Vietcong guerrillas attacking the North-American embassy in Saigon. But you cannot see me.

This does not make you think about all that television is capable of. You can watch the chase for murderers through the city's rooftops at the very moment in which police corner them and shoot at them, while sitting in your house.

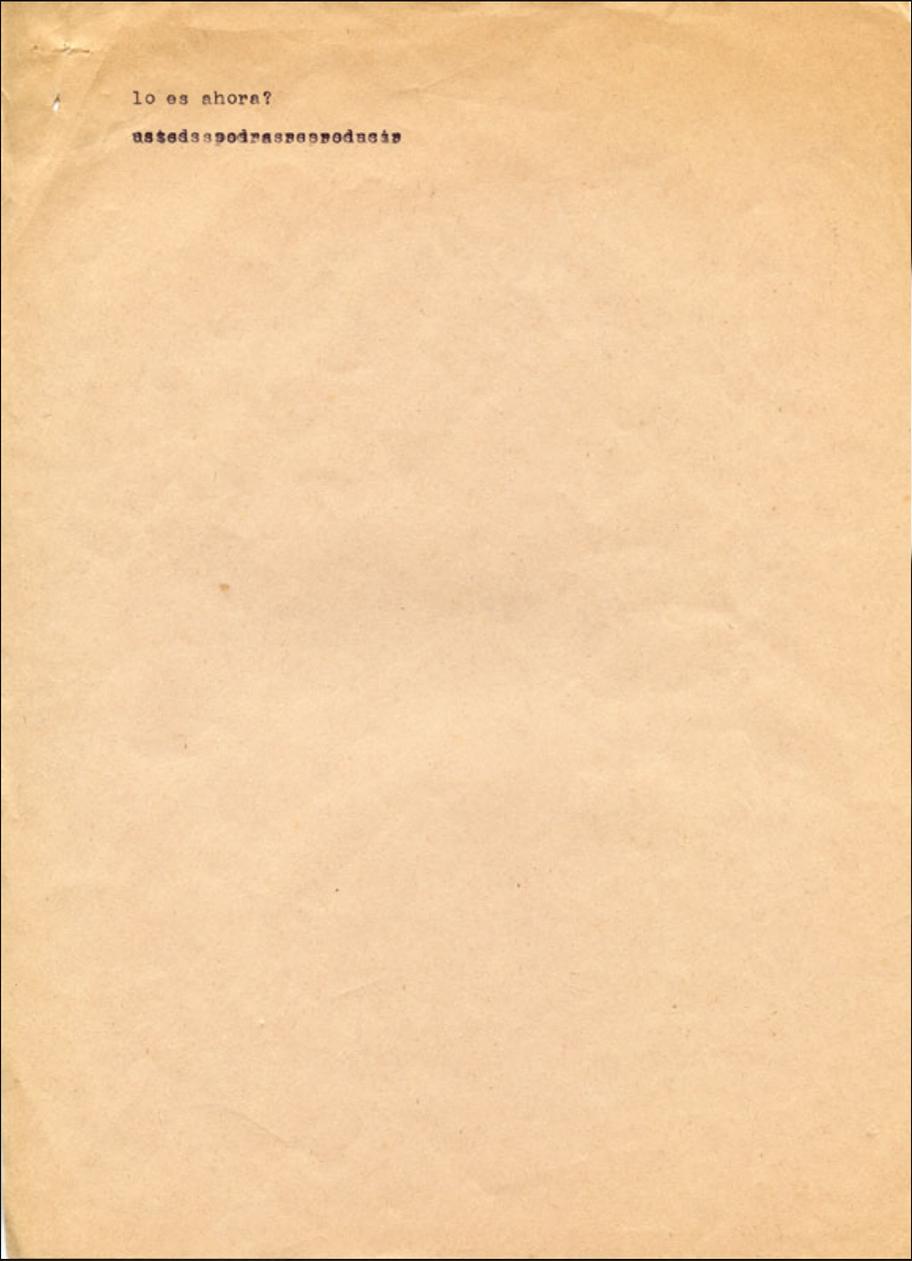
And you can hear me, while sitting in your house.

Soon you'll be able to see yourself.

You'll be able to record and play back your own image.

And play it back on your device as many times as you want.

You'll be able to record shows and play them back as many times as you want.

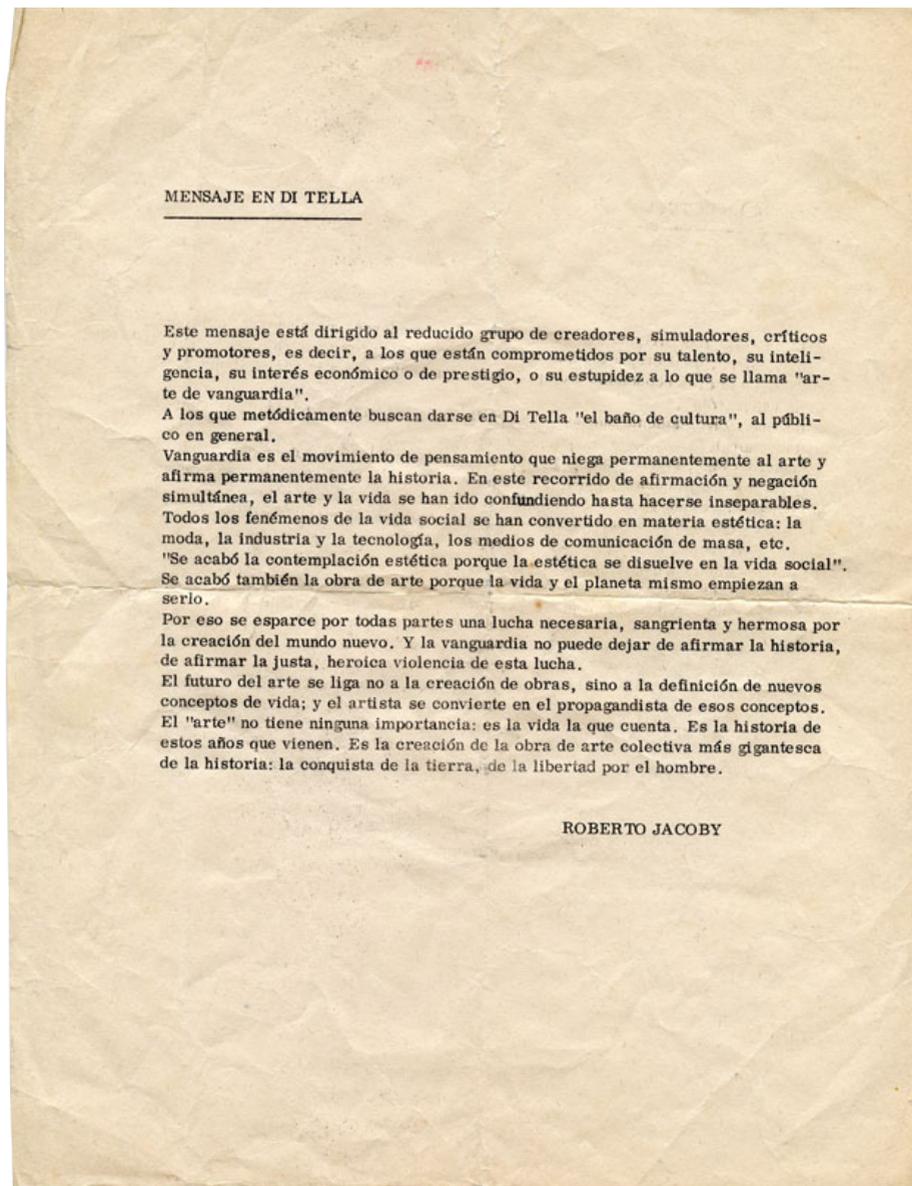


Roberto Jacoby, Late Typescript of *Parámetros*, 1967. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

Television will no longer be a machine for passivity.

Is it now?





Typescript of *Mensaje en Di Tella*, 1968. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

Mensaje en Di Tella Message at Di Tella Institute

Roberto Jacoby, 1968

Manifiesto that was part of Jacoby's installation during *Experiencias 68* at the Di Tella Institute, Buenos Aires, May 1968. The text was written in white letters on a large blackboard and handed out as a flyer. The installation included a photo of an African-American activist demonstrating against the Vietnam War and a teletypewriter broadcasting reports from the France-Press agency on the events taking place in Paris at the time. Installed on the teletypewriter, there was a small poster with a second text. Published in *El deseo nace del derrumbe. Roberto Jacoby: Acciones, conceptos, escritos*, ed. Ana Longoni (Barcelona: Ediciones de La Central / Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora / Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía/Red Conceptualismos del Sur, 2011), 117–119. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

This message is addressed to the small group of creators, simulators, critics, and promoters, that is, all those who are committed to what is called "avant-garde art" by their talent, intelligence, interest either economic or of status, or stupidity.

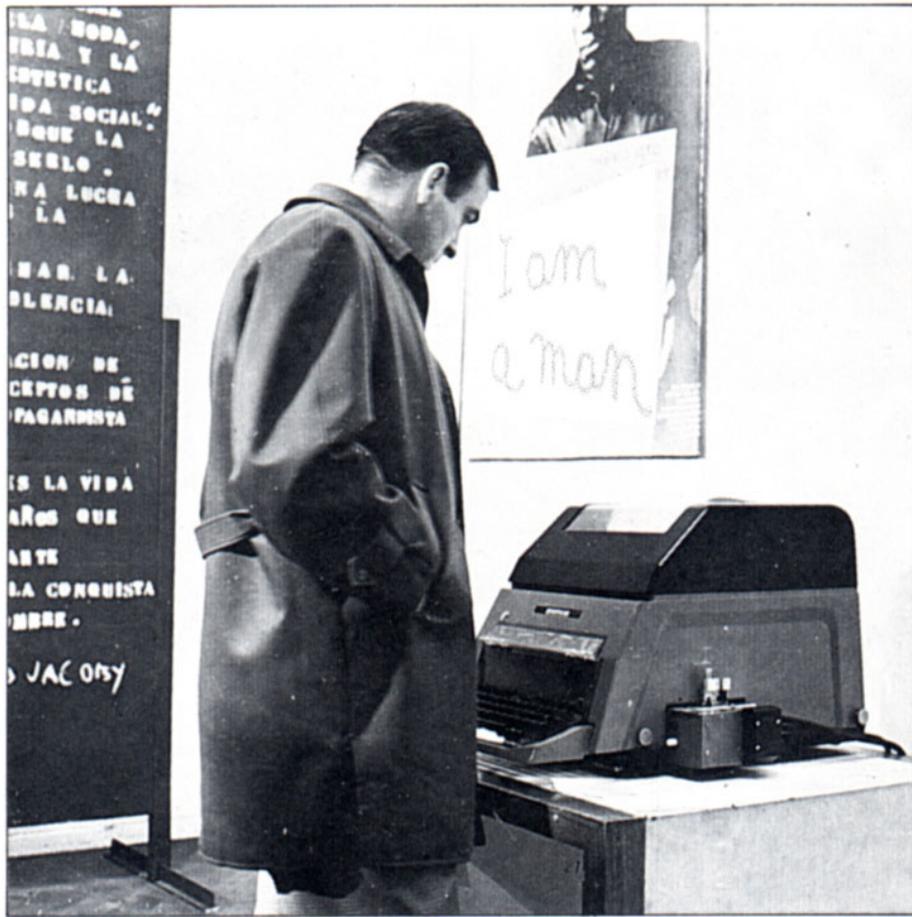
To those who methodically wish to take a "cultural bath" at the Di Tella, to the audience in general.

Avant-garde is the thought movement that permanently denies art and permanently affirms history. In this path of simultaneous affirmation and denial, art and life have been gradually conflated, to the point of becoming inseparable.

All phenomena in social life have become aesthetic matter: fashion, industry and technology, mass media, etc. "Aesthetic contemplation is over because aesthetics dissolves into social life." The artwork is also over because life and the very planet start becoming it.

That is why a necessary, bloody, and beautiful struggle for the creation of a new world is spreading everywhere. And the vanguard cannot stop affirming history, affirming the just, heroic violence of this struggle.

The future of art is linked not to the creation of artworks, but to the definition of new life concepts, and the artist becomes a promoter of said concepts.



Art is of no importance; life is what counts. It's the history of these coming years. It's the creation of the biggest collective artwork in history: the conquering of the land, of freedom, by mankind.

Roberto Jacoby

Message
1968

Installation in *Experiences 68*.





Excerpts from *Tucumán Arde*, 1968. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

Tucumán Arde. *Declaración de Buenos Aires* Tucumán Is Burning. Buenos Aires Declaration

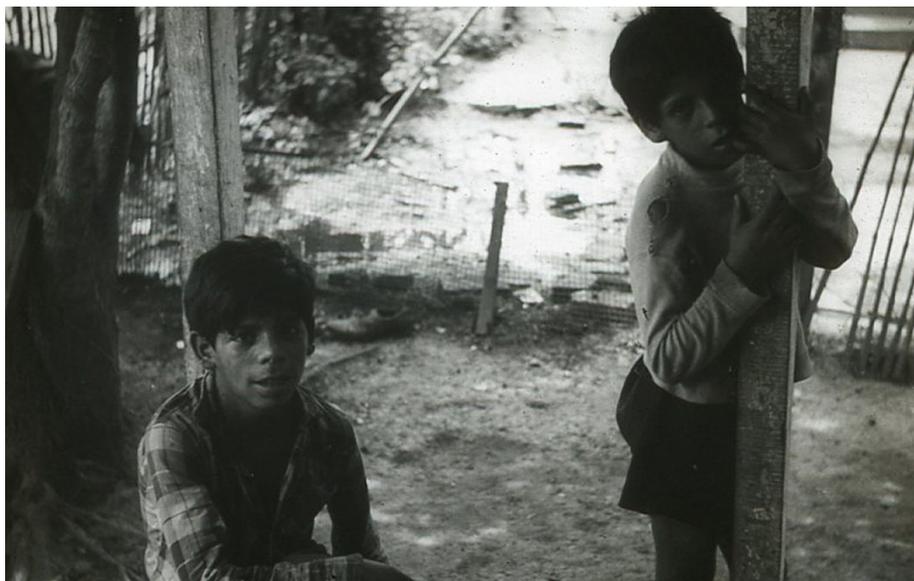
Grupo de artistas de la Comisión de Acción Artística de la CGT de los Argentinos, 1968

Grupo de artistas de la Comisión de Acción Artística de la CGT de los Argentinos. (Vanguard Artists of the Commission of Artistic Action of the General Confederation of Labor of the Argentines). Mimeographed text. Published in *El deseo nace del derrumbe*. Roberto Jacoby: *Acciones, conceptos, escritos*, ed. Ana Longoni (Barcelona: Ediciones de La Central / Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora / Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía/Red Conceptualismos del Sur, 2011), 121–123. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

The violence of the regime is cruel and clear when it is directed against the working class; it is subtler, however, when it is directed at artists and intellectuals. And, in addition to the repression that implies the censorship of books and films, the closing of exhibitions and theaters, there is another: the permanent repression. It is necessary to look inside of the form that art currently comprises: an elegant article of consumption for a certain class. Artists can make themselves illusions by creating apparently violent works: they will be received with indifference and even with pleasure; they will be bought and sold, their virulence will be just another additive to the market of buying and selling prestige value.

And why can the system appropriate and absorb works of art, even the most audacious and innovative?

It can do so because these works are inscribed in the cultural frame of a society in which the only messages that get to the people are those that cement their oppression (principally by radio, television, newspapers, and magazines). It can do so because artists are isolated from the struggle and from the real problems of the revolution in our country, and their works still don't say what needs to be said, they don't find the appropriate means to do so, and they don't address themselves to those who need their messages. How will we artists then stop being servants of

Excerpts from *Tucumán Arde*, 1968. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

the bourgeoisie? Through contact and participation alongside the most enlightened and combative activists, putting our creative militancy and our militant creation at the service of the organization of the people for the struggle.

We artists will have to contribute to the creation of a true network of underground information and communication that opposes the broadcast network of the system.

In this process, we will discover and decide upon the most efficient means: the clandestine film, billboards and flyers, pamphlets, records and recorded tapes, songs and slogans, the theater of agitation, new forms of action and propaganda.

These will be the works that the regime will find difficult to repress because they will merge with the people. These will be the beautiful and useful works. They will show the true enemy, they will inspire the people with hatred and energy for the struggle.

We artists will no longer feel that our skills serve our enemies. It will be said that what we propose is not art. But what is art?

Those elitist forms of pure experimental art?

Those creations that are supposed to be corrosive, but that, in reality, satisfy the bourgeois that consume them?

Is art perhaps the words in their library books? Dramatic actions and scenes on film in their cinemas and theaters? Images in paintings in art galleries? All quiet, all in order, in a bourgeois, conformist system. All useless.

We want to restore words, dramatic actions, and images to the places where they can fulfill a revolutionary role, where they are useful, where they can be converted into “weapons for the struggle.”

Art is all that mobilizes and agitates. Art radically denies this way of life and says: let’s do something to change it.

This exhibition, the actions against the cultural institutions of the ruling classes that preceded it, and the works that other artists are taking in the same direction are a starting point.



Poster by Juan Pablo Renzi, *Tucumán Arde*, 1968. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



Diagram, *Tucumán Arde*

Roberto Jacoby and Pablo Suárez, 1968

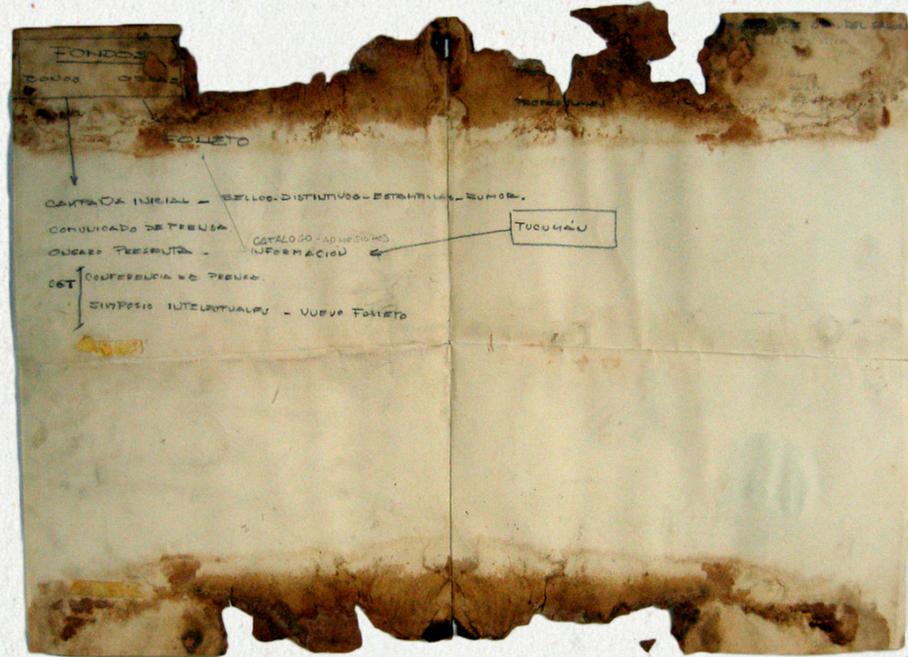
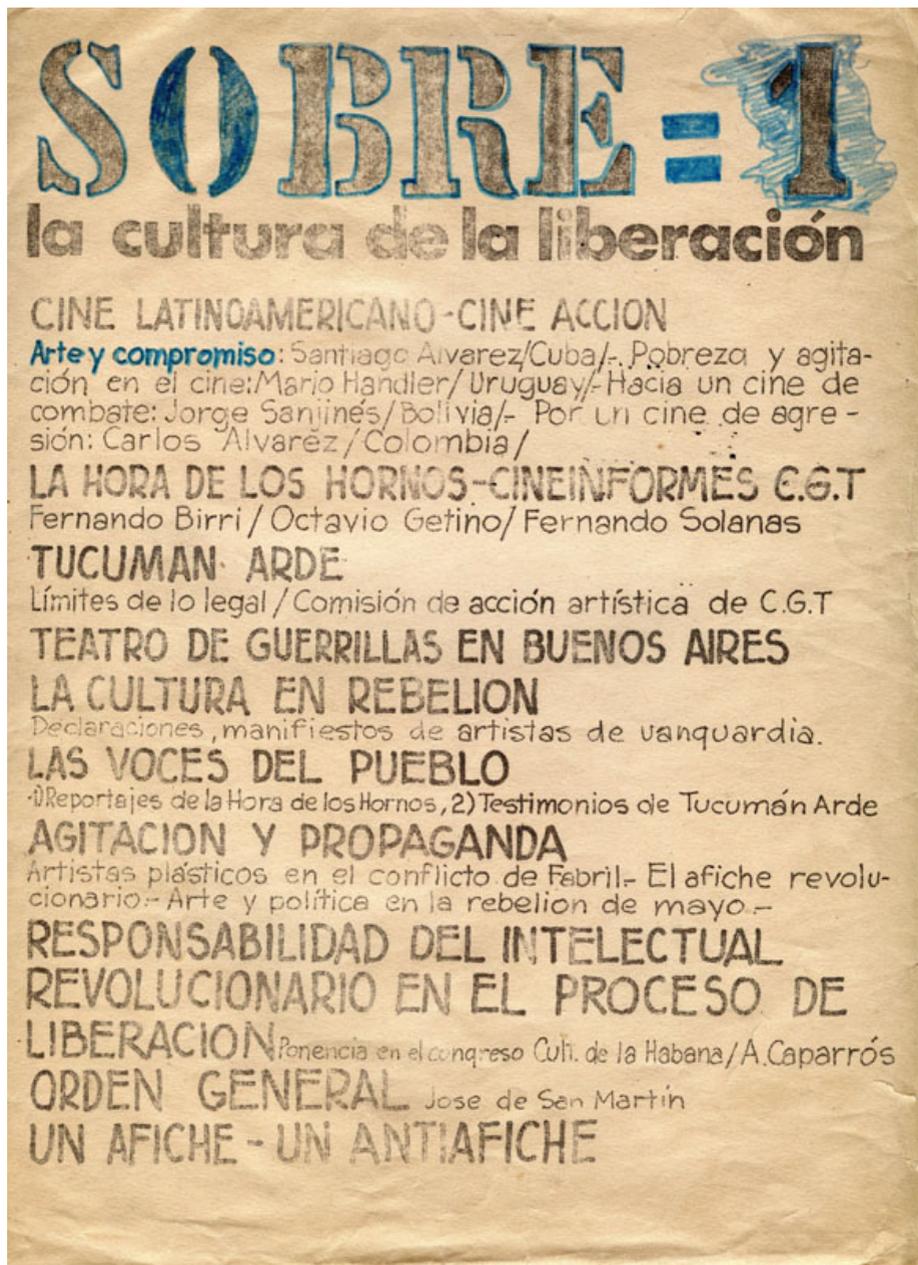


Diagram from Roberto Jacoby and Pablo Suárez, *Tucumán Arde*, 1968.
Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.





Recto of *SOBRE*, 1969. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

La nueva vanguardia cultural argentina The New Culture Avant-Garde in Argentina

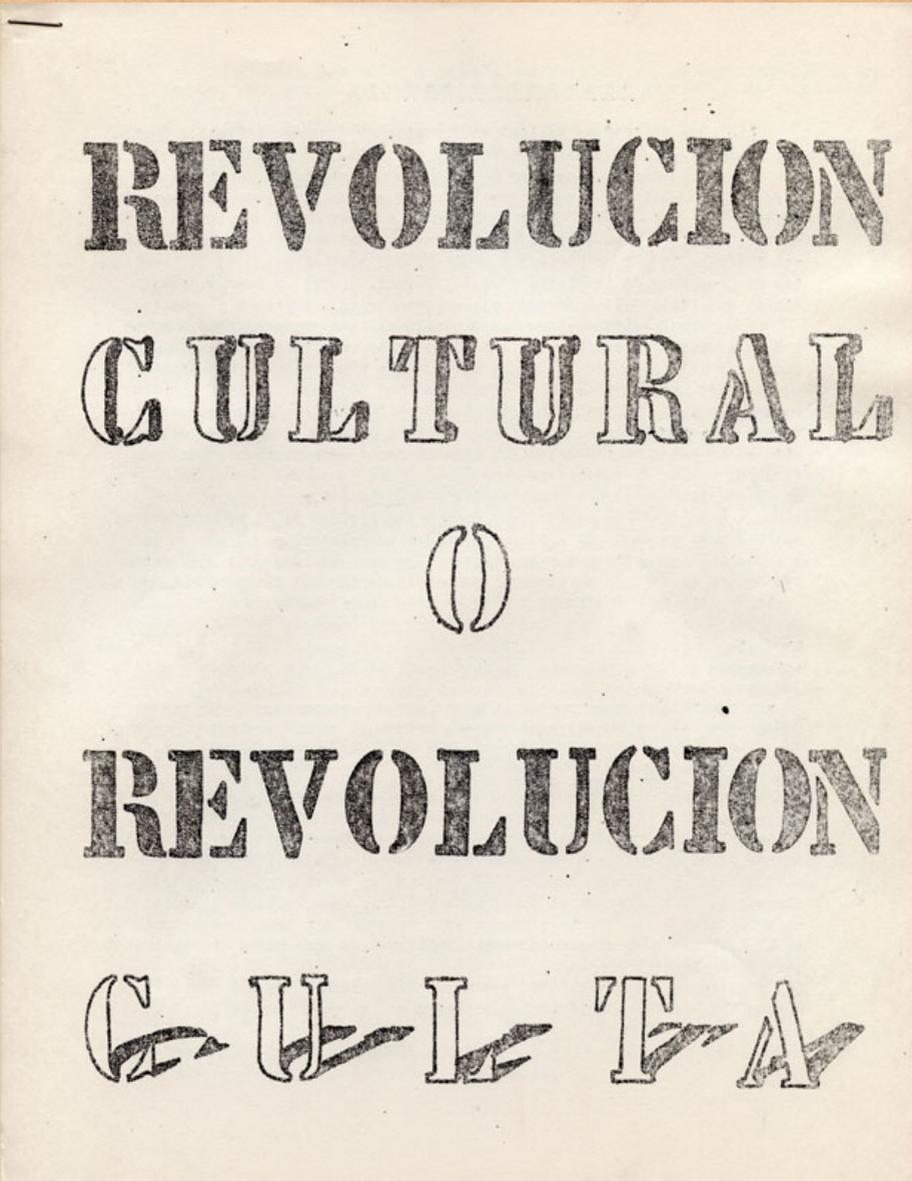
1969

Statement included in the magazine *SOBRE*, no. 1, which was released in May 1969. Published in *El deseo nace del derrumbe*. Roberto Jacoby: *Acciones, conceptos, escritos*, ed. Ana Longoni (Barcelona: Ediciones de La Central / Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora / Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia/Red Conceptualismos del Sur, 2011), 125. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

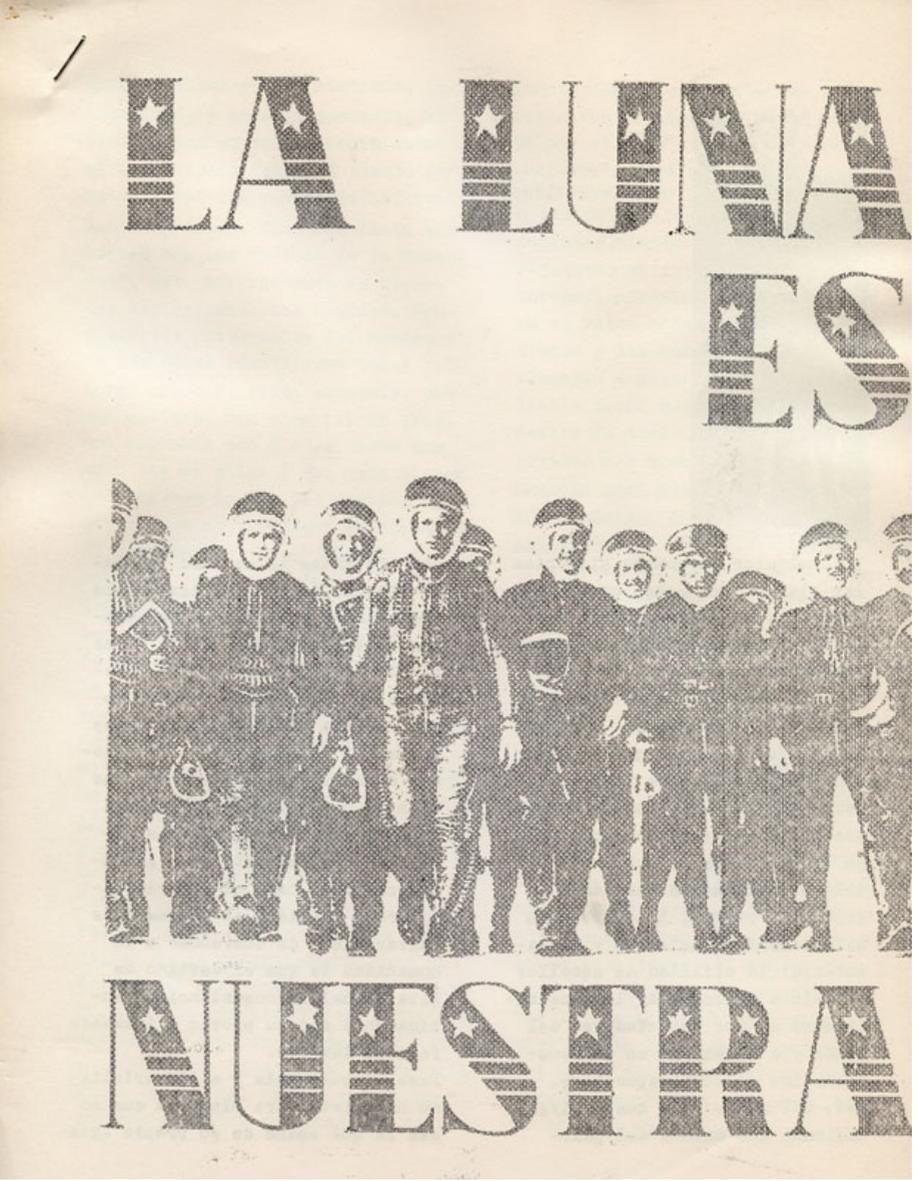
During 1968, an important group of avant-garde artists (linked to what became known as the “Di Tella” group), moved by their own direct work experience — avant-garde art— started to become aware of the decrepitude and uselessness of the prevailing cultural approaches, even their own, which until then they had perceived as revulsive and dissolving. The oligarchic-imperialist dictatorship has increased its oppressive measures; thus, censorship has become obvious and crude, both enforced by the police as well as by “cultural” institutions (museums, prize committees, etc.). We have shattered our own illusions of producing truly aggressive cultural events within the bourgeois cultural apparatus.

This opens a process that demands a complete restatement of the purpose and conduct of the artist and the intellectual, the search for new institutional frameworks, for new audiences, the design of new media and messages. We know that similar manifestations are beginning to emerge in our country and abroad and, therefore, we wish to disseminate our actions among artists of all countries and among revolutionary parties and movements by getting in touch with those who act in the same direction.

Comité Coordinador de la Imaginación Revolucionaria
(Coordinating Committee of the Revolutionary Imagination)



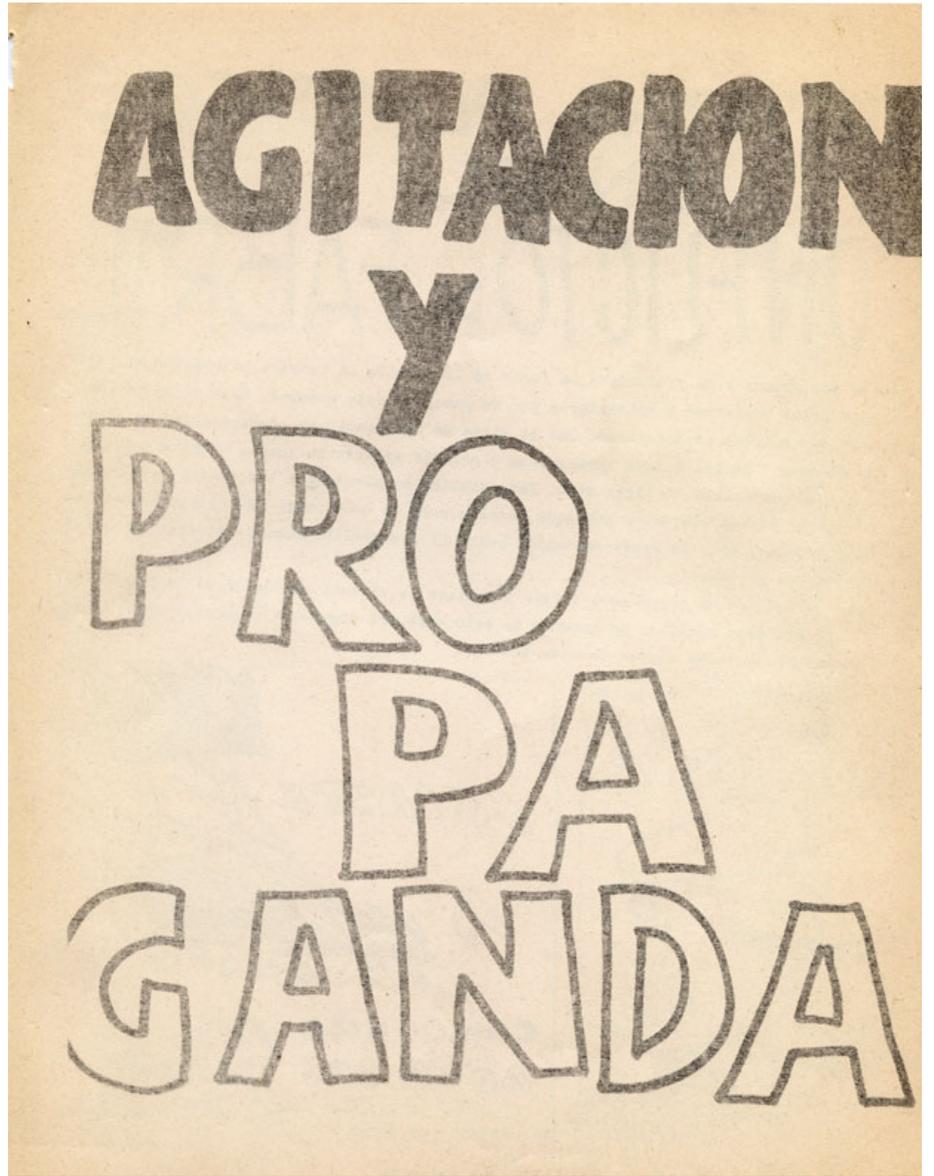
Tucumán Arde, ephemera inside SOBRE, 1968. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



Tucumán Arde, ephemera inside SOBRE, 1968. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



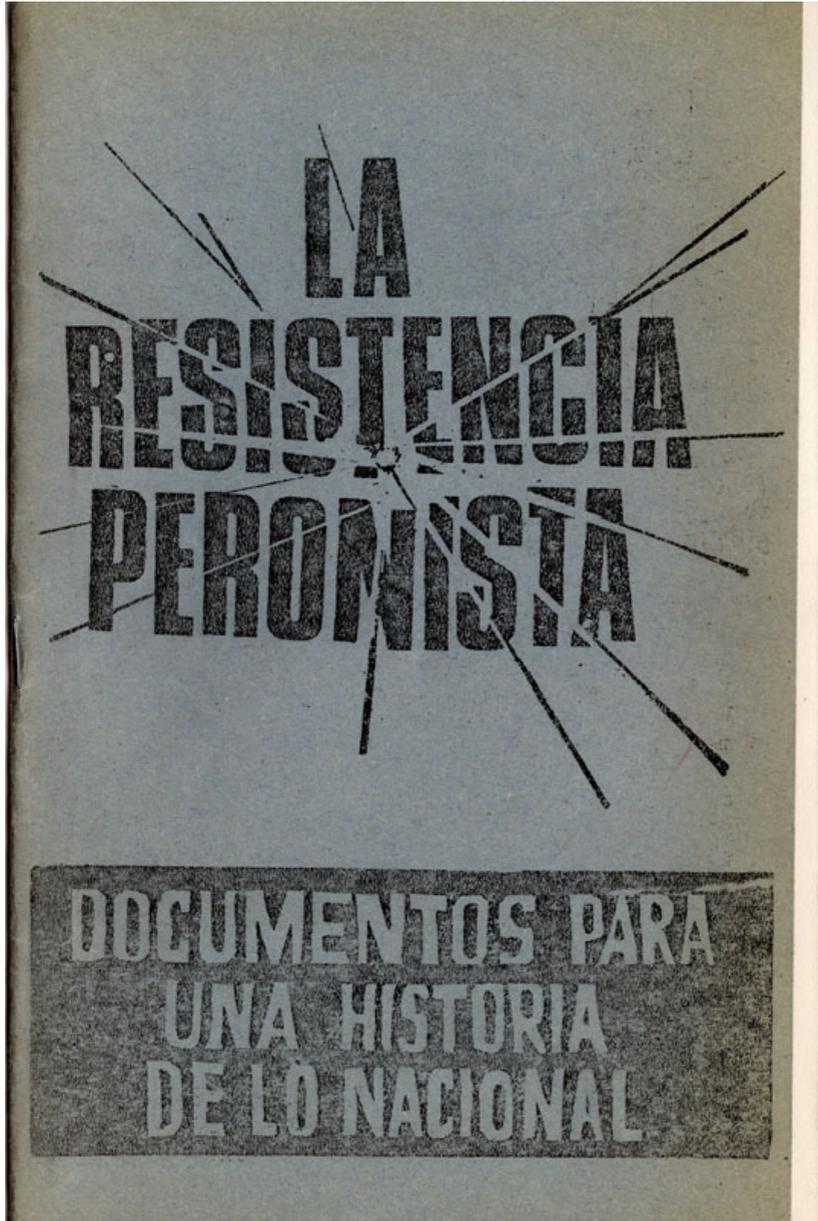
Tucumán Arde, ephemera inside *SOBRE*, 1968. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



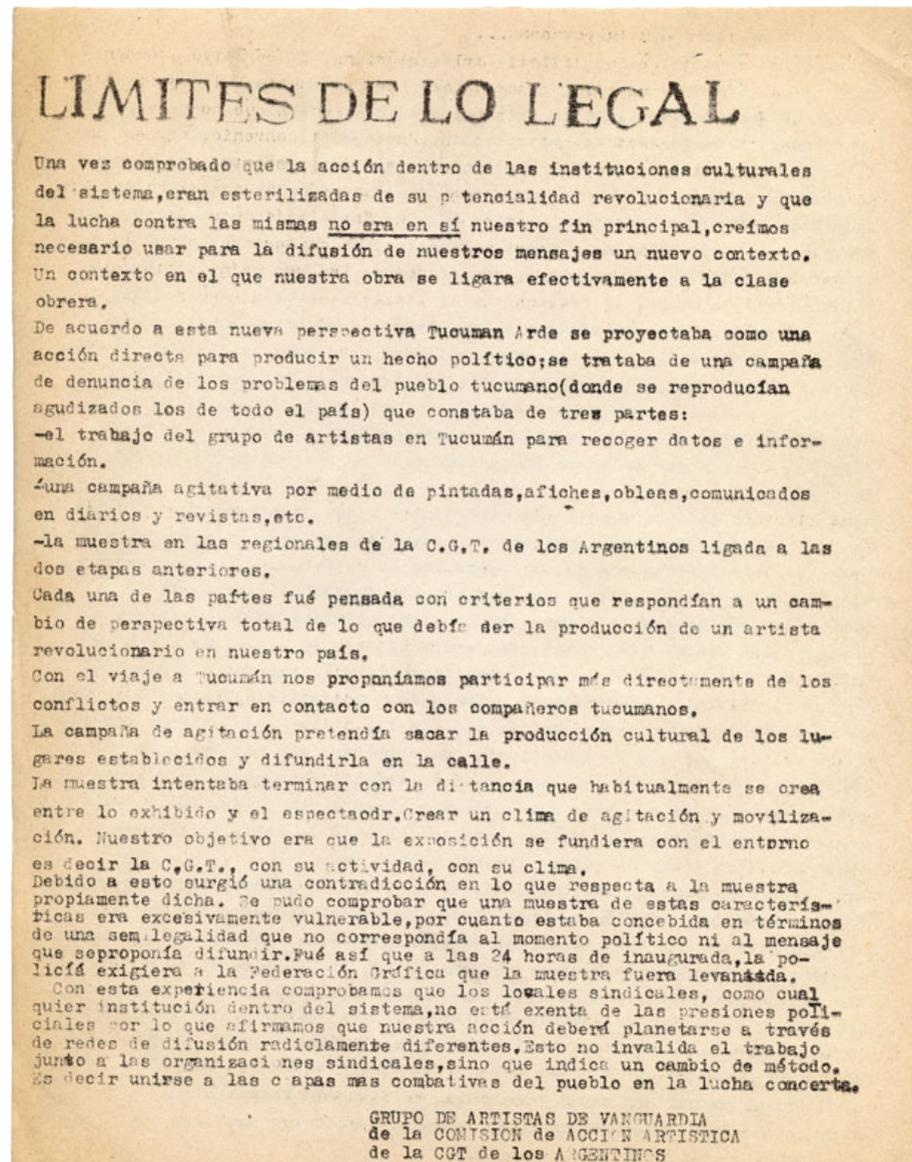
Tucumán Arde, ephemera inside *SOBRE*, 1968. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



Tucumán Arde, ephemera inside *SOBRE*, 1968. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



Tucumán Arde, ephemera inside *SOBRE*, 1968. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



Roberto Jacoby, typescript of *Limites de lo legal*, 1969. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

Limites de lo legal Limits of Legality

Grupo de Artistas de Vanguardia de la Comisión de Acción Artística de la CGT de los Argentinos, 1969

Text signed by the Grupo de Artistas de Vanguardia de la Comisión de Acción Artística de la CGT de los Argentinos, included in the magazine *SOBRE*, no. 1, May 1969. Published in *El deseo nace del derrumbe*. Roberto Jacoby: *Acciones, conceptos, escritos*, ed. Ana Longoni (Barcelona: Ediciones de La Central / Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora / Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía/Red Conceptualismos del Sur, 2011), 127–128. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

Once it had been proved that the actions within the cultural institutions of the system were deprived of their revolutionary potential and that the struggle against them was not in itself our main goal, we found that we needed to create a new framework for the dissemination of our messages: a context in which our work would be effectively linked to the working class.

According to this new perspective, *Tucumán Arde* (Tucumán is burning) was intended as a direct action to produce a political event; it was a protest campaign to expose the situation of the people of Tucumán (which represented that of the whole country) consisting of three phases:

- A research phase in which a group of artists would gather data and information about the living and working conditions in Tucumán.
- An agitative campaign by means of graffiti, billboards, banners, communiqués in newspapers and magazines, etc.
- An exhibition in the regional branches of the CGT de los Argentinos, linked to the two previous phases.

Each of these stages was conceived considering a total change of perspective of what the production of a revolutionary artist in our country should be.

