

Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía

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Santa Isabel, 52

Nouvel Building
Ronda de Atocha s/n
28012 Madrid

Tel: (+34) 91 774 10 00

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Monday to Saturday
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the entire Museum is open
from 2.30 p.m. to 7 p.m.
are open Collection 1
and one temporary exhibition
(check website)

Closed on Tuesdays

Exhibition rooms in all venues
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before closing time.

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Mapa Teatro

Of Lunatics, or Those Lacking Sanity

31 October 2018 – 29 April 2019

Sabatini Building. Espacio 1, Sala de Bóvedas, Stairs
Fisuras Program

Programa educativo
desarrollado con el patrocinio
de Fundación Banco Santander

MUSEO NACIONAL
CENTRO DE ARTE
REINA SOFIA



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Mapa Teatro Artists Laboratory, Bogota

Heidi Abderhalden Cortés
Rolf Abderhalden Cortés*
Ximena Vargas
José Ignacio Rincón
Alirio García

Programming architect:

Timothy Noble

Video editor: John de los Ríos

Sound editor: Forrest Gray

Architectural modeling:

Arq^a Daniela Bright

Blacksmith: Héctor Guerrero

Carpenter: Edwing Pinzón

Craftsman: José Alirio Melo

Dealer: Carlos López

Research consultant:

Arq^a M^a Dolores Muñoz Alonso

* Arts Department Professor at the
Universidad Nacional de Colombia

The Marmato mines

Marmato Association of Traditional Miners

Rubén Darío Rotavista
Yamil Amat
Eulises Lemus
Fernando Álvarez (Tornillo)

La Esperanza Mining Company

Omaira Morales Ramírez
José Guillermo Ortíz Olarte
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El Respaldo - Echandia Gold Mine

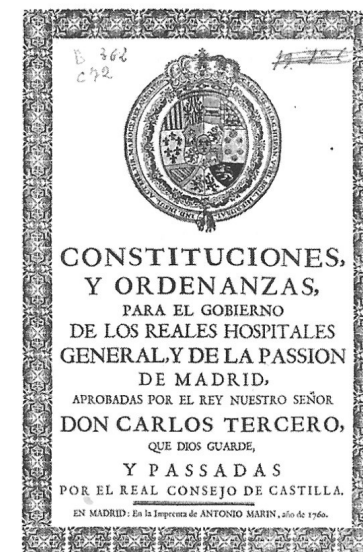
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Cristian Alejandro Parra



CAPITULO XVII.

De los dementes, ò faltos de juicio.

Enseñando la experiencia, que muchos de los pobres enfermos, que vienen à curarse à los Hospitales, por resulta de una grave enfermedad, suelen declinar en demencia, ò locura, ha provisto la caridad de los que los han gobernado, fabricar algunos quartos, ò jaulas para encerrarlos durante el tiempo que subsistan, y que permitan sus indisposiciones removerlos à Toledo, ò à Zaragoza, por la impossibilidad de curarlos radicalmente en Madrid; y con el mismo motivo la Real Hermandad del Refugio ha recogido los que desvalidos, y desamparados ha encontrado por las calles, y los ha retirado por la quietud del público à estas jaulas, manteniendolos de su cuenta, por no haver en los Hospitales fondos, ni dotacion para estos enfermos: Y deseando la Junta, y Hermandad del Refugio, atender à estas urgencias, se ha convenido en que los Hospitales cuiden de los dementes, que se puedan recibir, y permita su cabimiento; y la Hermandad conducirá à Zaragoza, ò à Toledo, todos los que existan de ambas clases, procurando aprovechar los tiempos oportunos, y que no se dilate su remission.

The Gold Crevice

José A. Sánchez

Mapa Teatro's latest fissure speaks of a faraway crevice that is still open today, a place of desire and exploitation, ingenuity and brutality, resistance and oblivion. Fiction is to the fissure what gunpowder is to the crevice: it cuts through the surface to make the hidden visible. The act itself produces a narrative that might almost be read as a fairy tale; yet the act's very nature, in that it emphasizes the poetic, is a taking of sides: it is a response to the cleft left by extraction, to rationalist arrogance, and to erased memories.

Mapa Teatro is not a theater collective but a "laboratory" of artists who experiment with creative, investigative, and interventionist procedures in multiple formats (staged, audiovisual, discursive) and fields (artistic, academic, urban). Mapa Teatro's artists define themselves as practitioners of "live arts" and term the results of their artistic procedures "gestures." The "live" element does not refer to life itself but to temporary experiments that use human bodies to explore specific issues and contexts without predefined disciplinary limitations. The "gesture" is a form of poetic thinking that breaks free from a purely discursive medium and resists being pinned down, categorized, or conserved out of context and neutralized of its political power.

