



Tania Bruguera's Utopian "Non-Museum"

Inside the museum (Pompidou Center), basement. Here, in level -1 of the Forum, Tania Bruguera has set up, for five days, her "tiny" museum. With "IP *Détournement*," the Cuban artist, who is now a professor in the Fine Arts School in Paris and whom we will find in early October in the Plateau/Frac Ile-de-France in a collective project entitled "Generic Capitalism," breaking with the unity of the most recent programming of the "Rendez-vous du Forum" at the Pompidou Center. *IP* for Intellectual Property, *Détournement* (Defacement or Appropriation) because it sabotages the notion of intellectual property as such, so little approached (or faced up) by the world of art and, first of all, by artists themselves. It is an appropriation or a defacement which could be expressed in plural, since the device conceived by Tania Bruguera goes beyond the abbreviation or the meaning of copyright/copyleft and even questions the idea of museums, exhibitions, the hanging and reception of the work.

Although IP "project" is ephemeral (and is confined, or almost confined, to a basement) it is above all Utopian, political, generous... and questioning within the framework of a new situation updated by the artist, for the artistic community, in

time-honored places (museums, galleries), on their practices and forms of preservation (the collection), forms of acquisition and exhibition, and strategies for diffusion and receipt. And she questions actors — artists, public or private institutions, curators, visitors — and the ways they behave in their crossed relationships, whether clearly enunciated or underground: codified, legalized, museumized relationships.

Inside the museum / the correspondence. Tania Bruguera had at her disposal all the videos of artists in the New Media collection of the Modern Art Museum. What to do? What to do with them? What to do with a collection when you even question the idea and the process? We say: we show it, we exhibit it, we disseminate it. How? In the blackbox at the art centers under the control of their owner-buyer (in this case the Pompidou Center), with irreproachable conditions to see them because of their excellent qualities of image and sound. In one of the few versions protected by copyright? Tania Bruguera resorts to an entirely different process in which she makes use of all her practices: installation, performance or actions, participation, protocol. It all begins with the letters stuck on the walls in Forum Level-1.

During the summer, Tania e-mailed a hundred artists asking for their permission to reproduce and disseminate their videos or DVDs. These videos and DVDs are disseminated in a device that still belongs to the museum. They are also disseminated outside the museum, offered at 1 euro (perhaps the famous and symbolic 1 euro used in case of litigation) by salesmen (fine arts students who keep the profits). This implies the massive duplication of these video-works, the multiplication of the number of copies bearing the Creative Commons name (licenses inspired in the free software authorizing the circulation of the works). This implies that artists must yield their copyrights to the author during the time the action lasts.

E-mail exchanges between Tania Bruguera and the artists are distributed in two areas: one for those who said yes and one for those who said no. Most of them said yes. What is most noticeable in these correspondence, soon to be found in PDF format in the net (and that poptronics will have the pleasure to offer for their downloading) is the enthusiasm of the artists, the way they joined the project, their

irony, their wish to see their works disseminated away from museum paths. We could see the technical details, the arguments on Tania's project. Martin Le Chevallier, for example, says that it can only be a swindle, a joke. Michel Snow's answer is enthralling and lengthy: "I thought that if anyone can vandalize my work it should be me. Unlike the original film "WVLNT..." it can be shown that way you want on any machine. Please do so." And there are other names, like those of Judith Kurtag, Jordi Colomer, Philippe Terrier-Hermann, Thomas Hirschhorn, Akram Zaatari, Mona Vatamanu and Florin Tudor, Sanja Ivekovic... there are also those against it and whose names, deleted with a black marker, we will not know,. Those who said no in what has to do with their gallery, those who said no because they believe artists make themselves with their works and their exhibition. And also those who just said no.

Suddenly, Tania enters the world of reality art with an already well-known debate by musicians, filmmakers, authors-composers, scriptwriters... and internauts. What happens with intellectual property in a flow and circulation society, a society of downloading and piracy? What happens with art works in a society nourished by the Net? Is it always "the work of art in the era of its technical reproducibility" as Benjamin categorically pointed out and also "the work of art in the era of its multiplied and fractioned diffusion?"

Inside the museum /the "non-museum." Or "storage," according to the signal on the floor. Visitors enter... a storehouse? A shop? Tania Bruguera has created a perfect "brothel." Wooden spatulas, untidy metal office furniture, wooden chairs, desks from the '70s, old monitors, screens with a terrible definition. We see without seeing, we try to see images. The famous videos of the artists in the New Media Collection of the Museum of Modern Art. But we do not see anything... We do now know who these tapes belong to... or the titles, posters, dates or names. Visitors adapt themselves, stop for a while to see the at times blurred, at times scratched images. There is the feeling that Tania Bruguera would like us to understand that we have entered into a time after the museum, after the collection, after the exhibition. The entry into the magnificent hall with the red carpet next to the shambles with its dilapidated furniture and screens lacking quality is blocked by a string: No trespassing. Goodbye the chance of a beautiful and comfortable view of a work.

Tania Bruguera materializes and defends her conception of the “non-museum,” just as she developed it in an article in the summer number of *Artforum*. “I would like a museum in the not-so-new 21st century that abandons the idea of looking for the idea of activation; one that is not a building or even a fixed space but a series of events and a program (...) One where things are not exhibited but activated, given use-value instead of representing it. One that is not a structure, but a moment; that is not a place to visit, but a presence. A museum that is more a part of Internet, open-source, and Wikipedia culture”. Or, said in a different way on the inauguration: “It is outside, in the square, in the Net, where art should be.” The opening to her Utopia of free circulation actually takes place outside the Pompidou Center. She takes us – placed as if with a bait for our wish to see, to have access... and to buy – to a salesman with DVD copies of artists of whom we have been able to see nothing. We are still inside. She shows us the jackets, she praises her ware, but she cannot sell it inside the institution. Outside, transactions take place outside.

Outside the museum / visitants-buyers. One euro. For 1 euro, underground, visitors may satisfy their desire for images and works. For 1 euro, a DVD copy. To see at home. Our individual museum thus begins to be built. Tania Bruguera also marks the behavior of spectators. Far from the museum, spectators live with Youtube the chance of downloading films, music. They live within the accelerated circulation of goods and images, in the midst of an underground freedom. But there are still many ambiguities in this savage selling system. At the end of the first day, salesmen said they had sold more than a hundred DVDs. Some artists sold more than others. New criteria of work value? Commercial value reactivated by another market, that of the consumer-visitor?

Tania Bruguera’s proposal shapes a possible moment for transactions, uses and values... A critical Utopia with all this implies. And everything stays open...

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<http://www.poptronics.fr/Le-non-musee-utopique-de-Tania>