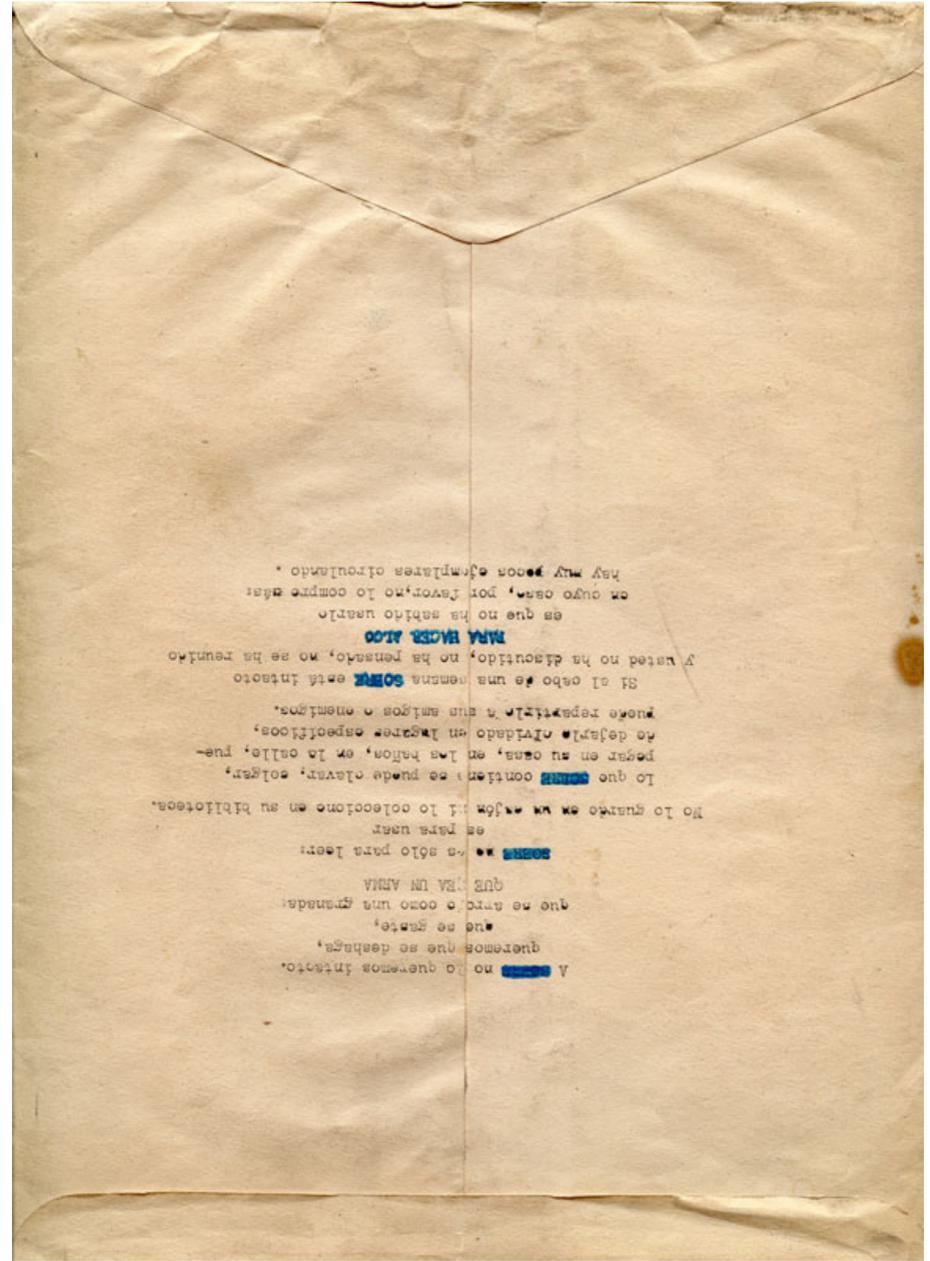
By traveling to Tucumán, we intended to be more directly involved in the conflicts and to get in touch with the Tucumán comrades. The agitation campaign was intended to bring cultural production out of the established places and spread it in the street. The exhibition tried to put an end to the usual distance between

what is exhibited and the spectator, to create a climate of agitation and mobilization. Our objective was to make the exhibition merge with the environment—that is, the CGT, with its activity, with its climate. Because of this, a contradiction arose in terms of the exhibition itself. It became clear that such an exhibition was excessively vulnerable, since it was conceived in terms of a semilegal nature that failed to match the political moment and the message it was intended to disseminate. Thus, twenty-four hours after its inauguration, the police demanded the exhibition be withdrawn from the Graphic Federation.

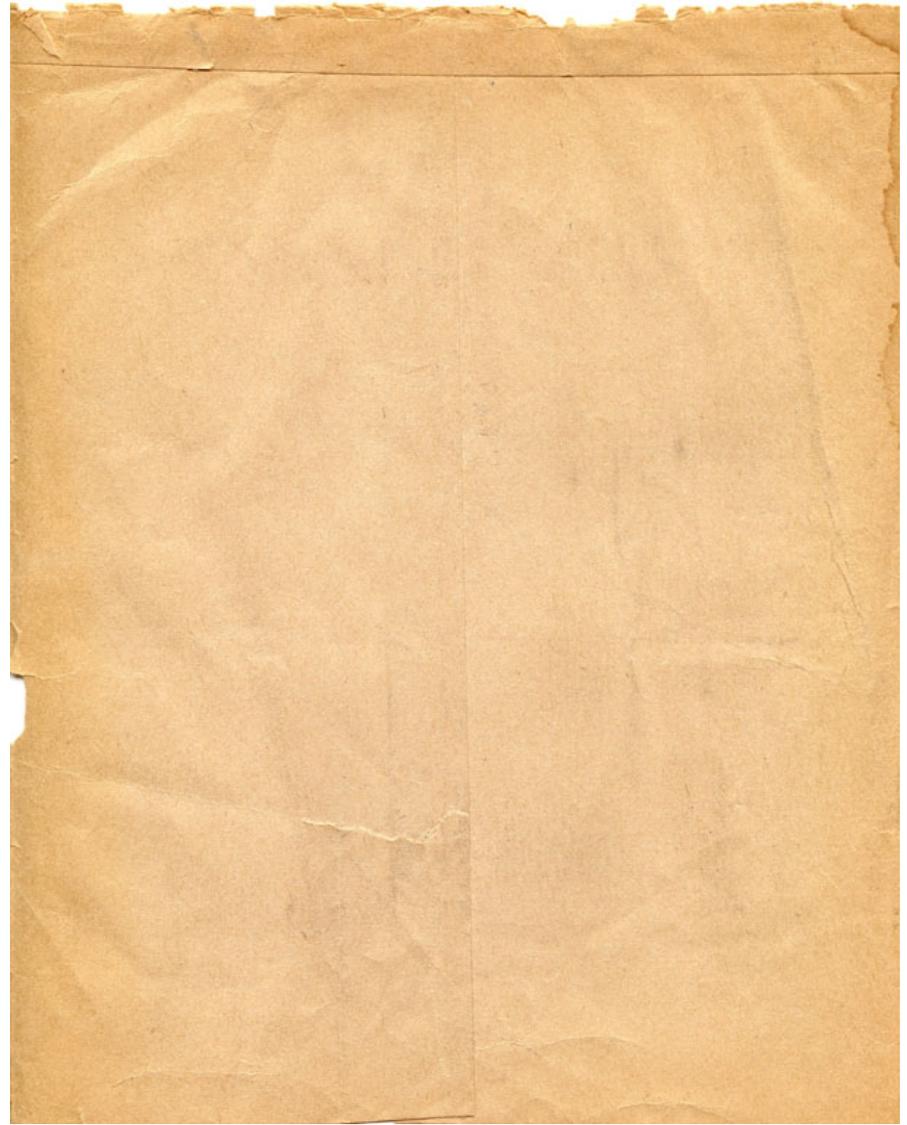
Through this experience, we verified that the union premises—like any institution within the system—are not immune to police pressures; therefore, we state that our actions should be planned through radically different networks. This does not preclude working alongside trade union organizations, but rather indicates a change of method—that is to say, to join the most combative sectors in their concrete struggle.

So many manifestos! The one that follows has a philosophical and expected vein, although the immoderation remains. The hatred against “art” is obvious: I was fed up with art.

Something similar happens to me now. I feel that art is overstated, abducted. Fortunately, the same does not happen to me with artists, in whom I find the best part of the species, despite or perhaps because of their shameless egos. Perhaps it is because artists represent in their useless, strange, personal becoming, the epitome of the “individual” who struggles to find a place in the world, to emerge not as herd, mass, army, or cogs, not as serial products of the social machinery, but as random entities, capable of mutating and spreading their mutation.



Verso of *SOBRE*, 1969. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



Recto and verso of *SOBRE*, no. 2, 1969. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

1970 — 1979

132 1970s
by Clara von Turkovich

139 *Córdoba*
1972–1979

149 *Disciplina: política del cuerpo*
Discipline: Body Politics
Roberto Jacoby, 1975–1985

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Capital, Domestication, Body, Force, and Power
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Roberto Jacoby, 1975–1985

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Easy Kinetics for Difficult Times
Roberto Jacoby, Geometric Generatives Series Drawings, 1979

1970s

Following the interruption and forced termination of by Clara von Turkovich *Tucumán Arde* (Tucumán is burning) at the end of 1968, signaling its revolutionary impotence and a defeat of the “new aesthetic,” Roberto Jacoby sought out alternative political action. In 1969, Jacoby joined a collective of Marxist sociologists organized under the name Centro de Investigaciones en Ciencias Sociales (CICSO).¹ Over the next few years, Jacoby conducted research on the civil uprising popularly known as the “Cordobazo,” carried out by a coalition of students and workers against the military dictatorship of General Juan Carlos Onganía. This research culminated in a 1973 publication, titled *Lucha de Calles, Lucha de Clases* (Street conflict, class conflict).² The “Cordobazo” of 1969 marks the beginning of a period of escalating political conflict and violence that spilled onto the streets in the 1970s. During the early years of the new decade, Jacoby also contributed theater criticism to the culture section of the newspaper *La Opinión*, as well as to the periodical *Nuevo Hombre*. *Nuevo Hombre* went underground after the assassination of its editor, Silvio Frondizi, by parapolice forces in 1974. Giving opinions publicly at a time when culture and speech were highly regulated was dangerous. In an increasingly turbulent and violent political landscape, Roberto Jacoby’s practice veered towards writing and sociological research.

This shift may at first seem like a departure/disjointed intermission in Jacoby’s artistic trajectory, but writing has always been an integral component of his work, taking on paradoxical tones and registers: manifesto, essay, journalism, research, criticism, novel, poetry, and lyrics. Jacoby’s pivot to writing and sociology in the 1970s was both a method of survival and resistance to the world he was living in. The chaos of battling ideologies during the so-called “Dirty War” led to a mass exodus of artists and intellectuals.³ Jacoby, however, decided to remain in the country.

The installation of the Videla regime in 1976 abruptly put an end to the promise of the socialist project that had been developing in Argentina, like in much of Latin America, over the past half century. The popular revolution, which once seemed to be part of the inevitable course of history, was a dream crushed and replaced by fascism. The military dictatorship (1976–1983) oversaw both a brutal campaign against revolutionary forces and a process of

1. CICSO was founded in 1966 by a group of sociology professors who were discharged from their positions at the National University of Buenos Aires following the Onganía regime’s violation of university autonomy (established 1918) and the aftermath of “La Noche de los Bastones Largos” (Night of the long police batons).

2. *Lucha de Calles, Lucha de Clases* was co-authored by Beba Balvé, Juan Carlos Marín, Miguel Murmis, Tomás J. Bar, Roberto Jacoby, Beatriz Balvé, and Lidia Aufgang.

3. The term “Dirty War” was coined by the military dictatorship.

neoliberalization. In the 1960s, Jacoby's question had been how to ignite revolution, how to seize power. In the 1970s, his question was: why had these revolutions failed?

Over the span of ten years, from 1975 to 1985, Jacoby wrote a series of texts that would evolve into a book titled *El asalto al cielo* (The assault on heaven), published in 2014. In these texts, Jacoby uses Marxist-Leninist revolutionary theory and Clausewitz's theory of war to trace a genealogy from the Paris Commune of 1871 to the October Revolution of 1917.⁴ In broad terms, *El asalto al cielo* offers a way of understanding the history and theory of proletarian revolutions. Yet its reflections on the historical context within which it was written cannot be overlooked. As the dictatorship created a heightened climate of fear, paranoia, torture, and enforced disappearances, Jacoby's turn towards sociopolitical theory might further be read as an effort to devise strategies of resistance against bodily subjugation during a period of state terrorism.

El asalto al cielo is also an investigation into the mechanisms through which capitalism and state power manipulate and dominate the body to meet their ends. Building on Marx, who in his critique of political economy ascribes a central role to the body as a site of forces and needs, Jacoby draws from thinkers such as Michel Foucault and Elias Canetti to further probe the subject of the body.⁵ In the chapter, "Disciplina; política del cuerpo" (Discipline: Body politics), Jacoby describes how the disciplining of the body also extends to moments of relaxation and rest, attitudes of social regard and recognition, and even tones and rhythms of voice. For Jacoby, the state's subjugation of the body not only involves processes of labor and punishment, it also extends further, aiming to corrupt our modes of sociability. In confronting the dynamics of power that politically inscribe the body with practices of containment and control, Jacoby instead repositions the body as an agent for political engagement. If the body is thus understood as a site where power is contested and negotiated, taking pleasure in one's own body becomes a radical act of resistance.

The notion of sociability, and alternative forms of sociability, has been an enduring theme in Roberto Jacoby's work.⁶ During Videla's military regime, all forms of socializa-

4. Roberto Jacoby's investigations were guided at a distance by sociologist Juan Carlos Marin, founding member of CICSO, who was exiled in Mexico at the time.

5. Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, published in 1975, was censored in Argentina under the Videla regime but circulated secretly amongst students and intellectuals.

6. Jacoby's 1980 unrealized project, *Internus*, aimed to implement an exchange of photocopied texts and written materials amongst interested intellectuals. In the brief of this project, Jacoby describes a method of circulation that would take on a "snowball" effect, foreshadowing the structure of his later social network website *Bola de Nieve*, which came to fruition in the 1990s.

tion, including speech, education, culture, and gatherings, were highly regulated aspects of life, but the underground scene in Argentina remained alive and active, nonetheless. Even during the most violently suppressive years of the dictatorship, particularly 1977 and 1978, alternative spaces for social encounters and play were carved out by bands such as Los Redonditos de Ricota and clandestine theater pieces such as *El Plauto*. It is within this suspension/lapse between possible repression and expression that Jacoby formulates a body politic that seeks to liberate and engage the body, choosing pleasure over fear.

At the same time that Roberto Jacoby was writing *El asalto al cielo*, in 1981, he also began writing lyrics for the rock band Virus. Their transgressive sound and message, always playful and often ironic, was unabashedly political.⁷ Virus was part of the new-wave movement and an important influence in the musical revival that overtook Argentina with the end of the dictatorship and the restoration of democracy in 1983. Elias Canetti's explorations into the dynamics between crowds and power strongly influenced Jacoby's thinking during this period, both in regards to *El asalto al cielo* as well as in his participation in Virus. Canetti puts forward an idea of masses that revolves around shared desire, experience, and identity. To lose yourself in the energy and density of a crowd, Canetti suggests, is to circumvent the fear of touch—touch of the other—which dictates much of human behavior.

In an examination of various kinds of mass gatherings, Canetti likens the peculiar experience of a traditional musical concert to a religious ceremony, in which listeners are expected to remain silent and motionless as though they managed to not hear anything. The sphere of stillness from which the concert originally derives seeks to discipline the crowd, prohibiting any outward expressions of emotion, enjoyment, or even rhythmic reactions. The absurdity of this arrangement is not lost on Canetti or Jacoby. Virus was interested in the physicality of rock and pop music. Their music was meant to make people move, to liberate the body. They refused to hold concerts in venues with seating, bouncers, or in any kind of disciplining space that could hinder the experience of gathering and bodily expression. For Jacoby, his collaboration with Virus was a rare respite of joy, humor, and release within the trauma and terror of the dictatorship.

The 1970s was a period of isolation and introspection in Jacoby's body of work, punctuated by the lacerations of a complex social and political atmosphere. Over more

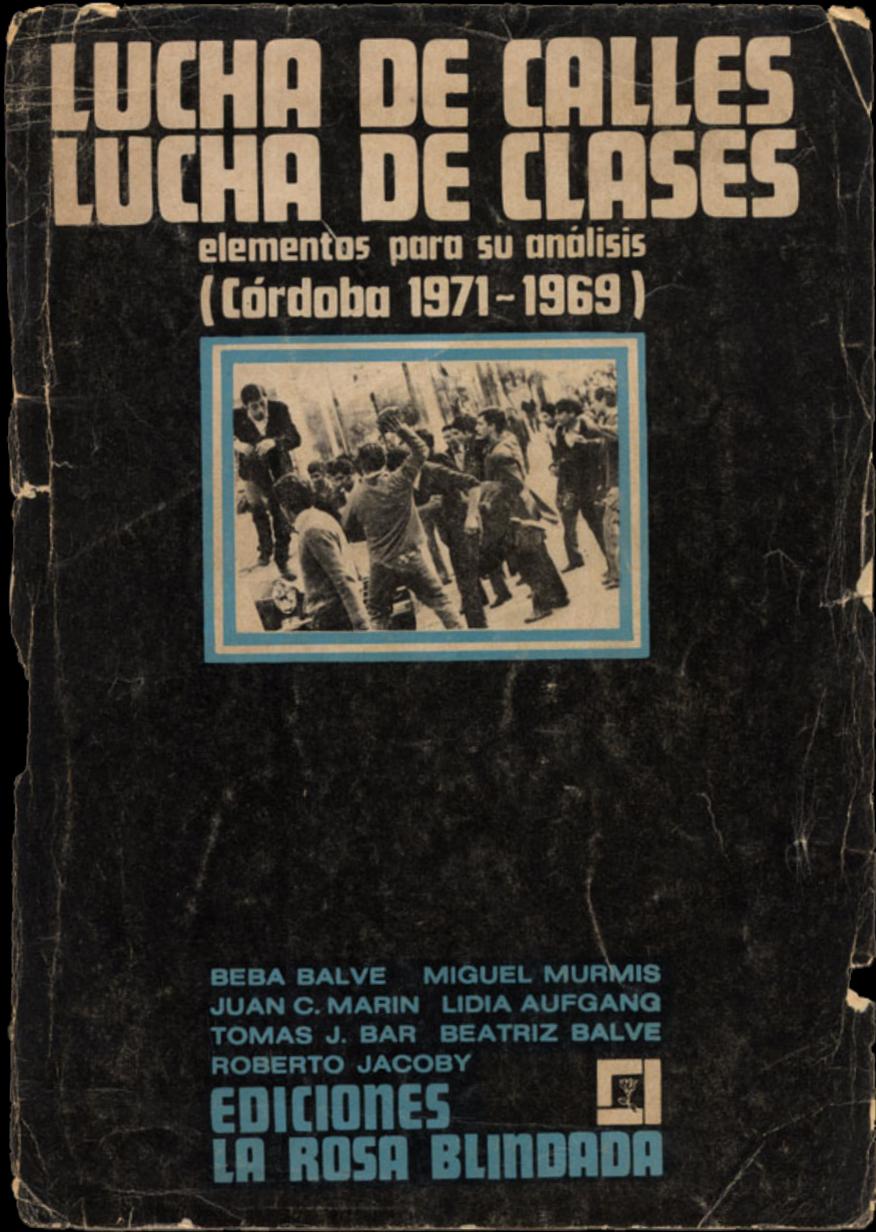
7. Their sense of humor was vital even though three members of Virus, Federico Moura and two of his brothers, had themselves been kidnaped by parapolice forces during the dictatorship. Another of their brothers and his wife suffered enforced disappearances and were never seen again. Later, the Moura brothers were reintroduced to their niece.

than a decade, Jacoby immersed himself in dense political theory and philosophy, and sustained an intensive writing practice with significant repercussions on the rest of his oeuvre. What emerges in Jacoby's research and writing during this period is a development of a particular analysis of body politics that informs much of his later practice and prefaces one of his most celebrated pieces of writing: "Estrategias de Alegría" (Strategies of joy). Strategies of joy are based on seizing pleasure, even when seemingly impossible. Digested theory turns into action and processed trauma allows for joy.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Shortly after the completion of *El asalto al cielo*, Jacoby went on to write texts such as "Vivir en un campo de concentración" (Living in a concentration camp) and "Mira cómo tiemblo!" (Look how I tremble!), which deal with similar considerations surrounding the subjugation of the body, methods of power and control, and the terrorism of Videla's dictatorship.

Selected Writings



Córdoba

1971-1969

Beba Balve, Juan C. Martin, Miguel Murmis, Tomas J. Bar, Roberto Jacoby, Beatriz Balve, and Lidia Aufgang, *Lucha de Calles, Lucha de Clases: elementos para su análisis (Córdoba 1971-1969)* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones La Rosa Blindada, Colección Cuadernos Latinoamericanos, 1973). Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



ORGANIZACION - FUENTE	ENEMIGO	CLASIFICACION DEL ENEMIGO Y SUS OBJETIVOS	PROPUESTA POLITICA	ALIANZAS	METODO	VISUALIZACION DE LA CONTRADICCION EN EL MOVIMIENTO OBRERO	OBJETIVOS	CONSEJOS
Vanguardia Comunista Volante "La dictadura tiene que pagar una deuda de sangre"	"Dictadura militar" "monopolios imperialistas" "Ejército de Lanusse y CIA."	"Atentado a medida de los monopolios imperialistas."	"Gobierno popular revolucionario dirigido por los obreros."	"Obreros y pueblo."	No parece que algo en la línea de Mao Tse Tung. "El poder nace del fail".	"Sigamos el ejemplo de Siria-Síram." "La hora de despertar a los dirigentes traidores."	"Hay que detener cualquier flia para continuar el combate."	"Ni golpe al ejército, revolución." "Florecemos al paisaje urbano." "Morra la Dictadura y su plus político."
UCR. Resistencia Radical.	"Dictadura oligárquica y pro-imperialista."	"Atentado del Pueblo y de sus derechos."	"Liberación Nacional de nuestra patria y su autodeterminación soberana." "verdadero Justicia Social"	"sectores populares"	"a través de un proceso revolucionario"		"golpear al sistema en todos sus frentes, para derrocarlo."	"Nuestra misión no es una misión electoral, transitoria. Hemos echado un reto al sistema a toda una época." Leandro N. Alem.
Fundido Obrero (Trabajadores) Volante del día 10-31	"Gobierno de Livingston" "imperialismo"	"Fracaso del fraude de la panadería, determinado porque el capitalismo ya no le da más el cuerpo para dar los aumentos que exige la clase." "intervención (...) de los sectores nacionales revolucionarios del ejército que es un punto lo que los amos imponen la línea de represión."	"Gobierno popular basado en los sindicatos que ejecute el programa de Huelga Grande y la Falda."	"CGT que llamó a los sectores nacionales revolucionarios del Ejército." "Comando de Lucha de la CGT junto a gremio en conflicto SITRAC-SITRAM, Empleados Públicos, Judiciales, etc) y el conjunto de los organismos populares."	Centrar "la CGT única e independiente" y organizar el instrumento político de la masa, el partido obrero basado en los sindicatos.	FOTIA-CGT Tucumán, CGT Rosario, UOM de Mérida, Intendencia Nacional, MUKS, Gremio de los "17", FOETRA, PATUN, OBREROS DE FRIOLORIFICOS y CGT Córdoba deben imponer a la CGT Nacional.	Desde Córdoba imponer Plan de Lucha nacional con puro general con ocupación de librerías. "Crisis nacional (...) para extender y generalizar las experiencias de Córdoba invitando a sindicatos en conflicto."	Salario mínimo 92.000 pesos. Obras públicas para las masas. Derogación de leyes represivas. Migración de derechos democráticos. Pura las intervenciones de FOETRA y Lue y Puzza. Imponer un gobierno popular basado en los sindicatos.
Encuentro Nacional de los Argentinos Volante "Nuevo Crimen de la Dictadura"	"Dictadura militar que es el adorno del poder el 28-VI-66." "Máquina extranjera que nos quita el alma"	"Coloca los recursos del país y el esfuerzo de los Trabajadores al servicio de los monopolios extranjeros y la explotación."			"unimos y organizamos"			
Movimiento de la Juventud Peronista "Declaración ante los sucesos acaecidos el día 12 de Marzo de 1971."	"Dictadura militar... dirigida por la crema del poder mundial del colonialismo." "oligarquía" "imperialismo" "Clases Imperialista, CGT, Bole de Comercio y demás organizaciones de los monopolios."	"Destruir al Movimiento Peronista como instrumento de la lucha revolucionaria del pueblo argentino, restando todo intento de imponer la voluntad soberana de los obreros y vincular con la violencia las actividades de rebeldía de los que no clasifican en la lucha."	"Liberación de la Patria del imperialismo y construcción del Socialismo nacional", (que) "terminará con el sistema de la propiedad de las medios de producción por las capituladas que controlan sus riquezas sobre la explotación de la clase trabajadora."	"Movimiento Peronista como instrumento de la lucha revolucionaria del pueblo argentino."	"enfrentar con los métodos que la circunstancia exigen a la política dictatorial profundizando la acción popular."			"Por la Liberación Nacional y la construcción del Socialismo Nacional." "Por el retorno de Juan Perón a la Patria y al Poder." "Juan Perón es una bandera y las banderas se agitan hasta la muerte o no se agitan." (EVITA) "Perón o muerte."
PRP "El Combatiente" Volante "A los computadores de IKA-RENAULT."	"Burguesía e Imperialismo." "Dictadura." "votados fraternalmente por el presidente de ACTE, UIA, Sociedad Rural, CGE, Y la CGT también presente." (El Combatiente" Nº 33)	"reaccionaria dominación capitalista" "reprimido." "dominación de la clase burguesa sobre la clase obrera y el pueblo."	"Destrucción de la dominación capitalista y construcción de la patria socialista"	"clase obrera y pueblo"	Guerra revolucionaria del pueblo, que hoy es llevada a cabo por la vanguardia armada en lucha frontal... que solo podrá triunfar con la incorporación de las más amplias masas.	"burocracia" "direcciones clasistas"	No hubo propuestas formales pero es probable que sus militantes se hayan lanzado a la toma de ciertos barrios.	Aldafate con la guerra revolucionaria del pueblo. Por un gobierno revolucionario obrero y popular. Viva el Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo.
Partido Socialista de la Izquierda Nacional Volante "Derrotar a los usurpadores en lucha por la soberanía popular efectiva"	"Gobierno usurpador" "oligarquía ganadora, monopolio y financiero" "imperialismo asqueroso."	"servir a los monopolios extranjeros, desnationalizar la industria y la banca, desvaler a los pequeños productores rurales, hundir a la clase obrera y la pequeña burguesía, desvaler el interior."	"Expropiación de la gran empresa imperialista, de los queques Peronistas monopolios, de intermediación agraria como fruto del establecimiento de un gobierno obrero y popular... y planificación socialista de todos los recursos humanos y naturales"		Todos los métodos de lucha que las circunstancias aconsejen.		"derrocamiento del gobierno usurpador y la inmediata convocatoria a elecciones sin fraudes ni manipulaciones. Esto significa la presencia del General Perón en el suelo argentino y su posible candidatura presidencial."	"Por la Justicia Social." "Por la soberanía política." "Por la independencia económica." "Por el gobierno obrero y popular." "Viva los Estados Unidos Socialistas de América Latina."
Comité Revolucionario del Pueblo "Programa del E.R.P." "Familia Roja" Nº 1.	"Ejército imperialista del imperialismo yanqui y del capitalismo argentino." "El ejército burgués y los policías y gendarmes mercenarios de los explotadores."	"opresión económica, política, cultural y militar."	"Gobierno de Democracia Popular (trabajo y consumo) del Pueblo, dirigido por la clase obrera." "Patria Socialista."	"Revolución... (clase obrera, campesinos y pueblo) y patria socialista, democrática y antiimperialista."	Construcción del Poder del Pueblo.			"Viva la guerra revolucionaria." "Viva la guerra obrera y el pueblo." "A vencer o morir por la Argentina."
CGT Regional Córdoba Comando de Lucha Resistencia del 12-III-71 "A los trabajadores y pueblo de Córdoba" 12-III-71.	"quienes están vinculados de una u otra forma a las potencias imperialistas" "oligarquía e imperialismo" "Dictadura y sistema de opresión."	"sumar a un emboscamiento progresivo y crecimiento de ésta para los trabajadores, la crisis y ronda los talleres y negocios." "explotación." "dependencia política." "crisis" conflictos gremiales."	"Una auténtica revolución para crear y distribuir la riqueza argentina en marzo tiene un fin: entrar de poder la clase trabajadora organizada que constituye la vanguardia." "Trabajadores, estudiantes, profesionales, sacerdotes de la Iglesia de los pobres, fuerzas políticas y demás instituciones, hombres y mujeres."	"Todos los argentinos, esclavizados o no que sufren los efectos de la dependencia" "gran fuerza nacional antiimperialista (que) tiene un fin: entrar de poder la clase trabajadora organizada que constituye la vanguardia." "Trabajadores, estudiantes, profesionales, sacerdotes de la Iglesia de los pobres, fuerzas políticas y demás instituciones, hombres y mujeres."	"Acción... todos los medios son efectivos en la Lucha Grande, cualquiera sea la forma pacífica o violenta." "Con decisión e inteligencia la clase trabajadora muestra vocación nacional revolucionaria así encontramos la victoria en el camino de la ACCION"	"Conferir la puntualidad céntrica ante los problemas del movimiento obrero y del Pueblo y exigir..."	"tomar V. Revol" "tomar Córdoba"	
SITRAC-SITRAM Bolíder Nº 11 Volantes: "ALERTA." "A nuestros compañeros de clase y a la opinión pública en general."	"Dictadura... patronal imperialista monopolista... burocracia sindical" "Dictadura proimperialista de Livingston"	"entragamos y represión... planes de superplotación... tracción al servicio de la dictadura y la patronal." "política de hambre."	"Liberación nacional y social"	"obrero, estudiante, sectores oprimidos del pueblo."	"proceso de concentración, factor principal para llegar a la liberación nacional y social."	"Burocracia traidora... Sindicatos clasistas revolucionarios..."		"Conciencia y lucha, autonomía de liberación." "Sin conciencia no hay liberación."
Política Obrera "Política Obrera" Nº 86	"Imperialismo y burguesía nativa" "Burocracia (y la burguesía)" "Capitalismo extranjero y la burguesía nacional, se alianza."	"crisis... explotación" "miseria"	"Poder obrero y Popular" "Liberación nacional."	"Proletariado y la mayoría de las masas explotadas, jubiladas, maestras, poblaciones barriales, desempleados, inmigrantes independientes, estudiantes..." (P.O. Nº 82)	"Frente único antiimperialista bajo la dirección del proletariado... en la lucha de clases..."	"negociadores" "Burocracia sindical" "direcciones intermedias" "congreso de Base" "delegados de fábrica" "obscuros de vanguardia" "delegados combativos" "activismo clasista"	"Ocupar la plaza todo el día, formar picquetos para agitar y traer a los barrios y organizar un vasto movimiento de reclutamiento y agitación política que habiendo liquidado manifiestamente a la burocracia y al reformismo."	"Viva la Lucha Córdoba." "Viva la Unidad de Acción para la huelga nacional." "Viva el Gobierno Obrero y Popular."

Diagram published in the first edition of *Lucha de Calles. Lucha de Clases. Elementos para su Análisis* (Córdoba 1971–1969). Textos de Beba Balvé (1931–2009), Miguel Murmis (1933), Juan Carlos Marín, Lidia Aufgang, Tomás J. Bar, Beatriz Balvé (1937–2020) and Roberto Jacoby (1944).



ORGANIZATION — SOURCE	ENEMY	CLASSIFICATION OF THE ENEMY AND ITS OBJECTIVES	POLITICAL PROPOSAL	ALLIANCES	METHOD	VISUALIZATION OF THE CONTRADICTION IN THE LABOR MOVEMENT	OBJECTIVES	ASSIGNMENTS
Communist Vanguard Flyer “The dictatorship must pay a blood debt”	“Military dictatorship” “Imperialist monopolies” “Lanusse and Co.’s army”	“Assassins on the payroll of imperialist monopolies”	“A revolutionary people’s government led by the workers”	“Workers and the people”	Not clearly stated except by Mao Tse Tung: “Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun.”	“Let’s follow SITRAC–SITRAM’s example.” “It’s time to crush traitorous union leaders.”	“We must now close ranks to continue with combat.”	“Neither coup nor elections: revolution.” “Let’s trample the clown Uriburu.” “Death to dictatorship and its political agenda.”
U.C.R. Radical Resistance	“Oligarchic and pro-imperialist dictatorship”	“Assassins of the people and their rights”	“National liberation of our homeland and its sovereign self-determination” “True Social Justice”	“Popular sectors”	“Through a revolutionary process”	–	“To hit the system in all fronts, to overthrow it”	“Our mission is not an electoral, transient mission. We have issued a challenge to the system of an entire era.” —Leandro N. Alem
Labor Party (Trotskyist) Flyer dated 3/10/71	“Levingston’s government” “Imperialism”	“Failure of the fraud of syndicalist dealings, determined because capitalism cannot continue to grant the raises that the class demands.” “Intervention ... of revolutionary nationalist sides of the army, which is in part what prevents them from imposing repression.”	“A people’s government based on syndicates that will apply the programs Large Field and <i>La Falda</i> .”	“CGT that calls forth the revolutionary nationalist factions of the army.” “The CGT’s Combat Unit next to syndicates in strife (SITRAC–SITRAM, civil service employees, judicial employees, etc.), and the whole of people’s organizations.”	To build “one single independent CGT ... and to organize the public instrument of the masses, the labor party based on syndicates.”	FOTIA–CGT Tucumán, CGT Rosario, UOM Matanza, National Inter–Union, MUCS, Union of the “17,” FOETRA, FATUN, cold storage workers, and CGT Córdoba must be imposed unto the National CGT.	From Córdoba, to impose a national fight plan with general strikes and seizing of factories. “National tour ... to extend and generalize the experiences in Córdoba and invite syndicates in conflict.”	“A minimum wage of 92,000 pesos. Public works for the masses. Overturning of repressive laws, enforcement of democratic rights. Out with the interventions of FOETRA and <i>Luz y Fuerza</i> . To impose a government of the people based on syndicates.
National Assembly of Argentines Flyer “New crime of the dictatorship”	“Military dictatorship that seized power on 4/28/66” “Foreign monopolies and native oligarchy”	“It places the country’s resources and the workers’ effort into the service of foreign monopolies and the oligarchy.” “Insatiable and criminal.”	–	–	“To join forces and organize”	–	–	–
Peronist Youth Movement “Declaration in the face of the events of March 12, 1971”	“Military dictatorship ... led by the world’s power centers of colonialism” “Oligarchy” “Imperialism” “Industrial Union, CGE, stock exchange, and other organizations of monopolies.”	“To destroy the Peronist movement as an instrument of the Argentine people’s revolutionary fight, to crush all attempts at imposing the sovereign will of the majority and to annihilate violently the rebellious activities of those who do not give up the fight.”	“National liberation from imperialism and construction of socialism on the national stage,” (which will) “put an end to the system of appropriation of mass media on the part of capitalists who build their wealth by exploiting the working class.”	“The Peronist Movement as an instrument for the revolutionary fight of the Argentine people.”	“To face, with the methods demanded by the circumstances, the dictatorial politics by furthering popular action.”	–	–	“For national liberation and the building of national socialism.” For the return of Juan Perón to the country and to power. “Juan Perón is an emblem, and emblems are carried until death or not at all” (Evita). “Perón or death.”

PRT "El Combatiente" (The Combatant) Flyer "To the colleagues at IKA—RENAULT"	"Bourgeois and Imperialism" "Dictatorship" "Fraternally surrounded by the president of ACIEL, UIA, the Rural Society, CGE, and the also present CGT" ("El Combatiente," no. 53")	"Reactionary capitalist domination" "Repression" "Domination of the bourgeois class over the working class and the people"	"Destruction of capitalist domination and construction of a socialist nation"	"Working class and the people"	A revolutionary war of the people, that is nowadays carried out by the armed vanguard in head-on combat ... which can only triumph with the incorporation of the largest masses.	"Bureaucracy" "Classist directions"	There were no formal proposals, but it is likely that its militants launched the takeover of certain neighborhoods.	"On with the revolutionary war of the people. For a revolutionary government, of the workers and the people. Long live the People's Revolutionary Army.
Socialist Party of the National Left Flyer "Defeat the usurpers in an effective fight for people's sovereignty"	"Usurping government" "Cattle-ranching, commercial, and financial oligarchy" "Plundering imperialism"	"To serve foreign monopolies, denationalize industries and banks, unprotect the small rural producers, starve the working class and the petite bourgeoisie, devastate the countryside"	"Expropriation of big imperialist corporations, parasitic and oligarchic, monopolies of agricultural intermediation, as the result of the establishment of a government of the people and the workers ... and socialist planning of all human and natural resources."	—	Any and all fighting methods that circumstances merit.	—	"Overthrow of the usurping government and the immediate call to elections without frauds or proscriptions. This implies the presence of General Perón on Argentine soil and his possible presidential campaign."	"For Social Justice" "For political sovereignty" "For economic independence" "For a government of the workers and the people" "Long live the Socialist United States of Latin America"
The People's Revolutionary Army (E.R.P.) "E.R.P.'s agenda" and "Red Star," no. 1	"Dictatorship representing Yankee imperialism and Argentine capitalism" "The bourgeois army, and the cops and gendarmes, mercenaries of the exploiters"	"Economic, political, cultural and military oppression"	"Government of social democracy, revolutionary people's government, led by the working class" "Socialist nation"	"Revolutionaries ... working class, students, and all people patriotic, anti-dictatorship, and anti-imperialist"	"A revolutionary war of the people"	—	—	"Long live the revolutionary war" "Long live the working class and the people" "To triumph or die for Argentina"
CGT Regional Córdoba Combat Unit Resolution on 3/13/71 "To the workers and the people of Córdoba" 3/12/71	"Those who are linked in one way or another to the imperialist powers" "Oligarchy and imperialism" "Dictatorship and oppressive systems"	"Subjects to a progressive impoverishment and its growth for the workers, the crisis is already prowling the workshops and small businesses." "It explodes." "Political dependency." "(It creates) union conflicts."	"A true revolution to build and distribute Argentine wealth in the context of strict justice and absolute sovereignty." "To end the exploitation of men by men." "An independent nation."	"All Argentines, wage-earning or not, who suffer the effects of dependency." "A great anti-imperialist national force (that) has as its only center of power the organized working class that constitutes the vanguard." "Workers, students, professionals, priests of the Church of the Poor, political forces, and all other institutions, men and women."	"Action ... all means are effective in the Great Fight, any way peaceful or violent..." "Let us strengthen our revolutionary national calling with determination and tactical intelligence and we will find victory in the path of ACTION."	"To condemn complicit passivity in view of the problems faced by the labor movement and the people and to demand..."	"To take over V. Revol" "To take over Córdoba"	—

SITRAC-SITRAM
Bulletin no. 1.
Flyers:
“WARNING” and “To
our class brothers
and public opinion in
general”

Labor Politics
“Labor Politics,” no. 86

“Dictatorship ... co-
operative imperialist
monopolist ... syndical
bureaucracy” “Leving-
ston’s pro-imperialist
dictatorship”

“Native imperialism
and bourgeoisie” “Bu-
reaucracy (and bour-
geoisie)”
“Foreign capitalism and
national bourgeoisie,
its ally”

“Surrender and re-
pression ... plant to
overexploit ... treason
in the service of the
dictatorship and the
corporations”
“Hunger politics”

“Crisis” “Exploitation”
“Misery”

“Socialist and national
liberation”

“Power for the workers
and the people”
“National liberation”

“Workers, students,
oppressed sides of the
people”

“Proletariat and
the majority of the
exploited masses,
pensioners, teachers,
low-income
communities, farm
laborers, independent
workers, students ...”
(“L.P.,” no. 82)

“Process to raise aware-
ness, the main factor in
reaching national and
social liberation.”

“United anti-imperialist
front under the leader-
ship of the proletariat”
“The workers, leaning
on class struggle ...”

“Traitorous
bureaucracy ...”
“Classist and revolu-
tionary syndicates ...”

“Negotiators” “Syn-
dicalist bureaucracy”
“Intermediate direc-
tions” “Base congress”
“Factory managers”
“Vanguard laborers”
“Combatant managers”
“Classist activism”

–

“To occupy the square
for the whole day, to
agitate via picketing,
to bring lower-class
neighborhoods here
and to organize a mas-
sive rally of political
agitation and clarifi-
cation that would have
massively put a stop
to bureaucracy and
reformism.”

“Conscience and
combat, synonyms of
revolution.”
“Without consciousness,
there can be no liber-
ation.”

“Long live the Córdo-
bese fight.”
“Long live the Unit of
Action for the national
strike.”
“Long live the work-
ing-class and people’s
government.”

Disciplina: política del cuerpo

Discipline: Body Politics

Roberto Jacoby, 1975–1985

Written between 1975 and 1985. Excerpt from “Capital, Domestication” in *El asalto al cielo* (Buenos Aires: Mansalva, 2014). Published in *El deseo nace del derrumbe. Roberto Jacoby: Acciones, conceptos, escritos*, ed. Ana Longoni (Barcelona: Ediciones de La Central / Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora / Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía/Red Conceptualismos del Sur, 2011), 195–207. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

The depth and significance of the intervention of the “war–politics” continuum on the human body, one could say at the macro and micro levels, is now beginning to be understood through a number of studies. Just as in the nation–state, the “constitution” of the human body today conceals a “constituent” process: not only concerning its consciousness, which seems in principle easier to accept, but also its physical postures, its abilities, and probably its physiology.

Throughout the historical process of imposing forces on the body, in order to disarticulate and rearticulate different levels of its existence, the bourgeoisie formed, with reference to these partial fields of action, multiple techniques or special sciences; the formation of bourgeois power on the body and its relations was concurrent with the shaping of knowledge on these subjects.

In this way, a wide variety of “disciplines” developed—the very word “disciplines” suggests much about their purpose—focused on knowledge about the body and human relations; the theory of war itself, economics, pedagogy, orthopedics, criminology, psychiatry, psychology, sociology, and an endless list of branches or subbranches, along with empirical techniques that did not even attain theoretical status. The way in which they emerged and related to each other was apparently random, put to the test, rejected, or included or overcome in the field of experimental class struggle, not only in the specific field of war, but also in the hospital, the prison, the school, the asylum, the family, the urban space, buildings, and so on. The human body and its relations became territories of power and knowledge of the bourgeoisie.

War, as the bourgeoisie theorizes it today, has had to embody and subordinate many of these fields of force application and experimentation on the body. In order to understand how the bourgeoisie shaped the worker–citizen—that is to say, how it formed its unit of domination—a substantial example is the theoretical and practical activity of war in the period of the domination of commercial capital, during the absolute monarchy, when the nation–state and the conditions of the capitalist mode of production were taking shape.

Getting to know how the “war” was affecting the soldier’s body at the time can give some clues about what was being done in other spheres of social life. Why is the soldier important? Because the formation of the soldier by the bourgeoisie—as is clear from what has been said so far—has conditioned the training of the worker–citizen, since this creation was in its origin a process of dissolution of relations, a “war.”

The theory of war prior to Clausewitz was dominated by the image of the man–machine. The questions of tactics, on which it focused its reflection and military practice, had been oriented to achieve the formation of an army conceived as a perfected mechanism, as an “automaton.”

The techniques used to this purpose consisted of an intensification, extension, and refinement of body discipline. It was a matter of integral domestication started through a meticulous analysis and reorganization of body movements, which took several centuries.

The desired result was to obtain a mass force articulated from its minimum unity to the most complex configurations, through the fragmentation and reorganization of each individual’s own body, of individuals among themselves to form groups, and among such groups of individuals.

These transformations sought, on the one hand, to multiply the number of possible actions to be produced by the body, to intensify the energy put into each action, to homogenize them to allow their accounting and management, and to disaggregate them to facilitate their articulation with the actions of other bodies. The training of the soldier’s body, through marches, by means of special steps, set at a given rhythm, allowed a certain organization of time—which could be considerably accelerated—and, at the same time, managed to regulate the displacement in space.