One of the first things this fissure does, in tandem with other interventions (by Mapa Teatro elsewhere and by other artists in this museum), is to challenge the space itself by introducing a "live" element into a place that is institutionally committed to conservation (no matter how incompatible conservation is to its other commitments, such as facilitating an aesthetic experience or generating discussion). Mapa Teatro's use of the term *gesture* initially suggests some kind of bodily movement

or an act performed in support of a larger action. However, almost from its inception Mapa Teatro has combined or alternated activities that imply presence (staged, performative, participative) with others based on absence, whereby actors take a step back and compel other bodies into action. These other bodies may be those of the museum's visitors, who nominally retain their role as spectators but act within the installation through their very presence, a presence that is subsidiary but no less significant and opaque, in a space that now seeks to be inhabited rather than passed through. This is what happened with *Testigo de las ruínas* (Witness to the Ruins), enacted at the Museo Reina Sofía in 2016, when visitors became vessels of absent life and thus took on the responsibility of giving meaning to multiple aspects of the installation that would have otherwise been muted.¹ But visitors are not the only bodies entrusted with "activating" these installations. This duty sometimes falls to "special guests," as happened with the same piece when Antanas Mockus (mayor of Bogotá in the early 2000s, when the marginalized, downtown neighborhood of El Cartucho was demolished) and Juana María Ramírez (one of the last residents to leave the neighborhood) took part; or with the producers of the piece itself, "witnesses" to a process they themselves began.²

The sense of ambivalence that pervades all of Mapa Teatro's work was especially visible in *Los incontados: Un tríptico* (The unaccounted: A triptych, 2014), an installation with actors, witnesses, and special guests that provided an overview of the

1 *Ficciones y territorios: Arte para pensar la nueva razón del mundo* (October 2016–March 2017).

2 *Witness to the Ruins: Living Archive* was presented at *Arts and Politics*, Graz, 2011, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, 2012. In its cinematic format, *Witness to the Ruins* was presented for the first time at the MuseumsQuartier in Vienna in 2005. It was later presented in Madrid at the Casa de América in 2008 and at the Fringe festival at the Matadero in 2016.

first part of the group's research into fifty years of violence in Colombia. The same piece (now part of the Museo Reina Sofía's permanent collection) was presented at the São Paulo Biennial, with live action exchanged for a sequence of sounds, images, and mechanical movements, the preestablished and temporary nature of which allowed visitors to enter the installation and explore the device.³

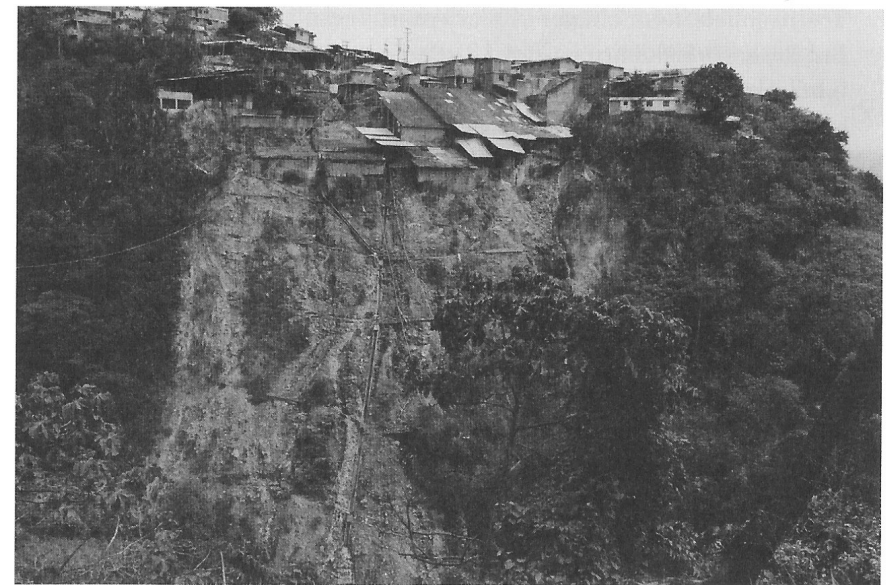
If *La despedida* (The farewell, 2017), Mapa Teatro's last staged production, may also be thought of as an installation with actors, *Of Lunatics, or Those Lacking Sanity* (2018) can be considered a performance in which the bodies that might have inhabited it have been extracted to make its exhibition possible, but without using the asepsis that would have made all traces of them disappear.⁴ The traces are still there, and their latent presence produces a sort of paradoxical theatricality that defies coexistence but not the apparatus that enables it. The aim of the installation could be described as reconfiguring the space as a place of memory; however, not only does the work recall the past, but it also takes what the witness has seen and what it essentially is and develops it in order to anticipate what it might become (within the installation or within history).

