

# ART IS NOT ENOUGH

*Aesthetics of participation and the future as a cultural fact*

*(A free adaptation in the form of a series of lectures of the thesis:*

*Sites, spaces, locations and citizen communities.*

*Exhibition projects in the United States on the decade of the 90s  
of the XX th. Century*

*Art as a force of social participation and transformation.)*

**A proposal by Jesús Palomino in collaboration with EHESS, Paris.**

**November 2018**

# WHEN A GOVERNMENT TURNS ITS BACK ON ITS PEOPLE, IS IT CIVIL WAR?

***The U.S. Government considers the 47,524 dead from AIDS expendable.  
Aren't the "right" people dying? Is this medical apartheid?***

*Gran Fury*

Black and white posters edition for Gran Fury's campaign presented in New York on the year 1988.  
The text in lower part of the poster says: "The US Government considers the 47.524 dead from AIDS are expendable. Aren't the "right" people dying? Is this medical apartheid? "

## ART IS NOT ENOUGH

### ***Aesthetics of participation and the future as a cultural fact***

A series of lectures by Jesús Palomino

In collaborartion with EHESS, Paris

#### ABSTRACT

These lectures will attempt to analyze the art and cultural practices developed at the United States during the decade of the 90s of the XX th. century that considered art as a force of participation and social transformation. A kind of practices that confronted social circumstances of deep moral urgency, advancing the transformation of United States democracy through aesthetics means.

These series of lectures will present four general lines of argumentation:

1. These lectures will attempt to analyze the outstanding political and moral spirit of the activisms from the decade of the 90s at the United States, and its conceptual and aesthetical influence till the present.
2. On how the concept of *tridimensionality* and *site-specificity* was progressively broden by the artistic practices themselves to end up including all those concerns related to their human, historic, social and institutional contexts.
3. About the social life of discursivities and the epistemological consequences of travelling categories.
4. On how art practices themselves operate as a force of social participation and transformation.



*Window Blow Out*, 1976. A project by Gordon Matta-Clark. New York. USA.