But these techniques were not exclusively aimed at modeling and increasing the strength of the soldier’s body and its joint action. Proof of this is that the disciplining extended to completely unrelated activities beyond the exercise of

physical strength: positions were imposed during rest and sleep as well as attitudes of greeting, tones and rhythms of voice, lexicons, and so on.

This tendency to standardize the overall timing of behaviors, even the eminently symbolic ones, meant that the soldiers had practically no control over any of their corporal movements, both in war exercises and in the daily life of the barracks and, even less, over their functioning as a whole. The action of the body, the externalization of its forces or its setting in motion, its relations with other bodies, had to be determined by an outside, external will that was expressed by means of orders, voices, and signs of command.

Another feature of this “machine” was its stratification in a pyramidal and multiply articulated hierarchical structure: whoever exercised command at one level had to submit in turn to another will, located at a higher level in the chain of command. This subordination thus reached up to the general-in-chief, who controlled the whole army.

In this way, the production of mass forces turned out to be inseparable from the relations of obedience. It not only resulted in an increase in the magnitude of the produced forces, due to the cooperative character of their functioning, but also in the dispossession from the soldiers of their power over the body.

This fact makes sense if we consider that the development of the disciplinary techniques took place mainly in relation to the infantry, which meant both a numerical increase and a modification of the social character of the troops: the general recruitment of almost all the male adults as potential soldiers, which meant, above all, the militarization of various layers of the peasantry, the craftsmen, and the incipient rural and urban proletariat.

In addition to this modification of the relations between bodies, there is the simultaneous change operated between bodies and weapons, that is to say, those things that constitute extensions of the body in order to increase its magnitude, the scope and speed of its forces.

The dissolution of feudal military formations implied the suppression of the property relations of the combatants regarding their weapons and equipment as well as the property of the lords regarding their armies, which had been recruited among vassals and serfs, in order to transform them into instruments of the centralized state.

The rise of these organizational forms did not depend fundamentally on the technological development of weapons, but on the character assumed by the class

struggle between the different owner factions. It is remarkable that the first armies of this type were, at the same time, the first great capitalist enterprises, in the sense that they salaried their soldiers and sold their services¹.

The army, having been primarily an organization of property owners, was now a matter of extracting fighting strength from the bodies of the dispossessed. For the owners, the problem of having forces at their disposal could not be separated from another question: that of making them act independently of the social character of the soldiers, even in opposition to it. The mass forces had to be aligned in the very act of their production.

The combatants, deprived of the control of their bodies and the ownership of weapons, were also physically separated from the rest of the people, from whom they were extracted to be accumulated in barracks, where their vital needs—housing, food, clothing—were provided by the state. They were thus alienated from productive life, from material needs, from the sufferings of exploitation and the rebellions they caused, in order to make them depend on the military institution for their conditions of existence.

A whole ladder of rewards—from material remuneration and booty to promotions, limited to certain hierarchies according to the social stratum from which they came—and punishments—from degradation and imprisonment to death—which were distributed by means of an omnipresent hierarchical surveillance, were the instruments to impose an automatic discipline.

It was a matter of creating a mass force without forming a mass: it had to be the result of operations with individuals and even within each individual, whose internal relations were always mediated by the link with superiority, with an external power that, through a series of links, reached its apex in the government of the state.

This schematic, simplified description is enough to illustrate the process of formation of the “soldier” through the action of “war–politics” on his body. The formation of the worker, of the “industrial army,” from the bodies of peasants and artisans, was carried out by means of these techniques that spread throughout society.

In fact, it is now known that they were used in all areas where bodies were accumulated, some intended for the production and appropriation of forces, such

1. It should be pointed out that since the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, the tendency has been to privatize the armed forces and their logistics, as well as the police forces, although obviously under very different conditions from those of feudalism, as shown by the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan.

as the factory, others, solely devoted to the appropriation of power over the body, such as the insane asylum or the prison, or to older roles, such as the school, the hospital, and so on.

Knowledge and power over the body were integrated into a “technological package” of legal–normative material, used to materialize in the body a part of the social relations, those that connect it with the market, with the class interest of the bourgeoisie. At the same time, they served to hinder the consolidation of another portion of its relations, those that link them, outside the market with the dispossessed, with the class interest of the proletariat. Such is the formation of the worker–citizen.

BUREAUCRATIC APPARATUS AND POWER/MACHINE THEORY

As these objectives were achieved and as the bourgeoisie succeeded in determining and appropriating corporal behavior, without the need for direct and immediate intervention on the bodies, this form of organization seemed to acquire independence from the conditions under which it was originally built. The bourgeoisie thought it had succeeded in inventing a perfect machine for accumulating and appropriating the power of bodies: the bureaucratic apparatus.

This social “machine” allowed for the will of a small number of people, the “lords,” generally recruited from among the capitalists and landowners, to be imposed on the majority, made up of wage earners, by means of a stratum of civil servants drawn from different segments of the petty bourgeoisie. A centralized chain of hierarchies and orders, operating in one direction only, from the “lords,” with a meticulous definition and articulation of areas of competence, an omnipresent vigilance that allowed the control and accounting of behaviors, with a regime of accumulation of information, protected by secrecy, served to classify and reclassify individuals within a hierarchical system of sanctions and rewards, which no longer needed to resort to physical violence. The exercise of power took on an impersonal appearance, bound to strictly codified rules.

The state of the absolute monarchy, and later that of the bourgeois revolution, adopted this organizational form in order to centralize the multitude of “powers” of all kinds that survived from the feudal era.

In order to cohere this apparatus together, its members, including wage earners, were assured of special conditions that, in fact, did not correspond to the laws of

the labor market: job security and all kinds of extra–salary rewards, privileges to perpetuate their families in official positions.

The alleged separation between civil society and political society—which, according to bourgeois theory, kept relations of representation between them—meant, in fact, the creation of new social strata with their own spheres of interest, insofar as their existence did not depend on market conditions but on the national budget, determined by the government.

The class interest of the bureaucracy was centered on the general conditions of subsistence of the state and capitalist production, rather than on its particular manifestations and interests. The bureaucracy, the state machine, began to embody the strategic interest of the bourgeoisie in the class struggle.

This form of state organization allowed it to appear before the dispossessed as an impersonal power, legitimate insofar as it expressed the universal validity of the general interest of the nation. On the other hand, this position made it possible that the struggle between the factions of the bourgeoisie, in order to use state power to their own advantage, could be carried out while maintaining certain global criteria in the struggle against the dispossessed.

El capital, domesticación, cuerpo, fuerza y poder

Capital, Domestication, Body, Force, and Power

Roberto Jacoby, 1975–1985

Written between 1975 and 1985. Excerpt from “Capital, Domestication, Body, Force, and Power” in *El asalto al cielo* (Buenos Aires: Mansalva, 2014). Published in *El deseo nace del derrumbe. Roberto Jacoby: Acciones, conceptos, escritos*, ed. Ana Longoni (Barcelona: Ediciones de La Central / Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora / Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía/ Red Conceptualismos del Sur, 2011), 187–195. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

Marx investigates the genesis of capitalism and notices that there is no capitalism without separating the means of production from the worker. And in order for the human body to become a pure carrier of labor power, a living body of value and surplus value, a labor power that sets itself in motion, a worker, the workers must be dispossessed of their conditions of existence. This expropriation process is carried out by means of violence, the rupture of social relations. The dispossession of the workers’ conditions of existence also implies the expropriation of power from their bodies’ forces. Historically, and as an original process, they are “freed” from property and “liberated” from servile and corporative relations to the point of forcing and conditioning them to offer their labor power as just another commodity but under different forms. The expropriation process of capital has never stopped.

The destruction of social relations by means of the spectacular use of direct force was the precondition of capitalist social relations, which, once established, confer on the production, appropriation, and accumulation of body forces a purely mercantile, juridical, and peaceful appearance. Naturally, this illusion is sustained only on condition of being observed through the dominant optics: the infinite ways in which need and desire are annihilated or turned against themselves are not to be seen.

In any case, it required the development of a long process of struggle in which direct violence, in a more or less evident form, took on an economic character: it

took centuries for the “free” worker, as a result of the developed capitalist mode of production, to voluntarily submit himself, became socially obliged to sell all his active lifetime, his very working potential, for the price of his usual means of subsistence.

There is another sphere of social relations that becomes visible: these do not refer to production and circulation, to appropriation and accumulation of the body’s forces expressed in things, but to the production, circulation, appropriation, and accumulation of the very body of the dispossessed. This is the sphere of the relations of force, of “power,” in terms of which the relations of production, that is, of property, are produced and destroyed.

Within this space of relations, body forces are not only exerted on things but also on bodies. Not only are things personified and people treated as things, but the conditions for this to happen are created here. Social relations are not only expressed as value relations between things, but also as power relations between classes, owners and dispossessed, expropriators and expropriated, exploiters and exploited, oppressors and oppressed. Through these power relations, the precapitalist modes of production were annihilated, or subsumed, and the conditions were created for the existence and persistence of the market, of labor power expressed in the nation–state, the territory of the constituted “power” of industrial capital. Marx’s model of the correlation of forces, which refers to the constitution and development of the capitalist mode of production, can be synthesized as follows: action of force on the body, struggles whose consequence is the dissolution of social relations of property, violent expropriation, constitution of new relations between expropriators and expropriated, through which the latter contractually surrender their body forces in a sphere of peaceful appearance and of exchange of equals: the market.

It is interesting to compare this approach with Clausewitz’s theory of the power relationship between nation–states.

According to his model, the power relationship consists of three moments: politics–war–politics. Politics—“intelligence of the personified state”—sets the goals and provides the means for war. In turn, war is exclusively a means of politics. Politics and war are considered “acts of relations between people,” as “conflicts of high interest,” the only distinctive feature of which consists in the fact that in war the conflict is solved by bloody means, through the struggle between armed forces. In war, those means provided and created in the sphere of state policy are used: the physical and moral forces of combat. These forces are consumed when

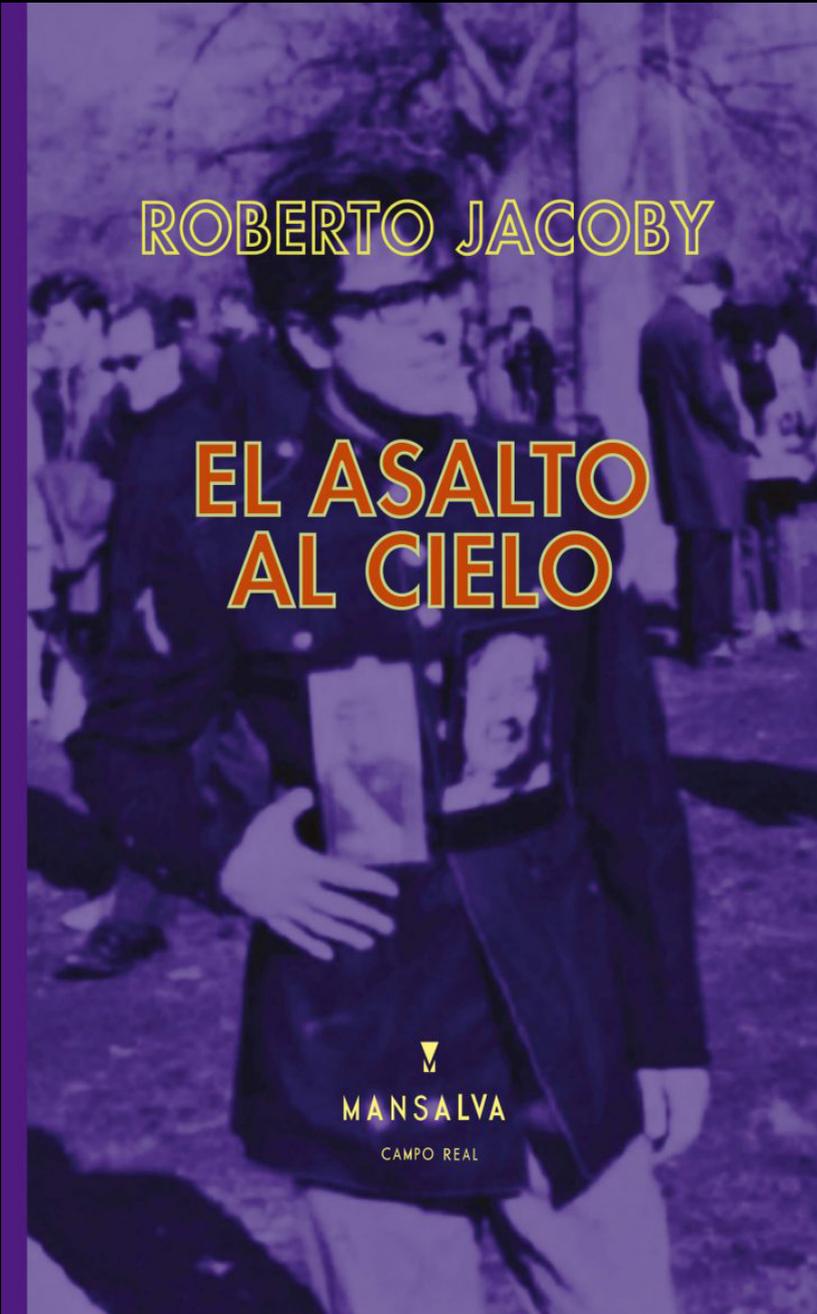
applied to the enemy's body. Material action is exercised directly on individuals, annihilating or limiting their freedom of movement through death, mutilation, or imprisonment. The target is the destruction of the strengths of the collective body of the adversary, its self-confidence, courage, cohesion, discipline, subjection to a plan, that is to say, the rupture of the relations that the enemy state has established between the bodies of its soldiers and in relation to them. Clausewitz calls the material force that these relations give to the bodies "moral force." The mediate goal is to produce a break between the enemy's will and behaviors. When the tendency toward moral preservation—courage—is overcome by the tendency toward physical preservation—fear—bodies give up control over themselves, surrender their will to another, accept the external determination of their behavior: the victorious side appropriates power over the body of the defeated, which has given up its resistance. According to Clausewitz, the mission of war ends here: whatever the purpose of this pursuit of power was, whatever is finally done with it, it is something that belongs to the realm of politics. War produces and appropriates power over the body, politics uses it. The moment of politics is that of the formation of new relations, no longer between equal forces, but between victor and vanquished. War has produced this inequality by crystallizing force in bodies, and its result is counted in terms of dead or wounded prisoners. Politics consecrates the inequality of forces by creating new links under the legal form of a contract between wills: it shapes "peace."

By means of peaceful, "voluntary relations," which were built on the basis of the dispossession of the will, of the power that the enemy had over the body, new conditions are established under which the expropriation of body forces or things belonging to the vanquished will take place: goods, land, taxes, etc. Clausewitz conceives the power relationship between nations as a continuum of "war-political" activities and relations, dominated by politics. Politics creates the forces and determines the goals of war. War applies forces to produce a dispossession and appropriation of power over the body and, finally, politics uses that power to appropriate forces produced by the body or its properties.

War uses force to destroy certain relations between bodies that give these bodies power over their forces. Politics uses the power acquired over bodies to build new relations with the dispossessed of power, which allow it to appropriate their forces or possessions. In classical bourgeois theory, war is the sphere of the expropriation

of power; politics, of the expropriation of forces. Politics is the moment when the relations of appropriation acquire juridical, contractual, peaceful form. War is the moment when these relations are extra juridical and bloody. For Clausewitz, war would be the precondition of the peaceful, "commercial-political" contract. The expropriation of things, which expresses itself juridically, would have been previously created as dispossession of power. The power relation includes these two stages, these two moments.

It should be noted that the Clausewitz model of the power relations between nations is analogous to the Marxist description of the formation and development of capitalist relations of production. According to Marx, market relations, in which the "free" individual sells his labor power as if he had a contractual will, are the consequence of a prior expropriation by means of violence of his material conditions of existence. The sphere of "politics" to which Clausewitz refers occupies a place analogous to that in Marx's thought of the labor force market once it is constituted. The sphere of "war" occupies the place of the conditions of the existence and persistence of this market, of this particular system of social relations, at once peaceful and expropriating.



El asalto al cielo
The Assault on Heaven

Roberto Jacoby, 1975–1985

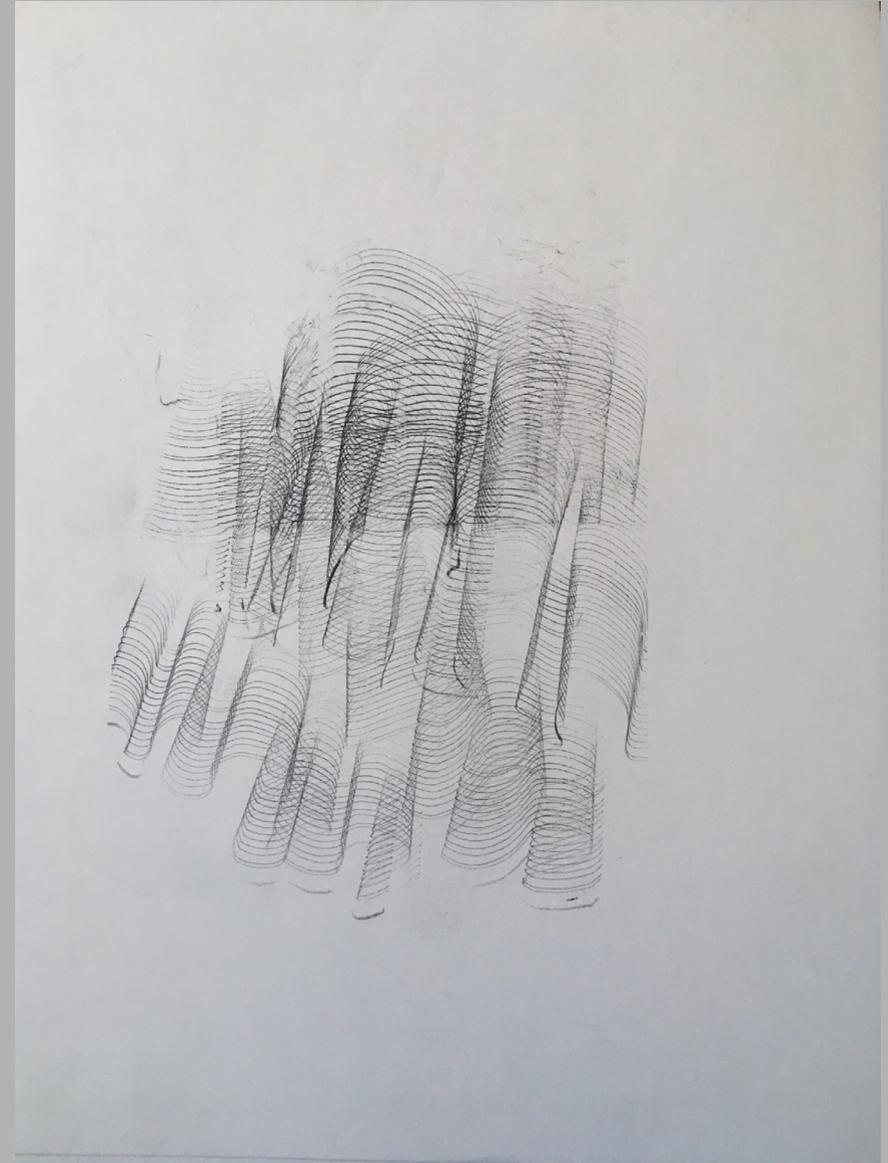
Roberto Jacoby, *El asalto al cielo: Formación de la Teoría Revolucionaria desde la Comuna de 1871 a Octubre de 1917* (Mansalva, 2014).
Courtesy Roberto Jacoby Archive.



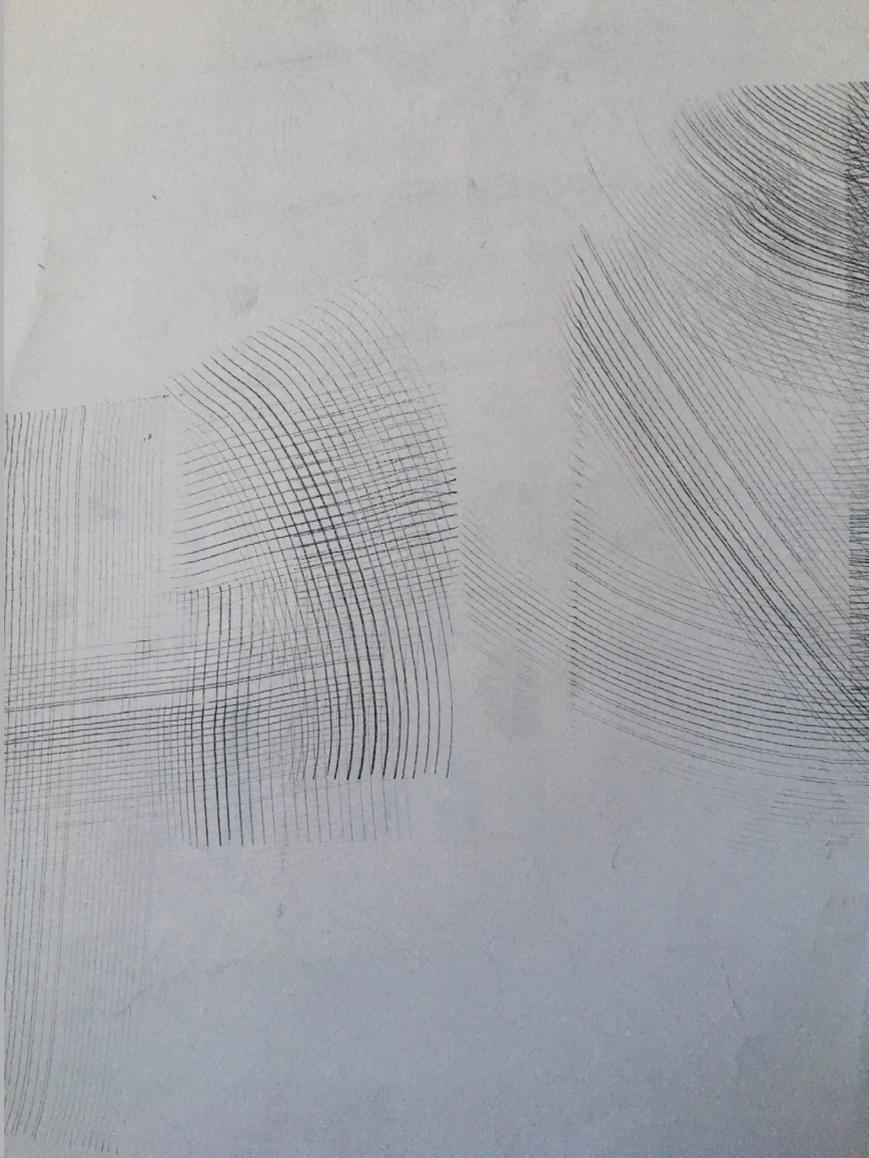
Cinetismos fáciles para épocas difíciles Easy Kinetics for Difficult Times

Roberto Jacoby, Geometric Generatives Series Drawings, 1979

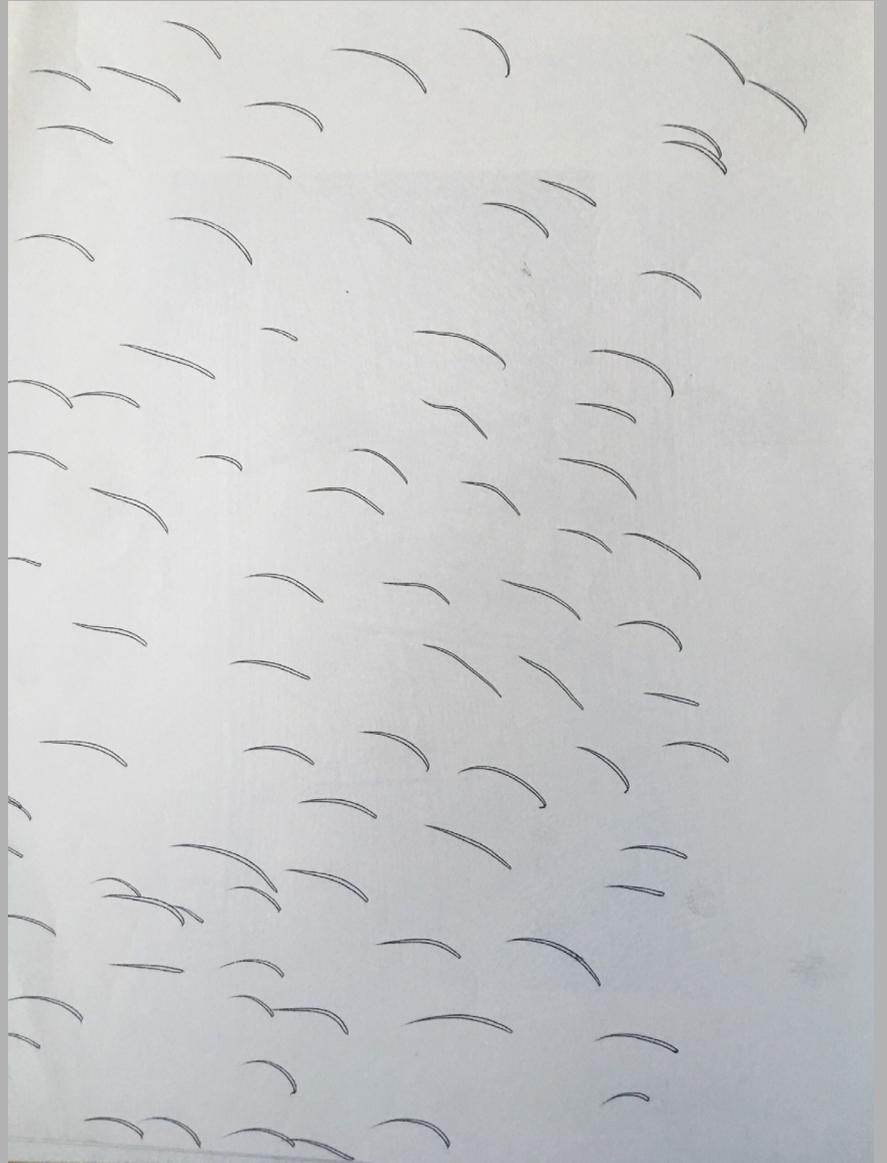
During this period of research and isolation, Jacoby also wrote poems, short stories, and made a series of drawings entitled *Cinetismos fáciles para épocas difíciles*. This is a series of kinetic drawings made by Jacoby during 1979–1980. According to Jacoby, “They seem to be drawn by obsessive Kinetic artists. However, I made them for fun with a comb on colored carbon paper because there wasn’t much to do during that time. I made about 50 kinetic drawings.” Roberto Jacoby in discussion with Karin Schneider, October 2022.



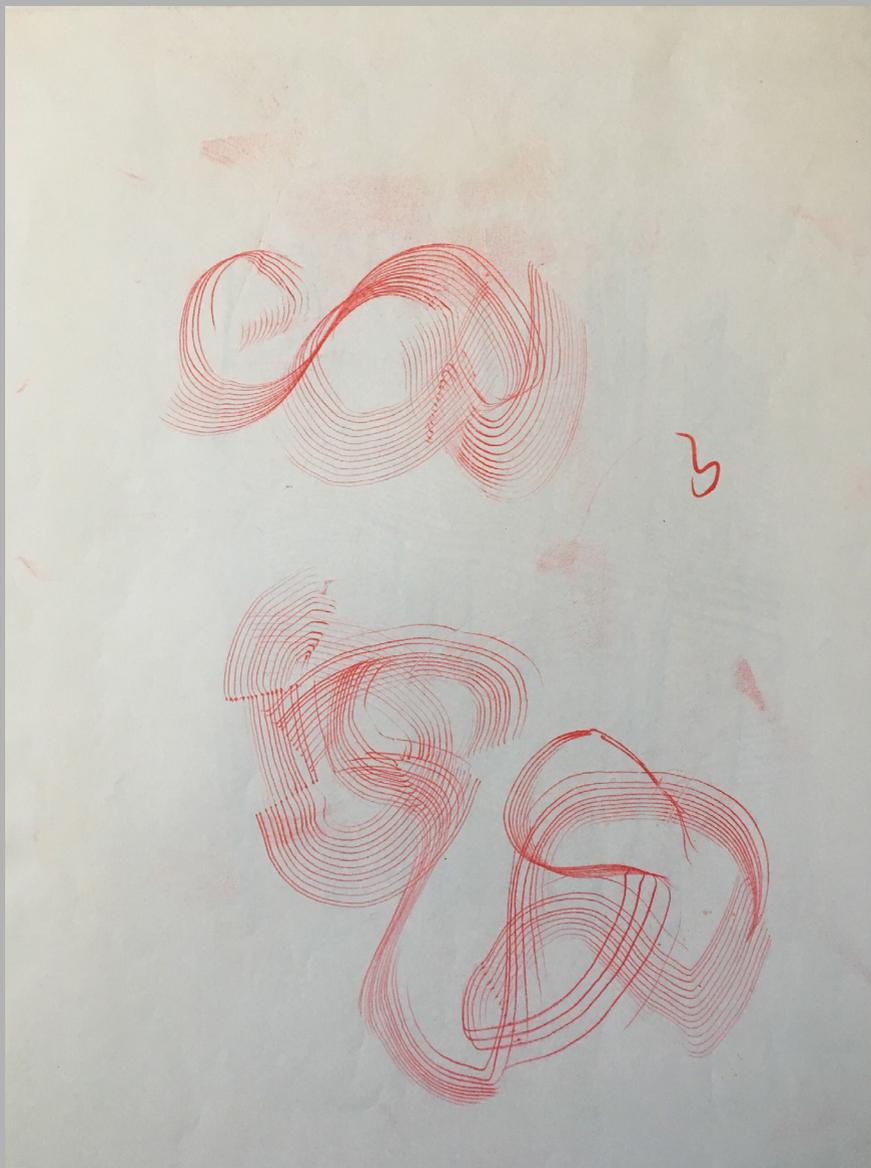
Roberto Jacoby, *Cinetismos fáciles para épocas difíciles* from Geometric Generatives Series Drawings, 1979.
Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



Roberto Jacoby, *Cinetismos fáciles para épocas difíciles* from Geometric Generatives Series Drawings, 1979.
Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



Roberto Jacoby, *Cinetismos fáciles para épocas difíciles* from Geometric Generatives Series Drawings, 1979.
Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



Roberto Jacoby, *Cinetismos fáciles para épocas difíciles* from Geometric Generatives Series Drawings, 1979.
Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.





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Introduction to the 80s by Claire Kim

During my research into the artistic practice of Roberto Jacoby—specifically in relation to his writings from the 1980s—questions around translation and legibility were often on my mind. Jacoby’s practice as a whole explores and creates within spaces of opacity and specificity, and it challenges the very methodology of language and its circulation. This way of navigating various forms of communication has opened up his practice as a site of amplification of marginalized issues, voices, and artistic movements. The artist’s practice has continuously promoted actions of empathy and collectivity in its viewers and audience members. Perhaps Jacoby’s writings show us one of the paradoxes of writing itself, revealing how the elasticity and precision of language is uninterruptedly intertwined and how these operations, created from specific decades and contexts, reverberate in the ear of the spectator—always seeking to activate a space of agency.

Jacoby began his career in the 1960s by engaging with linguistic operations. During that decade, he presented two radical works reflecting on how performativity can be eliminated or activated by receptors in the media: *Circuitos Informativos Cerrados* (*Closed information circuits*) and *Manifiesto de los medios de comunicación* (*Media manifesto*). In *Closed information circuits*, he reveals how the apparatus of media can exist in the form of a closed circuit of devices referring to each other, a model without receptors. In *Media manifesto*, Eduardo Costa, Raúl Escari, and Jacoby present a model of work reflecting on how meaning is transmitted and infinitely activated by receptors. Language as performativity was reintroduced to his practice during the 1980s, when he began to write lyrics for the Argentinian rock band Virus. After being introduced to the lead singer of Virus, Federico Moura, in 1979, the two became friends and collaborators. Jacoby’s lyrics urged audience members to move their bodies and dance; they also encouraged young people and teenagers in particular to rebel or act against the dictatorship.

An example of this method is in the song “Rock Is My Way to Be” from the 1981 album *Wadu-Wadu*. Here, Jacoby created a sequence of words inviting the listeners to dance: “I just wanna rock you / To get you the real thing / I just wanna rock you / For you to listen to your soul again.” The lyrics imply sexual liberation and the freedom to do and act in whatever way the listener wants—ideas that are particularly potent given that it was released during Argentina’s “Dirty War” (the name used to describe the civic-military dictatorship of Argentina from 1976 to 1983.) The song is reminiscent of his writings in the 1960s, in which he activated the performative function of language. Jacoby would

eventually write upwards of forty songs with the band, encouraging the growth and popularity of the youth music movement in Argentina.

In 1985, Jacoby created a project that was never fully realized, titled *Internus*: a network that had the potential to connect artists, nonartists, and workers with the goal of minimizing the isolation that was caused by the cultural and political oppression of the time. This project can be understood as the seed or first imaginings of a later project—one that would eventually become the magazine titled *ramona*. In his writing about *Internus*, he speaks about the circulation of texts, consistently returning to the importance of reception. An iconoclastic magazine, *ramona* (2000–2010) was conceived by a group of artists and nonartists as a platform for artists to write down their thoughts. This magazine model (created for and by artists) generated a long-standing legacy while simultaneously aggregating a community of intergenerational and interdisciplinary people.

Soon after, in 1985, Jacoby published an article titled “¿Fracasó la dictadura? Efectos ideológicos de la dictadura militar” (Did the dictatorship fail? Ideological effects of the military dictatorship) in the magazine *El Periodista de Buenos Aires*. This article puts into words the images and scare tactics of the dictatorship in power in Argentina at the time. The text is heavily influenced by his research background in sociology, which began in the 1970s. At one point in the text, Jacoby describes the damage of the dictatorship by stating that it was “... not what they forbid us to say, but what they make us say and think. Not so much what they eliminated as what they built in ourselves.”¹ His earlier studies on labor practices, particularly under the guise of oppressive governmental systems, allowed the artist to have a nuanced view on the politics of terror and the ways in which the most insidious aspects of violence were often the most invisible.

That year, 1985, Jacoby wrote two additional key texts: “Revolución con sex appeal” (Revolution with sex appeal) and “La alegría retomada” (Recovering joy). Both are relatively short texts that span less than two pages. Yet there is a fervent and passionate nature to these texts with particular disregard for the status quo. “Revolución con sex appeal” focuses on the power of the youth by sharing a larger history of consumerism and the public’s relationship to material goods. Here, Jacoby shares an understanding of a nonlinear timeline while emphasizing the potential of rock groups to speak to young people and to meet them where they are willing to make the most change. On the other hand, in “La alegría retomada,” Jacoby’s writing emphasizes the importance of commu-

1. “¿Fracasó la dictadura? Efectos ideológicos de la dictadura militar,” *El Periodista de Buenos Aires* (Ediciones de la Urraca) 1, no. 24, February 22–28, 1985, 42.

nity, gathering, and the necessity of succumbing to our desires in order to find joy. In it, he states, “There is no solitary joy. Even in the greatest abandonment, the smile is for the other.” In a recently uncovered diary entry, the artist reveals that his ideas around freeing the body from the mechanisms of repression found in “La alegría retomada” became the direct inspiration for his 2000 text, “La alegría como estrategia” (Joy as a strategy), which speaks to the interconnected nature of his practice and the ways that ideas have been expanded, continued, and revisited at different times of his life.

In 1986, Jacoby published the texts “Mira cómo tiemblo!” (Look how I shiver!) and “Notas dispersas sobre la cultura del rock: el sonido, la imagen y la furia” (Scattered notes on rock music culture: The sound, the image, and the fury). In the latter text, he describes the rock genre as: “The rock phenomena continues to be like a second-rate cultural citizen—a stranger whose language is not accurately understood and therefore instinctively rejected.”² Even from his earliest engagement with rock culture, the artist was well-aware of the various gaps of understanding and the necessity of or call for translation. These gaps act as a metaphor for the ways in which Jacoby’s artistic practice was often misunderstood by art critics in the 1980s. With his turn to lyricism via his work with *Virus*, many critics assumed he was turning away from the art world, when, in reality, the writing practice was a deeply consequential integration into his overall practice.

During this decade, Jacoby also organized many multimedia shows, performances, parties, and an anti-disco movement called “Club Social Deportivo y Cultural Eros.” Towards the end of the decade, in 1988, the artist presented a work in a group exhibition titled *La escena intangible* (The intangible scene) at an institutional space called the Institute for Ibero-American Cooperation (today known as CCEBA). This exhibition featured works by Jacoby, Oscar Bony, Alejandro Kuropatwa, and Pablo Suárez. Here, he showcased a collaborative work titled *Huyamos a Buenos Aires, nadie podrá encontrarnos* (Let’s flee to Buenos Aires, no one will be able to find us, 1988), in which he included two nude self-portraits—one from 1968 along with another that was taken for the exhibition in 1988. This exhibition marked an important turn for the artist, who was returning to an institutional art space after a hiatus. The portraits reflect on the passing of time in the most intimate sense: his own body.

Jacoby’s writing of the 1980s showed that his practice was not only influenced by

2. Roberto Jacoby, “Notas dispersas sobre la cultura del rock: el sonido, la imagen y la furia,” *Crisis* (Buenos Aires) 42, May 1986, 72–74.



his work from decades past, but also that it would significantly affect his future practice. His reintegration into the more “traditional” artistic practices in the 1980s and his collaboration with Virus introduced groundbreaking ideas around the formation of network communities, based on communal engagement, reciprocity, and the necessity of giving back to and caring for younger generations.



Selected Writings

*Huyamos a Buenos Aires, nadie
podrá encontrarnos*
Let's Flee to Buenos Aires, No One
Will Be Able to Find Us

Roberto Jacoby, 1988



Roberto Jacoby, two photographs from *Huyamos a Buenos Aires, nadie podrá encontrarnos*, 1988.
Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

Roberto Jacoby, *Huyamos a Buenos Aires, nadie podrá encontrarnos*, 1988.
Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



Virus

El rock es mi forma de ser Rock Is My Way to Be

Lyrics by Roberto Jacoby for *Wadu-Wadu* (1981)

I just wanna rock you
To get you the real thing
I just wanna rock you
For you to listen to your soul again

Rock, rock, rock, it's my way to love
Rock, rock, rock, it's my way to be
Rock, rock, rock, it's my way to love
Rock, rock, rock, it's my way to be

I just wanna rock you
To reach your lowest lust
I just wanna rock you
To sing this song together

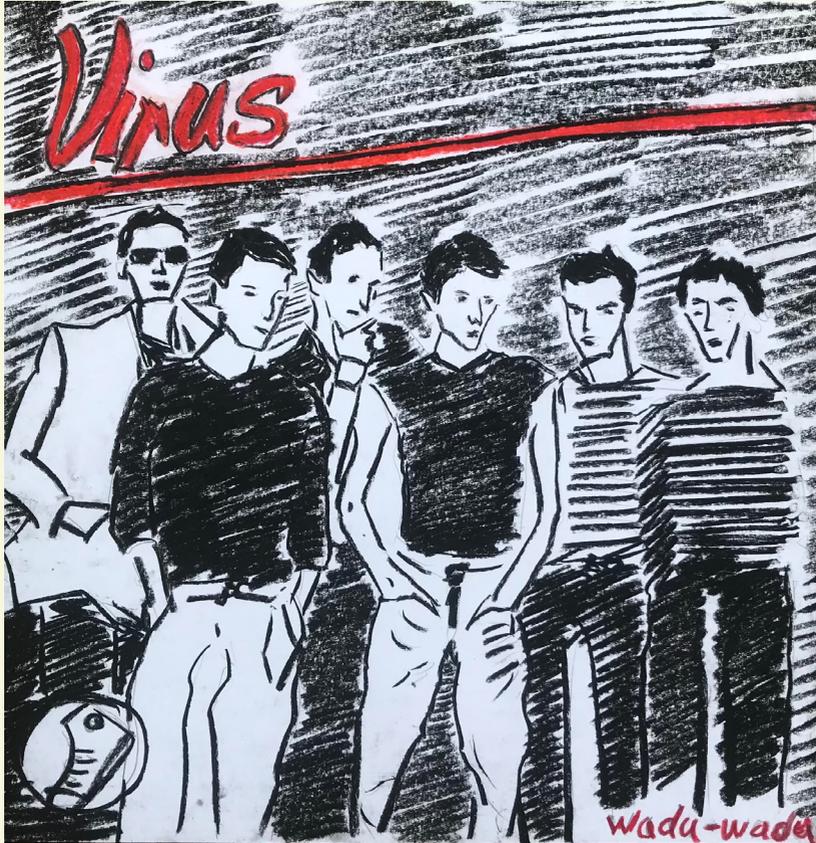
Rock, rock, rock, it's my way to love
Rock, rock, rock, it's my way to be
Rock, rock, rock, it's my way to love
Rock, rock, rock, it's my way to be

Rock, rock, rock, is my way to love
Rock, rock, rock, is my way to be
Rock, rock, rock, is my way to love
Rock, rock, rock, is my way to be

Rock, rock, rock, it's my way to love
Rock, rock, rock, it's my way to be
Rock, rock, rock, it's my way to love
Rock, rock, rock, it's my way to be

I just wanna rock you
For you to clear your psyche
I just wanna rock you
For my pleasure and fun

I just wanna rock you
In Old Constitution Park
I just wanna rock you
'Cause you belong to my time



Nacho Marciano, *wadu-wadu*, from *Virus Series Drawings*, 2022. Pastel on paper. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

El rock es mi forma de ser

Solo quiero sacudirte
 Para que veas las cosas como son
 Solo quiero sacudirte
 Para que dejes la vacilación

Solo quiero sacudirte
 Para que llegues a la más baja pasión
 Solo quiero sacudirte
 Para que cantes conmigo esta canción

Es el rock, rock, rock, que es mi forma de amar
 Es el rock, rock, rock, que es mi forma de ser
 Es el rock, rock, rock, que es mi forma de amar
 Es el rock, rock, rock, que es mi forma de ser

Solo quiero sacudirte
 Para que adoptes tu decisión
 Solo quiero sacudirte
 Para darme satisfacción

Solo quiero sacudirte
 En plaza Constitución
 Solo quiero sacudirte
 Porque sos mi generación

Es el rock, rock, rock, que es mi forma de amar
 Es el rock, rock, rock, que es mi forma de ser
 Es el rock, rock, rock, que es mi forma de amar
 Es el rock, rock, rock, que es mi forma de ser

(chorus x 2)



Roberto Jacoby, photo of the audience during a concert by Virus, 1986.
 Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

El banquete The Banquet

Lyrics by Roberto Jacoby for *Recrudece* (1982)



Nacho Marciano, *Recrudece*, from *Virus Series Drawings*, 2022. Pastel on paper. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

We have been invited
to a gorgeous banquet
There will be frozen desserts
and delicious sorbets

They sacrificed hundreds of lambs
to celebrate a presidential dinner
They have spent loads of money
and they promised a wonderful menu

It is quite a pleasant occasion
although a bit peculiar
Some general subjects
were thrown over the table

The chefs seem very familiar
they want us to taste their new recipes
The stew seems somehow overcooked
leftovers from a decade ago

But beware!
We, Argentinians
now have
irritable guts!

We have been invited
to a gorgeous banquet
There will be frozen desserts

and delicious sorbets
They sacrificed hundreds of lambs
to celebrate a presidential dinner
They have spent loads of money
and they promised a wonderful menu

The chefs seem very familiar
they want us to taste their new recipes
The stew seems somehow overcooked
leftovers from a decade ago

But beware!
We, Argentinians
now have
irritable guts!