Echoes of Samuel Beckett can be heard in Mapa Teatro's approach to re-presentation: characters who are dead in life, or alive only inasmuch as they subject themselves to the endless repetition of their agony. In Mapa Teatro's works, the actors have the same one-dimensionality that Beckett requires of his protagonists.⁵ They are not quite people; rather, they serve as

3 *Los incontados: Un tríptico* was presented at the 31st São Paulo Biennial in 2014.

4 *La despedida* premiered at the Théâtre de la Ville in Lausanne in 2017.

5 See, for example, Samuel Beckett, *Endgame* (1957; New York: Grove Press, 1958).



supports, mediums, screens, or assistants, enabling the action to advance and to be repeated night after night, even after the end has already occurred. To replace a body that is present with one that is latent thus becomes a seemingly simple task.

Casa tomada (House taken over), Mapa Teatro's first production after relocating from Paris to Colombia in 1987, was in some ways a Beckettian interpretation of Julio Cortázar's short story of the same name, while *De Mortibus: Requiem for Samuel Beckett* (1990) was a means of confronting Beckett's plays and narratives.⁶ In preparing the piece, Rolf Abderhalden met Beckett in the nursing home where the Irish playwright spent the last years of his life (after briefly being interned at the Hôpital Sainte-Anne in Paris). Beckett gave him a signed copy of a page from *The Guardian* newspaper featuring *Stirrings Still*, Beckett's final piece of prose.⁷ Beckettian traits are evident in the installations *Camino* (Path, 1997), *Lo demás es silencio* (The rest is silence, 1999), and *Pieza de corazón* (Piece of heart, 1997), German playwright and regular Mapa Teatro collaborator Heiner Müller's most Beckettian work). But Beckett's influence on Mapa Teatro is more a matter of intellectual and artistic affinity, evident in the recurrence of certain poetic motifs and methods. In terms of motifs, it is worth highlighting the theme of failure and, closely connected to it, that of ruin, which Mapa Teatro considers from a collective perspective, whereby disappointment, sickness, and decadence are always shown in conjunction with unsuccessful social or political projects: urban sanitation in *C'úndua, un pacto por la vida* (C'úndua, a pact for life, 2001); guerilla revolutionaries,

6 Beckett's work is as literary as it is gestural. Roger Blin, a disciple of Antonin Artaud, was responsible for the first set designs for Beckett's works. Rolf and Heidi Abderhalden trained in Paris at the École Jacques Lecoq. Lecoq began teaching in 1947 at the school founded by Jean-Louis Barrault and Blin, Éducation par le jeu dramatique.