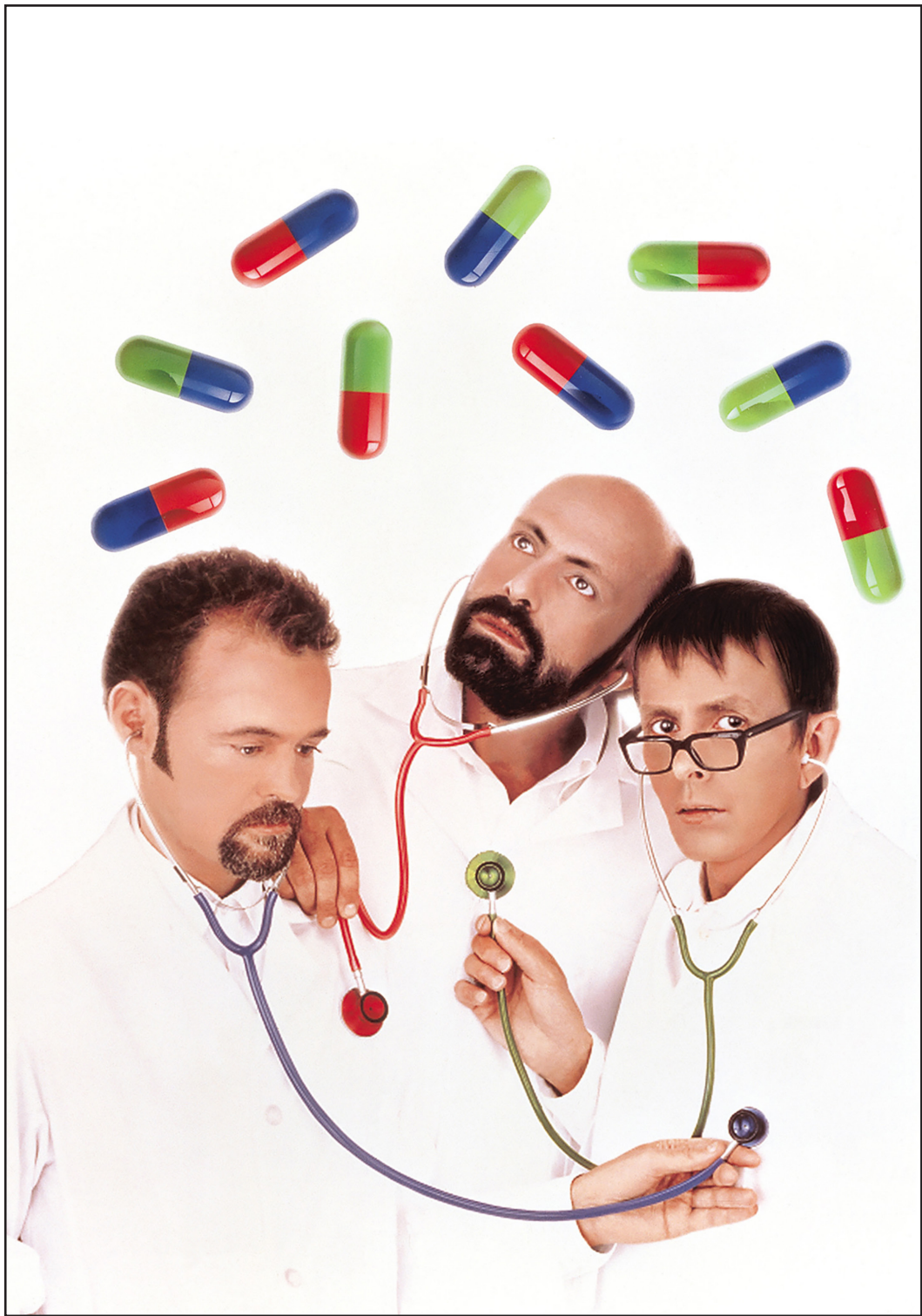
## FIRST LECTURE\_

### PLACES, DISCOURSES AND MATERIAL CONDITIONS OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION.

### THE COLLECTIVE ART OF TELLING THE TRUTH TO POWER ACCORDING TO THE NORTH AMERICAN EXPERIENCE OF SITE.

The academic ambition of this first lecture would be to analyze the artistic practices developed in the United States in the decade of the 90s of the 20th century that considered *art as a social force of participation and transformation*. I shall try as well to explain the evolution of the specific concept of place (*site-specificity*, as was coined by contemporary aesthetics theory) illustrating this process from the many and varied examples provided by artists in their use of sites, spaces, places, locations, etc. This gradual evolution ended up incorporating the different publics and the citizen communities involved in those projects articulated through innovatives and urgent social strategies of participation. To illustrate this process, I will comparatively analyze the social and visual history of five exhibition projects carried out in the United States in the 1990s of the last century.

This analysis will be presented from a detailed historiographical survey of contemporary art practices in the United States starting from the valuable contribution of Donald Judd in his canonical text *Specific Objects*, 1962, and illustrating this analysis with the works of Joseph Albers, Mel Bochner, Daniel Buren, Robert Smithson, Gordon Matta-Clark, Ana Mendieta, Mierle Laderman-Ukeles, Adrian Piper, Felix Gonzalez-Torres and Rirkrit Tiravanija, among many other artists who made possible the emergence of what the theory of contemporary aesthetics baptized as the specificity of the place (*site-specificity*). This research will seek to determine how specific projects linked to spaces, places and physical locations eventually evolved to include citizen communities and the historical circumstances of their social contexts as creative and aesthetical material. In a summary manner, this first lecture will seek to understand how the concept of *site-specificity* generated its own historical conditions of articulation by including social concerns (through the coined category of *Socially Engaged Projects*) and a broad range of political aspects involving the reality of the audience (*Politics of the Spectatorship*) allowing the rise of a collective performativity of genuine democratic character oriented towards participation and social transformation.