El banquete

*Nos han invitado
A un gran banquete
Habrá postre helado
Nos darán sorbetes*

*Han sacrificado jóvenes terneros
Para preparar una cena oficial
Se ha autorizado un montón de dinero
Pero prometen un menú magistral*

*Es un momento amable
Bastante particular
Sobre temas generales
Nos llaman a conversar*

*Los cocineros son muy conocidos
Sus nuevas recetas nos van a ofrecer
El guiso parece algo recocado
Alguien me comenta que es de antes
de ayer*

*Pero cuidado
Ahora los argentinos
Andamos muy delicados
De los intestinos*

*Nos han invitado
A un gran banquete*

*Habrá postre helado
Nos darán sorbetes
Han sacrificado jóvenes terneros
Para preparar una cena oficial
Se ha autorizado un montón de dinero
Pero prometen un menú magistral*

*Los cocineros son muy conocidos
Sus nuevas recetas nos van a ofrecer
El guiso parece algo recocado
Alguien me comenta que es de antes
de ayer*

*Pero cuidado
Ahora los argentinos
Andamos muy delicados
De los intestinos*



Roberto Jacoby, photo of the audience during a concert by Virus, 1986.
Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

Ay, qué mambo Jumbled Mambo!

Lyrics by Roberto Jacoby for *Recrudece* (1982)

Ask for punk and get junk
or ask for rock and get a knock
or ask for tango and get a mambo
Ask for salsa and get a trauma

Just disco, disco music
Disco at the bars, disco at the clubs
In the air and in the skies

Disco, disco, disco, disco
Disco, disco, disco music

What a twist, what a jumbled mambo!
Now rock has sold its stock
Our song climbed to the stage
But this mirage will blur soon

Just rock
Rock, rock, rock
National rock on TV
on the radio, in the stadiums

Rock, national rock
Rock, national rock
Rock, national rock
Rock, national rock



Nacho Marciano, *Recrudece*, from *Virus Series Drawings*, 2022. Pastel on paper. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

Ay, qué mambo

*Piden punk y no les dan
 O piden rock y les dan un ñoqui
 O piden tango y los mandan al banco
 Piden salsa y les rebalsa*

*Solo disco, disco music
 Disco en bares, disco en clubes
 En el aire, en las nubes*

*Disco, disco, disco, disco
 Disco, disco, disco*

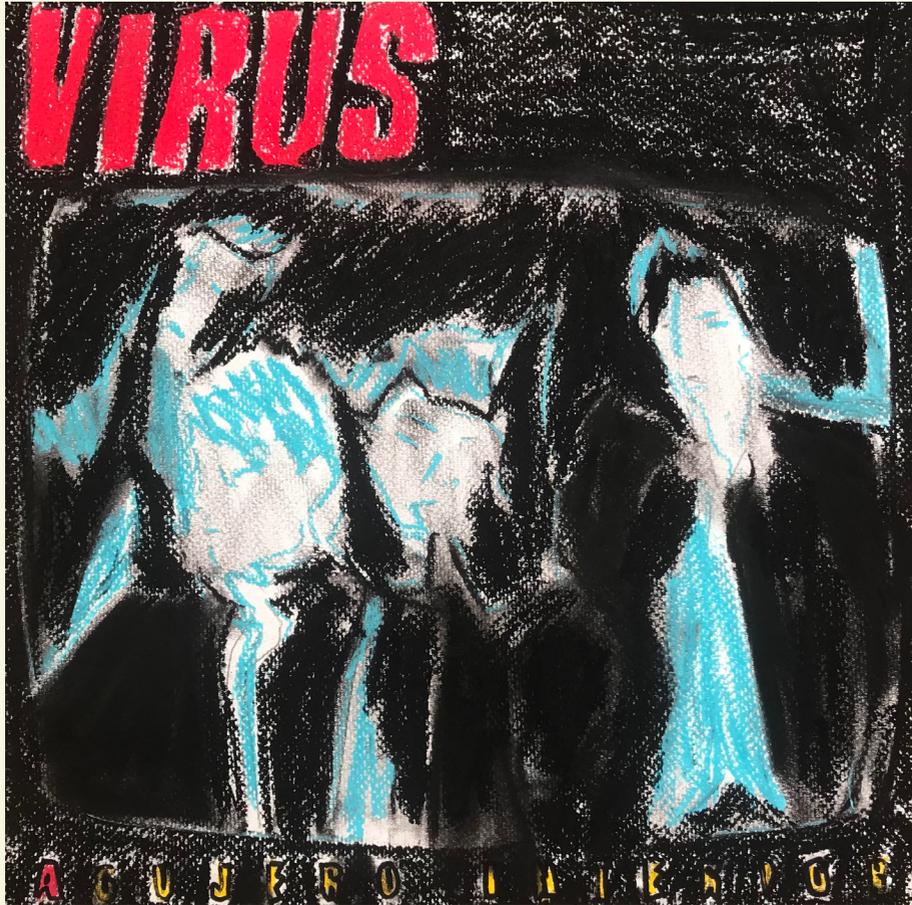
*¡Ay, qué mambo!, hay todo un cambio
 Ahora el rock, vendió el stock
 Nuestra canción salió al balcón
 ¿Hasta cuándo será este encanto?*

*Solo rock
 Rock, rock, rock
 Rock nacional, en el canal
 En las radios, en los estadios*

*Rock, rock nacional
 Rock, rock nacional
 Rock, rock nacional
 Rock, rock nacional*



Roberto Jacoby, photo of the audience during a concert by Virus, 1986.
 Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



Nacho Marciano, *Agujero interior*, from *Virus Series Drawings*, 2022. Pastel on paper. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

Hay que salir del agujero interior Get Out of Your Inner Hollow!

Lyrics by Roberto Jacoby for *Augero interior* (1983)

Get out of your inner hollow!
Punch against somewhere else
We don't need to be God
(We just need to muck sweat)
Mind, body, and soul at work

Be you life's dearest lover
No drama, just madness and lust
Gamble with your imagination
and never ask for permission

Get out of your inner hollow!
Punch against somewhere else
We don't need to be God
(We just need to muck sweat)
Mind, body, and soul at work

Be you life's dearest lover
No drama, just madness and lust
Gamble with your imagination
and never ask for permission

Be you life's dearest lover
No drama, just madness and lust
Gamble with your imagination
and never ask for permission

Get out of your inner hollow!

Hay que salir del agujero interior

*¡Hay que sacarse la ropa interior!
Largar la piña en otra dirección
No hace falta ser un ser superior
(Todo depende de la transpiración)
Poner el cuerpo y el bocho en acción*

*A la vida hay que hacerle el amor
Sin drama, con locura y pasión
Jugar con la imaginación
Sin tener que pedir perdón*

*Hay que salir del agujero interior
Largar la piña en otra dirección
No hace falta ser un ser superior
(Todo depende de la transpiración)
Poner el cuerpo y el bocho en acción*

*A la vida hay que hacerle el amor
Sin drama, con locura y pasión
Jugar con la imaginación
Sin tener que pedir perdón*

*A la vida hay que hacerle el amor
Sin drama, con locura y pasión
Jugar con la imaginación
Sin tener que pedir perdón*

¡Hay que salir del agujero interior!



Roberto Jacoby, photo of the audience during a concert by Virus, 1986.
Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



Nacho Marciano, *Locura*, from *Virus Series Drawings*, 2022. Pastel on paper. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

Destino circular Repeated Fate

Lyrics by Roberto Jacoby for *Locura* (1985)

Today, just by chance, I've left you locked
up for the third time
Of course, my prisoner, you broke my
door to run away

It's a repeated fate that spins around itself
This wicked whim makes me sick
Let me get out and be free

It's not by chance
Your brain will never understand
That your secret pleasure
Is to be prisoner of your master's rule

It's a repeated fate that spins around itself
This wicked whim makes me sick
Let me get out and be free

Today, just by chance, I've left you locked
p for the third time
Of course, my prisoner, you broke my
door to run away

It's not by chance
Your brain will never understand
That your secret pleasure
Is to be prisoner of your master's rule

It's a repeated fate that spins around itself
This wicked whim makes me sick
Let me get out and be free

Destino circular

*Hoy, hoy sin querer te dejé encerrada por
tercera vez* *Es un destino circular que gira en el mismo
lugar*
*Vos, vos sin dudar me rompiste la puerta
para escapar* *No tengo ganas de seguir
Quiero salir en libertad*

No, no, no es casual
Tu computer no da para descifrar
Que, que tu placer
Es estar atrapada por quien te va a atrapar

*Es un destino circular que gira en el mismo
lugar*
No tengo ganas de seguir
Quiero salir en libertad

*Hoy, hoy sin querer te dejé encerrada por
tercera vez*
*Vos, vos sin dudar me rompiste la puerta
para escapar*

No, no, no es casual
Tu computer no da para descifrar
Que, que tu placer
Es estar atrapada por quien te va a atrapar



Roberto Jacoby, photo of the audience during a concert by Virus, 1986.
Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

Superficies de placer Surfaces of Pleasure

Lyrics by Roberto Jacoby for *Surfaces of Pleasure* (1987)



Laid in your tempting, graceful ways
my passion blooms
far from anywhere

Dressed up like a divine dissolute
shaping impressions
in my loneliness

Keeping to myself
all surfaces of pleasure
Letting grow deep inside
my dreadful filthy coyness

I revel in your turned-sun body
God's blinding flesh
pure secret movement

I can dare to glimpse you high and low
like a voyeur on sweet holidays

And keeping to myself
all surfaces of pleasure
Letting grow deep inside
my dreadful filthy coyness

Laid in your tempting, graceful ways
my passion blooms
far from anywhere

Dressed up like a divine dissolute
shaping impressions
in my loneliness

Keeping to myself
all surfaces of pleasure
Letting grow deep inside
my dreadful filthy coyness

And keeping to myself
all surfaces of pleasure
Letting grow deep inside
my dreadful filthy coyness

Superficies de placer

*Toda mi pasión se elevará
Viéndote actuar
Tan sugerente
Lejos de sufrir mi soledad
Uso mi flash
Capto impresiones*

*Me adueño así
Superficies de placer
Dejo crecer
Mi tremenda timidez*

*Gozo entregándote al sol
Dándote un rol
Ambivalente
Puedo espiar sin discreción
Como un voyeur en vacaciones*

*Me adueño así
Superficies de placer
Dejo crecer
Mi tremenda timidez*

*Toda mi pasión se elevará
Viéndote actuar tan sugerente
Lejos de sufrir mi soledad
Uso mi flash
Capto impresiones*

*Me adueño así
Superficies de placer
Dejo crecer
Mi tremenda timidez*

*Me adueño así
Superficies de placer
Dejo crecer
Mi tremenda timidez*



Roberto Jacoby, photo of the audience during a concert by Virus, 1986.
Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



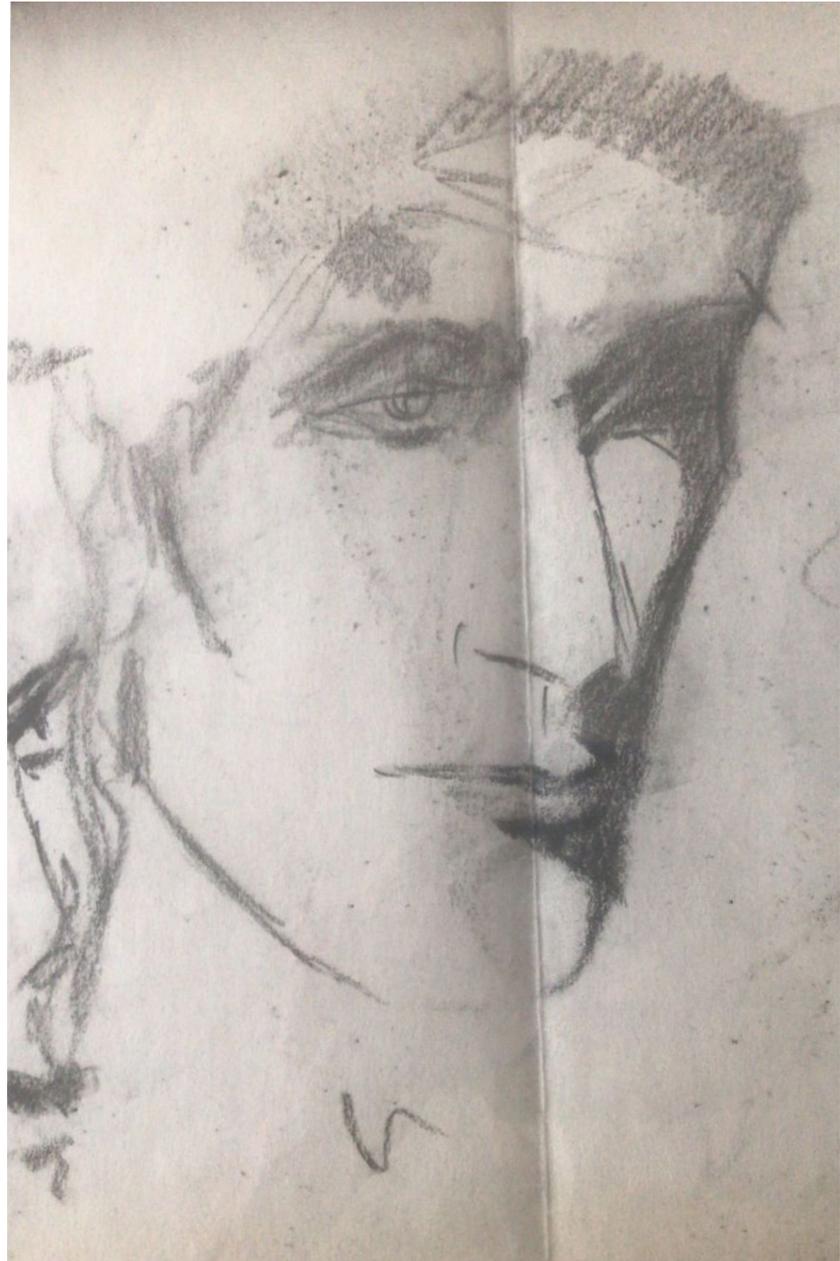
Roberto Jacoby and Federico Moura during a work meeting, 1987. Photo: Fernando Bustillo. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

Drawings of Federico Moura by Roberto Jacoby

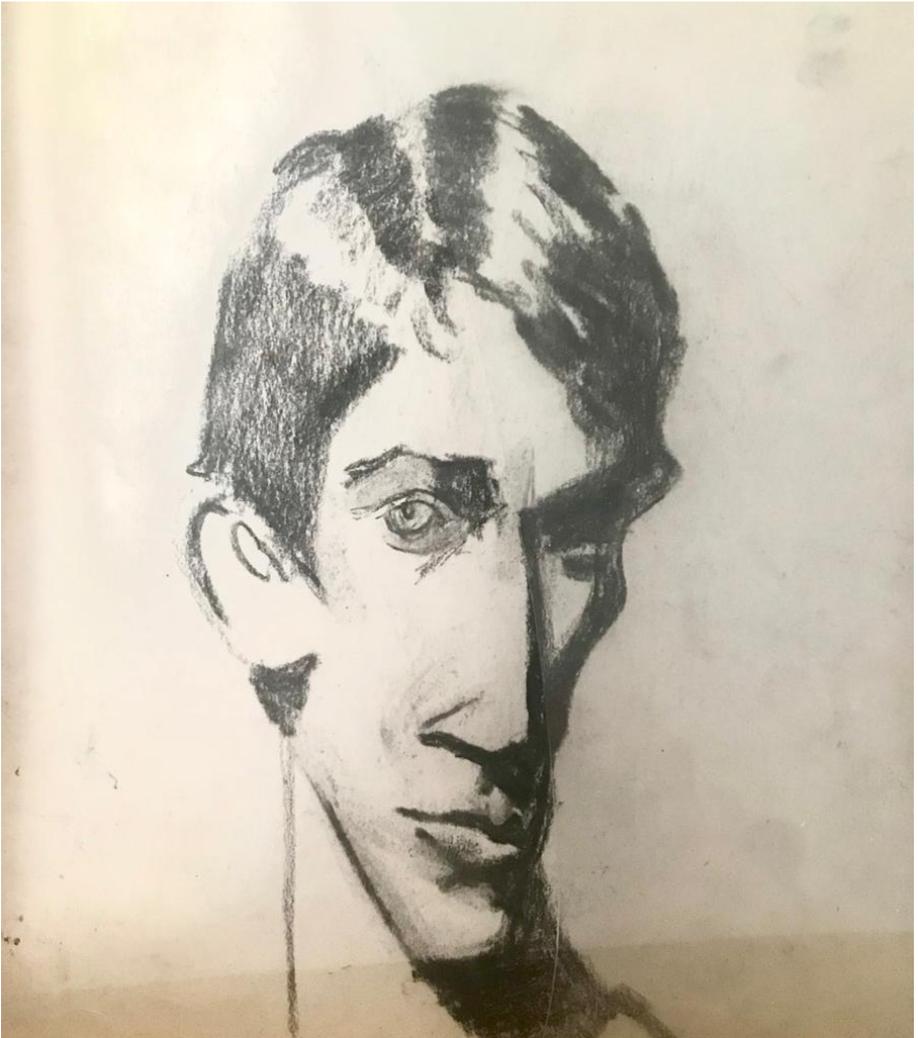
1985



Roberto Jacoby, *Drawings of Federico Moura*, 1985. Graphite on Paper. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



Roberto Jacoby, *Drawing of Federico Moura*, 1985. Graphite on paper.
Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



Roberto Jacoby, *Drawing of Federico Moura*, 1985. Graphite on paper.
Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

Vivir en un campo de concentración

Living in a Concentration Camp

Roberto Jacoby, 1984

Written in 1985. Published in *El deseo nace del derrumbe. Roberto Jacoby: Acciones, conceptos, escritos*, ed. Ana Longoni (Barcelona: Ediciones de La Central / Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora / Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia/Red Conceptualismos del Sur, 2011), 239–240. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

Towards the end of 1976, a German journalist visiting Argentina asked me if I had the feeling of living in a concentration camp. In a flash, those words clarified many experiences that I could not understand. The distrust of everyone; the prohibition to speak while waiting “in line”; the isolation of each person in the middle of the crowd; the ever-renewed hope of “saving oneself” by fulfilling a mechanical task or of becoming gray, of metamorphosizing; the presence in each micro-group of a representative of the camp management, of the “kapos,” people like us but dedicated to being a transmission pulley, the management’s control; the identification with the enemy; the fear of a worse situation (one of the keys is that there is always something worse).

One day, through the newspapers, we learned that there is a syndrome called “Stockholm syndrome,” according to North American psychosocial experts: it consists of the gratitude felt towards a captor when it is perceived that the captor will not physically eliminate the prisoner.

Later, we learned that in the Argentine concentration camps, these effects also took place; many of the prisoners assumed that there was always something worse, they were induced to think that there was something worse, but that there was also hope. The conviction is never final, but conditional (this also applies to the coup d’état). In 1972, armed events were on the rise, and this would not lead to a coup but to elections.

The reassuring definitions of the state as the monopoly of legitimate force over a given territory were never entirely true.

“Unemployed labor,” was Minister Troccoli’s diagnosis whenever journalists asked him about actions that brought into question the monopoly of force in the

hands of the state. He even once referred to them as “naughty” and the term “black hand” was also heard in Parliament. [...]

The description was amusing to those who appreciate radical¹ poetics, perhaps suspecting that his picturesque comment was revealing. That sympathetic way of referring to unemployed professionals and technicians was legitimizing them. Obviously, he was referring to those bossless salaried workers, who belonged or had belonged to that imprecise branch of activity known as “the agencies.”

This way of referring to intelligence agency officials as unemployed technicians was extremely realistic because it pointed to one of the many changes that have been insensibly taking place in the structure of the state.

However, it is known that the same officers who experimented at ESMA² were in charge of information and media relations from a secretariat of the presidency. It is not too far-fetched to think that the knowledge acquired by their social psychologists was applied on a massive scale to the population. Or that it is still working (that mechanism) under more discreet forms.

1. The Unión Cívica Radical (Radical Civic Union), the first parliamentary minority between 1973 and 1976, was originally an insurrectionary party: the Unión Cívica, which, in 1890—a year of “economic crisis,” strikes and rallies—mobilized the largest crowds ever seen up to that point in Argentine history at Plaza de Mayo, even taking up arms and assaulting police stations, in the unsuccessful Revolución del Parque... It is not the least of Argentine historical curiosities that the conspiracy—led by a revolutionary junta with an elaborate military plan, supported by the military lodge of “the thirty-three officers,” and which included the uprising of the fleet and the formation of armed civilian militias by the revolting regiments—involved the participation of the publisher of the newspaper La Nación (a newspaper founded in 1870) and former president of the nation, General Bartolomé Mitre. During the uprising, fifty “cantons” and barricades were formed by 2,500 civilians, who occupied one hundred blocks of what today is the center of the city of Buenos Aires. Later on, the Unión Cívica Radical was the main anti-Peronist force. Its parliamentary representatives were known for their vacuous and grandiloquent oratory, popularly known as the radical guitarra (charlatanism).

2. The Escuela Superior de Mecánica de la Armada (Navy School of Mechanics) was a clandestine detention center.—Trans.

Internos Internus

Roberto Jacoby, 1985

Written in 1985. Excerpt from *El deseo nace del derrumbe. Roberto Jacoby: Acciones, conceptos, escritos*, ed. Ana Longoni (Barcelona: Ediciones de La Central / Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora / Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia/Red Conceptualismos del Sur, 2011), 241–242. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

Internus is a circle for the dissemination of texts and intercommunication among its members.

It seeks to help connect those who write and research and to accelerate their access to materials of interest.

The relative impoverishment of culture in Argentina (in terms of devoted time; resources to buy books and magazines; availability of libraries, archives, and data banks; updating of universal scope) has added to the magnitude of the global growth of information, which makes it unmanageable, even among specialists working on a particular subject.

Unfortunately, computerized articles are not, as yet, a substitute for human intelligence, and we must increasingly rely on personal references to select and obtain the information we really need or to explore new ground. Frequently, the recommendation of a person whose opinion we find respectable is more useful and pertinent than the infinity of anodyne commentaries and bureaucratic bibliographies. On the other hand, it has become very common and necessary to borrow books and magazines (a practice contrasted by the natural and unfortunate tendency not to return them). In other words, certain personal relationships make it possible to reduce the aforementioned shortcomings.

Internus simply aims to widen the circle of intellectual “trust” in which one moves and to stimulate contacts, making them more regular.

The organization of Internus will primarily be based on the following guidelines:

- The proposition you are reading will also reach a certain number of people

according to the “snowball” technique: each of the recipients will nominate (if possible, providing address and telephone number) two other people with whom he/she would be interested in maintaining an exchange of information and will, therefore, recommend their incorporation into the Internus circle. These, in turn, would indicate four others, up to a number of participants that would not exceed one hundred.

The limit of this bibliographic “chain” would be given by the following biographical facts:

- Residing in Argentina.
- Residing abroad, but with bonds of interest with Argentina (Argentine professionals living abroad, exiled, scholars related to Argentine issues, etc.).
- Each member of Internus will be entitled to a letter-size page in which he/she may recommend books, articles, or any kind of texts read, commenting in a few lines the reasons for his/her interest. Eventually, opinions may also be expressed on other topics considered significant, without the need to refer to a published text.
- The membership list and its distribution service will be used by any member to send messages (cultural events, foreign visitors of interest, new books, etc.).
- To put the system into operation, it is necessary for each member to contribute a fee of thirty australes¹, which entitles him/her to write and receive three issues of *Internus*, that is, half a year of Argentine cultural life. In that period, it will be possible to measure whether this experience is worthwhile or not. Of course, everything depends on the disposition of the local elite. If the extremely serious situation we are going through has created the minimum basis of sanity, I have no doubt that the need to increase in real measures the interconnection, essential for individual development, will be a task that will seriously engage a group of thinkers. If not, this will be another good idea into the shredder. [...]

The system will also allow anyone to send texts to all or a number of people in the circle, without being asked to do so. This would probably energize the ideological, aesthetic, and cultural clash, making it more transparent and objective and, at the same time, a struggle of ideas.

1. Argentina’s currency between 1985 and 1988, as part of the economic plan of Minister Juan Sourrouille.

¿Fracasó la dictadura? Efectos ideológicos de la dictadura militar

Did the Dictatorship Fail? Ideological Effects of the Military Dictatorship

Roberto Jacoby, 1985

Article published in the magazine *El Periodista de Buenos Aires* 1, no. 24, February 22–28, 1985, 42. Published in *El deseo nace del derrumbe. Roberto Jacoby: Acciones, conceptos, escritos*, ed. Ana Longoni (Barcelona: Ediciones de La Central / Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora / Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía/Red Conceptualismos del Sur, 2011), 248–250. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

A book in flames. The scissors cutting frames of a film. Blacklists. Destroyed economy. The disappeared. These are signs that anyone can identify with the governments in power until 1983.

Through these images, the effects of power appear to us as obstacles, limits, prohibitions, concealments, annihilations. Their action seems to be governed exclusively by the partial arithmetic of subtraction, whose operations only admit diminution.

As exemplified in the idea of the man who decides to become mute and finally tears out his tongue, well used in the film *Tiempo de revancha* (*Time for Revenge*),¹ power is also measured by what is nullified, except that here it is exercised by the hand of the mutilated person himself, thus adding a new aspect to the complex and changing relationship between masters and slaves.

Those who refuse to poeticize recent history with the phrase “dark ages” because it would justify not having seen anything—at night all uniforms are gray—tend to conceive it as the product of a machine that shreds people, ideas, and economies. They are supported by a great deal of evidence. However, it may be useful to rethink the less spectacular, complementary aspects of the destructive process: not what they forbid us to say, but what they make us say and think. Not so much what they eliminated as what they built in ourselves.

In his great anticipatory comic strip *El eternauta*², written in the early 1960s, Héctor Germán Oesterheld imagined planetary invaders taking over the will of humans by means of a telecommand implanted inside the nape of the neck, through which stimuli penetrated directly into the brain.

Under that allegory, he anticipated those procedures that were somehow applied years later, during a struggle in which he participated and in which his trace is lost.

It is obvious that neither repression nor censorship could guarantee the conquest of the will of the population, an objective doctrinally assumed by the strategists of financial power. Through the omnipresent use of physical coercion, they could at most have prevented ideas or behaviors from being expressed. But the mission they attributed to themselves was broader and more permanent. It consisted of a victory over the most intimate part of the being, in popular senses and reason. It was a matter of taming dangerous mass rebellions in a period of desperate accumulation of capital and colossal changes in the productive structure of the Western world.

Thus, since the 1970s, while Japanese technology was being developed to make machines as sensitive and intelligent as workers, in Argentina—paradox of the international division of labor—experiments were carried out on how to robotize people. The notion of “brainwashing” suddenly became obsolete when it was realized that the mind is never blank: to nullify a set of ideas, it is necessary to replace them with others. It was a matter of reprogramming. Our hypothesis is that the real way to achieve it consists in adjusting the reading of reality, supplying the code with which we classify daily experience, introducing forms of observation and analysis. In this way, we become reproducers of the dominant discourse, we see the world through its optics, without the need for constant intervention to control us. Power acts productively and no longer negatively. It turns us into accomplices, often unknowingly.

In fact, the procedures with which robotization was attempted were more atrocious but also more subtle than in Oesterheld’s fiction. Unimaginable torments inflicted on the body were combined with rhetorical operations, linguistic games, and logical fallacies. These refinements were applied individually and selectively, but also massively and diffusely. Face-to-face and from a distance. There was re-

2. It is a classic of Argentine comic strips or drawn Argentine literature, published in 1957. Its scriptwriter was literally faithful to its plot until his death. In April 1977, he was kidnapped by the armed forces in La Plata, after the disappearance of his four daughters. Beyond fiction, in high German, German means “man who fights” and Oesterheld, “hero of the east.”

1. Argentine film directed by Adolfo Aristarain and starring Federico Luppi and Julio De Grazia, 1981.—Ed

distribution of income and population—massive migrations inside and outside the country—but also of concepts and values, beliefs, and convictions.

It is difficult today to answer some disturbing questions: Have the purposes that the “national reorganization process” set out in this field absolutely failed? To what extent did it achieve—besides the generally recognized disinformation and stupidity—an ineffable spiritual collaborationism that would last, under forms that we still do not know, and the undoubted massive complicity for many years?

There is no way of finding out as long as the constantly postponed debate is not opened with the excuse of a supposed healing coming from ignorance. It is true that, beyond what has been elaborated by human rights organizations—those who thus place themselves at the highest points of social conscience—little rationally founded reflection on recent history has been undertaken. So far, neither the parliament nor the political parties nor the university or academic circles have taken on the rigorous study of the facts, the starting point for any progress in knowledge.

Revolución con sex appeal Revolution with Sex Appeal

Roberto Jacoby, 1985

Written in October 1985. Published in *El deseo nace del derrumbe. Roberto Jacoby: Acciones, conceptos, escritos*, ed. Ana Longoni (Barcelona: Ediciones de La Central / Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora / Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía/Red Conceptualismos del Sur, 2011), 254. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

The revolution has to regain (yes, regain) its sexual attraction, which it now obscurely retains, more due to the desire of the revolutionary hedonists than to the ascetic revolutionaries. The revolution, once it had occupied the state, believed that social “order” was implied in morals and good manners, as the policeman of any country believes, although in some, the regime has decided to loosen the reins and to resume driving in another direction. Slowly, the capitalist states, in the phase of hegemony of financial capital, have chosen to control other spaces and territories. The relationship with the body of the subjugated must be modified since the aim is to extract their surplus value from very different productive processes.

Nowadays, it has become necessary for capital to consider new productive conditions capable of seizing the human body in a different way, attacking other contact points, and also other intellectual operations. Of course, the material relations in the material body of the worker vary, the way in which their bodies match, articulate, and combine in the technical machinery of production. But, along with these changes, the forms of consumption, of transport, the relation between the working day (that is, people’s lives, from the point of view of capital as extracting and absorbing labor power) and the time of consumption, the time in which the workers are buyers in the market (this is of interest to capital, as a seller of goods), also change. But what matters to finance capital is to control complete social processes, or at least part of them. How is this linked to the expansion of drugs?

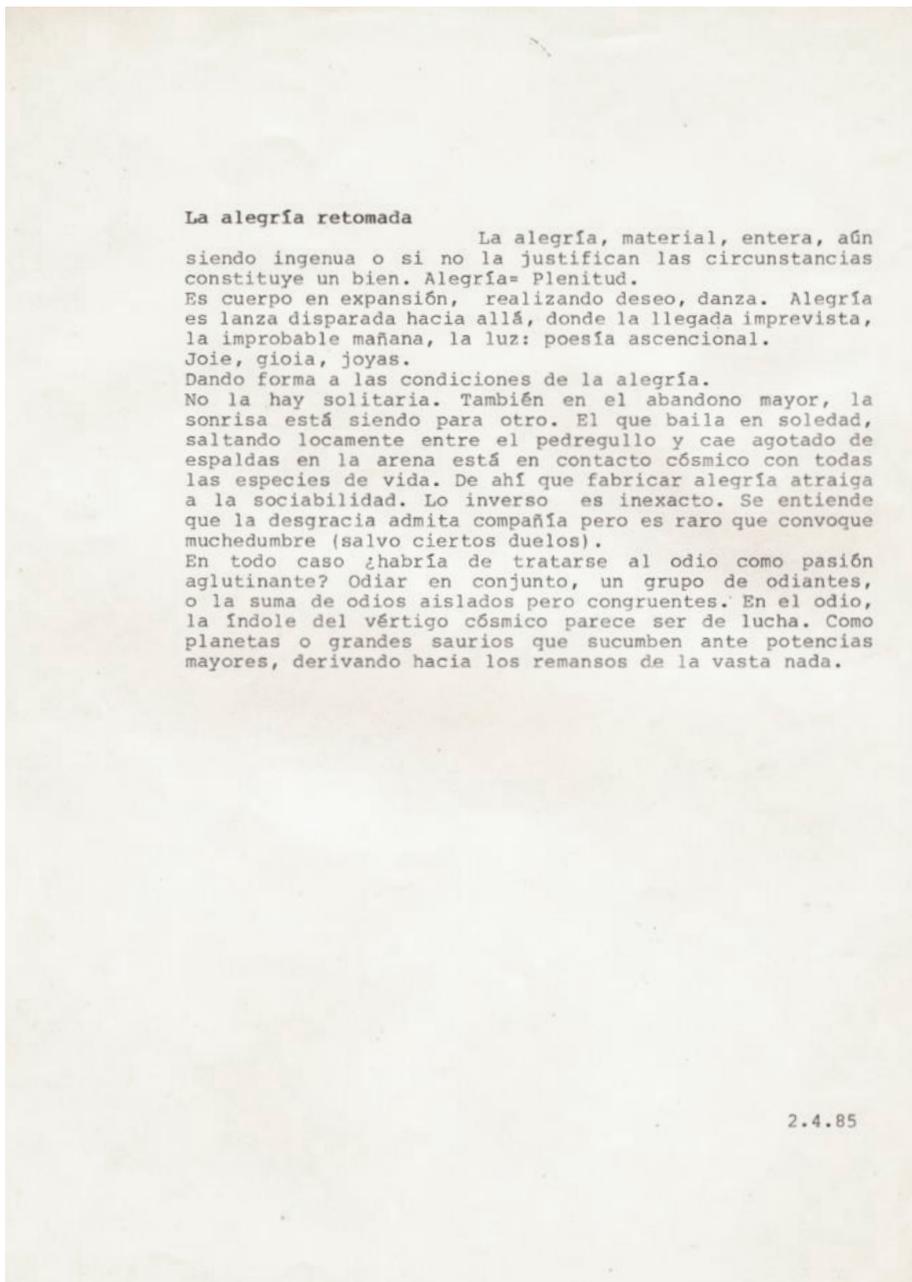
We must consider all aspects of each phenomenon, not only in isolation but also in their articulations. Because in practice they are also articulated, a little or a lot, or at least there is the possibility that they may be articulated, which must be

considered. All this was a roundabout way to point out determining factors of the liberalization of the habits of certain sectors of the population in large cities, but it is a phenomenon that would have to be seen in much more detail, since the most irresponsible spontaneous theories are circulating. For example, that the system uses drugs to turn youth away from the revolution, separate them from their Christian families and drag them into 20th century hedonism and materialism. Ultimately, the church is not wrong, since it is the revolution of the proletariat that truly makes pleasure available to all. I am aware that these opinions will arouse the wrath of some readers. But I invite them to reflect on the historical and transhistorical character of the distance between pleasures and needs. Each period determines the minimum necessities of life as well as the that which is recommended. Thus, nowadays it is necessary to have education, housing with so many square meters per person, health care, good clothes, and even fashionable entertainment, shows, and so on. In the past, these pleasures were reserved for the bourgeois strata. Only two hundred years ago, there was no culture to be consumed by workers. What we have now is a backward and adapted consumption of bourgeois culture by those at the bottom. They are consuming what is obsolete for the bourgeoisie. It is the bourgeoisie that creates and enjoys novelty and variety. Only in recent years, when the market began to be dominated by the youth, that is, by the new proletariat (due to the enormous expansion and concentration of the markets), did a more accelerated downwards diffusion of fashions¹ begin. The great vehicles are rock groups and media clips. From the beginning of the 1980s, clips, the happening created at the beginning of the 1950s and consumed by the bourgeoisie in the 1960s, have been massively consumed (of course, surrealism, dada, expressionism, and even romanticism also appear in clips).

This fast access to the most sophisticated goods of humanity, to a variety of forms of action, of life and of consciousness, is favored by the Keynesian market economy. In the USSR, where the revolution was concomitant and coincident with an extraordinary cultural effervescence that put the country at the forefront of Europe in terms of linguistics, semiology and literary criticism; painting and cinema; design and architecture, it then fell into a highly patterned classicism, very codified and with long-lasting guidelines, with rather rigid and ahistorical,

1. Even rich and complex cultural movements have arisen from the reprocessing of avant-garde and pop culture in the poorest neighborhoods of the United States, as seen in a whole range of phenomena such as rap, voguing, and street art.

partializing doctrines and theories. Art theory notably receded when it became unilateral and frozen. Dogmatism emasculated the immense creative richness of Marxism and Leninism. It was as if those reading systems were simply to be followed in their ways of reading and not to be understood in their process of producing reading systems. It is not only a matter of saying what Lenin could have said in his moments and with his instruments, but of understanding the process through which the production of social consciousness is made possible or hindered, the social and technical processes that allow a doctrine to be shaped, its history, its intersections, the absurd marriages that took place to give rise to the system of analysis. What processes occurred for this or that phenomenon to become an observable one, what global process involves all this human revolution process: it is not a question of thinking that we are evolving straight, but of what kind of a loop we are on.



La alegría retomada Recovering Joy

Roberto Jacoby, 1985

Written in October 1985. Published in *El deseo nace del derrumbe*. Roberto Jacoby: *Acciones, conceptos, escritos*, ed. Ana Longoni (Barcelona: Ediciones de La Central / Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora / Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía/Red Conceptualismos del Sur, 2011), Roberto Jacoby Archive.

Joy, material, complete, even if it is naive or if it is not justified by circumstances, constitutes a gift. Joy = Plenitude.

It is the expanding body, fulfilling desire, dance. Joy is a lance launched towards there, that place of the unforeseen arrival, the improbable tomorrow, the light: ascensional poetry.

Joie, gioia, jewels.

Shaping the conditions of joy.

There is no solitary joy. Even in the greatest abandonment, the smile is for the other. The one who dances in solitude, jumping madly among the pebbles and falls exhausted on his back on the sand is in cosmic contact with all species of life. Hence, making joy attracts sociability. The inverse is inaccurate. It is understood that misfortune admits company, but it is rare that it summons a crowd (except for certain duels).

In any case, should hate be treated as an agglutinating passion? Hate as a whole, a group of haters, or the sum of isolated but congruent hates. In hate, the nature of cosmic vertigo seems to be one of struggle. Like planets or great saurians that succumb to greater powers, drifting into the backwaters of the vast nothingness.

Notas dispersas sobre la cultura del rock: el sonido, la imagen y la furia

Scattered Notes on Rock Music Culture: The Sound, the Image, and the Fury

Roberto Jacoby, 1986

Article published in *Crisis* magazine, no. 42, May 1986, 72–74. Published in *El deseo nace del derrumbe*. Roberto Jacoby: *Acciones, conceptos, escritos*, ed. Ana Longoni (Barcelona: Ediciones de La Central / Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora / Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía/Red Conceptualismos del Sur, 2011), 262–267. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

SECOND-CLASS CITIZENS

From the mid-1950s on, the type of music that we, to simplify, call rock, hasn't stopped developing in terms of styles, instruments, audiences, and funds applied to its production and circulation. Improvement in the means of reproduction and distribution of sound is incessant. Massive phenomena of hitherto unseen magnitude articulated around this music that was invariably linked to a new category in the markets and in society: youth.

Gatherings of hundreds or thousands of people to listen to rock music force one to rethink the concepts of mass and music. Styles of personal adornment and behavior, moral criteria, and political activities have been established around rock's different variants. From its origins in the US and England, it has spread to the whole of the capitalist world and, in good measure, to socialist countries. On the other hand, peripheral countries such as India, Peru, Jamaica, and Panama also fed their sounds to the metropolitan production.

Youth, unknowingly and with the means at their disposal, are leading a battle in favor of a revolutionary universalism that their enemies are trying to expropriate. I wonder why, to a certain intellectual style, the rock phenomenon continues to be like a second-rate cultural citizen—a stranger whose language is not accurately understood and therefore instinctively rejected.

THE SOUND OF CRISIS

In rock, it is possible to hear one form that the sound of crisis takes, its horribly destructive rearrangements, which are, at the same time, productive of new ways of living; but for this, we have to listen to it.

At times, it's a deafening noise. Other times, there are intelligible melodies, retrievals of sounds forgotten or denied. Finally, the murmuring or the shouting of the unknown also emerges. All these elements are juxtaposed.

HAGEN, KHADAFI

Nina Hagen no sooner grunts than she trills against nuclear war, while on TV the F11s swoop down on Libya. I'm drinking maté and reading a Fidel Castro analysis on the external debt in *Le Monde*. What to call this situation? Which culture does it belong to?

The processes of decomposition and recomposition of all lifeforms go faster than our ability to find categories that encapsulate this baffling situation.

ARGENTINE ROCK?

Is it a terminological contradiction to talk about Argentine rock? Kind of like saying central European *chacarera*¹ or Dutch *tango*?

In fact, it cannot, for better or worse, be Argentine. But this is in the sense of being a particular way of perceiving and developing musical stimuli that come from diverse national sources. A reprocessing.

The fact that cultures are experiencing turbulence is inseparable from the current ways of internationalizing assets and from its solvent effect on the nation-states established in the last century—its counterpart, a new universalism that overcomes it.

US ROCK IN SPANISH

In the 1960s, a new way of internationalizing musical styles emerges. With the twist also comes pop stars singing in local languages: Rita Pavone, Johnny Halliday, the same in Japan as in Brazil.

However, English songs held sway or grew in a large part of the world, as a sort of Latin for musical universalism.

1. A genre of Argentine folk music.—Trans.

In fact, the bigger part of the audience doesn't understand English (which is regrettable given that the learning of languages is part of the right to an education), and its acceptance should be understood as a rejection: young people prefer an incomprehensible tongue to the idiotizing chitchat of their elders, the formal world. Spanish is the language of orders and commands; English, an Esperanto in which hope is barely whispered.

FOREIGN INFLUENCES

The issue is not so much that the foreign penetrates us with its images of the world, but rather that we receive merely a part of the global culture (a certain area called the West) and not always that of the best quality. We do not benefit from access to the totality of the world's information. And our methods of producing culture are restricted.

The claim should be, if anything, for the right of getting the best international music. We know little about the Neapolitan pop music movement (that does reach the US) or about Hungarian punk. Even the best US or British rock bands are known here only by an elite.

HAGEN, BRECHT

The rock culture feeds itself from the most diverse sources in contemporary culture. Nina Hagen, one paramount of international rock, who caused more uproar than delight in Argentina, is a known disciple of Bertold Brecht and was trained in the school of German *hypercultured cabaret*. The imprint of German expressionist opera is also noticeable in her singing.

ROCK AND REJECTION

In fact, a good portion of rock expresses, in many varied ways, certain spontaneous strategies for the rejection of oppressive politics. For example, the hippie movement arose and developed around large stadiums where the main rock bands of the time performed. One cannot doubt the impact that these pacifist tendencies had on the US retreat from Vietnam. Punk rock arises within the context of the decline of British imperialism, the incline in unemployment, and the loss of respect for monarchic structures. Reggae came about with the Black messianic movement in Jamaica. Other rebellions, perhaps, refer to micro-politics or simply didn't manage to reach larger-scale confrontations.

ROCK AND VANGUARD I

I see a vanguardist direction in modern culture, in which I include rock music. The tendency of having art express or use the results of the scientific and technological revolution in its materiality has appeared in almost all movements and schools since the beginning of the century. The most sophisticated vanguard schools in scholarly music dreamed of having the means of production and artificial treatment of sound that any good rock band does.

The most forward-looking musicians in current rock, like Brian Eno, acknowledge their debt to vanguardists such as John Cage, Karlheinz Stockhausen, or Pierre Schaeffer, masters of the scholarly tradition that are venerated by the makers of the popular tradition.

ROCK AND VANGUARD II

It's impossible to watch a video clip without thinking of Dada, collages, Pop Art, happenings, audiovisual experimentation, the creation of ambiance, or neo-Expressionism.

Andy Warhol, artist and cultural agitator, produces The Velvet Underground, an almost mythological group from which the best of current rock emanates. Yoko Ono was one of Japan's most prominent vanguard artists when she dedicated herself to music.

ROCK AND VANGUARD III

It's enough to enter certain discos to realize that in those unsuspecting places, the fantasies of a whole century of vanguard artists have been realized. Some dress in clothing similar to the designs of Soviet Constructivism or the Russian school of eccentric actors. Not only are there thousands of strange lights titillating, but also, fragmented and simultaneous images are projected onto the walls and the ceiling, as if dreamt up by El Lissitzky, a revolutionary architect from the 1920s, or Allan Kaprow, an artist from the 1950s. Characters resembling vampires retrieved from German movies of the first postwar era, theatrical makeup, weird new hairdos, erratic dancing—free and at the same time deliberate. The ambition of total spectacle, the fusion of art and collective celebration, the parties, and the invention of new rites have taken shape in an unexpected place. Images that can be categorized as insane or, at least, unacceptable (which today can be long hair, and tomorrow short) have an unequivocal meaning: to disprove the arbitrary coherency of that

which is real. It's about assimilating the game of what's possible as a criticism of a supposed natural order of things and bodies.

AN ART OF THE CAPITALIST PERIOD

Rock music, like film, is a capitalist art form. The artist is no longer an independent producer. In any case, even if one self-produces, one must know the marketing criteria of the huge capital applied to the business of communication. This situation has become more pronounced with time; the bigger the businesses, the fewer businesses control the market. This is so in all branches of production. The ability to transform every minute need, every desire, into a commodity is the moving force behind this era's capitalism. But claiming the invalidity of the products because of the capitalist nature of their production is a risky thing to do. It would be like denying Gothic cathedrals or the Romanesque simply because they were created under socioeconomic conditions typical of feudalism.

ENGINEERS OR ARTISTS

As also happens in film, technicians and specialists (sound and lighting engineers, photographers, costume designers, etc.) increase their relevance compared to the individual artist. This doesn't prevent there being a director, but he should keep in mind a great range of issues outside of the music.

From the latest phase in technologization, sound engineers (people who mix audio) acquire a sometimes decisive role.

From a different point of view, musical technology being within reach of all, which would make insignificant the expertise in its execution, would demand much more in terms of musical ideas.

MORE ON THE MARKET

To talk about market effects, it would be necessary to study them in detail, in their complete process of mutual determination with the production. It's impossible to conceive that a symbolic production of high complexity could be invented in a fully artificial way by a group of expert manipulators, independently of a completely deceived audience.

ROCK AND FASHION

I don't like the use of the concept of fashion to explain phenomena with massive acceptance. Precisely, what one should have to understand is why that fashion, and not a different one, comes about. What is the relationship between fashion and the period? What is so random and necessary about it?

POLITICAL YEARS OF ROCK IN ARGENTINA

In Argentina, we see two clear moments of rock music growth: 1972, when **Lanus-seism** sought to channel youth toward the electoral process; and 1982, when Galtieri tried to mobilize it in defense of the state, and radio transmissions in English are prohibited. At both times, naturally, the government must appeal to what it can find near—to the same groups of young people that, days previous, it bashed. A third moment is perhaps during the Alfonsinism, although this is more likely a change in form rather than an increase in extent.

NEW HAIRDOS

Coming out of the military retreat post-Malvinas (Falklands), new styles and sensibilities started growing in Argentine rock, without erasing those hitherto in effect. Modern listeners discredited the figure of a poetic magician, a leader, or a prophet, which many rock idols embodied in the 1970s and during military despotism.

Humor, dissolving and enlightening, has inspired a good deal of the most popular rock music since 1984, and shows a less naive and solemn taste, one sharper in its observations. In all, its levels and degrees are different, from the antiestablishment sarcasm of Los Twist to the hedonistic irony of Virus, or the erotic malignity of Las Viudas.

Language is used in a much more conscientious way, aware of its effects and possibilities, as a material for playfulness, for discovery, for suggestion.

In line with the tendency of receiving music with one's body (the Nobel laureate, Elias Canetti, was amazed at how concert halls had seats that impeded dancing to the symphonies), rock lyrics frequently allude to physical pleasure, legitimizing the search for joy or contact. Some, like Soda Stereo, propose subtle reflections on bodily processes and feelings that seem straight out of certain ideas by Michel Foucault. Others, like Sumo or Los Redonditos de Ricota, express a more instinctive and demanding passion.

And, of course, the great paradox of Argentine rock—that it was not possible or acceptable to dance to it—was gradually erased. Two great figures of the 1960s and 1970s, Charly García, first, and Luis Alberto Spinetta, presently, support dance music as a gesture of continuity to the Argentine rock movement.

A BACKGROUND MUSIC

The sounds of nature have almost all been banished from the human landscape. But not because engine or gear noises, factory or police force sirens—involuntary melodies, to a certain point—have replaced them. Imitating film, real life does not progress without an underlining sound, a melodic and rhythmic atmosphere, evocative or provocative.

That’s why young people, those who wish to hear different music, connect to their Walkman headphones to program their own sonorous space. Or they occupy the others’ territory with an invasion of decibels that foreshadows a race of mutants or deaf people. Perhaps more insidious than images, sounds penetrate through every crack. I could eventually unplug the TV, but from anywhere, all around, a background music emerges.

THE SOUND, THE IMAGE, AND THE FURY

Rock’s most original contribution is in the field of sound and image. But, as regards the verb, the situation has yet to be defined. The attempt to process and direct the rock phenomenon that its enemies make is incessant.

The issue at hand is how to find a discursive equivalent in the musical and visual planes. It’s evident that it will be found neither in protest nor in nostalgia but in a type of remarks that allow one to move with one eye on the past and the other on the future, to overcome the incorrect cultural confrontations presented to us, and to produce a miraculous algebraic sum with all that exists. Redefining, in our own words, the profile and meaning of our discontent.

¡Mirá cómo tiemblo! Look How I Tremble!

Roberto Jacoby, 1986

Article published by *Crisis* magazine, no. 47, October 1986, 3–12. Published in *Eel deseo nace del derrumbe. Roberto Jacoby: Acciones, conceptos, escritos*, ed. Ana Longoni (Barcelona: Ediciones de La Central / Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora / Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía/Red Conceptualismos del Sur, 2011), 275–297. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

To what extent the current constitutional period is an era conditioned by terror and the aftermath of the military dictatorship is something that analysts of Argentine reality rarely ask themselves. At the same time, there are certain groups that claim that the inherent weakness of democracy is in providing security to its citizens. On the other hand, certain handling of criminal news, which has intensified in recent months, has spread the issue of fear on a massive scale.

In the following pages, *Crisis* provides an exploratory investigation, based on personal surveys, in an attempt to sketch the face of the threat. The aim is to identify the concrete forms it acquires and the spaces it occupies in the relationships between people, the scenarios of risk and protection, who the feared people are, and the different reactions to disturbing situations.

METHODOLOGY

This is an exploratory study. The aim of the survey was to approach a little-known field of problems with as little prejudice as possible. The aim was to be surprised by the results and to better define the topic, rather than to explain or describe it. In order to satisfy the conditions of an explanatory or descriptive study, we should have had a much more precise delimitation of the subject and, of course, greater resources. Our sample consisted of ninety interviews of residents of the City of Buenos Aires and the Greater Buenos Aires area, selected according to certain characteristics that, initially, could potentially differ regarding the issue of fear. That is to say, a quota sampling.

The participants were divided into 2 equal groups based on sex (45 subjects in each), 3 age levels (30 subjects between 15 and 20 years old, 30 between 25 and 30 years old and 30 between 40 and 45 years old), and 3 groups according to socio-economic status (30 wage-earning and labor level subjects, 30 middle level, and 30 professional, hierarchical, and business level).

Data collection took place during the first week of August, that is, at the very beginning of the mass-media paroxysm regarding “delinquency” and “gangs” that was finally culminated towards the end of the month.

In order to simplify data analysis, we have prepared some numerical charts, as well as a selection of approximate textual responses to illustrate the qualitative analyses. A couple of considerations for reading the graphs: due to double or triple responses (e.g., one can have two or more fears), the sum of the percentages exceeds 100%. In addition, since this is not a probability sample, the figures should be considered gross indicators intended to build substantive hypotheses, without any pretensions of generalization.

The central promise of the ruling party was perhaps to “put an end to fear.” In 1983, it seemed that Argentine history was going to be cut into two. Before: a time defined as “dark” (the nocturnal tone is ancestrally propitious for all the abuses and frightening fantasies). Now: Dr. Alfonsín. Therapeutics were graphed in the electoral advertising billboards. Ahead of the spectator coming from a black corridor lies a hopeful door opened towards the luminous exterior: “exit to life.”

To overcome what-happened-to-us! When we tried to clarify this stubborn euphemism, the explanation was found too soon to be true and, above all, useful. It consisted of the giant figure of Terror (with a capital T), which was charged on all sides. For some, it was plain terrorism, for others, “state terrorism.” The remaining ones proclaimed the dominant, but no less conspiratorial, historical thesis: the two demons.

The broad consensus of 1983 had been precisely that: the general coincidence of having been victims of that omnipresent, enslaving fear called “terror.” In fact, those who spoke on behalf of the different sectors of Argentine society described themselves as subjects who had, at some point, gone through an experience of “terror.” They were “terrorized” or, at least, “ex-terrorized.” There were also plenty of political scientists who explained the Radical¹ party success on the basis that

1. The Unión Cívica Radical (Radical Civic Union) party.—Ed.

an implicit party of fear had been formed, a presumed “mishmash” into which frightened people of all stripes would end up.

If this hypothesis is accurate, the current constitutional period would be legitimized and sustained on the precarious balance of reciprocal fears. The growing demobilization of mass political activity as well as the lack of response to the recurrent appeal to “participative democracy” could also find its origin in the sediments of dread. But this would mean advancing too far on certain assumptions that would make it impossible to read the results of this research, when it is only a justification of the chosen topic that we wish to expose to reflection and, if possible, to debate.

Even in the absence of this component of local relevance, the question of fear is nevertheless a decisive issue. Not only does it constitute an important chapter in psychology and sociology, but it is also the essential element in various political theories as well as in ethology. There is also a neurophysiology of fear and although all these instances or approaches have not been unified in a joint treatment, it is very likely that each of them assembles some of its pieces in the great mechanism of fear.

On a fairly general level, it could be said that fear is a process that begins with the perception of a threatening stimulus, object, or representation and causes, as an immediate reaction, the interruption of the activity that the subject was carrying out. The following phases may consist of escaping or acting to eliminate the threat when this is considered possible, or when escape is not feasible. In the latter case, it has been observed that this defensive confrontation is accompanied by a fury that is all the greater the more intense the terror previously experienced. In cases where both escape and fighting seem impossible, there is an inhibition of action, an adaptation of behavior to danger demands.

Fear is a universal experience. Many animal species, including humans, learn to be afraid in the early stages of life. Therefore, several theories attribute an important role to fear-triggered behaviors (preservation or combat) in the interaction with the environment and in the evolution of organisms and societies.

Within the central nervous system, there are subsystems that enable the storage of satisfactory behaviors, but which trigger processes of flight or defensive aggression in certain cases, and inhibition of action in others. These situations are governed by two different neurohormones. Adrenaline deals with fear and leads to action, fight or flight, while noradrenaline is linked to anguish, waiting in tension, as a result of the

inability to control the environment. According to the neurophysiologist Henri Laborit, when the inhibition of motor activity—protective against a superior aggressor—is not effective in avoiding the threat, a vicious circle of glucocorticoid release in successive waves is provoked. This would determine numerous pathologies. The relationship between the organism and the environment is mediated by the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal system and its disturbances are the origin of various diseases, from ulcers to autoimmune diseases, hypertension, and tumors. Laborit goes so far as to refer to psychosomatic ailments as behavioral inhibition disorders.

Beyond pathogenic anguish, there would be an even more harmful state: depression. While there is a possible action in the tense waiting of anguish, the depressed person has already lost that hope.

The threat does not always involve a real danger—many fears are purely imaginary—but precisely when this fantasy component is high, it functions as a sign of a very special individual or social state.

FEAR AND KNOWLEDGE

Terror, one of the extreme manifestations of fear, bewilders, alters the ability to reason. This influence on the intellectual faculties (theorized by Carl von Clausewitz) has been used since primitive times in warfare: horrifying screams and terrifying masks were part of the arsenal of the ancients.

According to some authors, there is a state prior to fear: anguish. It lacks a defined identity and is experienced as an inner state without any obvious referent. Fear, on the other hand, is the outcome of a differentiation process that identifies the agent that causes it and enables us to organize the necessary actions to confront it.

Knowledge, in itself, has incessantly narrowed the sphere of action of fear. There was no end to primitive scares. Natural phenomena (thunder or lightning) were only part of a world populated by catastrophic signs that were mitigated through innumerable prohibitions and constant incantations. Monotheistic religions concentrated their threat on a special kind of malignity—the demons—and limited their territory to hell, a long burning, payable in obedience.

Finally, the current scientific civilization has produced another reduction and localization of religious fears. All fears are likely built on an archaic background, but more and more their discourse is enunciated in rational terms. Natural and supernatural fears give way, more or less rapidly, to social fears. The relationship

between power and threat is well known to all, particularly to those who exercise it in order to impose their will and interests. In his book *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault showed the transition from the spectacular and annihilating manifestations of power in absolute monarchy to the devices of monitoring and disciplining where punishment is virtual but gradual and omnipresent (the panoptic method).

However, at the same time that the strategies of power of the bourgeoisie adopted these new methods, terror was also systematized. While it was used against the aristocrats in the first French Revolution, in the following ones (1848 and 1871), the victims were the masses.

Nobel laureate Elias Canetti, in his remarkable work *Crowds and Power*, relates the topic to the remote link between predator and prey. The threat of death on the part of the hunter, he argues, is the oldest form of issuing an order. All other orders accepted in social life derive from it.

A more comprehensive perspective on the issue of discipline and order would say that its fulfillment is only guaranteed because terror is renewed through the permanent execution of death sentences, of exemplary massacres.

The political use of fear is a technology that is constantly being perfected. The mass media, especially television, also modifies the coordinates of the social imaginary in terms of fear. Threatening messages that used to take days to spread and be distorted, can now be communicated instantly and unanimously. Information is processed so as to construct a reality where death and mutilation reign, alternatively frightening or outrageous: any strategy of power involves both creating enemies and exhibiting the danger of one's own strength.

However, fear, as an instrument of social manipulation, is extremely dangerous for those who wield it. It is not only power that feeds on fear, so do religions and mass mobilization. The perception of collective dangers helps to form social bonds that otherwise would not have been formed. It is known that the boundary between escape, paralysis, and anger is subtle. At the same time, the hypercomplex social processes that may be generated by these experiments are never entirely controlled, are unknown. Although fear is universal, its form and effects are never identical.

In today's Argentina, there is reason enough for us to be aware of the silhouette that threatens us. We ask ourselves: Are there remnants of political terror? Is

fear or anguish prevailing? What effects does it exert on the shaping of daily and institutional social life? Is there a real danger behind our ghosts? Is it possible to free ourselves from the threat?

To a large extent, it is a question of survival.

RADIOGRAPHY OF PHOBIAS

Of course, there is a great difference between real fear and spoken fear, and the meaning of this term is inevitably associated with a particular culture. The images or ideas it evokes will depend on a certain history, lived or narrated, either well understood or barely intuited.

This blurred landscape was the one we wanted to capture with a very general question: what are all the images, words, or ideas that appear when faced with the word fear? First surprise: the matrix of all anxieties, death (which, along with its entourage of illnesses and pain, one's own or that of loved ones, shapes the natural and basic fear) is mentioned by an important fraction, but less than expected. The same happens with the classic phobias: fear of heights, rejection of confinement or of open spaces, and fear of certain animals also do not play a preponderant role. God or the Devil, who in other times would have been piously and self-consciously identified with fear, are barely remembered in isolation. Fears of a social nature are most frequently mentioned: fear of aggression or the threat of physical aggression and of what could be called, in a synthetic form, the future (see table I and answers A, B, and C, on pp. 281–283).

Many of the participants feel susceptible to being hurt, pressured, or harmed. The interviewee perceives him/herself as vulnerable. Sometimes the word fear is associated with nouns, more or less abstract: "violence," "society," "drugs," "national security doctrine," "weapons," "authoritarianism," "war" or "military coup," "rape." Others imagine specific actions of varying degrees of generality: homicides, attacks, and assaults with or without weapons, robberies, rape and kidnapping or harm to children, torture, operations. For some, the action is quite unclear: "Anything can happen." Sometimes, the interviewee fears for himself, other times, he evokes his wife or his children. There are those who point to places that represent their insecurity (the street, prison). And there are those who are directly afraid of having their briefcase or jacket taken away.

Some of them evoke fear personifications, again with more or less specificity in their actions and instruments: the “gangs,” the “kids,” the “crooks,” the “military,” the “cops,” the “authoritarians,” the “elders.”

But whatever the level of enunciation, two clearly distinct groups emerge. One of them refers to the institutional sphere where the state’s armed forces prevail, categorized into two sectors: the military and the police. The other contains much more confusing images, full of nuances that we call the noninstitutional. This refers to a more or less diffuse zone of criminality. Here, there is mention of everything from concrete personal experiences to obvious references to the latest news (the event of the pregnant woman subdued in a moving bus was a favorite piece) or more ancestral fears such as child abduction.

In any case, it is a relatively diffuse, social threat, at the same time aimed directly at the heart, at the individual body of the one who fears, or at its biological or affective extension.

As for the institutional threat, it involves a clearly and univocally identified character: a uniformed person, someone of rank and function in the power structure.

But the radius of action of his threat involves collectivities more than individuals: “what they did to the country” or “the rupture of democracy,” “the disappearance of thirty thousand people.” Just as fear of the noninstitutional is located in the street, fear of the institutional has no territory.

According to our measurement results, it is not possible to state, with certainty, the predominance of either of the two.

In one way or another, a good number of those consulted identify the word “fear” with aggressions coming from the authorities. It is difficult not to attribute this fear to a recent experience, but we would not know how to read it correctly. Does the extent of this fear constitute a success or failure of power? Doesn’t power need, at least in part, to be feared? And does it not aim, as the ultimate display of its power, to impose itself naturally, with the impersonality of a habit, through the “active consent of the governed”?

THE DECLINING FUTURE

Finally, and also spontaneously, an anguish inverse to the previous one arose. It does not stem from a long-survived past, but from an indefinite future. It does not refer to the mutilation or torment of the actual body, but to the infeasibility of developing, of being. For some, it would be represented as an actual loss (of work, for example). For others, it consists in the foreseeable frustration of hopes either on the professional or vital level.

In a certain way, it would be a fear of life or of an incomplete, painful existence. It is also the fear of the unknown, of a beyond, but placed in the immediacy of tomorrow. On this level, the course of time is not stable. Yesterday, today, and the future are not seen as equivalent. The son thinks that his place or destiny will not be equal to or better than that of the father. He foresees a decline.

It is symptomatic that this category of anguish is even stronger among teenagers, and that it has little impact in the labor sector, with a tendency to increase in the middle stratum and, even more so, in the relatively prosperous. It could be thought that among the former, the image is related to an obstructed growth, while among the latter, to a difficulty in reproducing their current situation.

Other differences among socioeconomic sectors are revealing. At the labor level, the word “fear” refers more to a danger that could be called “criminal” and there is relatively little fear of the uniformed. Exactly opposite tendencies are observed in the middle and business or professional sectors. This topic will reappear later when we deal with the social representations of threat and security.

I. ALL THE IMAGES, WORDS, OR IDEAS THAT POP UP FROM THE WORD: “FEAR”	
BEING PHYSICALLY ASSAULTED 62%	From the institutional sphere 33%
	From the non-institutional sphere 22%
FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OR PROJECT FAILURE 37%	
DEATH, ILLNESS OR GRIEF 37%	
COMMON PHOBIAS 18%	

THE ANSWERS

A) Institutional threat or aggression

- Men who have some power, some authority, when they become strong because of their possession of certain instruments such as weapons (seventeen years old, high school student).
- People, some people to whom they owe a lot of respect, adult people: bosses, authoritarian people (twenty years old, woman, a doctor's daughter).
- The military, coup d'état, war, bombs (seventeen years old, student, a lawyer's daughter).
- Abuse of power: the disposal of another person's life. Feeling of suffocation. A memory of my violent father: my old man's hand on my face (thirty years old, married, three children, professional, swimsuit manufacturer).
- A military coup. Police operation (forty years old, separated, one son, broadcaster).
- The police force repressing a protest group's fair request; the national security doctrine, the possible non-democracy of the future. Authoritarianism, impunity. Fear of not being allowed to think (nineteen years old, fine arts student, deceased university-educated father).

B) Noninstitutional aggression or threat

- Violence, being attacked, gangs, rape, terror (twenty-seven years old, married, lawyer).
- When I walk with my child, I am afraid that they will try to kidnap him, there are many child thieves. Once, a lad tried to take him out of my arms in a park. Fear of being attacked in the street for one austral² (twenty-six years old, married, one child, municipal employee).
- Walking at night, being assaulted, and beaten... by the police (seventeen years old, incomplete primary school, office assistant, unemployed father).
- I am afraid of the society around us, of drugs, of alcohol, which is bad for everyone, I think society is sick because of alcohol and drugs. I am afraid that even a relative of mine might steal, kill, or something like that (twenty years old, retail employee, son of a store owner).
- Walking alone at night with my child, that someone might take my child away

from me (twenty-five years old, married, one child, domestic employee, married to a worker).

- Drugs, gangs, bad friendships in the street that lead to stealing, to killing (thirty years old, widow, two children, domestic employee, husband was a public employee).

C) Fear of the future

- Fear of not achieving the things I want, the ones I have in mind. Fear of being alone (twenty-five years old, owner of a tourism agency).
- Lack of work (forty-two years old, anesthesiologist).
- Fear of getting attached to something and that people disappoint me; fear of disillusionment (sixteen years old, student, daughter of a cab owner).
- I am afraid that the country will go backwards, that the things I plan will turn out the wrong way, or that what I do does not seem right to the people important to me (sixteen years old, commercial employee, daughter of a janitor).
- I would not like my son to have to open cab doors (twenty-eight years old, married, one son, cab driver).
- Desperation, insecurity, the situation the country is going through, not finding a job. I have been looking for a month now (twenty years old, incomplete high school, son of a restaurant owner).
- Fear of being paralyzed by fear, of the future, about my children, of what is going to happen, of everything. I'm afraid that everything will go back to the way it was before (nineteen years old, retail employee, university student).
- I am afraid for my children, for their future, because the situation of the country is increasingly distressing and there are prospects for only a few (forty years old, married, three children, perfume retailer).

THREAT SCENARIOS

The next phase of the questionnaire sought to investigate the location of the threat: where, when, what objects and situations produce the highest levels of insecurity. In order to draw a clearer significance map, the questions were asked again regarding spaces, times, things, and protective scenes.

It was difficult for the interviewees to analytically separate these dimensions: almost always the place was connoted by the time of day and both of them by the image of a situation involving objects. That is to say, there were no "pure" answers,

2. Argentina's currency between 1985 and 1988, as part of the economic plan of Minister Juan Sourrouille.—Trans.

ENCLOSURE AND SHELTER

The areas of protection are at the opposite pole. A very large majority considers an interior, almost always one's own home, as the safest, and a small segment refers to places of work or study. The security zone is neither very extensive nor varied. It is a place known to exhaustion. A pleasant or at least familiar form of confinement (see chart III A, on p. 290). For some animal species, one's own territory, where one eats, sleeps, or defecates, is the area where fear is lost. It has been noticed that these animals flee until they reach their territory and once there, they are ready to counterattack. Then it is the pursuer that undertakes the escape.

There is also an outside that is mentioned, by a minority, as protective, but often it is the neighborhood, the city itself, rarely natural spaces such as the sea or the countryside. Could it be thought that the safety zones are related, in quite a direct way, to real estate? In some cases, the safety zone is minimal: it is reduced to the room itself, sometimes just the bed.

Just as there was a group that perceived places of confinement as threatening, there is another similar group that feels secure within four walls, even if it is not their home but schools, faculties, or places of employment.

The character of the spaces is also visible in another type of social burden that respondents attribute to them. The fear of lonely and dark places has its symmetrical aspect, though much less widespread. The fear of crowded places, of the masses. It is not only the solitary or grouped hunter who is feared.

However, it should be noted that, frequently, the images refer to a mass in panic, close to disintegration, with its internal struggle, attacked, repressed. Rarely are mass scenarios mentioned as protective. An additional fact may be curious: when talking about threatening objects, weapons (almost always knives and revolvers) are often mentioned, but this does not occur when mentioning protective objects. It is as if the interviewees only see the weapons being pointed at them, and not from the grip. Bombs hardly appear even in their atomic-missile variant, which is of so much concern in other latitudes.

What would have been the answer ten or twelve years ago? Are these devices not named because they detonate less frequently? Or do explosives make less of an impression on the spirit than the weapons being wielded?

but rather the whole discourse, in its multiple references, pointed to the same thing: the person consulted was included in some form of social connection (see charts II A, II B and answers D and E, on pp. 285–287).

In any case, the clearest and most generalized indicator turned out to be territorial: the place of the threat and that of the protection. Time and situation, as well as the objects involved, contextualize the spatial dimension in the same direction as the threatening characters. Space, like the other dimensions, is essentially social, because it is impregnated by the presence of the other. First remark: the main threat for everyone is on the outside. Practically no one has failed to mention a place of transit: the street, a means of transport, a vacant lot or a station. However, a considerable group, albeit a minority, also mentioned an area of confinement (either exceptional, such as prison, or daily, such as school or work) as the locus of their fear. A detailed analysis of the data shows that, in many cases, fear of confinement shows a link with authorities. This group would tend to increase with socioeconomic level and would be greater among teenagers.

Phobias of open space seem to be, as a rule, the most frequent. A study of pathological cases in France states that 60% of severe phobics avoid open spaces³. This is not, of course, the case of those interviewed in Buenos Aires, who are able to go outdoors even if they are wary of it.

The nightmare of the outside often combines with night or darkness. Threat does not let us see its face: the more undefined it is, the worse it is. We do not see it, but, imaginatively, we are seen. It is almost always a solitary place, where one feels abandoned by others, at the mercy of a hunter or a group of hunters. One becomes a moving target. As a passerby, one feels easy prey. Against the background of a place without people, our figure is cut out, it becomes individualizable. It can be selected. The other spatial image of fear is different. The minority that feels the threat of confinement fears not only the sporadic, sudden, unexpected attack, but also a more permanent, slowly developing situation. In confinement, the body is limited in its movements or is still. Body reactions are too predictable, and it is difficult to change them. The body is already prey.

3. Jacques Corraze, *Les maladies mentales* (Paris: PUF, 1977).

II A. TERRITORIAL THREAT	
ISOLATED PLACE 43%	OUTSIDE 97%
STREET 31%	
MEANS OF TRANSPORT 31%	
PRISON –SCHOOL 14%	INSIDE 23%
CROWDED PLACE 23%	

D) Threatening scenarios

- When I am walking through a dark place where there are unknown people, arriving late with my girlfriend, someone ordering me “Do this or I’ll knock your girlfriend’s head off” (twenty years old, student, son of a customs broker).
- The soccer field, a demonstration, some train rides, at night, the cafeterias, the army, the arrogance (twenty–seven years old, married, one son, lawyer).
- A torture session and the tortured man’s best friend saying: “They probably took him away for a reason.” I see the police ready to suppress when I am at a demonstration (nineteen years old, student).
- In public places, with a lot of people, at River’s stadium (twenty years old, high school incomplete, unemployed).
- In rallies, seeing the police with guns, gas, rubber bullets (twenty–eight years old, psychologist).
- Among crowds, I am very scared of the crowd, the agglomerations. If I think about it rationally, I am scared of social and political changes that alter my way of life (forty–five years old, married, two children, shopkeeper).
- Injustice, misery, because it sets people against each other. People feel aggressive out of an instinct for self–preservation. Dissatisfaction destroys solidarity. Impunity is the greatest threat. All the unpunished murderers at large (forty–five years old, separated, four children, high school teacher).
- The exit of dancing parties, one always tries to get away when the patrol car is in the street, not because one has done something but because they take away whoever they want, even if they have their identification papers in order and everything is

in order (nineteen years old, commercial employee).

- Going on the street with my children (thirty years old, widow, two children, domestic employee).
- To be burgled at home, because when the man isn’t there, the house is the easiest thing; they find little resistance. Everything in the house was built with much sacrifice and they take it away in a short time (forty–three years old, single, metal worker).
- The street is the most dangerous because there are bad people. The argument “Don’t get involved”: nobody acts in defense of the other, nobody approaches, nobody wants to get involved (forty–five years old, widow, two children, retired police sergeant).

E) Protective scenarios

- In a good restaurant, at a friend’s house in the Barrio Norte neighborhood, listening to music, going to the movies (forty years old, separated, one son, psychoanalyst).
- In my room, with the door closed (sixteen years old, student, executive father in a private company).
- People being united, happy, with a lot of strength to move forward and clarify everything that has happened. These things make me feel good, it is the only way, together, that people will get what they want, which is not what they have now (nineteen years old, student, journalist father).
- The kettle and maté, a shower, a good meal, having cigarettes, shoes, and dry feet; TV in bed (twenty–seven years old, single, accounting assistant).
- Democracy, when I have the right to denounce and somebody listens to me, when I can trust in justice and that the guilty will be punished (forty–five years old, single, four children, high school teacher).
- With people, among many, it is easier to defend oneself (twenty years old, saleswoman).
- Protection, in my thinking, is where there are many people and that is where one is more protected; in well–urbanized areas, where there are more people (forty–three years old, single, metal worker).
- At home, in the field (in my field). In anything that belongs to me: my house, my field, my horse, my neighborhood, my country, my room, my girlfriend, my friends. Jesus, my parents, my brothers, the priests, the church in general (twenty years old, student, son of a financier).

My house, places with friends, my bed, someone who loves me, being at a party and being hugged by my boyfriend, being sick and being spoiled by my mother (twenty years old, dance teacher).

II B. PROTECTED TERRITORY	
INSIDE 88%	HOME 8%
	WORK –SCHOOL 20%
OUTSIDE 27%	NEIGHBORHOOD –CITY –NATURAL SITE
CROWDED PLACE 8%	

FACES AND MASKS

Who is feared? The threatening figure already appeared spontaneously when we asked about the meanings of the word “fear” and when we talked about the spatio-temporal coordinates of the threat. But then, the questionnaire included a specific question regarding most threatening types of people and most protective types of people. All interviewees—and not only those who had implicitly or explicitly brought it up in more global questions—were asked to name the social personifications that matched these polar feelings. We found different names for the messengers of fear: “patoters,”⁴ “uncontrolled,” “drug addicts” or “alcoholics,” “thieves,” “Black people,” or “slum dwellers.” These varied characters could be grouped under the denomination of “dangerous class,” in the way early 19th-century sociology did.

The variety of names should not be misleading. With a few exceptions, the reasons for their threatening nature are so similar that they could form a single group (with at most two differential tones).

In first place, it is because their harmful acts are almost never concretely stated. Rather than clear-cut criminals, they are open probabilities: “It is not known what they might do.” To a large extent, their dangerousness lies in their unpredictability. You don’t know “how they will react”—they lack a plan.

The tautology reigns: they are threatening subjects because they can do evil. Ultimately, their greatest evil lies in existing, either in reality or in the imagina-

tion (their entity is one of the issues to be elucidated: to what extent are “patotas” a creation of the mass media).

In this sense, they appear as an alien, asocial, irrational, instinctive world. They are not given the comprehensible meaning that thieves, whose purpose is simply to appropriate something, possess. They are assumed to be evil, just trying to annoy, resentful, vengeful people. At times, the breach from the norm is modest: they are disrespectful, they give dirty looks, they are rude. In other cases, they are portrayed as more frightening: desperate, frenzied. In the extreme, they might rape, hurt, or kill, but these kind of events are not often mentioned. Anxiety seems to be fueled by ambiguity itself.

When gangs are feared (and this would be more frequent in the labor sector), there is a clear emphasis on group action and sometimes class discrimination: they are lazy, they hang around, they are slum dwellers, they look bad, they are “low class.” But even if no mention is made of traits of social belonging, it is always understood that they are not articulated in “normal society,” but rather that they are undermining it, hanging around it.

From its very name, the “patota”⁵ illustrates a very peculiar situation that has impressed the imagination since ancient times: the individual harassed by the herd. The aggression of the “patota” is fantasized as primitive, artisanal, and is not always associated with bearing arms.

In second place, another feature common to the various appellatives of this “dangerous class” is the age of its members... Explicitly or implicitly, the threat is young. There is never talk of adult gangs or mature addicts. Although some go so far as to attribute up to thirty years of age to them, in general they are thought of as teenagers detached from the framework of family authority from the age of twelve onwards. This sociodemographic characteristic is of great importance: here and in all capitalist countries, unemployment is higher among young people. On the one hand, it is true that many young people have little to do, and for the moment, from the production point of view, they are redundant.

A significant nuance within the “dangerous class” is given to the group of “drug addicts” and “madmen.” Fantasies about the effects of drugs have mythic traits. Drug addicts are presented as explosive beings, true walking bombs. What

4. A term used to describe rowdy young people, often translated as “thugs” and sometimes associated with gang members.—Ed.

5. The origin of patota arguably stems from pato, the Spanish word for duck, in reference to the fact that they travel together in a group.—Ed

is most often pointed out is that they “have no control,” they are “unbalanced”: no major differences are established between the addict and the aggressive paranoid. In fact, most of the drugs consumed in Argentina cause self-absorption, passivity, loquacity, and some of them stimulate production.

UNIFORMS AND WEAPONS

Another important category, although minor, refers to people who are part of the institutional, political, and social spheres. These are almost always men in uniform, men at arms, both military and police; sometimes ecclesiastics are mentioned, and sporadically, politicians and large landowners. Under the heading of institutionalized threat, what is feared is the abuse of power, arbitrariness, and the way in which they impose their will, by means of the power of arms or money. From a historical perspective, it should not be surprising that uniformed officers look dangerous to a considerable number of those consulted. But it is more noteworthy that they are rarely quoted as protectors.

Another notable absence: neither the government, nor the judiciary or educators, nor political parties or other social organizations appear among the protective figures. Authority, the institutional, and the political, are, in principle, hardly reassuring. Their significance lies precisely in the existence of the threatening ones. The official instances, which are almost never named as sources of security, make their appearance when the question arises as to who could do something to eliminate the detected threat. Then, in order to suppress or diminish the aggressiveness of the dangerous class, legalistic and educational mandates and calls for repressive drastic measures come to the fore, bringing the police function to prominence. In one group, the elimination of the dangers of street aggression and addiction takes a surgical form: they must be killed, mutilated, imprisoned, armed civil guards must be formed, the police force must be increased, and the severity of the laws must be increased. Others perceive them as broader social symptoms that require pedagogical and psychiatric mechanisms and deep socioeconomic transformations. In the face of the military-police threat, the government is eventually given the mission of reducing its power, although without much hope of success.

Among these interviewees, the “dangerous class” causes anguish because what they want is unknown, while armed power is frightening because it does what it wants. Essentially, danger has only these two faces. Other personifications are erratic

and of softer psychological tones: people who are false, scheming, unintelligent, jealous, and other bad qualities. Only two respondents fear terrorists or leftists: that cliché, typical of the 1970s, has been displaced.

THE SPHERE OF TRUST

Security—as could already be guessed from the data provided above—is an attribute of the most intimate: family, for the majority; and friends, for a significant portion. The intimate group, especially if it is linked by blood ties is, universally, the social sphere of protection. There is no reliance on impersonal roles or functions (such as institutions). This is also seen in a type of response that targets both the feared and the welcoming. The classification criterion is given by personal qualities (fake or sincere, loving or manipulating). It is remarkable that friends or colleagues at school or work are more frequently mentioned by teenagers and by the professional and business social level. On the other hand, young people between twenty-five and thirty years of age are less likely to trust their friends. In the middle strata, family is much less mentioned, while people of good qualities arouse a more protective feeling.

According to a large majority, the threat could be reduced, although the ways to achieve this are very different. On the one hand, mutilation, confinement, confrontation, expropriation, and political work are only mentioned by minority groups.

On the other hand, education, improvement of living conditions, legislation, or police repression are more frequently mentioned, without being in the majority.

But what is most significant is that only a minority of the fearful (most commonly teenagers) think that they can do something on their own to confront the threat. The majority blame the state, and a much smaller sector, the police. The image of the home as a defensive confinement is accompanied by a sense of personal impotence. The offensive is entrusted to a rather ambiguous entity, the “government,” and not to precise bodies connected to the will and participation of citizens, such as parliament, political parties, trade unions, or popular movements.

III A. SOCIAL PERSONIFICATIONS OF PROTECTION	
THE INTIMATE GROUP 83%	FAMILY 72%
	FRIENDS – COLLEAGUES 43%
INSTITUTIONAL POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SPHERE 14%	SECURITY FORCES 8%
	AUTHORITIES / POWERFUL PEOPLE 8%
EVIL PEOPLE 19%	

F) Political and social institutions

- The church, the uniformed forces, and the armed forces are closed corporations, indoctrinated in intolerance, and do not admit what is different or free thought. The threat can be reduced with information, awareness and above all with courage (forty–five years old, married, four children, high school teacher).
- People in powerful positions, who cause harm to everyone arguing that they have the right. I don't believe that this threat can be diminished. I don't know. I have no answer. I feel indignation and helplessness (forty years old, married, female, employed physician).
- The military, the oligarchy, the police, the Catholic Church. The corrupt, repressors, traitors. We could expropriate the properties, professionalize the police and the army, cut down all the top officers (nineteen years old, fine arts student, deceased university–educated father).
- The police paralyze me. I am afraid of them. They carry guns. It's an unequal relationship. It's like with gangs or assailants, they can hurt you (twenty–eight years old, married, two children, female biologist).

G) Patotas / offenders

- They believe that being among many, they are more powerful and unconscious, that they could do anything, and as they are crazy people, they do not reason, they act by instinct (twenty years old, saleswoman).
- Young people, teenagers, even if they look good. Because you don't know if they are criminals or not. Surveillance and security must be increased, the number of

police officers must be increased, new laws on juvenile delinquency must be passed because they leave immediately (forty–five years old, married, housewife, wife of a personnel manager in a large company).

- Juvenile gangs, of lower class, up to 30 years old. They have no restraints. The answer is for security to be organized by neighborhoods, structuring self–defense throughout the population (forty–four years old, married, two children, accountant).
- Thieves or pickpockets screw people who are out of money. They screw anyone. They don't look for those with money (forty–five years old, married, two children, employed in commerce).
- The Black slum dwellers, delinquents, are a reality. They commit assaults, harassment, beatings, murders. They could be reduced by giving more power to authority (forty years old, married, three children, perfume merchant).
- Low–level, petty thieves. Desperate people who should not be sentenced for life. It is necessary to create living conditions so that there are no unemployed (twenty years old, incomplete secondary school, unemployed).

H) Drugged / unbalanced

- Young people have too much freedom, too many drugs, too much alcohol, they resent their parents; there should be more surveillance, I know that there are few personnel in the police (twenty–six years old, married, one child, municipal employee).
- There should be prevention centers, sanitary conditions to teach the emotionally and psychically disturbed who do not respond to a volitional order, to socialize in an orderly manner. People who are untidy, messy, and dirty are also a threat because they do not meet the minimum conditions of order to be inserted in society (twenty–five years old, married, debt collector).
- Crazy people, drug addicts, people who have no control, who have other limits, as they are destructive with them, they can harm me, influence me, cause me to make decisions. The only thing to do is to get away from them (twenty years old, daughter of a doctor).
- Corrupt people like drug addicts and those who promote drug addiction because they damage the social system as well as harming themselves. We should kill them all, a police raid is not enough (twenty years old, university student, daughter of a professional).
- People who are restless, who have no peace, unbalanced, people on the corners

of Lavalle and Florida, excited by the country's past; people who do not understand things as they are; it would be necessary to work on raising consciousness. What happened, happened (twenty-five years old, business owner, with eight employees).

III B. SOCIAL EMBODIMENTS OF THE THREAT	
THUGS 27%	DANGEROUS CLASS 61%
DISTURBED -OUT OF CONTROL 22%	
INTOXICATED 17%	
CRIMINALS 14%	
LOW-INCOME PEOPLE 10%	INSTITUTIONAL, POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SPHERE 29%
SECURITY FORCES 24%	
AUTHORITIES / POWERFUL PEOPLE 8%	
	EVIL PEOPLE 21%
	FAMILY 6%

SEIZURE: FIGHT OR SUBMISSION

To conclude the survey, a sort of experiment was carried out. Interviewees were presented with the image of a kidnapping in which they were successively playing the role of witness and victim, and their reactions were directly and projectively probed. The test was replicated for different degrees of proximity between witness and abductee: random person, a neighbor, an acquaintance, a friend, a relative. Thus, we learn that a large majority think that if they were kidnapped, random people who witnessed the situation would do nothing; on the other hand, if the scene were witnessed by family members, a similar proportion of respondents think that they would intervene on their behalf. The family sphere (and to a lesser extent that of friends) is where intervention and reciprocity are expected, while the greater the distance (acquaintances, neighbors, random people), the greater the inaction and

nonreciprocity (the “don't get involved”). It is clear that family ties legitimize action. In practice, this was already reflected in the fact that the most active organizations in the defense of the detained/disappeared were the mothers', grandmothers', and relatives' groups. Although the refuge within the consanguineous group (the house) constitutes, in part, an enclosure and an isolation from a wide social life, it also represents a “natural” defensive system.

Other suggestive data that may be drawn from this test are, for example, that the reaction of intervention always implies an even expectation of reciprocity, regardless of the subject in favor of whom the action is taken.

We knew, before asking the question, that there is nothing hypothetical about the proposed scenario in Argentina, but we did not imagine to what extent this was known. Almost all of our interviewees think that such events have occurred in the past and an overwhelming proportion believe that they continue to occur at present and will continue to occur in the future. Why do they think this way? What kind of events are they talking about? The ones led by the “patotas” and “drug addicts”? We have already seen that these persecutors would be rather young vagabond boys and not motorized men like the ones we presented in our test. Many people fear the persistence of the past in the present. Perhaps a large part of them are unaware of it and others will not admit it. Otherwise, why would anyone feel that he or she is a potential victim of a type of threat (kidnapping by motorized adults) that has so far been virtually absent from his or her discourse?

In any case, we know that these events involve them personally. These are not events that only happen to others. Two pieces of information are very revealing: the vast majority recognize that they could have been kidnapped in the past, and half of them say that they could still be kidnapped today. Of course, although in many cases it is taken for granted that it is a political kidnapping, the hint of common crime may be present, contributing to the state of anxious expectation in which, should these data be confirmed, the population lives.

What is the basis for this very high proportion of interviewees to suppose that they could have been kidnapped? Might they have done something? Beyond this reassuring fallacy, we know that this fear is not based on mere fantasies. This is confirmed by a definitive piece of data. How many societies in the world can boast a terrifying scenario of similar extent?

An additional indicator of the effect of terror suggests that if they were victims

of such an event—something that is thought to be quite likely, as we have just seen—half say they would do nothing and slightly less than half say they would resist or try to flee, while a smaller number would call for help.

Undoubtedly, there are signs of a slight drop in the perception of this type of threat. Probably, the fear of legal action by the uniformed has diminished. However, the magnitude of those who still feel they are a potential target and those who declare themselves defeated in advance is, at first sight, impressive.

IV. The following scenario was proposed: “Four men force a person between twenty and twenty-five years of age into a car.”