*Playing Doctor, 1992. General Idea.*

## SECOND LECTURE\_

### EXHIBITION PROJECTS IN THE UNITED STATES IN THE DECADE OF THE 90S OF THE 20TH CENTURY AND THEIR INFLUENCES ON PRESENT ART PRACTICES.

#### AROUND THE SURVIVAL OF A RESISTANT AND *PARTICIPATORY AESTHETICS*.

Based on five case studies coming from the US art scene and proposed by the American artistic collectives Culture in Action, Group Material, General Idea, Gran Fury and Guerrilla Girls, this second lecture will attempt to describe the social and human circumstances that gave rise to these expressions, and the novelties of all order (aesthetic, discursive, participation, production, and visual) articulated by them.

Those five specific case studies that will be analyzed in the second part will be:

1. *Culture in Action*, a project curated by Mary Jane Jacob for the Public Art Program of the City of Chicago, which focused its energies on the production of innovative projects that encouraged citizen participation in the suburbs of that US city.
2. *AIDS Project* carried out in 1987 by the General Idea collective, denouncing the stigmatization suffered by infected patients and /or carriers of the HIV virus.
3. *AIDS Timeline*, a project presented at the University of Berkeley in California by the Collective Group Material in the year 1990, to articulate conscious visibility, and inform about the terrible social consequences that the appearance of the AIDS virus provoked in American society.
4. *Kissing Doesn't Kill*, a communication, information and awareness campaign around HIV / AIDS created by the Gran Fury collective for the city of New York in 1987.
5. Finally, the effective public denunciation of the patriarchal behaviors of the public cultural institutions in the city of New York carried out by Guerrilla Grils in 1989 with its project: *Do Women Have To Be Naked To Get in The Met. Museum?*

These projects of North American collectives signified the early experiences of what contemporary art theory has coincided with the label of participatory art. This lecture will seek to propose a historical and visual reasoned genealogy to understand the evolution of the practices of American public art of the 90s whose energies and ambitions were oriented towards social intervention and democratic transformation. At the same time, I will seek to reterritorialize comparatively the aesthetic and conceptual influences of those practices of the 90s at the present through the proposals of the collectives Superflex, Zentrum für Politische Schönheit, Artway of Thinking, Center for Urban Pedagogy and Office for Political Innovation.

Those five actual selected study cases will be:

1. The *Superkilen* urban design project carried out by Superflex in the city of Copenhagen in 2011.
2. The impressive proposal *Die Toten Kommen* (The dead come) made in 2015 by the collective Zentrum für Politische Schönheit.
3. *Relationships. Vivir el litoral*, 2003, a project by Artway of Thinking carried out for the Multiple City exhibition presented in Panama.
4. The design proposal *Public Access Design* that Center for Urban Pedagogy has carried out since the year of its foundation in 1997 till the present.
5. The *Cosmo* project presented in 2015 by Office for Political Innovation at PS1 in New York.





*Die Toten Kommen*, 2016. Zentrum für Politische Schönheit, ZPS. Berlin, Germany.





*READING\_State of Siege, 2016. A project by Jesús Palomino. ARTifariti International Western Sahara Meeting of Art and Human Rights. Saharwi Refugee Camps. Tindouf, Algeria. October - November, 2016.*



## **THIRD LECTURE\_**

**SITES, SPACES, LOCATIONS AND CITIZEN COMMUNITIES TRANSFORMED BY THE SPECIFIC EXPERIENCE OF ARTISTIC PRACTICES.**

**HOW THE SPECIFICITY OF THE PLACE BECAME RELATIONAL, DIALOGICAL AND PARTICIPATORY.**

**A PRESENTATION OF JESÚS PALOMINO'S PROJECTS BETWEEN 1992 AND 2019.**

Finally, this third lecture will propose a comparative analysis between the previous cases presented and the artistic projects of Jesús Palomino, providing the necessary images and readings based on a bibliographical selection of texts coming from the social sciences, the cultural theory, the critique of globalization and the contemporary visual culture. This final lecture will attempt to present the essential ingredients for a wider understanding of Jesús Palomino's projects proposed since 1992, stressing critically the categories of *nomadism*, *performativity* and *democratic criticism*.