Percentage of affirmative answers

- Do you believe that such things happened in the past? 94 %
- Do you think that such things happen nowadays? 78%
- Do you think it is possible that things like this will happen in the future? 73%
- Do you think that something like this could have happened to you in the past? 73%
- And could something like this happen to you today? 50%
- Have you known anyone who has experienced something like this? 53%
- If something like this happened to you... I would do nothing 52% / I would resist or try to run away 39%

First conclusions

From inhibition to fury

The information gathered raises more questions than answers, but along with these new questions, some promised clarifications could be risked.

Political fear persists in a patent form in the images associated with the military coup, arrogance, torments, identification procedures, or arrests. On the other hand, fears of political aggression from non-state armed groups are exceptionally mentioned. Although the current effectiveness of the threat is clear simply from the fact that the interviewee mentions it, it is frequent that the interviewee refers to an imprecise future, as if it were a return of the past, rather than a decisive action in the present.

In the arguable classification between anguish and fear, it is difficult to decide which of them would prevail in Argentina. On the one hand, there are signs of anxious expectation: one, with a clearly outlined profile, the prevalence of military style and

another, more blurred, the personal future conditioned by an unfavorable prospect of development. But there is also, on the other hand, an imminent enemy, which could eventually produce a punctual physical harm, of a more or less ambiguous criminal type: the immediacy and unpredictability of the assault.

In any case, it is remarkable that those threatened did not perceive any available instruments for action. Although a majority thinks it is possible to diminish the threat, only a small group considers that they can do something on their own. The vast majority relegates it to the institutions themselves, basically the “government” and, to a lesser extent, the police.

What could be the consequence of these fears on social and personal life? It is not easy to foresee, because the action of fear is neither direct nor linear. Sometimes fears suddenly change their object and this impact can be surprising.

In a classic book, *The Great Fear of 1789*, historian Georges Lefebvre describes the stream of anguish towards alleged “bandits” that swept through France in that decisive year. The resulting atmosphere made the rumor of a plot by the aristocracy, against which the popular reprisals were finally directed, seem credible.

The way in which fear will influence people’s behavior depends on multiple parameters, including their awareness of its existence and nature, as well as the use that others try to make of it. In any case, it is a highly dangerous material to manipulate. The distance between inhibition and fury is not always regulated at will.

In any case, an elementary analysis of the results would give the impression of a society that withdraws into the domestic sphere. The home becomes a kind of imaginary bunker. In public spaces, fraught with danger, one does not find solidarity, but rather risks either being individualized and fenced in or being subject to an unforeseeable outburst.

The way out, promised in 1983, has been challenged by several frightening creatures. One of them is a strange one: half hunting herd, half delusional madman. But this new fear has not completely replaced the old one: the armed defenders of order do not inspire general confidence either.

Outside the primary bond of family, the bond of friendship is the only one that would provide defensive strength. No other levels of organization appear either among the protectors or in mass situations.

At least one group, in order to get rid of the street threat, would favor increased

control and police forces. The military danger seems more solid than that of common criminals: it is difficult to imagine effective means to reduce it. However, we should be cautious: other readings are possible, provided that a wide range of economic, social and political factors, both national and international, were brought into the analysis. It would also be essential to assess the degree of reality and spontaneity of such perceived threats. Are they the effects of consciously deployed strategies, reflections of an increasingly hostile life, or both?

Regarding noninstitutional crime, some interviewees so literally reproduce thunderous episodes conveyed by the mass media that the nature of this fear becomes doubtful. The suspicion of a deliberate campaign would find abundant evidence. The record of the journalistic coverage would show the duplication or triplication of time devoted to police news. Meanwhile, according to the police itself, crime has not increased significantly.

There are some illustrative cases of manipulation of fear: *Somos* magazine, which dedicates its issue no. 597 to drug abuse in schools, instructs parents on how to keep an eye on their children's classmates and how to control their wives (according to the journalist, the spread of drugs comes through friends and from bossy mothers' homes). Using almost identical grounds to those used during the military government, discord is fomented between the family and their children's friends, turning the former into the persecutor of the latter, who, as the survey shows, are the most reliable connection with the outside world.

From another point of view, the problem of "security" and drug addiction as serious public threats seem to be transferred from the Western metropolis. Should this be considered as one of the first symptoms of Argentina's modernization?

In fact, the issues of "public security" and the "fight against drugs" serve as much to justify the search of a Lanús schoolboy's bag as the landing of US Special Forces in Bolivia, but not to burn marijuana plantations in Hawaii and California, or for intervening in the "laundering" banks of Miami. However, the nature of these processes should not be reduced to a conspiratorial image. For such campaigns to succeed, there must be motives and victims, businesses and strategies.

In Argentina, there is a little bit of everything and more. An interesting difference compared to other countries is that, in addition to the criminal-social threat, there is an official-political danger. The connections, exorcisms and displacements that may have occurred among these fears are another open question.

We always try to get rid of threats. But when we don't succeed, threats are reposted and intermingled. Soon we will no longer remember what we were afraid of. We begin to coexist with it naturally. We adapt. If we have not successfully confronted it or fled from it, there is no doubt: we are its prey.

Sometimes, the escape occurs without any apparent change of location. In such cases, in the manner of certain animals, many behavioral metamorphoses occur. It is a quiet getaway, so quiet that its most perfect execution consists in pretending to be dead. One rarely takes note of the change of attitudes, dress, friends, schedules, occupations, ideas, which follow one another as a consequence of this form of escape. Hence we are faced with dreadful questions: After this metamorphosis, do we more or less resemble the perpetrator of the threat? Does our behavior follow more or less our will? What is the limit between the simulation for survival and the discipline made flesh?

When discipline is well imposed by fear, fear is embodied and becomes superfluous. Pretty soon it will be covered by a substitute. One fear covers another. When we overcome a fear, it seems as if a weight has been lifted off our shoulders.

1990

—

1999

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Orgy

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Art and Fashion with Fabulous Nobodies

Roberto Jacoby and Kiwi Sainz, 1993

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Roberto Jacoby and Kiwi Sainz, 1994

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The 13 Prettiest Boys – Andy Warhol Remake

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Roberto Jacoby, 1999

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Venus: The Currency of Desire

Roberto Jacoby, 1999

The 1990s by Olivia Rodrigues

In his explosive narrative poem *Orgía (Orgy)*, Roberto Jacoby concludes a party scene in the following line: “Minutes later, the cosmos is hilarious. Words are loaded like ships with beings and things, not as the Devil charges them. All the words sail through the rooms, surf the music.”

Following an orgasmic encounter with the celestial, Jacoby’s partygoers move to language. Words, physicalized as vessels, contain an infrastructural power that penetrates into their bodies and shapes their reality. Charged with “beings and things,” these utterances bear a weight and liveliness.

Jacoby has always granted performative power and physical capability to words—they were the basis of his conceptual practice in the 1960s. Eduardo Costa, Raúl Escari, and Jacoby overthrew the media apparatus through an audit of readers’ and producers’ trust in the system—the *Media manifesto* continues to accumulate meaning through this method. Thirty years later, Jacoby adds an economic logic of movement to their exchange, perhaps in reaction to Argentina’s 1989 election of Carlos Menem. The president’s economic policy promised transformation and expansion. Often referred to as the “convertibility plan,” Menem pegged the Argentine peso to the US dollar, attempting an optimistic integration and depoliticization of the nation.¹ This economic mythology helped Washington buoy Argentina through the 1990s, until the peso collapsed at the start of the millennium and further enmeshed distress into the country’s consciousness. Within the neoliberal market Menem introduced, economic logic seeped into every facet of life; language was no longer a means to communicate but an instrument to insure the exchange of goods and services.

Seizing this logic in an act of reclamation, Jacoby and Mariana “Kiwi” Sainz formed a fictional creative agency, cheekily named Fabulous Nobodies, in 1993. In their statement, the pair proclaim, “We dedicate ourselves exclusively to making ads and we do absolutely nothing else.” The exchange for Jacoby and Sainz is in the advertisement, not the product.

1. “On the whole, however, neoliberalism reform was attractive to both militaries because of the restructuring of social relations it promised and the depoliticizing effects it seemed to entail.” Tomas Undurraga, “Neoliberalism in Argentina and Chile: Common Antecedents, Divergent Paths,” *Revista de Sociología e Política* 23 (September 1, 2015): 11–34, <https://doi.org/10.1590/1678-987315235502>.

2. Here I am speaking about the increasing use of collectives in the wake of major crises and working from a postmodernist dissection of media structures, as discussed in Roland Barthes’s “The Death of the Author” (1967), throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Of course, this subverts a traditional Western and modern notion of the author, a concept outside of which many other geographies and movements have worked. Duchamp’s concept of the art object’s contingency on both artist and audience is an earlier example of how these conversations have long struck the traditional contemporary canon. However, the evolution towards the *collective* in both production and distribution found particular resonance during the AIDS crisis.

Entering the market as an agency and not an artist, Fabulous Nobodies echoes the dissolution of authorship seen in many contemporaneous projects born out of crisis.² The work sits between the agency and the system within which it operates. There is a joy in warping the market.

This joy—revolutionary at its core—solidified as a strategy for Jacoby’s work and collaborations into the 1990s. Because while globalization promised the trade of a borderless world, Jacoby saw a country still in crisis. Neoliberalism manifested global trade under the banner of equal exchange, yet many countries, like Argentina, were set up to fail and then subject themselves to relentless extraction. Jacoby’s dedication to his surroundings was a keen resistance to this global force.

AIDS arrived in Argentina in 1982, and by 1993, the country reported the second highest incidence rate in the world. The crisis—concentrated in urban areas—decimated communities of artists. Fabulous Nobodies fought back with their first physical object attached to a campaign—*Yo Tengo SIDA (I have AIDS)*—in 1994. The five hundred T-shirts produced for the project bore large lettering in bold colors. Jacoby and Sainz distributed the shirts to friends—especially performers and socialites. This included musicians Fito Páez and Andrés Calamaro; the former agreed to participate during a national tour at the height of his career. He wore the shirt each night, until one performance, when rural fans threw stones at him in disgust. Jacoby experienced similar hostility when he wore the shirt, and these failures bolstered the artwork as an experiment in motion rather than a static object. Its message was clear, sympathy cannot usher us through hatred, we must all recognize we are the Other. Ten years earlier in New York, theorist Tim Dean wrote, “Each of us is living with AIDS ... AIDS is structured, racially and precisely, as the unconscious real of the social field in contemporary America.”³ Here, the American crisis echoes Fabulous Nobodies’ call for solidarity. Repression in the consciousness of a nation can only lead to Othering itself, by manifesting false lines of difference among its population. This solidified during Jacoby and Sainz’s 1995 trip to New York City, where they presented their project as guests during an ACT UP meeting. Similar to *I have AIDS*, ACT UP weaponized a radical sense of connection to break taboo by manifesting realities into spoken word and disseminating artistic material into the fabric of everyday life—no pun intended. This process of utterance, however painful and abject it may appear, furthers Jacoby’s investigation of language as material.

3. Tim Dean, “The Psychoanalysis of AIDS,” *October* 63 (1993): 85.

In 1999, the final year of Menem’s presidency, Jacoby launched Bola de Nieve (Snowball), an online social network that sought to foster community and conversation in spite of structural estrangement in Argentina. The website, which allowed artists to communicate directly with one another, was open to anyone with a user’s invitation. With no hierarchy or mediator, Bola de Nieve hosted an artists’ community, one that trafficked in generative concepts and material. In total, 1163 Argentinian artists contributed to Bola de Nieve, each establishing a profile of their work, reaching out to their contemporaries and broadcasting an accessible platform to art enthusiasts around the world. Before the digital landscape we know today, Bola de Nieve cracked open a generative solidarity during the dot-com boom. Nowhere is this clearer than *Proyecto Venus: Moneda del deseo (Venus Project: The currency of desire, 1999)*, a work that asked group members to trade goods and services using an invented currency: the Venus. Made possible by Jacoby’s acceptance of the Guggenheim fellowship, *Venus Project* carved out a utopian economy among friends. This investment in the imaginative, the collaborative, and the joyful is fundamentally political. In 1999, Argentina saw four presidents within one week, eighteen active currencies, and tens of millions of inhabitants disenfranchised. The social world became the only space of solace and consistency, the services offered in *Venus Project* bled into the lives of nonartists, as it became evident Jacoby’s strategy of joy was a tool for survival. As Jacoby weathered the 1970s and 1980s, he insisted on solidarity and exuberance against an onslaught of crisis that continued into the 1990s.

Selected Writings

Orgía Orgy

Roberto Jacoby, written in 1992 and published in 2000

A collection of poems written in Brandsen, a town in the province of Buenos Aires, in September 1992, and published as a chapbook by Ediciones Belleza y Felicidad in 2000. Published in *El deseo nace del derrumbe. Roberto Jacoby: Acciones, conceptos, escritos*, ed. Ana Longoni (Barcelona: Ediciones de La Central / Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora / Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía/Red Conceptualismos del Sur, 2011), Roberto Jacoby Archive.

Him. The arriving Reasoner.

The camera captures him from the group: he moves closer to the extensive wet green. Assorted greenery, broad and thin leaf, large and small. The camera detects shyness. He's not a good actor, but at least he's not overacting either. A style?

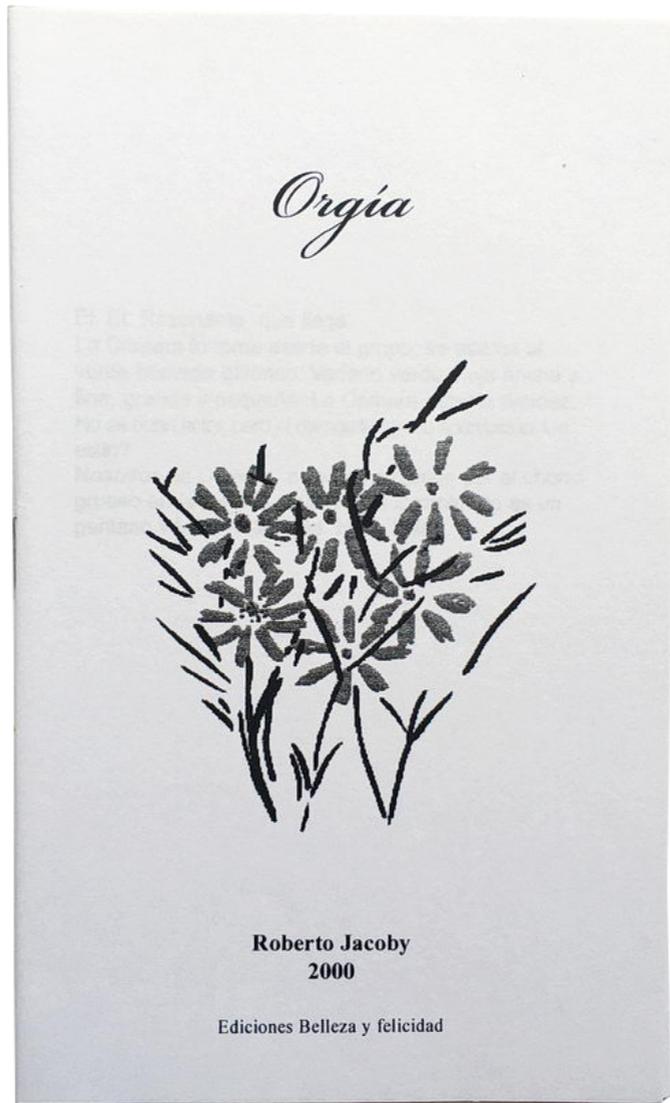
Him. The arriving Reasoner.

We, the camera, are getting drenched by the thick jet in the blue pool which deep down is just a green swamp. Hello, hello. Hello, hello.

The shaved priestess, wrapped sometimes in "brocade," sometimes in "moiré" or "chiffon," arranges the folds in different ways. Rehearsal without mirrors and they always are—she laughs, mischievous. The ruby of the third eye does not last until the banquet, it detaches and falls. Her name is Lisa.

Esther and Lisa dance in the park—park? Bushes, shrubs, weeds, overgrown grasses, and around the "pavilion," the "trianon," the "pool," the "*petit pool*" (stuffed with cactus), the dense *latifolium*. They dance and echo, clink the beads of their necklaces and bangles: colored glasses, silver beads. They neglect their festive clothes even though this is the fifth time they have changed outfits. Lisa, we already know, she is Skinhead O'Connor and Esther, the dyed blonde. How do they dance? Like fools?

Someone takes the place of Christ. The elders at the head. We are thirteen. We drink "champaren" and Father pronounces words that underline the event. Fish and salads change hands and disappear quickly. The camera captures the images close to the central light, the edges are blurred. The gestures of the meal are mea-



Roberto Jacoby, *Orgía*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Belleza y Felicidad, 2000. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

sured and the comments about flavors take on new meanings. There is a change of cassettes that anticipates some definitive events. It is a matter of not allowing the Devil to dominate, even if no one expels him from the table.

The flames illuminate the barn sculptures, African, Aztec. The first drops. Two surubim catfish are roasting. From here, the sky peeps through antique gratings, furniture, and debris preserved for artistic recycling, tall grasses. Music comes from the house. The son lies down on the white hammock among the adjacent vines. Everyone comes and goes. Premeal changes of clothes. Three of us put on makeup. One poses before a mirror with a faded frame. Now we are in the candlelit house. It's raining hard.

A quarrel, a scream.

The glass is the limit.

The barefooted hear my loud scream and calm me down, affectionate.

I don't want my friends to bleed.

Mud, mud, mud. Glass in the mud, outside among the straw armchairs.

The party was consummated. There was a party because something got broken.

The next morning, they will show me my keys sunk in the mud, among the glasses. The consecutive noises—glass—window—break the cadence of the night.

The cup spills over. The cup slips. The cup falls and defoliates. The champagne soaks the glass splinters.

Water splashes all around. There is no inside and outside: open windows and doors.

The paper being cut into eighths is later dissolved in saliva, a squatting Buddha, not a dragon. Likewise, there are little giggles of nervous waiting.

Minutes later, the cosmos is hilarious. Words are loaded like ships with beings and things, not as the Devil charges them. All the words sail through the rooms, surf the music.

GANESHA SON OF SHIVA: big-bellied elephant's head, white = Saint Sebastian. Tiny teeth, helpless lips sleep and wait.

The scene is illuminated by candles arranged in short rows in front of the windows, in the brick partition surrounding the "sofas," on small tables filled with souvenirs of beaches and cliffs or religions, beads, threaded or not, of blue, red, and green glass. These beads are also on the floor, on the carpets, they "sparkle" among the piles of clothes and fabrics and food. They multiply the candlelight. The Asian music intensifies and, with her head between her knees, Esther now shudders on

the cushions, the sheepskin loincloth comes off and her earthy buttocks appear in the foreground vibrating beyond the beat. Another brother picks up one of the candles and places it in that candlestick that does not stop shaking as long as the music lasts. No one speaks and the scene is not filmed.

Dark park. He sees lights and hears voices beside the orchard, walks there, falls into the canal, does not die.

When the boundary between bodies is broken without pain, there is fiesta. Messages flow between joyful souls.

GANESHA smiles and cares. He needs a breath of air because he has been mistreated for ages. But this will happen later.

Later, he receives a woman's signal and obeys. He also breaks with his big head and glass-breaking hair. Big butterfly is the iron window. Big butterfly is the head of Ganesha. Her white flamingo woman's hips.

Him = Tim, Tim = the Reasoner = Ophelia.

The plain persists in the distance, interrupted by a chocolate torrent on what yesterday was the road. Our isolation has been enhanced—we are on an island! The wide ditch that runs between the house and the orchard has overflowed and the plank that traversed it has become invisible.

As it clears, the shades of gray rapidly change. It is raining lightly and in a different way: thick drops. They hit the umbrella. Naked and barefoot, I walk covered with my thin Amsterdam blanket along the edges of the island. Each footstep sinking into the soggy grass has the soundness of an aphorism. As a whole, the passage is an economy edition of a philosophy book. It's not only me who understands it, I am a pertinent image for the early risers and sleepless people who heat the water for coffee while watching the sunrise.

Someone has to do the Gandhi part.

Father and son lie still in bed. Tulles divide the cubicle. Over there, they thread "brilliant" beads. Vases with daffodils. Vases with lilies.

It's raining hard but the temperature is pleasant. The camera pans across the kitchen table and windows, records the coffee preparations. The time is indistinct because the sun is absent.

He has slept naked on the floor, covered by a thin blanket bought in Amsterdam sixteen years earlier. He walks around the rooms in the blanket.

The camera visits the collapsed sleepers on the floor, some on beds. The even light does not distract them from their casual, elegant abandon. Their poses are now perfect. They are fashionable at last.

He forgot everything about those days except the feeling of having captured the general understanding of the meaning of his life and, therefore, of others. The realization took the following form: an infinitely fine rain that was incorporated into a liquid mass not contained by anything and that swayed gently, as its concentric circles dissolved.



Roberto Jacoby, *Orgía*,. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Belleza y Felicidad, 2000. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



Print ad for *Revólver* magazine created by Mariana (Kiwi) Sainz and Roberto Jacoby, *Fabulous Nobodies*, 1993. Photo: Alejandro Kuropatwa. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby and Kiwi Sainz.

Arte y moda con *Fabulous Nobodies* Art and Fashion with *Fabulous Nobodies*

Roberto Jacoby and Kiwi Sainz, 1993

Text performed at the conference Art and Fashion, Centro Cultural Center Ricardo Rojas, Buenos Aires, 1993. Published in *El deseo nace del derrumbe*. Roberto Jacoby: *Acciones, conceptos, escritos*, ed. Ana Longoni Barcelona: Ediciones de La Central / Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora / Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia/Red Conceptualismos del Sur, 2011), 347–349. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

According to today’s paper, I am participating in this round table on art and fashion, so I decided to fulfill this media prophecy and join in. Mostly so that kind-of fake news won’t be confused with my old works on mass media.

And since the round table is about “art and fashion,” let’s introduce our brand *Fabulous Nobodies*, created in collaboration with Mariana “Kiwi” Sainz. We launched *Fabulous Nobodies* a few months ago in a very selective campaign, very focused, through a single medium, the magazine *Escupiando Milagros* (Spitting miracles).

It is a high fashion brand but with nonexistent products. Because at *Fabulous Nobodies*, we think that advertising comes before production. We dedicate ourselves exclusively to making ads and we do absolutely nothing else.

For this ad, Mariana wears a piece by Omar Schiliro, all in plastic basins and plastic bowls with chandelier details on the corsage and cloche. The photo editor was Alejandro Kuropatwa.

And now, following Mariana’s catwalk show, let’s express some thoughts from *Fabulous Nobodies* about the intimate relationship between art and fashion.

Fashion is a subject that is treated with excessive frivolity. This may be due to the fact that we live in a carefree age, where nothing is taken seriously. On the other hand, art is a subject that is treated too seriously. That may also be due to the fact that we live in an age of insouciance. On the other hand, true fashion tends to the extreme. Without exaggeration, no fashion is possible, and in general, neither is fantasy. In this respect, fashion resembles art, which succumbs to moderation.

Traditional Argentinians, whose only notorious characteristic in terms of fashion was to cultivate the extremism of sobriety, did not seem to understand this. Fortunately, in recent times a new breed of fashionista has appeared, with tremendous excesses such as Sergio De Loof or Cristián Delgado who, for that very reason, are among the best Argentine artists.

Fashion moves to extremes. A limit of fashion consists in taking an appearance similar to that of a large number of people: it is the egalitarian, massifying edge. In this sense, “follow the fashion” means the same as “follow the herd.” The individual becomes invisible as such but is incorporated into the image of a collectivity. At the other extreme, fashion is an individual, exclusive invention. It is the monarchic, autocratic extreme. And in art something similar happens with singularization and social acceptance.

One side of fashion is baroque, an incessant eagerness for complications. At the other extreme, we have the minimalist fiction of simplicity and asceticism. The same applies to art.

Although it may seem contradictory, there are new and old fashions. Roland Barthes writes that “every new fashion is a refusal to inherit, a subversion against the oppression of the preceding fashion. Fashion experiences itself as a right, the natural right of the present over the past...” An excessive ambition of fashion is to invent what never existed: to found an epoch and, at the same time, to establish an imaginary empire. But few realize this aspiration of originality; Schiliro is an exception.

In opposition to the singularized time, revival arises, which today is the natural environment in which our lives take place. Revival is the second chance that fashion gives us. It is always good to have a second chance, even a third or fourth, because life is short, and it is difficult to get it right from the start.

You may remember that first came the revival of the 1950s, then the 1960s, and now we are in the midst of 1970s nostalgia. Although in these round tables, one notices a longing for the fashion of the 1980s, a sort of overlapping resistance to the new that emerges. But let’s suppose that the evocation of the 1980s really does triumph against the 1990s. In principle, it is unlikely that precisely what has just gone out of fashion will come back into fashion. But, in my opinion, it would be excellent if it happened because it would prevent the 1990s from going out of fashion too quickly.

Moreover, the restoration of the 1980s seems wonderful to me because a catastrophic phenomenon will have to happen immediately afterwards, a catastrophe

in the Prigogine sense. A phenomenon that will modify our whole perception of time and our relationship with history. Yes, because after the revival of the 1980s, the revival of the 1990s will immediately become fashionable. But as we will still be living in the 1990s, it will have to be a revival of itself. The glorification of the instant in itself without any mediation. It will be immediate eternity, with no ties to the past. Finally, fashion will have gone out of fashion. That is to say, everything will be fashion.

In the meantime, until that moment of absolute fashion arrives, we will continue to be subjected to the dilemmas of circular fashion.

For example, there are still some who want to revive 1962 and do not understand that 1962 and even 1968 have already gone out of fashion. And that we are currently in the midst of the 1978 revival. But we should also be cautious with this, because if instead of doing 1978, we anticipate in an avant-garde way and do the revival of 1984, nobody will perceive that we are advanced but, on the contrary, they will believe that we are out of fashion.

Another question: it is well known that there is no one who does not have an ideology. Nor is there anyone who does not follow a fashion. It happens that many are not aware of this and that is why they believe that they are absolutely independent of fashion. But no, what happens is simply that they are out of fashion or perhaps they are absolutely out of fashion: one never knows for sure, because fashion is not an exact science; it is not even a new philosophy, as some people think, but a series of permanent but subtle tremors and undulations that demand attention and fine sensitivity to be detected. Almost all the things that people think are fashionable, such as postmodernism, cocaine, simulacrum, Versace, and the death of utopias, are actually from the 1980s and are not fashionable at all.

Such is the paradoxical law of fashion: the more fashionable something becomes, the less fashionable it is.

And another, even more perfidious antinomy follows: fashion feeds especially on those who abominate fashion. Scandal is its natural soil. In order to live, fashion demands to be considered absurd, immoral. In this respect, it also resembles great art, which draws its strength from disdain, censure, and incomprehension.

And I conclude with a precept of Patricio Bisso: never throw away tube skirts or wedge heels because they will always come back.



Print ad for *Esculpiendo Milagros* magazine created by Mariana (Kiwi) Sainz and Roberto Jacoby, *Fabulous Nobodies*, 1993. Photo: Alejandro Kuropatwa. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby and Kiwi Sainz.





Poster by Mariana (Kiwi) Sainz and Roberto Jacoby for *Yo Tengo SIDA*, 1994–1995. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby and Kiwi Sainz.

Yo tengo sida I Have AIDS

Roberto Jacoby and Kiwi Sainz, 1994

Opening texts of “I Have AIDS”, a campaign against discrimination faced by HIV-positive people, that circulated in Buenos Aires from 1994 to 1995. Published in the catalogue of the exhibition *Uno sobre el otro*, presented at the gallery MUN, and published in *El deseo nace del derrumbe. Roberto Jacoby: Acciones, conceptos, escritos*, ed. Ana Longoni (Barcelona: Ediciones de La Central / Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora / Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia/Red Conceptualismos del Sur, 2011), 359–360. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

Evil is the other.

AIDS, like all Evil, is the other.

This conceptual and affective equation obstructs preventive individual behaviors and creates exclusion behaviors towards those infected and suffering from HIV. Victims of a horrifying social pressure, people.

HIV-positive and sick people suffer from a double burden, both from their health problem and from concealment and shame or stigmatization.

With the action (I define it as intrusion) “I have AIDS,” I seek to operate on two points on this equation: “AIDS = other.”

On the one hand, to disenchant the disease from its malignant halo—which in other times covered smallpox, leprosy, syphilis, tuberculosis, or cancer—to bring it down to what it really is: one medical condition among many.

On the other hand, to shorten the personal distance with the subject. Today it is abstractly recognized as a universal problem—“AIDS is everyone’s problem”—but it is not assumed in concrete terms as something that belongs to each and every one of us.

It is a matter of promoting visibility and acceptance based on a very simple individual statement—“I have AIDS”—in the tradition of *Fuenteovejuna* and “We are all German Jews.”

Let’s not forget that we are all someone else’s Other.

ese otro
es ilegítimo

por eso, hoy debe
escondarse
ocultarse
avergonzarse

en argentina existe una
fuerte discriminación contra
las personas hiv positivo

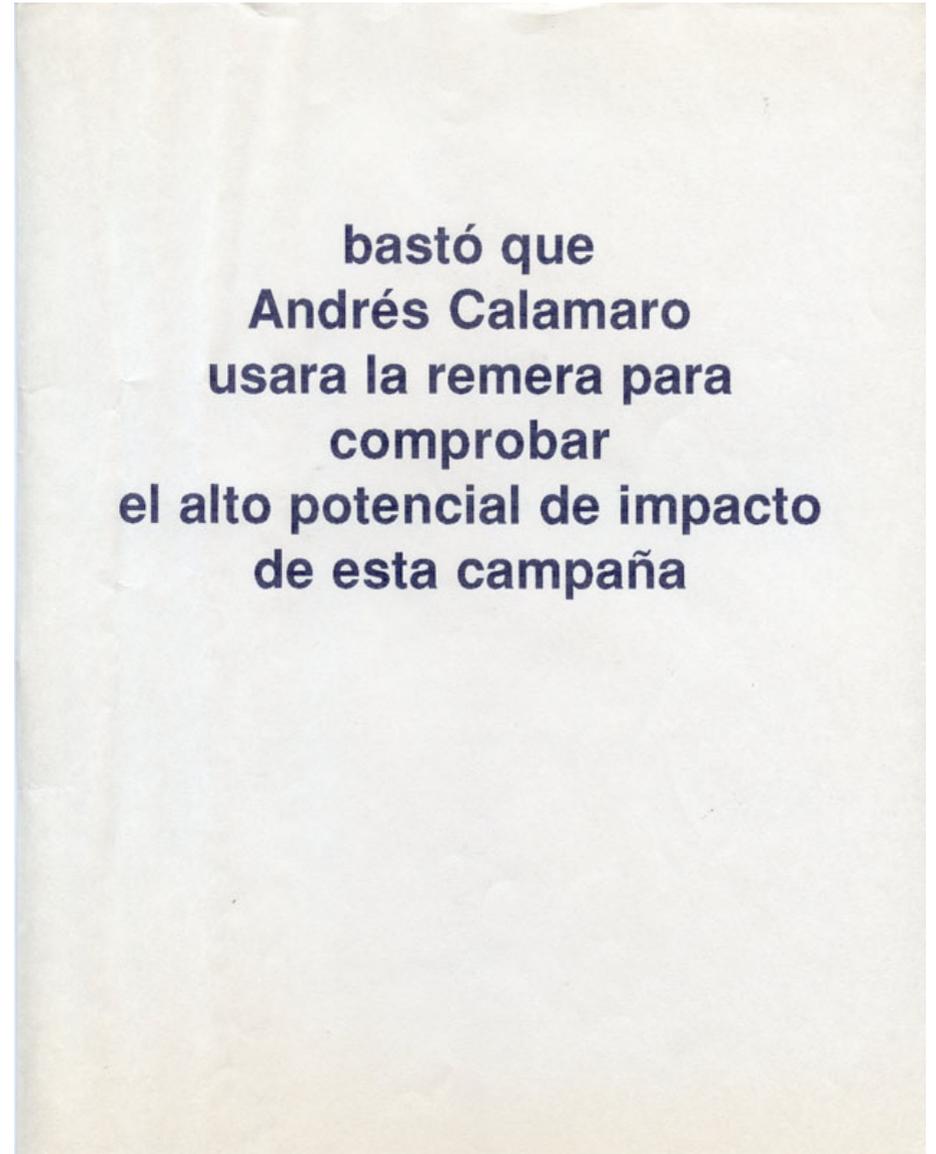
en lo laboral
en la familia
en los medios
en los microgrupos



T-shirt by Mariana (Kiwi) Sainz and Roberto Jacoby
for *Yo Tengo SIDA*, 1994–1995. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby and Kiwi Sainz.



285 Musician Andrés Calamaro wearing a *Yo Tengo SIDA* shirt, c. 1994. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby and Kiwi Sainz.



The text on the poster translates to, "Andres Calamaro wearing this t-shirt was enough to prove the high potential impact of this campaign." Courtesy Roberto Jacoby and Kiwi Sainz.

IF YOU THINK YOU KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT AIDS
TRY GOING OUT WITH THIS -SHIRT

**AIDS IS' NOT A CRIME. IT'S NOT A SHAME EITHER. IT'S NOT A THREAT TO SOCIETY.
AIDS IS JUST A CHRONICAL ILLNESS ONE CAN LIVE WITH REASONABLY WELL FOR A LONG TIME.
BUT FEAR HAS BECOME IT UNPRONOUNCEABLE, INVISIBLE.
THAT'S WHY SOCIAL REJECTION MAKES THE HEALTH CRISIS EVEN WORSE.
THAT'S WHY SO MANY ABSENT-MINDED PEOPLE DON'T PROTECT THEMSELVES.
IT COULD BE GREAT TO PUT AN END TO THIS SILENCE.
IT COULD BE WONDERFUL TO FINISH WITH REJECTION.
TO INCLUDE ONESELF IS THE BEST WAY OF AVOIDING EXCLUSION.
IF MANY OF US DECIDED TO WEAR THIS T-SHIRT WE'D FEEL AIDS AS A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.
IT WOULD BE HARDER TO DISCRIMINATE. BECAUSE DISCRIMINATION LIES FIRST OF ALL IN OUR OWN HEAD.**

Roberto Jacoby

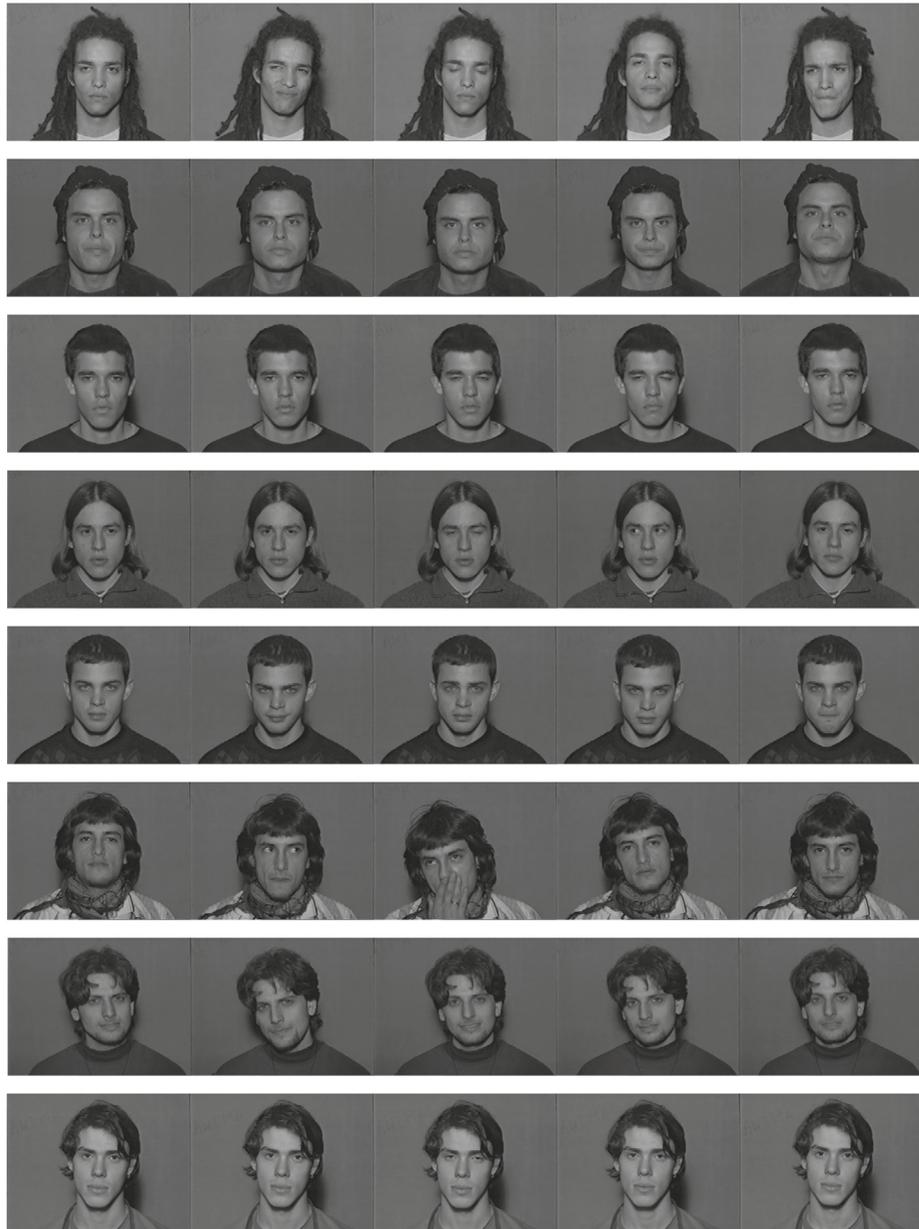
IF YOU THINK YOU KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT AIDS
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**AIDS IS' NOT A CRIME. IT'S NOT A SHAME EITHER. IT'S NOT A THREAT TO SOCIETY.
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Roberto Jacoby



Poster by Mariana (Kiwi) Sainz and Roberto Jacoby for *Yo Tengo SIDA*, 1994–1995. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby and Kiwi Sainz.



*Los 13 chicos más lindos –
Andy Warhol Remake*
The 13 Prettiest Boys –
Andy Warhol Remake

Roberto Jacoby, 1998

Stills from Roberto Jacoby,
Los 13 chicos más lindos at Centro Experimental del Teatro Colón, 1999.
Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



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Proyecto Bola de Nieve o cómo crecer barranca abajo en épocas heladas

Bola de Nieve Project or How to Grow Going Downhill in Freezing Weather

Roberto Jacoby, 1999

Article published in the magazine *Ramona*, no. 3, June–July 2000. Published in *El deseo nace del derrumbe*. Roberto Jacoby: *Acciones, conceptos, escritos*, ed. Ana Longoni (Barcelona: Ediciones de La Central / Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora / Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía/Red Conceptualismos del Sur, 2011), 393–394. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

The goal of the Bola de Nieve Project (Snowball project) is to strengthen the field autonomy of visual artists working in Argentina. Instead of the field's membership being established exclusively by the market, gallery owners, critics, curators, officials, etc., we want the artists themselves to define it.

At the same time, Bola de Nieve seeks to revitalize the network of relations among artists, now eroded by the new social, urban, economic, and other conditions. The meeting places (cafés, bookstores, galleries, group workshops, gatherings, centers) where artists used to establish all kinds of relationships have practically disappeared. These spaces were the true nodes of exchange of information, discussion, interdisciplinary transfers, intergenerational relations, and the cementing of traditions.

Bola de Nieve is also a real–virtual space through <http://www.proyectovenus.org/boladenieve/index.html>. On this site, which already includes almost fifty artists, all members have the chance to freely upload any material they wish to the web: photos of their work, curriculum, reviews and notes, biographies, videos, their e–mail addresses, links, and anything else they can think of and that is technically possible. Bola de Nieve is a project in development, and these are its stages:

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```

- We asked a series of artists considered to be referents to list the “ten living artists whom they considered most interesting today, the ones they found most relevant for whatever reason.” We asked the same question to those mentioned in the first grouping and obtained a third grouping that should also make its list.

We considered visual artists in a broad sense (performance, video, photography, etc.) and not only painters or sculptors. In addition, we asked about other “non-visual” artists or intellectuals and about events or works that had been important in recent years.

- We asked for curricula and photographs of the work and uploaded it to <http://www.boladenieve.org.ar>.
- We updated the status of the experiment on *Ramona*.
- In the next stage, we will integrate those artists who are being mentioned and the materials of those who are already listed and have not yet been sent to the site.
- The proposal is that the page of each artist becomes a living place that integrates their past activities as well as what they are currently doing or their projects.
- We will launch the international diffusion of the site to all search engines, art links, magazines, universities, museum listings, curators, galleries, etc.

Below are the lists of artists already involved in the project. Due to our agreement with the participants, we will not disclose who mentioned whom, but only the overall results. Nor will we make a ranking of the most mentioned, because we consider quantitative criteria to not be relevant from an artistic point of view, but only a sociological one. We imagine that these lists will arouse controversy because of the absences as well as the presences, but this is a work in progress and many answers are missing. On the other hand, many of the conspicuous absences respond to the fragmentation and isolation existing in the artistic world.

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personales y colectivas. Ha sido becaria del Fondo Nacional de las Artes y ha recibido premios y distinciones en concursos
nacionales y municipales. Desde el año 2005 desarrolla proyectos artísticos vinculados al campo y la vida rural, donde
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Images from Roberto Jacoby, *Salame de Chacra*, 1999. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

Salame de Chacra Chacra Salami

Roberto Jacoby, 1999

Excerpt from Robert Jacoby's diary from the summer of 1999. Published in *El deseo nace del derrumbe. Roberto Jacoby: Acciones, conceptos, escritos*, ed. Ana Longoni (Barcelona: Ediciones de La Central / Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora / Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia / Red Conceptualismos del Sur, 2011), 397. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

We want to operate in networks, as a wider, multiple subject. Virtual networks are producing new connections of knowledge and desire, as well as exchanges of knowledge and desire.

Micro-groups of exchange and survival with their own rules for enjoying life arise, new morals are in progress. The end of the millennium is approaching, and people are more inclined to believe, to trust, which also leads to trust in themselves. To believe in their own divine destiny, appointed by the gods. And someone who feels like a god has at least the possibility of doing divine things and with that, everything would improve a little bit. Feeling that we are secret gods is a belief that we have always been hiding because we considered it a childish superstition. Today, perhaps more than ever, we can feel like gods, free, living the wildness of desire and production. We understand production as that which has to do with symbolic production and above all with the production of symbolic production, which is the business of the future. That is why universities are also becoming stock market businesses.

And even more so, the production of the production of symbolic production. But we will not venture there, for there are too many moves in the chess game of speculation. But it naturally remains for the reader's exercise to understand what it is all about. Or perhaps you have already understood it. That shows that you are a good reader.



Images from Roberto Jacoby, *Salame de Chakra*, 1999. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



Venus: moneda del deseo

Venus: The Currency of Desire

Roberto Jacoby, 1999

Text included in the catalogue for the exhibition *Worthless/Invaluable*, at the Moderna Galerija, Ljubljana, 1999. Published in *El deseo nace del derrumbe. Roberto Jacoby: Acciones, conceptos, escritos*, ed. Ana Longoni (Barcelona: Ediciones de La Central / Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora / Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia/Red Conceptualismos del Sur, 2011), 403–404. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

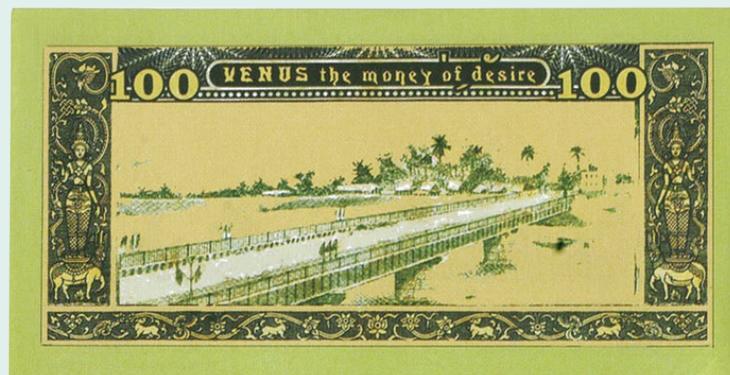
In the exhibition *Worthless/Invaluable*, the Moderna Galerija in Ljubljana presents a model of the project that I aspire to develop on a larger scale and on a permanent basis. What I consider my work is not the banknotes themselves (although I have been told that they are like poems) but the process of their circulation.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

- You receive a small amount of Venus banknotes with your ticket and you can immediately exchange them for something you want to own more than a piece of museum art: a beer, a coffee, a catalogue, a gift in the Galerija shop. But you can also exchange it with other visitors to the Galerija: one hundred Venus for a kiss, for example.
- You can become a Venus speculator and accumulate large amounts of these banknotes.
- You can steal Venus from the Galerija's visitors.
- You can sell your Venus at the local exchange rate if you find demand.
- You can create your own desiring community that exclusively accepts Venus in your exchanges.

STATEMENTS

- Today's artists are alchemists who can turn their symbols into disproportionate amounts of money.
- Does art establish a new commodity fetishism?
- The ultimate dynamism of today's capitalist economy lies in the production, distribution, and exchange of symbols (except for illegal substances and weaponry).



Recto and verso of *Venus Banknote*, 1999. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

2000 — 2009

308 **Jacoby's Experimental Communities
and the 21st Century**
by Kyle Herrington

313 ***La alegría como estrategia***
JOY AS STRATEGY
Roberto Jacoby, 2000

317 **ramona**
2000–2010

325 ***Informe sobre el proyecto Venus***
Report on the Venus Project
Roberto Jacoby, 2002

335 ***Centro de Investigaciones Artísticas (CIA)***
CIA: Center for Artistic Research
2009–2019

Jacoby's Experimental Communities and the 21st Century by Kyle Herrington

While networks and relationality have undoubtedly been a driving force in Jacoby's artistic practice and sociological work, it is worth considering the ways in which these networks and experimental communities were formed and engaged with, especially as the internet emerged into a world of expanded connectivity in the 2000s. Jacoby's work on networks is at once incredibly detailed and thoughtfully planned, as well as fluid and responsive to its own structures. His theoretical approach around networks began far in advance of the advent of the web, with much of his early work exploring the "self-expansion of absolutely physical networks."¹ While internet-based projects were not feasible until the early 21st century, endeavors such as *Internus* in the 1980s set the stage for later work that would expand the very idea of what a self-defined network could be and how it could operate. Named after the Latin *inter nos*, or "between ourselves,"² *Internus* was intended to serve as a network that circulated photocopies of written material between individuals with mutually aligned interests, affinities, and relationships. *Internus*, like much of Jacoby's work, stemmed from a need to reconstruct the cultural fabric after the dictatorship, as writing on art and theory, especially of foreign origin, was difficult or impossible to obtain in Argentina at that time.

Given both the structure and purpose of *Internus*, one can easily identify this project as a precursor to several projects in the 2000s, most notably *ramona*. Conceptualized by Roberto Jacoby and created together with a group of fifteen people, *ramona* magazine was launched in April 2000. Keeping with the "between ourselves" spirit, *ramona* began as a print publication consisting of texts devoted to exhibitions and visual art. As with his earlier works, *ramona* filled a void within established institutions or communities—in this case, the artistic community—by writing about art that was otherwise not addressed or published. It was largely inclusive in nature, relying not on editorial oversight or strict contribution guidelines, instead operating on an open submission structure, with "all incoming material—with the exception of manifest insults—published sooner or later."³ It is here that we can see the dual nature of *ramona* (in addition to many of Jacoby's other projects of the 2000s) as both highly structured and remarkably elastic in its development. The structure of *ramona* as a publication remained relatively fixed: all texts were presented in a uniform

1. Roberto Jacoby in discussion with Kyle Herrington, October 2022.

2. "Inter nos," Dictionary.com, accessed 16 November, 2022, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/inter-nos>.

3. Reinaldo Laddaga and Carlos Basualdo, "Experimental Communities: Archipelagos in the Ocean of Reality" (presentation, 25th anniversary of ARCOMadrid, International Forum of Art Experts, Madrid, February 11, 2005). Published in *ramona Magazine*, no. 51, June 2005, 26.

font (Helvetica), with no photos or visual artwork included within the publication. What did vary, however, was the content of the issues. Contributors came from all backgrounds and fields; academics, artists, historians, and students of varying experience levels all coalesced within the pages of *ramona*. It was the myriad and heterogenous contributors who drove the content of the magazine and, in doing so, shaped exactly what *ramona* looked like from issue to issue. In this regard, *ramona* was also an unfixed network: one molded by its own contributors and their affinities in the cultivation of artistic agency and autonomy. This duality, of networks that were both structured *and* loose, is a fascinating aspect of Jacoby's practice and a particularly apt characteristic within the double-edged moment of promise and uncertainty that defined the introduction of the web into everyday life in the early 2000s.

Much as pioneers of the web forged ahead into new arenas of possibility and uncertainty with the introduction of the internet, so too did Jacoby's work. Projects such as Bola de Nieve in 1999, *Proyecto Venus (Venus Project)* in 2001, and CIA: Centro de Investigación Artísticas in 2009 leveraged the emerging presence of the web to further explore the structural and cultural potential that surrounded self-expanding networks and artistic social ecologies.⁴ Following 2001's devastating financial and social crisis in Argentina, during which the Argentinian banks confiscated the bank accounts of the entire population, Jacoby created *Venus Project* as a "self-managed micro-society" in which participants, invited to join the project on a word-of-mouth basis, could exchange goods and services, develop affinity groups, socialize, and more.⁵ *Venus Project* revolved around several important elements developed by Jacoby and his collaborators, which served as important points of infrastructure in organizing the community. A proprietary currency, the Venus, was used as the mode of financial transaction for members. A website was set up to host the community; it was here that members could advertise their services for hire, items for sale, and coordinate face-to-face meetings, events, and gatherings. While many of the members' interactions took place in the real world through physical meetings (based on the availability of the internet in Argentina at the time), the website's presence slowly evolved and grew as the group harnessed the groundbreaking organizational power of the internet. As with previous projects, *Venus Project* occupied a space in between structure and fluidity: members navigated the organizing principles of the project (the Venus currency, the website, the invitation-only membership) while also influencing and steering the community through their own organic interactions and choices. In a time before Facebook, Twitter, and today's multitude of social

4. CIA: Centro de Investigación Artísticas was created together with Graciela Hasper and Judi Werthein.

5. Laddaga Basualdo, "Experimental Communities," 26.

media platforms, *Venus Project* used the internet as an emergent means of exploring a self-expanding network, one that began to blur the lines between technology and the real world. The web complicated, extended, and accelerated Jacoby's networks—members of his experimental communities were able to communicate and interact faster, more efficiently, and in a broader and more expansive way than ever before.

As Jacoby said in speaking of *Venus Project* and other works from the early 21st century, "The group curates itself."⁶ While this is certainly true and could easily be said of many of his prior projects, it is important to acknowledge how the introduction of the internet added to the trajectory of both the networks Jacoby formed and his broader artistic and theoretical legacies. With this lens in mind, we can situate Jacoby's writings from the 2000s in a compelling, rich, and deeply engaging context: one that traces notions of networks, relationality, and experimental communities throughout various social, political, and technological developments and moments, both in Argentina and globally. As such, we can consider how both the complex structural frameworks and the fluid self-expansion of Jacoby's networks have played integral roles in his work throughout the decades. "I don't believe that the direction the process will take is already fixed or determined," Jacoby writes, "but that it will depend in part on what we think and do with it."⁷

6. Roberto Jacoby in discussion with Kyle Herrington, October 2022.

7. "La alegría como estrategia" (Joy as a Strategy), *Zona Erogena*, no. 43, 2000. See page 387 of this book.

Selected Writings and Projects

La alegría como estrategia

Joy as Strategy

Roberto Jacoby, 2000

This article was published in the magazine *Zona Erógena*, no. 43, 2000. Published in *El deseo nace del derrumbe. Roberto Jacoby: Acciones, conceptos, escritos*, ed. Ana Longoni (Barcelona: Ediciones de La Central / Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora / Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía/Red Conceptualismos del Sur, 2011), 410–412. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

The subject of the body is not a matter of mere academic propagation in Argentina. Sadly, it seems to be of particular relevance here, where torture became a profession and the expression “disappeared” was coined. The military government’s political strategies had successfully operated on bodies through annihilation, torment, imprisonment, urban control, and systems of information, given that their goal was what Clausewitz calls “the moral and intellectual forces,” which in war are usually the real target for the destruction of physical or bodily forces. In truth, they acted upon the population’s state of mind until all impulses for autonomy were very nearly extinguished.

During those years, physical actions or joint celebrations were only admitted as long as they were endorsed by the state: the soccer World Cup and the Falklands war are paradigmatic cases. At the same time, however, at least two clear strategies were deployed regarding the issue of the recovery of the body’s potentialities. The most examined one revolved around the initiative of the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo and had as its objectives the visibility and historical reconstruction of the absent bodies. The sense behind not giving them the status of “dead” is to keep open an interrogation and a responsibility assigned to the state, which mourning would have closed. The significance and the effect of the Mothers’ movement, waiting around the monument in Plaza de Mayo, can be very profitably read in Elías Canetti’s *Crowds and Power*.

The other strategy, whose efficacy I’ll try to prove in this commentary, is never mentioned. I’m talking about the strategy of joy. It originated within the rock-and-roll scene, and it started (as did the Mothers) during the military government. It

consisted in unchaining the citizenship’s terrorized bodies, most of them youths, who were the main victims of state terrorism. To go from paralyzed bodies to bodies in movement. From the concentrationary¹ arrangement to which the city was subjected to the possibility of exercising movements driven by desire or play, intimate but no less significant forms of freedom.

The strategy of joy can be quite simply described as the attempt to recover one’s state of mind through actions associated with music, to make a type of molecular resistance out of them, and to generate their own territoriality, intermittent and diffuse.

The first ones to operate in this visionary way were Los Redonditos de Ricota, who did so as early as 1977: they changed the physical layout of the stage, the relationship between audience and performers, they handed out the mythical *redonditos*² they dressed up and put on makeup, etc.

In interviews conducted in the 1980s, the singer, Indio Solari, clearly states the deliberate nature of their action on the state of mind.

From the 1980s onwards, Virus, its descendants, and other groups that formed in parallel or slightly after to the rhythm of the times, like Los Twist, Las Viudas de Roque Enrol, **Los Abuelos de la Nada**, **Las Bay Biscuit**, and celebratory groups like El Ring Club, among others, continued in this vein. The press and the classic rock scene classified them frequently as “hedonistic” and “superficial,” which was accurate and deliberate, since hedonism worked as the opposite of suffering, and the notion of superficial acted doubly as a mask and as skin. It was possible to hide and manifest behind the harmless and the different shapes of the joke.

The skin was considered a territory of pleasure instead of torment. “Superficial” was also the opposite of the dungeon and the clandestine. It is easy to see that inserted in the moralizing tone of these criticisms was traditional revolutionary puritanism, a mixture of Stalinism with Christian and military asceticism, hegemonic among both progressive and reactionary forces.

The “strategy of joy” manifested itself in musical styles, appearance, scenery, costumes, and makeup. and involved free movement, plays on identity, and the playful transformation of the environment. Bodies found once again the possibility

1. Pilar Calveiro, in her book *Power and Disappearance* (Buenos Aires: Colihue, 1997), gives the name “concentrationary power” to all the shapes that state terror took during the last military dictatorship to disperse terror among the population, both inside and outside clandestine detention centers.—Ed.

2. This refers to the distribution to the audience, during the group’s first concerts, of small, sweet rolls called, appropriately, *redonditos de ricota*.—Ed.

of entering or creating fictional spaces, of visiting alternate, imaginary realities, where the crystallized world of unique and obligatory senses was eroded. The gesture was overdue because, in 1970s Argentina, gunpowder and blood had dimmed the lights of the party in the same way that they had halted the movement toward post-hippie pansexualism that took hold in the Northern countries.

The importance given to dance and the free or experimental movement of the body and the playful or carnivalesque dimensions of social encounters continued in the late 1980s with the opening of nomadic spaces in neighborhoods, outside the discotheque circuit, where very different social experiences were connected—experiences that had until then been compartmentalized (except within soccer and during the short period of Camporism, where, in any case, the disciplining of the masses came from the oppositional forces).

But what is interesting is that this strategy had effects beyond the circle of immediate originators and was carried out over time. For the new generations, it was a starting point, very different from the one in the previous period.

These two types of action or strategy regarding the body weren't necessarily contradictory. In fact, many people participated in both, but there was a certain ideology that tried to oppose and confront them, and, of course, many more didn't even notice their existence. The music groups of the 1990s do not even consider those antagonisms: physical expansion, joy, and even debauchery are experienced as quite direct political expressions. They have made—each in their own way—a certain mix of everything: memory, bodily and sexual experimentation, generational identity, use of the body as a support for artistic experimentation, communicational operations, etc. A very striking example is **HIJOS**, whose link to queer groups, in particular trans organizations, would have been unthinkable five or ten years before.

The strategy of annihilation of bodies by the armed apparatuses of the state conceived a multiform but unique enemy that finally ended up being conflated by history. Imperceptibly, slowly but unquestionably, two ways of understanding the relationship between the body, initially experienced by their protagonists as opposing, met again in the new generations.

In the 1990s, the issue of body politics became more complex as a result of the centrality that the HIV epidemic had in the discussions on social contact and the modification of the social and urban plot. The decade starting in the year 2000 is marked by transformations in the spatial and temporal dimensions. One hears

with some insistence the postulate that presents the opposition between web space, sensoriality, and the use of the city—between the “real” materials and the intensity of the “virtual.” Once again, some of the shapes which youth activity takes are challenged presumptuously on the base of conceptual simplifications.

The list of topics is a long one: the emergence of new gender identities; multiple, fluid, and fictional identities; intergenerational connections; the formation of new transnational collective subjects with the media; global solidarity campaigns; the demands for cultural and community localization; etc. What I mean to say is that I don't believe that the direction the process will take is already fixed or determined, but that it will depend in part on what we think and do with it.



ramona
ramona magazine: The voice of
artists & the art scene in the raw
2000–2010

Article published in the magazine *Zona Erógena*, no. 43, 2000. Published in *El deseo nace del derrumbe. Roberto Jacoby: Acciones, conceptos, escritos*, ed. Ana Longoni (Barcelona: Ediciones de La Central / Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora / Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia/Red Conceptualismos del Sur, 2011), 410–412. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

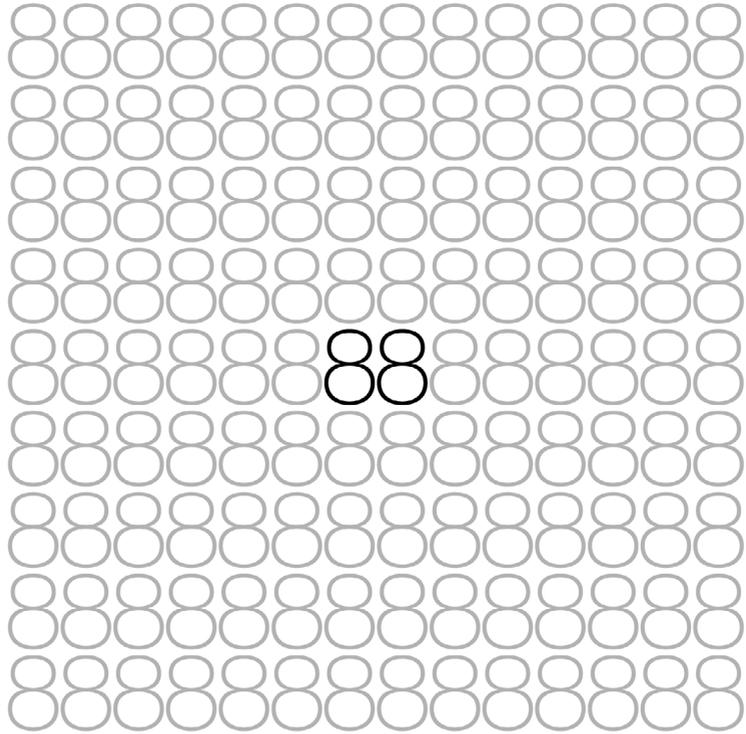
PRINT VERSION (2001–2011)

- Iconoclastic monthly magazine
- Promotes and gives visibility to emerging discourses and poetics
- Restores artists' voices and points of view
- Theory, discussion, and research on local and global visual arts: fusing/merging/intertwining/knitting academic studies with the artist's voice
- In high consideration worldwide: documenta 12, Art Basel, and Argentinian main events
- Pro bono collaboration
- Archives lexicon: organized files available in PDF format at www.ramona.org.ar/archivo
- Source for researchers

An iconoclastic magazine that promoted and brought visibility to emerging discourses and poetics, restoring artists' voices and points of view.

ARTISTS: from art subject to subjects of art. Take action!

Ramona and *ramonaweb*: in print from 2000 to 2010, with 101 issues (it continues to circulate electronically). *Ramona's* print edition was an inexpensive journal without images, with a polemic and confrontational bent. Artists authored the notes, momentarily replacing critics in their usual function as writers.



ramona

revista de artes visuales
www.ramona.org.ar
buenos aires
marzo 2009
10 pesos

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Mariano Oropeza sobre Pintura. El concepto de diagrama, de Gilles Deleuze

Arte light: mirada internacional

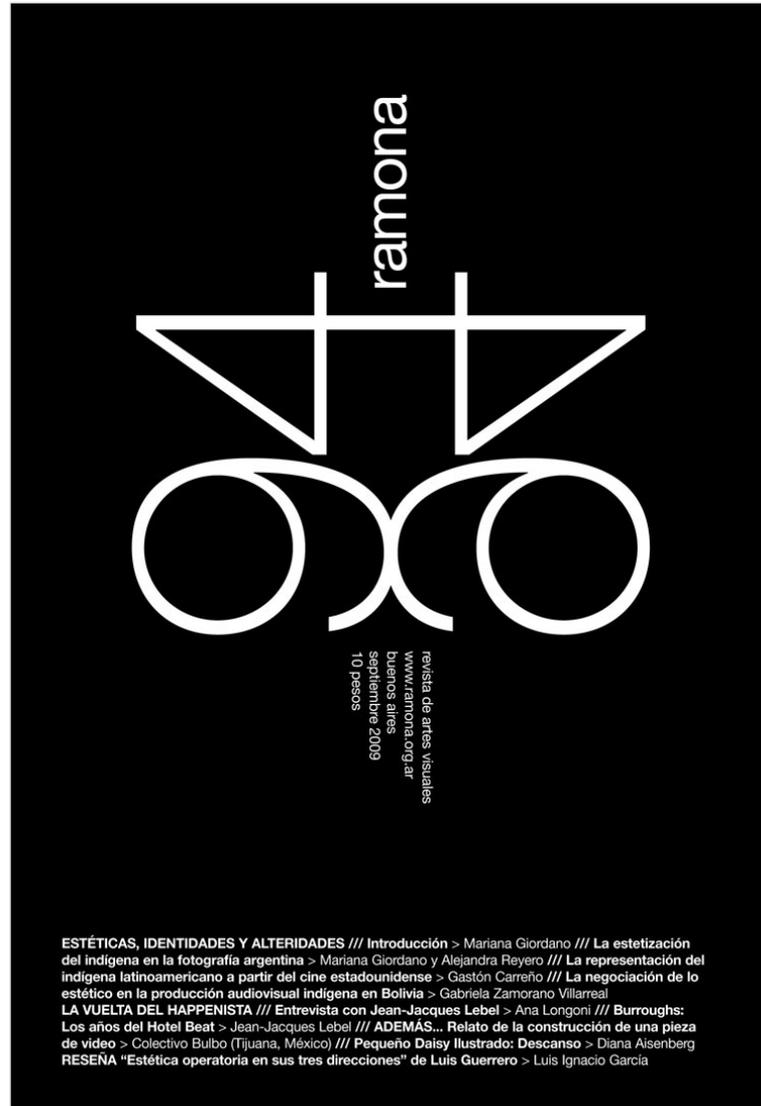
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Jaime Vindel con Daniel Ontiveros y Marcelo Pombo

Lo que Duchamp nos dejó

José Fernández Vega sobre Marcel Duchamp. La vida a crédito, de Bernard Mercadé
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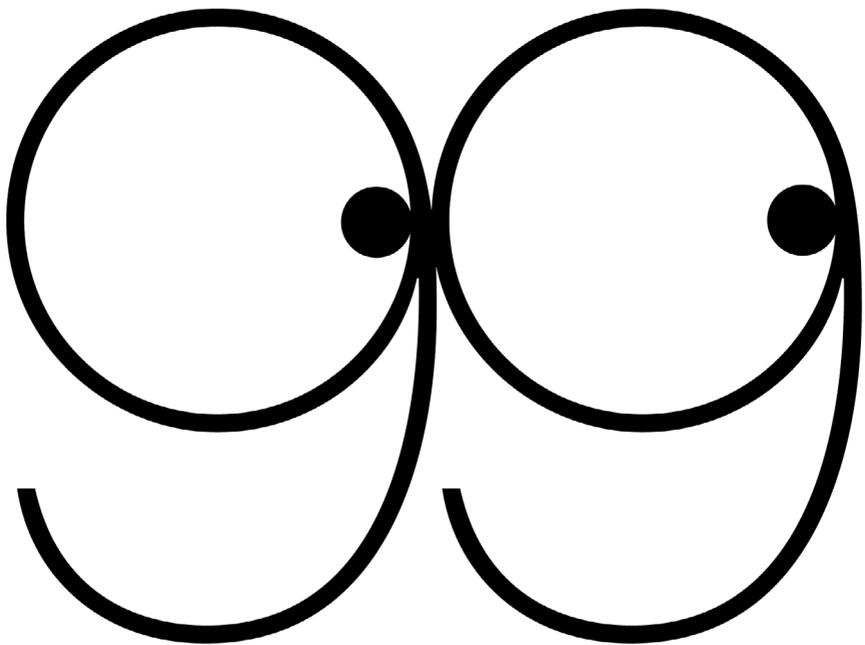


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ESTÉTICAS, IDENTIDADES Y ALTERIDADES /// Introducción > Mariana Giordano /// La estetización del indígena en la fotografía argentina > Mariana Giordano y Alejandra Reyero /// La representación del indígena latinoamericano a partir del cine estadounidense > Gastón Carreño /// La negociación de lo estético en la producción audiovisual indígena en Bolivia > Gabriela Zamorano Villarreal
LA VUELTA DEL HAPPENISTA /// Entrevista con Jean-Jacques Lebel > Ana Longoni /// Burroughs: Los años del Hotel Beat > Jean-Jacques Lebel /// **ADEMÁS...** Relato de la construcción de una pieza de video > Colectivo Bulbo (Tijuana, México) /// **Pequeño Daisy Ilustrado: Descanso** > Diana Aisenberg
RESEÑA "Estética operatoria en sus tres direcciones" de Luis Guerrero > Luis Ignacio García

Cover of ramona 88, March 2009. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

Cover of ramona 94, September 2009. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

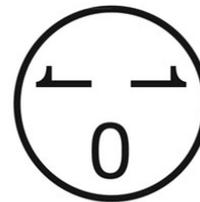


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MICROPOLÍTICAS CUIR: TRANSMARICONIZANDO EL SUR

- Presentación** > Fernando Davis y Miguel A. López
- Cuirizando la cultura argentina desde La Queerencia** > Silvia Delfino y Flavio Rapisardi
- Manifiesto Ecuatoriano del Octubre Trans** > Elizabeth Vásquez
- Notas sobre las Yeguas del Apocalipsis** > Fernanda Carvajal
- Transfeminismo y micropolíticas del género en la era farmacopornográfica** > Beatriz Preciado
- Flavio de Carvalho: el "Laboratorio de erótica" y su New Look** > Inti Guerrero
- Veladas paquetas queer georgé** > Mujeres Públicas
- Diálogo sobre el Museo Travesti del Perú** > Giuseppe Campuzano y Miguel A. López
- ¡Mi Culo es Revolucionario!** > Pablo León de la Barra
- La nueva escena de la Disidencia Sexual en Chile** > Felipe Rivas San Martín
- En el post del Posporno** > Elisa Fuenzalida
- Estado Patriarcal y Estado Proxeneta** > María Galindo. Mujeres Creando
- Eroticica o Los muchachos de Oro de Babylonests** > Víctor Manuel Rodríguez
- Proyecto Heteronorma** > Mujeres Públicas



Cover of *ramona* 99, April 2010. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

Cover of *ramona* 101, the latest issue of the magazine, June–July 2010.
Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



RAMONAWEB: RAMONA'S ONLINE ALTER EGO

Ramonaweb was launched in 2008 and was conceived as a platform for the dissemination of contemporary art in Argentina.

The website is the main entrance to START (Society, Technology, and Art) Foundation, and offered:

- A place to check out what's going on in the Argentinian art scene
- The offer and needs: answering the social needs of the artists
- Transformation and perdurability
- Schedule and database
- Web 2.0: social prosumers
- Spontaneous pro bono participation through writing articles
- Weekly updates
- Reference website
- Consulting website
- Resource center/information source

Informe sobre el proyecto Venus Report on the Venus Project

Roberto Jacoby, 2002

Speech presented at the launch of the strategic game *Colapso de Venus*, Buenos Aires, September 2002. Published in *El deseo nace del derrumbe. Roberto Jacoby: Acciones, conceptos, escritos*, ed. Ana Longoni (Barcelona: Ediciones de La Central / Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo Editora / Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía/Red Conceptualismos del Sur, 2011), 419–422. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

First, it must be said that the Venus Project is a de-utopianizing project, in the sense that it brings into existence a place not “outside of society” but mixed together with it, driven by the desire to make concrete a kind of utopian immediacy and its difficulties.

I think that among artists, thinkers, scientists, etc. there exists an unimaginable richness, not just because of their value in individual terms. I am referring to another kind of richness, even more significant: that one which exists in potential form in the connections that these groups establish among each other. And I am not thinking of the hackneyed notion of “collective creative work,” but in all types of possible intersections: technological assistance, so-called cross-fertilization, “structural transference” from one field to another, conversations, collaboration, loans, friendships, the interweaving of desires and competencies, the bricolage of ideas, productions, and sources.

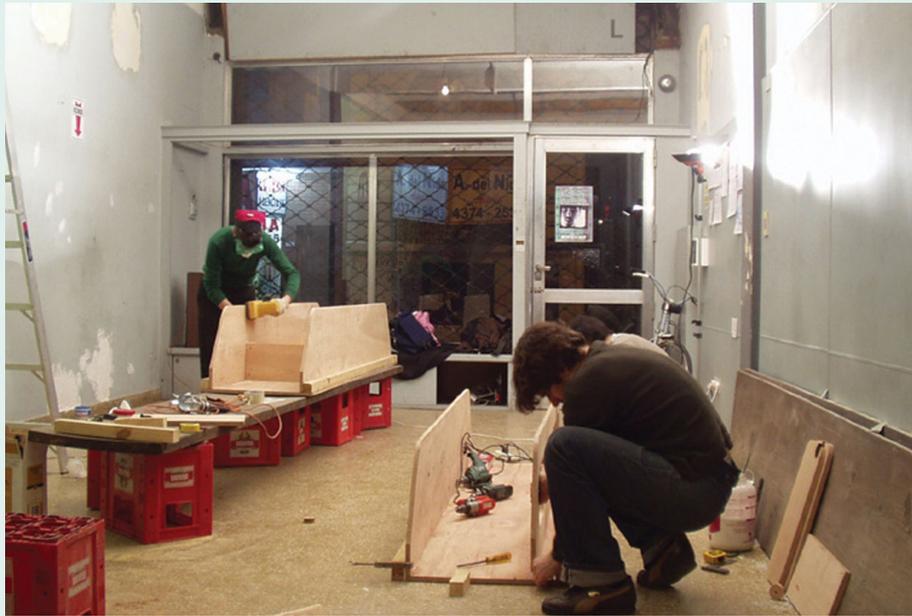
Based on the experience of the '60s, I believe that when those types of connections exist, the famous “creative brew” takes form, which in those days was made in “pots” such as bars, bookstores, collective homes, and parties or meals.

At first, Project Venus aimed at creating not an alternative society but a simultaneous one, a little after the fashion of a TAZ (Temporary Autonomous Zone): spaces built out of relationships rather than mere physical spaces; spaces derived from Situationism, where it might be possible to fulfill certain desires, a certain creative potential. I know this sounds a bit naive and probably it is so. I know the notion of “desire” has to be rigorously defined, and all those other things that have been said in previous meetings.

I use “desire” in a broad sense: the urge to have or know or do something I've never done or couldn't do or wasn't allowed to do. This desire in the Venus domain



Top: Selection from *Proyecto Venus Calendar*, 2003. Photo: Gisella Lifchitz. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.
Bottom: Currency from *Project Venus*, 2002. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



Top: *Project Venus* Headquarters, designed by Sebastián Gordin, 2001. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.
Bottom: Construction of *Project Venus* Headquarters, 2002. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

relates above all to creations and inventions, but also to the possibility of connecting with other people who are desirable.

Normally, our individual and collective creative powers are mediated, measured, and often limited by the institutional and economic system.

We could say that the development of symbolic action is bound or appropriated by other applications through the mechanisms of the market and institutions. This is what many of us have often felt when making proposals to gallery directors, editors, producer: on all those occasions in which we have been censored, questioned, excluded, etc. This experience gives rise to the search for an independent or autonomous expressive platform; labels, publishing houses, and galleries are instantly more trustworthy to us if they belong to artists.

It has been said that art has stopped searching for the truth in order to search for freedom. We know that there are no eternal truths in art, only phosphorescence, refrains, connections and missed connections.

In any case, the space of freedom to which we aspire is precisely one in which established truths can be explored, criticized, renovated.

Through the *Venus Project* I wanted to experiment within three areas:

- **1. Networks:** that is, with the infinite possibilities within our bodies and their connections. We know that relationships in contemporary society take the form of networks: business networks, information networks, terrorist networks, cultural networks, networks of resistance, etc. The topic of networks is important in and of itself, for it implies new kinds of contacts, hierarchies, functioning.
- **2. Digital technologies:** which, in part, refer to “art will be made by all,” given the relatively broad access to independent means of production; and, in part, refer to online forms of connection, communication, and cooperation. These possibilities are modifying contemporary culture, but even so, it is evident that they are not being fully used.
- **3. New forms of socializing:** which are, from my perspective, the most complicated. For this reason, it would be necessary and very interesting to explore forms of collaboration, cooperation, and joint actions that use these technologies, together with more traditional ones (and others we have not yet imagined).

Undoubtedly, this is something difficult, but it does not seem impossible.

Obviously, society is not external to individuals, but rather something that individuals carry with them wherever they go. Even more, these individuals have



Completed *Project Venus* Headquarters, 2002. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

been shaped by a society that in less than a million years has transformed itself from the crowd to an individual-based project (the moment we are currently living). However, the projects of “the new human,” “the new society,” “the new power” do not seem to have considered this transformation.

The main problems here are the usual suspects: human “nature,” the urge to accumulate property, the demand for and expectation of domination, unequal exchanges, the absence of equivalences.

In this sense, the Venus Project is a laboratory not just for art and technology but mainly for relationships between people.

The proposal of an autonomous exchange currency has a poetic, symbolic, and also parodic side, yet nonetheless it is also practical since in our times the market is the form of social behavior par excellence.

One might have emphasized non-strictly mercantile forms such as those belonging to religions or cults, certain parties or secret organizations, associations based on solidarity, the family, etc. But given the experience I had with some of these forms—in which unjust hierarchies and unequal exchanges persist, often secretly but with great force—I thought it would be better to try to create my own market, based on voluntary membership, that could coexist alongside the consensual or universal market. I did not know at that time—though I might have imagined it—that, like almost everything, it had already been invented.

First by Silvio Gesell in the '20s and then by dozens of groups that, without interruption from that time on, kept experimenting with local currencies, social money, and other such inventions variously named in different countries, none with too much success as far as I know.

But this remote antecedent was not all: right here and spontaneously, expropriated, and impoverished sectors had invented their own currency, which the state later multiplied by eighteen through the so-called pseudo-currency (patacones, lecops)¹.

As an experimental society in which artists, scientists, and intellectuals connect in circuits of production and circulation, exploring new forms of creation and life, the Venus Project cannot fail. In other words, it would not fail, even were it to fail, if certain experiences and certain knowledge emerged from all this. These achievements would already be an important contribution. To put it in trendy

1. This is a reference to the unpopular issuance of bonds after the 2001 economic crisis to pay part of the salaries of public employees in the provinces.



Documentation of *Venus: the Currency of Desire*, 1999–2006. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

terms: I would like to set up a laboratory in **microbiopolitics** (as opposed to macrobiopolitics) in which all the formulas that seem exhausted to us could be revised and reinvented.

We began the project in 2001 with a small group of artists and intellectuals who were connected to the magazine *Ramona* as well as others who came from previous projects and a few new enthusiasts. Several continue to exist and are themselves a TAZ, which is the best proof that this experiment makes sense.

First, we organized the Plácidos Domingos, who were proposed as a propitious space for reflecting on the Venus; at the same time, we began to develop information systems. Very curiously, Argentine history appeared to run parallel to the project. The discrediting² of the institutions of all kinds and especially those related to money modified the context in a favorable way.

If at the beginning people did ask what backed the Venus currency (imagining ingots at the central bank or at least at Fort Knox), toward February 2002, when the first Venus currency was minted and distributed, no one had those kinds of doubts again.

Initially we aimed at securing fifty and later one hundred associates in order to ensure sufficient sales for the currency to circulate effectively. Now there are 170³ associates, and we believe that 250 to 300 people with certain creative characteristics will provide a desirable magnitude of rich and observable connections.

We discovered that the web is a necessary but insufficient medium.

We discovered that materiality and physical contact are fundamental to give the project real weight. Accordingly, we organized gatherings, fairs, shows.

Believing in the necessity of creating physical nodes in the network, we began with the gallery and publishing house “Belleza y Felicidad” (Beauty and Happiness), and then developed “Tatlin”. The “De Loof” node is coming soon.

The web started improving, classifying, and increasing our sales.

We have several offers from places interested in doing commerce in Venus; we are preparing a magazine as an analogue networking counterpart that will allow outreach to people and spaces unconnected to the internet.

Since my experiences with groups and people proved so auspicious, we are planning a system of shared projects through the Venus system.

2. During 2001 and 2002

3. As of January 2004, more than 400.



Documentation of *Venus: the Currency of Desire*, 1999–2006. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

Using games such as “Colapso de un sistema” (Collapse of a System) generates ideas and provides sources. For example, through the game we got the idea of making sizable donations in Venus currency to organizations in need of funds.

We continue to uphold the sort of lack of definition in the nature of this association that seems to me advantageous: club, university, singles’ group, bartering center, factory, refugee barracks, utopian peninsula, experiment, customs, co-op bank, joint-stock company, micro-nation.

We list below some working principles:

- Let’s do it now.
- Let’s be friends (this doesn’t always work: “Is there a psychoanalyst in the house?”⁴).
- Let’s ask some more people.
- Let’s seek out the connections.
- Let’s think of the right person.
- Let’s flee forward: the problems won’t be resolved, the best we can do is to create another problem, bigger and more complicated, or to find a detour, a change (in the sense of a train changing tracks) toward another problem.
- Not to operate on the basis of sacrifice but on the basis of desire or benefits (I can make or have things I couldn’t otherwise: I have visibility, I gain skills, I make connections, etc.).
- To promote talent.
- To avoid the “free trip” that penalizes those who complete tasks for the benefit of the common good.
- Look for ways of functioning different from the usual: all the tried has failed.
- Not to freeze roles.
- Instead of reckoning in terms of strategy (as that word is commonly understood), we prefer to enter into states that are diffuse, variable, changing, which can become pretty maddening and can complicate communication, but rules out boredom....

4. Wordplay based on a common phrase from the speakers’ podium at mass rallies, asking for “a doctor over there” when someone is in need. (Editor’s Note)





Top: Documentation of “The Art of Conduct Workshop: Creating a Profession,” presented by Tania Bruguera at CIA, August 2009. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

Bottom: Documentation of “Delegated Performance: Outsourcing Authenticity,” a lecture by Claire Bishop presented at CIA, December 2009. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

Centro de Investigaciones Artísticas (CIA) CIA: Center for Artistic Research

2009–2019

Project proposed by Judy Wertheim and developed with Gachi Hasper and Roberto Jacoby. It was an extensive program of courses, workshops, seminars, presentations, and conferences carried out by artists and researchers around theoretical, historical, and poetic issues, mainly from Latin America. (2009–2020). Ciacentro.org.ar. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

Centro de Investigaciones Artísticas is a meeting point for both artists and thinkers from different parts of the world, Latin America in particular.

Since August 2009, there has been in place an extensive program of classes, workshops, seminars, conferences, and lectures given by artists and researchers on theoretical, historical, and poetic issues. Each year, training grants are awarded to artists selected by local and international juries. We think of these artists (and also of all the collaborators, teachers, and residents) as – – *cultural* – – *agents* of the CAR. Besides being participants, these agents are developers of the program and the space, as well as participants in the workshops and seminars.

The Center brings together projects of all artistic genres, with an emphasis on those that blur the boundaries between practices, genres and media, artistic and extra-artistic materials; those that propose new forms of production, exhibition, and exchange; those that expand the notions of “public,” “work,” and “author”; and those that explore broader social contexts than the institutionalized art scene. Narrators, poets, musicians, philosophers, architects, designers, filmmakers, historians, psychoanalysts, technologists, theater folk, and those from other fields of art and knowledge converge in our space.

The Centro de Investigaciones Artísticas is a proposal by Judi Wertheim, developed in collaboration with Graciela Hasper and Roberto Jacoby, with a legal seat at the START (Society, Technology, and Art) Foundation.

During a period of ten years, more than two hundred artists studied at the CIA.



Documentation of "Drawing, observation of the invisible and the expansion of the universe," a workshop presented by Ernesto Ballesteros at CIA, November 2009. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



Documentation of "Drawing, observation of the invisible and the expansion of the universe," a workshop presented by Ernesto Ballesteros at CIA, November 2009. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



Documentation of a music workshop presented by Alan Courtis at CIA, September 2009. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



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2010s
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In the 2010s, Roberto Jacoby shifted his artistic practice to focus on unconventional exhibition methods revolving around the idea of a spectacle in adverse conditions of perception. Driven by the exploration of space, darkness, visibility, and invisibility, *No soy un clown* (I Am Not a Clown, 2001), *Darkroom* (2002), *El alma nunca piensa sin imagen* (The Soul Never Thinks without an Image, 2010), and *1978* (2014) are site-specific experiments that dive deeper into the relationship between an art situation and the viewer's perception.

No soy un clown was Jacoby's first solo show at Belleza y Felicidad, an artist-run gallery on the periphery of Buenos Aires's mainstream art scene.¹ In the gallery's basement, completely enclosed in darkness, hung six photographs of Jacoby dressed up as a clown.² Zarah Leander's song "Wo Sind Die Clowns?" (Where Are the Clowns?) played in the background. One LED light bulb, placed on the edge of the frame, lit each work, requiring effort on the part of the viewer to perceive the images.

The following year, Jacoby's experiments with darkness extended beyond spatial interrogations to enter the field of corporality and physical sensation. *Darkroom* was not only characterized by its opaque darkness but also sought to trigger sensorial effects, emotions, and images, accomplished through the work's unscripted nature. Jacoby returned once again to the basement of Belleza y Felicidad to stage this work, which followed a one-spectator policy: one by one, viewers were invited to explore the space with the help of an infrared, night-vision video camera. Isolated by the camera's viewfinder, each spectator had to carve their own individual path through the space, illuminating each work at their own pace. Through these gestures, visibility was turned into myth, which reconfigured itself with every personal encounter.

In the crowded basement—littered with tins, magazines, posters, ironing boards, cinema seats, hairdressing tools, shelves, bottles, bowls, and kitchen equipment, among other objects—the spectator was eventually confronted by a group of eight performers, dressed in white suits and shiny globular masks. Unlike the superhuman vision offered to the spectator, the performers were blinded by their masks, forced to carry out their improvised actions in complete darkness. At the same time, while the spectator entered

1. While all the other art galleries were located near Florida Street, in the city center, in 1999, Fernanda Laguna and Cecilia Pavón founded Belleza y Felicidad in an old traditional pharmacy in the Almagro neighborhood.

2. During the 1990s, Jacoby studied performance arts, theater, and clown practices, among other disciplines. On Tuesdays, he worked for free in underground bars and clubs, such as Cemento, and improvised Shakespeare's plays, including *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*. During these performances, the boundaries between artist and spectator were also diminished, since most of the time, the public ended up on stage, performing with the actors.

the space alone, the performers were united in their tactile and hedonistic, albeit sightless, occupation of the space.

Free from instruction on their performance, the blinded group not only manipulated the objects and props around the room but also assumed playful, sexual, and even violent attitudes toward one another. Under the performers' dominion, the basement was transformed into an uncanny stage for tragicomic encounters. In this subterranean world—controlled by confusion, nondisclosure, fear, and frustrated desires—the viewer was confronted with shameless actions that revealed the fragile edges between freedom and supervision, plausibility and madness, pleasure and discomfort.

The *Darkroom* experience was certainly one of voyeurism. But who, exactly, was under surveillance remains less clear. In multifaceted ways, this work reinforced Jacoby's denial of art's traditional reliance on visibility. In 2005, a modified version of the play was reenacted at the Museo Latino Americano de Arte de Buenos Aires (MALBA).³

In October 2014, the site-specific project *1978* broadened Jacoby's aspiration to introduce unreachable presences from other times and places into art spaces.⁴ This work attempted to influence not only memory and historical conscience, but also the senses, emotions, and thoughts. The installation itself was located at Centro Cultural Haroldo Conti, also known as ex-ESMA in reference to the former torture center housed on the site during Argentina's civic-military dictatorship.⁵ In collaboration with Luciano Azzigotti and Nacho Marciano,⁶ Jacoby conceived an acoustic documentary revolving around Argentina's last FIFA World Cup victory as host nation—which occurred in 1978. The installation consisted of eighteen speakers arranged on floating shelves throughout a white room, completed

with two rounded seating areas that allowed the public to contemplate, listen, and engage with Jacoby's sound intervention.

Thus, *1978* was presented in an emotionally charged space, fraught with social and political memories, where every step taken by the viewers implied an intensifying acknowledgment of a painful and violent past.⁷ Jacoby's tactic here, though, rather than "making the walls talk" was to instead amplify the sound of loud celebrations, joyful songs, sustained applause, and endless cries of happiness, captured in the archival recordings taken of celebrating Argentinians following the World Cup victory in 1978.

Through both sound and a codified architecture, *1978* cross-references two opposing socio political realities. The historical sound recordings played inside the ex-ESMA simultaneously evoke reminiscences of Argentina's darkest years and one of its greatest celebrations, exposing how individual perception, habits, and political backgrounds might affect the reception, acknowledgment, and interpretation of such an aberrant historical moment. In effect, *1978* is Roberto Jacoby's ultimate attempt to draw forth light from obscurity.

These most recent works by Jacoby are not only site-specific but context-specific. While *1978* took place at one of Buenos Aires's most sociopolitically charged physical sites, for *The Soul Never Thinks without an Image* (2010), Jacoby took advantage of a particular moment in time: Brazil's 2010 presidential election.

Continuing the artist's reflection on art mediation and reception, *The Soul Never Thinks without an Image* was an installation work revolving around two portraits taken from the internet: one of José Serra and the other of Dilma Rousseff, both presidential candidates in Brazil at the time. Since neither image was under copyright, Jacoby was free not only to reproduce them but also to change their scale, enlarging them to look like political campaign posters. While Rousseff looks happy in the photograph, surrounded by women and wearing a folk hat, Serra wears a gray suit and a tired face.

While the starting point of Jacoby's installation was simple—two large-scale photographs found on the internet—the installation took on significant complexity through not only context but Jacoby's continued practice of social mediation. Just before the twenty-ninth São Paulo Biennial, for which *The Soul Never Thinks without an Image* was cre-

3. During the following years, Jacoby was still interested in his experiments in the dark. After failing to create a darkroom laboratory, he made simple drawings of imagined darkrooms. Following the unsuccessful laboratory, he was invited to recreate the first *Darkroom* at MALBA. However, this was a different experience, since Jacoby was invested in training the performers, studying a darkroom in different layers, and intensifying the concept of living in darkness.

4. The eponymous 1978 was one of Argentina's most polemic years. In regards to the civic-military dictatorship, it represented a moment of increased disappearances. Argentinian society was exposed to a regime of torture, kidnapping, and active disappearances of people. During the duration of the FIFA World Cup, the number of disappearances increased substantially. In other words, 1978 was the peak year of terror in the hands of the Argentinian state.

5. In 1976, the Escuela Superior Mecánica de la Armada (Navy School of Mechanics), also known as ESMA, contained one of the many clandestine detention camps around Argentina during its last dictatorship. These detention camps were aimed at supporting the state's systemic and planned terror scheme, which enforced the disappearance of people. The building that now contains the Centro Cultural Haroldo Conti was then the headquarters of the Argentinian navy's second-degree officials. After the dictatorship, many of these buildings were granted to human rights foundations and transformed into cultural centers. For *1978*, Roberto Jacoby decided to keep the original layout of the room. It is a huge white space of approximately 686 square meters that used to house the navy's boats.

6. Luciano Azzigotti and Nacho Marciano are contemporary musicians working with experimental explorations of sound. The main idea was to construct a sound system that could allow the spectator to feel that the sound was coming from outside, as an imitation of the sounds that the prisoners heard during the match.

7. People were kidnapped, tortured, and killed in these detention centers. Many have now been transformed into cultural centers as a tribute to state victims. The Centro Cultural Haroldo Conti is a particularly complex space, since it is located near the River Plate Stadium, which housed the 1978 FIFA World Cup. During the match, the prisoners could listen to the celebrations, and because the officers were watching and listening to the match, they were relieved of the usual torture sessions.

ated, Jacoby formed the Argentinian International Brigade in support of Dilma Rousseff. Composed of twenty-four Argentinian artists, poets, historians, philosophers, professors, and musicians, the Brigade's discussions, collective art-making, workshops, lectures, manifestations, and actions became part of Jacoby's intervention at the Biennial.

The intervention, however, did not go exactly according to plan, but reinvented its meaning through unexpected circumstances. Although the Biennial's central theme was "Arte y Política: Siempre hay un vaso de mar para Navegar" (Art and politics: There is always a glass of sea to navigate), the Electoral Attorney General's office suggested that Jacoby's work was considered "an electoral offense," questioning its legality.⁸ As a result, the artist decided to change *Dilma* to *Vilma* throughout the Brigade's actions to avoid legal complications, which stemmed from a prohibition on exhibiting political artworks during an electoral campaign. The monumental posters were also covered immediately following the opening night. The Brigade, however, continued its regular activities and political actions. Before, during, and after its installation, the work gained ever-increasing levels of complexity with every interpretation and reconfiguration. Through an emblematic social force, the censorship imposed by the Electoral Attorney General's office upon artists and political activists became visible; within this exteriorization enacted through *The Soul Never Thinks without an Image*, Jacoby brought to light the shadows of an exhibition and a curatorial team that presented itself as willing, but unable, to navigate the expanses of art and politics.

Like much of his six-decade oeuvre, Jacoby's works are part of an infinite circuit of connections, assimilations, and reaffirmations that require an engaged spectator. They construct and reconstruct themselves with every encounter, and their meaning can only be generated by an attentive and absorbed viewer.

Although Jacoby's more recent exhibitions may be filled with darkness and sensorial limitations, their enclosed structures introduce diagrammatic operations that cut across contextual situations and artistic authorship. By subjecting the reception to a foreign order of things, every encounter contributes to an external channel of significance that rests past the moment of contemplation.

8. Although Jacoby's work and actions survived the official opening of the São Paulo Biennial, *The Soul Never Thinks without an Image* was censored because it broke the law that prohibits the use of propaganda in public spaces during electoral campaigns. While the opening ceremony was targeted at members of the art world, the Biennial's sponsors were expected to attend the next day. For this last event, Jacoby's work was covered with wrapping paper, in order to prevent the Biennial from losing its funding due to compromising pieces that went not only against the law, but were seemingly "misleading" and "controversial".

Selected Exhibitions



No soy un clown
I Am Not a Clown

Roberto Jacoby, 1996, exhibited in 2001

Roberto Jacoby, *No soy un clown*, 1996.
Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



Roberto Jacoby, *No soy un clown*, 1996.
Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



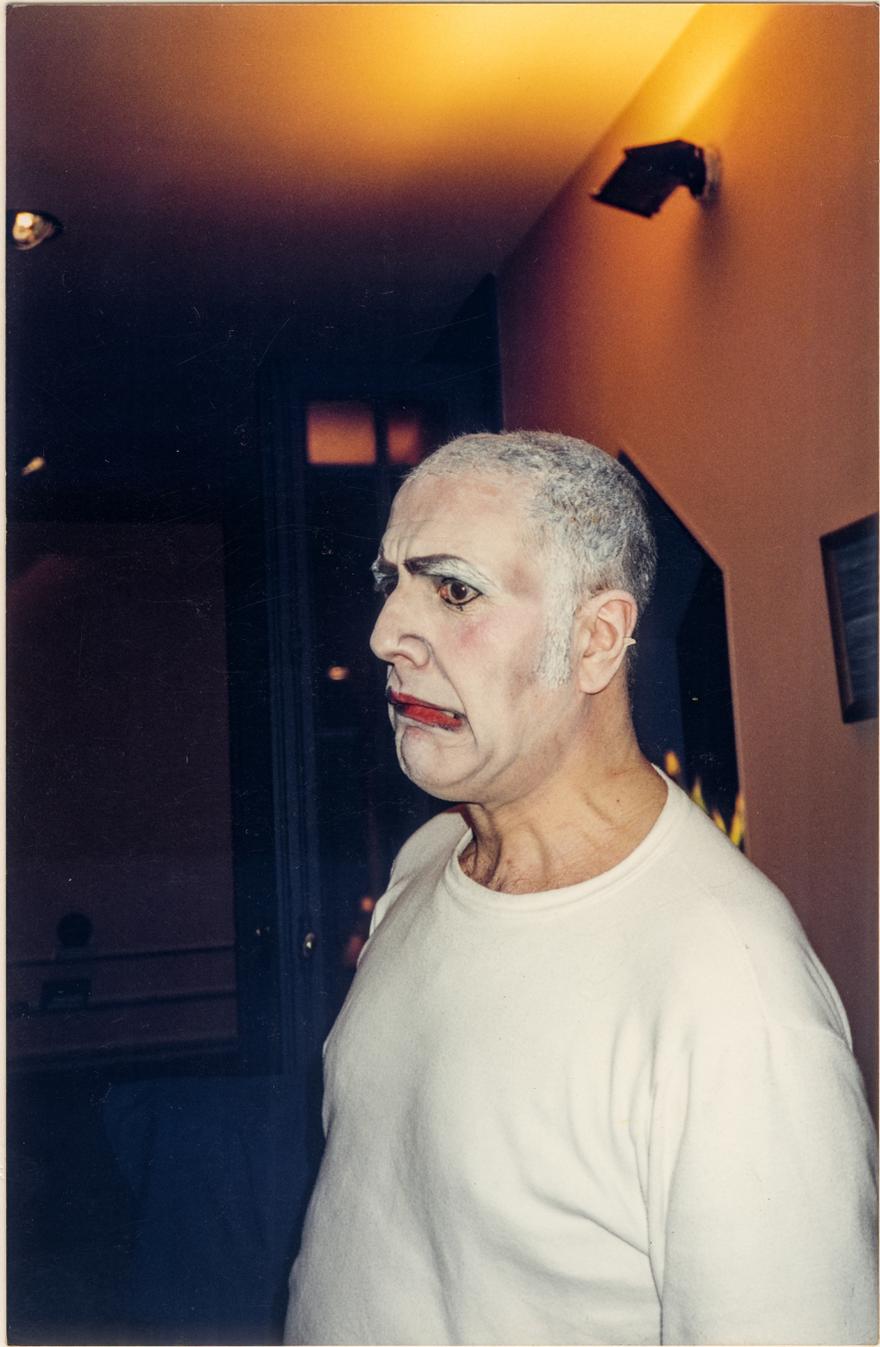
Roberto Jacoby, *No soy un clown*, 1996.
Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



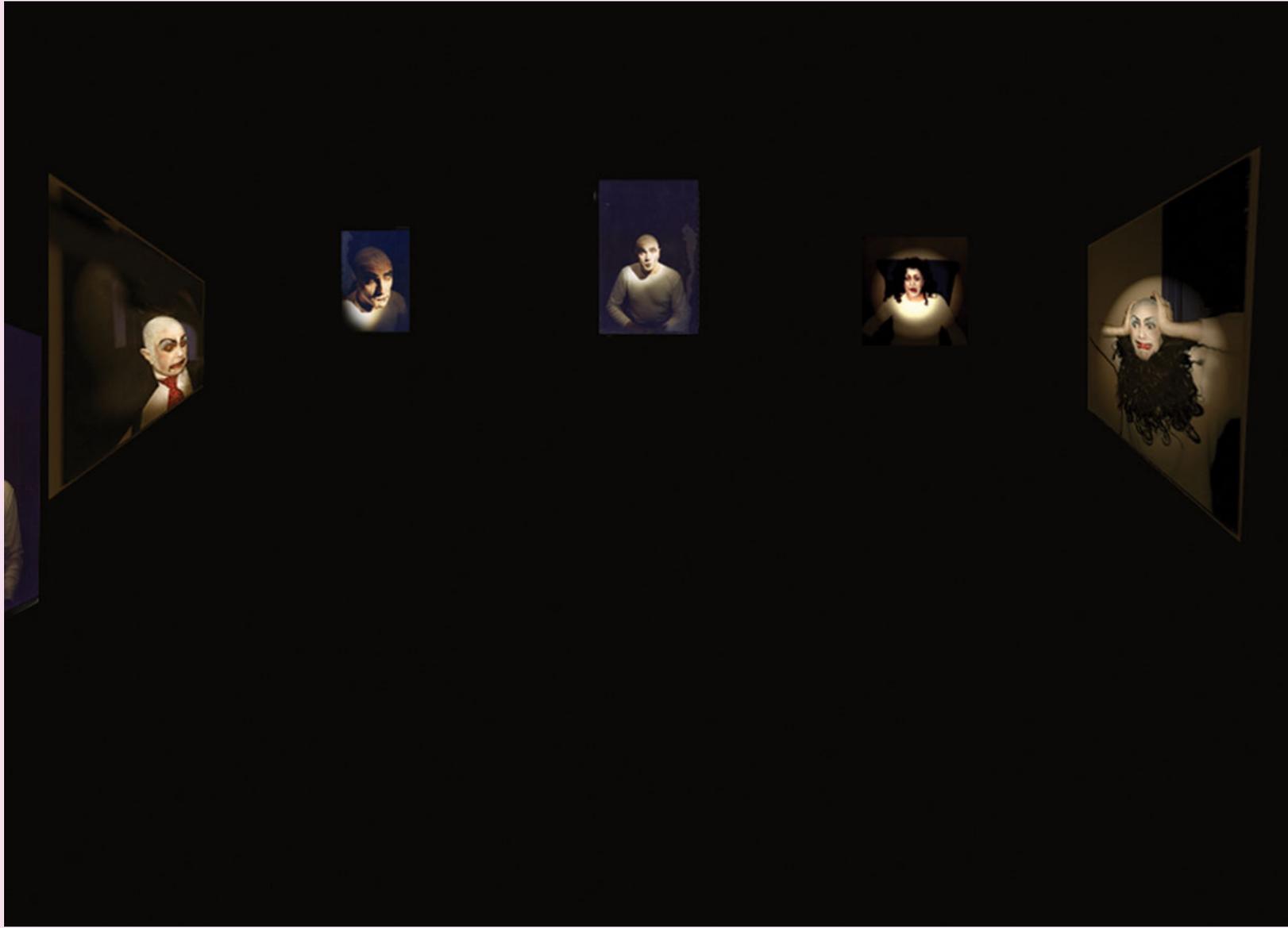
Roberto Jacoby, *No soy un clown*, 1996.
Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



Roberto Jacoby, *No soy un clown*, 1996.
Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



Roberto Jacoby, *No soy un clown*, 1996.
Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



Installation view of *No soy un clown*, at Galería Belleza y Felicidad, Buenos Aires, 2001. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



Darkroom

Roberto Jacoby, exhibited in 2002 and 2005

LABORATORY OF DARKNESS

The human race is mutating into blind organisms with holes instead of mouths living and evolving in a totally dark environment.

The casting of the performers is based on the ability to handle the infrared light cameras used for visibility and recording. The performers wear masks blurring their identities and blocking their vision entirely.

The training consists of a preparation of making them interact in total darkness. The obscurity will lead them to inferior worlds: the confusion of identities, the dream, the fear, the hidden desires.

When entering, a sign informs that communications with the outside world have been interrupted.

These are all signs of the imagined end of the world through the sacrifice of prisoners.

Daily life goes on and shows the fine limit between madness and common sense.

In this reign of the living dead, stages are built to film tragicomic documentaries about their own anomalous species.

The bugs construct underground, they attach to each other shamelessly, they play games that don't make any sense, they sleep.

The darkroom is the dance floor of the future. There is music for the light like there is music for the darkness.

In the art spaces, I aspire to introduce a relation with an unreachable presence in another time and place.

Something that can affect the senses, the emotions and the thought (supposing they are divided).

I propose a simple and clear experience.

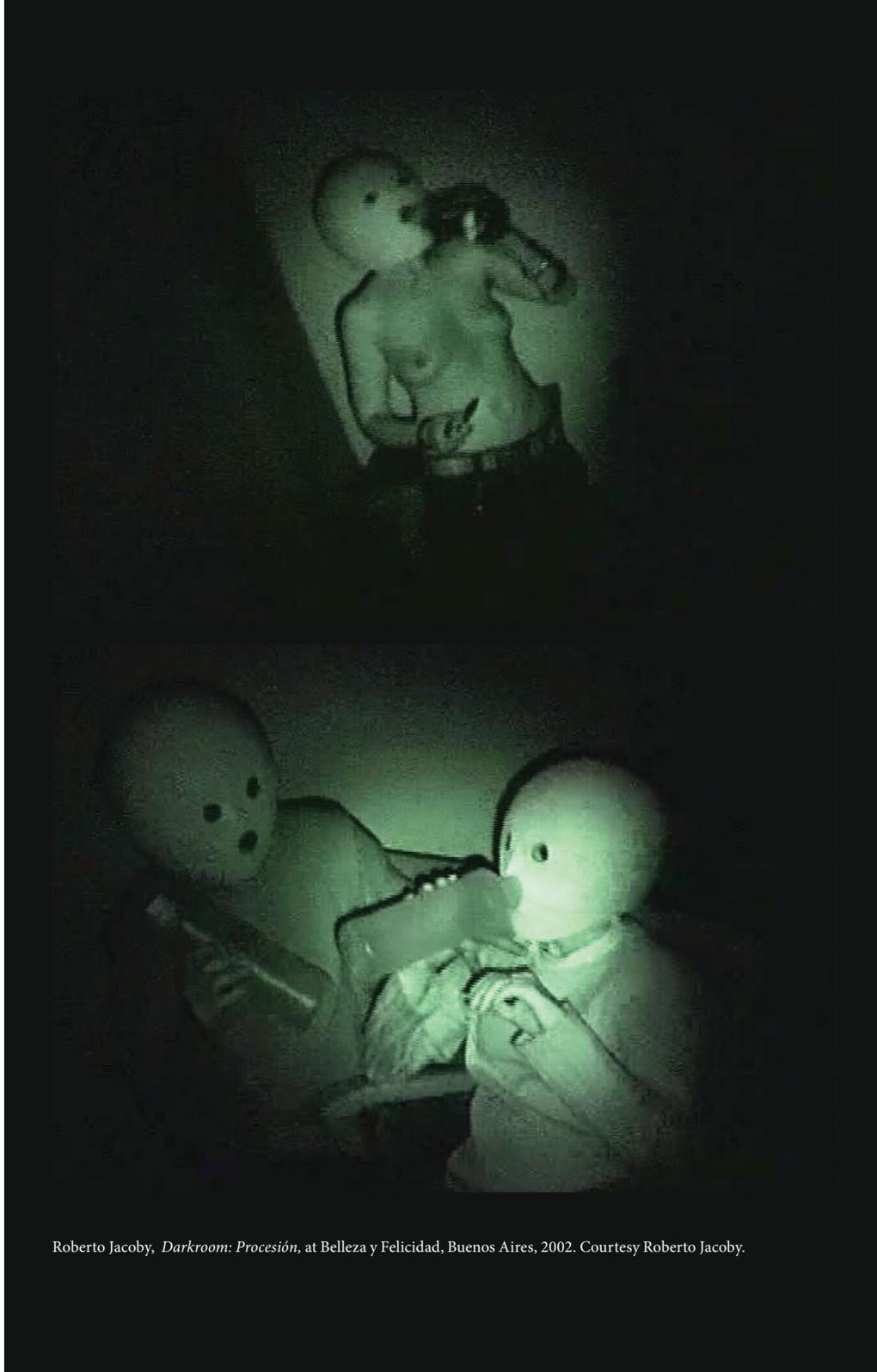
I am based on the darkness, the least explored aspect by the arts that choose only the section of the daylight spectrum that is visible to the human eye.

From the acting point of view, the darkness implies another perception of the body and another relationship with the public.

The spectator depends on the technological device (the forwarded mentioned, the infrared viewfinder). They choose and decide what to see and even if they want to see or not.

Roberto Jacoby





Roberto Jacoby, *Darkroom: Procepción*, at Belleza y Felicidad, Buenos Aires, 2002. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

DARKROOM, BELLEZA Y FELICIDAD, BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA, 2002

Darkroom, a multimedia piece by artist Roberto Jacoby, was presented August 17–29, 2002, at the gallery Belleza y Felicidad, Buenos Aires.

This multimedia work combined live action (*tableaux vivants*), video, surveillance techniques, sound, issues related to happenings, and the participation of the spectator as the one selecting the images.

The work could only be experienced by one spectator at a time, and took place in a completely dark room in the basement of the gallery. A guide led each spectator to this room and gave him an infrared camera (for night vision). The only way in which the spectator could see what went on was through the video camera. In the room, there were eight performers executing actions that followed very basic rules. Because they performed in complete darkness and continuously wore masks that hide their identities, this was an extreme experience for the performers.

The piece developed in a random improvised way and was different for each viewer. No situation could be seen twice because the spectator's eye, mediated by the viewfinder of the camera, could only choose a specific area of the whole space, and because the action of the performers was completely random and constantly varied. As a result, when the spectator observed a specific action, he lost sight of the other actions that were simultaneously taking place. The spectator could videotape what he saw, or not. In this way, the spectator became the only one recording the situations that occurred, therefore he became the record itself.

During the first few days, each spectator could stay in the room as long as desired. However, during the last few days of the show, the viewing time was restricted to three, two, and finally one minute so that more people could participate. Normally each performance lasted an hour and a half, but some days it lasted two.

Roberto Jacoby, 2002



Roberto Jacoby, *Darkroom: Procesión*, at Belleza y Felicidad, Buenos Aires, 2002. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.





DARKROOM, MALBA, BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA, 2005

Darkroom, which runs from August 25 to October 5, 2005, at the Contemporáneo space in MALBA (Museum of Latin American Art of Buenos Aires, Costantini Collection), is a video–installation/performance with infrared technology for lone spectators.

In the most absolute darkness, twelve beings (that belong to a blind mutant species, with no verbal language, undifferentiated and almost abstract), as if they were participating in a mad scientific experiment, develop live actions that range from the most everyday and apparently irrelevant to the most dramatic ones. They cannot see themselves or each other. The direct spectator entering this shadowy space is the only one that has the power of vision, which depends on a viewfinder or infrared vision device. Only one spectator at a time can enter this underground world to witness their habits and rituals, though never having access to the totality of their actions, as he can only see where the camera is focusing. At the same time, the spectator becomes the author by registering with the camera what is being observed.

As an inexperienced diver, each spectator is trained to submerge into the depth of the *Darkroom*, where he will live and record a situation that will never repeat.

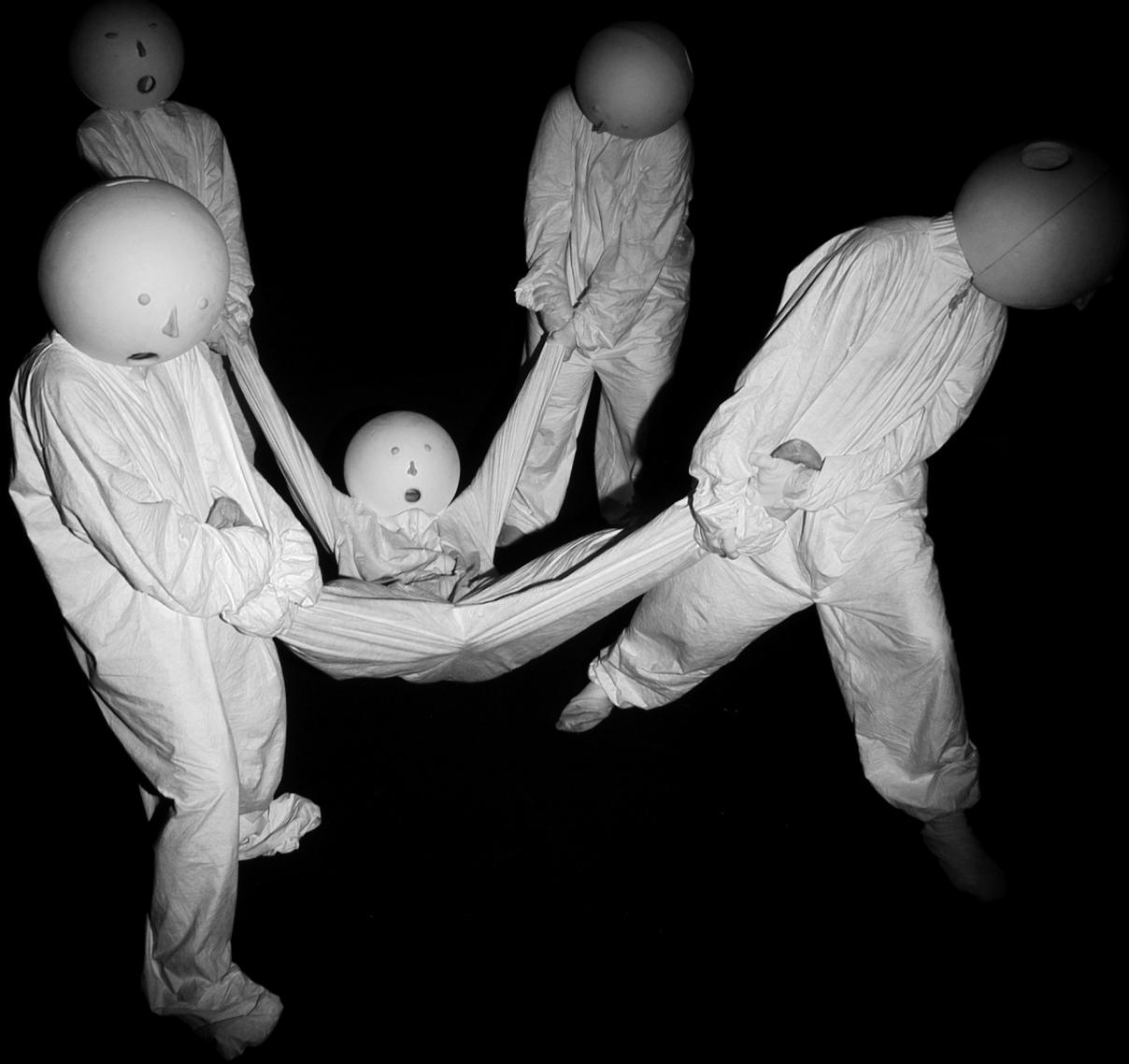
The outsiders, or external observers, can contemplate the experiment from a laboratory cabin. Although they do not move with the autonomy of the direct spectators, they can see different angles of the scenes that occur underground.

Roberto Jacoby, October 2005

Special thanks to Sebastián Gordin and Reinaldo Laddaga



Roberto Jacoby, *Darkroom*, at the Museum of Latin American Art of Buenos Aires (MALBA), 2005. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.





Roberto Jacoby, *Darkroom*, at the Museum of Latin American Art of Buenos Aires (MALBA), 2005. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

El alma nunca piensa sin imágenes The Soul Never Thinks without Images

Roberto Jacoby, 2010

A fragment from an interview with Roberto Jacoby by Sofia Delle Donne in August 2018 for the magazine *Octante*, no. 3.

The Soul Never Thinks Without an Image arose after the third attempt to propose something, and it has been rejected by the curators. Completely on the spur of the moment, I sent another project and what I did was to play with the idea of representation. I sent two images that were available on the Internet: a photograph of José Serra and another of Dilma Rousseff, both presidential candidates, and I just enlarged them. The change of scale, the enlargement, is one of the basic procedures of visual art. In this case, I enlarged them to be like a big political advertisement. I just put one portrait next to the other. But those portraits said a lot. Every representation stands for something and one chooses; there is no longer an objective representation. I chose two images that matched my own perspective. Dilma was cheerful, happy, surrounded by women, with a folkloric hat, and Serra was gray, with his suit and that worn-out look from dark meetings in the financial underworld; those images had a meaningful effect that disrupted the allegedly political proposal of the biennial. And then, from that image, other things appeared: the idea of a group that would travel, that would conduct permanent activities in that space that I had been granted. I turned that into a sort of committee or basic unit. We made serigraphs, printed T-shirts, sang. We gathered discussion groups, did magic, an endless number of activities carried out by twenty-five artists and researchers who traveled as the Argentine International Brigade for Dilma. The problem with the biennial was that we were talking about politics that were happening at the time, it was an immediate representation, it made you think of the real Dilma or the real Serra, of real elections, of real politics. Of course, I did it because I was interested in working on those contradictions of the institution. The artist always has to challenge, to look for the limit, to not be censored. I did not know about the Brazilian electoral law. The project worked outside the Brazilian electoral laws, which do not allow street advertising.



Roberto Jacoby, *El alma nunca piensa sin imágenes* (The Soul Never Thinks without Images), 2010, at the 29th São Paulo Bienal, Pavilhão Ciccillo Matarazzo, July 27, 2010. Photo: Syd Krochmalny. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

It is a strange rule that we Argentines cannot understand, but you cannot paint walls or hang posters, only radio or television propaganda is allowed. So, we were outside the legal parameters. We were out of the parameters also because it is clear that political art is allowed as long as it is not compromised with conjunctural politics. If I had put up Auschwitz skeletons or Nixon, there wouldn't have been any contraindication. It also occurs to me that the matter was not only political but rather economic, because they asked me to remove the work the night before the sponsors came to tour the biennial. And they did the tour avoiding my space because their problem was that they would be deprived of their monetary support. That is also the problem of curators, who are much criticized, they have bad press, they are branded as authoritarian and as replacing the artist's position. What nobody says is that curators are poor boys and girls who have to raise the money for the museums. Raising money is a key part: you have to convince rich people or officials to make the project possible, which is a very degrading task, especially for those who are supposed to be working on the philosophical and/or conceptual criteria of the exhibition. They have to beg for money from people who are not interested in art. So, there are times when one thinks it is political and it's not so political.

Some time ago, I had a work rejected because the project could hurt those who subsidized the biennial. The reason for rejecting my proposal was not that the work was aggressive to the community, but that it was aggressive to the banks that were providing the money. This is what often happens in the field of contemporary institutional art: a transgression is invoked on condition that it is not transgressive, which is a contradictory operation in itself. You can do whatever you want as long as you don't do anything that's a bother. It seems to me that what defines contemporary art is to take things to an extreme, which can be abstraction, the accumulation of objects, the deterioration of the object. In this case, I wanted to turn politics into something real and immediate that would work within the context of the biennial itself. I wanted it not to be a reference to a political event of the past, but something that was immediate in relation to the conjunctural political actions. Censorship did not worry us much. What we produced was another representation, we invented another candidate: Vilma Ros. A new candidate with her own slogan: "Vilma wins."



Roberto Jacoby, *El alma nunca piensa sin imágenes* (The Soul Never Thinks without Images), 2010. Photo: Syd Krochmalny. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

1978 *Documental sonoro* 1978 Audio Documentary

Roberto Jacoby, with sound mixing by Luciano Azzigotti and Nacho Marciano, 2014



Front panel at the entrance of the exhibition:

AUDIO DOCUMENTARY
Roberto Jacoby

Participating artists in the sound installation:
Luciano Azzigotti and Nacho Marciano

*Cultural Center of Memory Haroldo Conti (formerly ESMA¹)
Buenos Aires, Argentina
August 30–September 30, 2014*

Installation view of *1978 Documental sonoro*, at Centro Cultural de la Memoria Haroldo Conti, Buenos Aires, 2014. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

1. Escuela Superior de Mecánica de la Armada (ESMA): one of the 500 clandestine detention and extermination centers that operated in Argentina during the last dictatorship. It is estimated that five thousand people disappeared there. In 2004 it was converted into a Space for Memory and the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights.



Installation view of *1978 Documental sonoro*, at Centro Cultural de la Memoria Haroldo Conti, Buenos Aires, 2014. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

1978 is a sound intervention that attempts to explore the imminence of the past. However, this piece is not about making the walls talk. It is an acoustic documentary in which the protagonists are neither the executioners nor the prisoners. You will not hear the howls of torment or the commanding voices of the murderers.

On the contrary, we sought to reproduce the rumor that came from outside, which permeated every fold of that fateful year in which Argentina won the soccer World Cup. Perhaps that noise has been what is strictly called “the sinister.”

Roberto Jacoby



Carlos Vargas, *El gauchito del mundial*, 1978. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

Some people devalue President Néstor Kirchner's order to take down the portraits of the dictators in the Military College because it was only a symbolic action. But precisely because this "proceed" was a key symbol of the dismantling of the policy of terror, it had the character of a turning point of such magnitude that it can be said that only at that moment was the dictatorship finished.

The spaces formerly occupied by the ESMA have an emotional charge that does not exclusively arise from its character as a representation of state terror. If we are still overwhelmed by it, it is because in that place, fear is not a mere meaning, but it is fused in a specific materiality that affects our whole body. When we walk around its premises, we experience a double reality. We are walking now, yes. But the resonance of each step can open the time tunnel of our evocations and throw us suddenly in the middle of the concentration camp.

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Roberto Jacoby

With Luciano Azzigotti and Nacho Marciano
Producer and musical advisor Juan Marcos Litrica

Diarios del Odio: *A hate trouvé*

by Abel González Fernández

Diarios del odio (Journals of hate) is a collaborative work between Roberto Jacoby and artist, writer, and sociologist Syd Krochmalny. Following the spirit of exchange and process in Jacoby's work, *Diarios del*

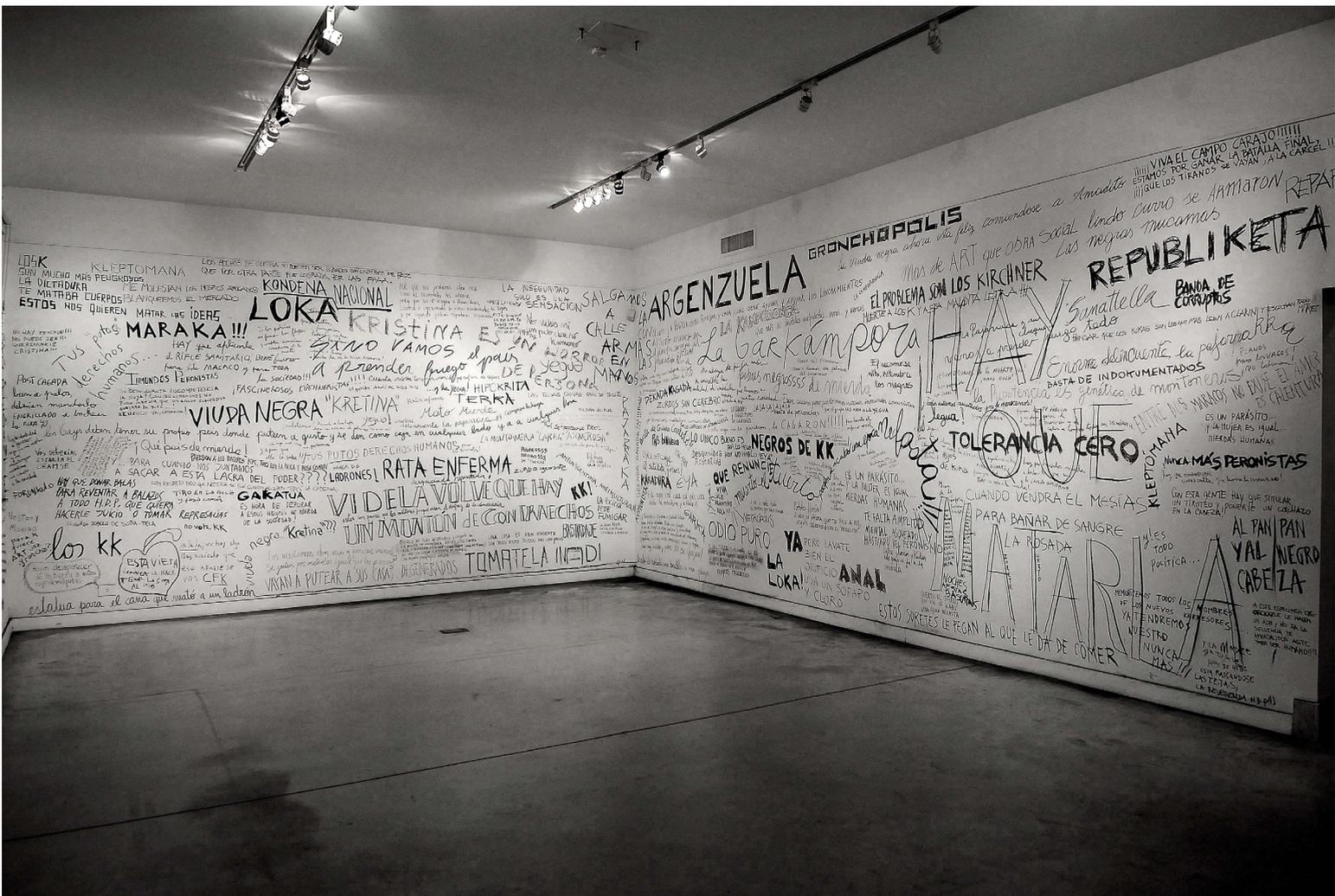
odio began as an installation carried out in December 2014 at the Casa de Cultura del Fondo Nacional de las Artes in Buenos Aires. The installation featured a set of walls with white backgrounds on which hate messages from anonymous readers, who had left comments on two Argentine electronic newspapers, *La Nación* and *Clarín*, could be read.

The messages were handwritten in black, converging them in the same space of meaning—a visual manifestation of the newspapers' digital agora. One of the standout messages read “fake leftist,” probably alluding to the then president of Argentina, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner.

The same phrase appears in the poem “Precios cuidados” (Cared-for prices), which is in *Diarios del odio*, the popular eponymous collection of poems published by Jacoby and Krochmalny in 2016. The poetry book summarizes the messages of hate included in the installation and organizes them into several poems that focus on gender, racial, and political hate, as well as historical memory, creating a language that is difficult to swallow but that reflects the social conflicts in contemporary Argentine and Latin American society.

In Krochmalny's words, “The chosen fragments specifically track those discursive cores where the dehumanization of whole sectors of society occurs. The construction of the other as an object of extreme hatred seeks to define certain people as a social surplus.” That is why an abundance of excremental metaphors, such as *shit*, *garbage*, and *waste*, are used in the collection of poems to describe the Other as “excrement that the social body must expel.”

Diarios del odio has become an important book for Latin American culture, which is afflicted by systemic racism, machismo, and extreme political polarization. The work documents the debates arising from the internet-based public forum in Argentina, where historically repressed sectors of society, but also terribly conservative forces, have come to light. As a kind of social barometer, *Diarios del odio* shows how the language of hate has flowed from intimate and domestic spaces into the public sphere under the protection of online anonymity. It also serves to challenge notions such as freedom of expression versus the regulation of discriminatory and offensive content, one of the most urgent current debates. The collection of poems shows how, despite having gone through a democratic process of



Roberto Jacoby and Syd Krochmalny, *Diarios del Odio*, 2014. Installation with text written in charcoal on the walls. Casa de la Cultura, Fondo Nacional de las Artes, 2014. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



Detail of Roberto Jacoby and Syd Krochmalny, *Diarios del Odio*, 2014. Installation with text written in charcoal on the walls.
Casa de la Cultura, Fondo Nacional de las Artes, 2014. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



Roberto Jacoby and Syd Krochmalny, *Diarios del Odio*, 2014. Installation with text written in charcoal on the walls. Casa de la Cultura, Fondo Nacional de las Artes, 2014. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.





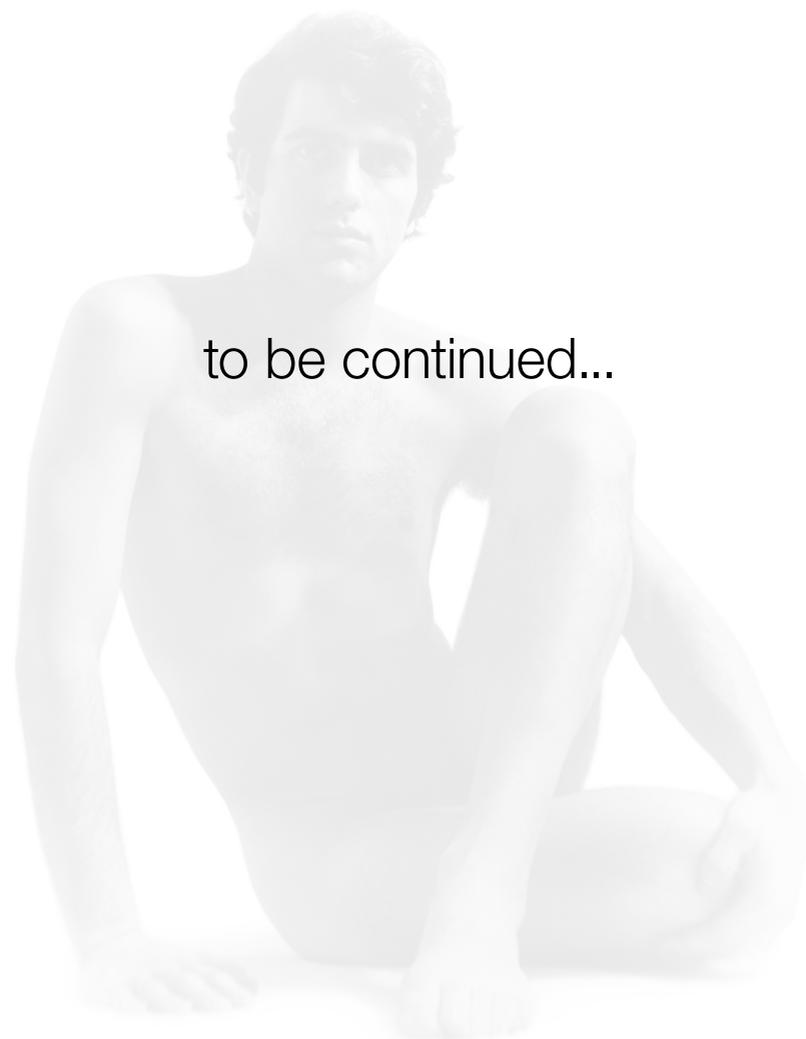
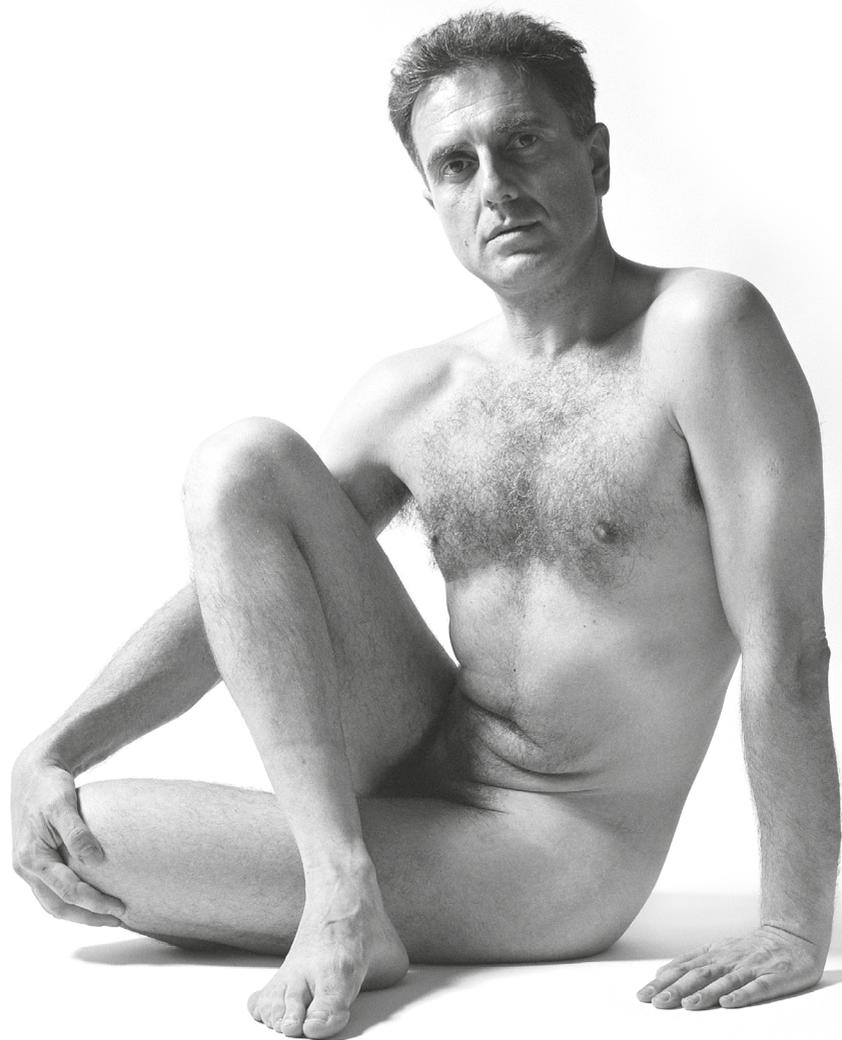


Abel González Fernández, Ursula Pokorny, Claire Kim, Calvin Wang,
Olivia Rodrigues, Kyle Herrington, Clara Prat-Gay, Clara von Turkovich.
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ROBERTO JACOBY

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