7 Rolf Abderhalden, "Una cita con Mr. Beckett," *Revista Arcadia* (Bogotá), no. 4 (April 2006).

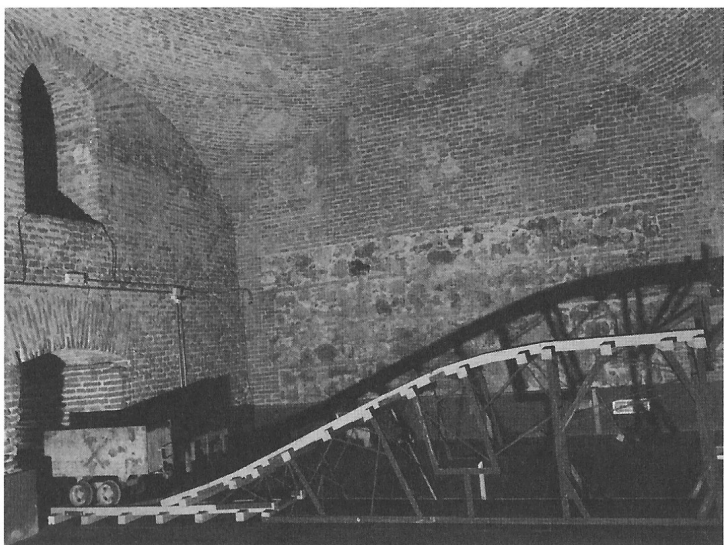
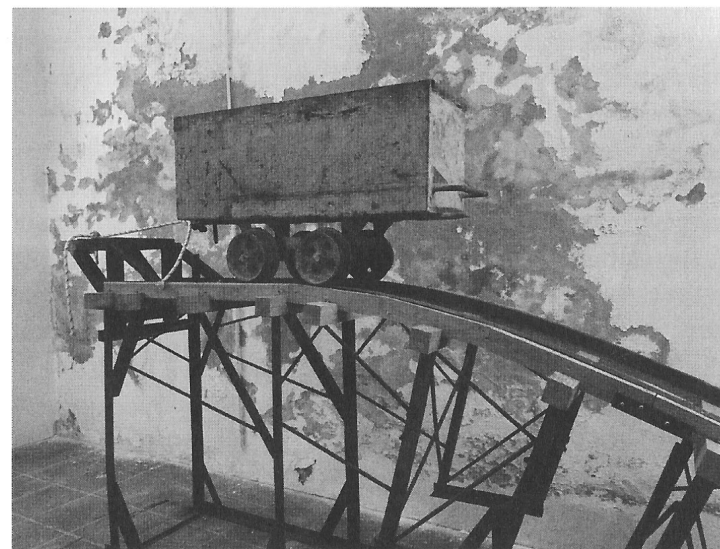
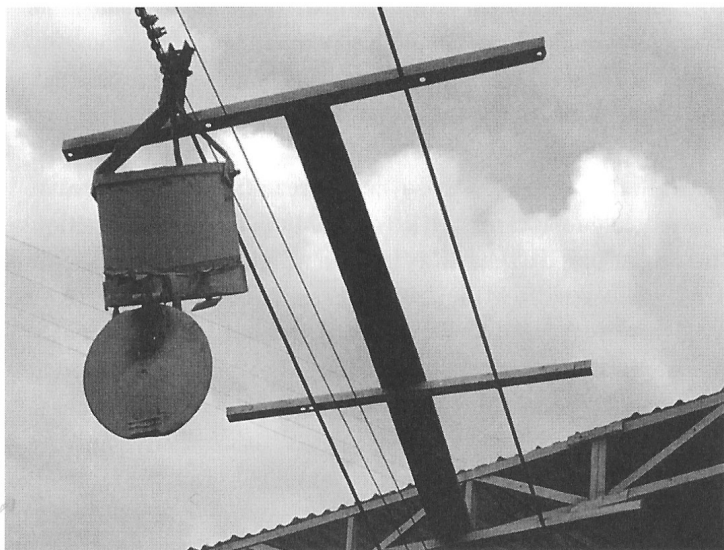
paramilitaries, and narco-power in *Anatomía de la violencia en Colombia* (Anatomy of violence in Colombia, 2010–2014)]. As for methods, there is the role of the eyewitness, expressed by Beckett through the seemingly impassive stare of his characters, their silent screams, which Mapa Teatro translates into a physical and emotional displacement of bodies, fiercely involved during the artistic process, but of muted expression and engagement in the presentation.

While in Beckett's work these motifs are underscored with a sobriety that forewarns of tragedy, in Mapa Teatro's productions they are afforded a sensuality infused with irony, celebrating a sense of the theatrical that does not seek to curb its own excesses. This theatricality is a consequence of the clash between the mechanics of repetition and the bodies that resist or act upon those mechanics and, in doing so, unleash a dynamism that can at times be frenetic, expressed as intellectual curiosity, sensitive mobilization, or carnivalesque exuberance. Irony manifests itself in the simultaneous interaction of opposites, implicit in the titles of the works themselves, which enables violence and partying, rationality and delirium to coexist.⁸ Fiction makes such encounters possible.

The Ecuadorian philosopher Bolívar Echeverría considered *tertium datur* a principle of what he termed a "baroque ethos," a way of living in modern times without making the binary choices that the "law of the excluded middle" demands.⁹

8 *C'úndua*, which means "the place we will all go to after death," is completed by the title "a pact for life," while violence, which leads to destruction and death, is approached anatomically, like an organism. As for "delirium," see Adriana Urrea, "Mapa Teatro: Poética de las ruinas y del delirio," in *Mapa Teatro: El escenario expandido*, ed. Marta Rodríguez (Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2018), 30–40.

9 One of the classic laws of logic, whereby in a dichotomy the sum of a proposition is equal to its refutation. See Bolívar Echeverría, *La modernidad del barroco* (Mexico City: Era, 1998), 175–78.



A story does not have to be real or not real; it can be true without responding to such a dichotomy. Behavior does not have to be modern or not modern; it can quite satisfactorily defy such division. By extension, a gesture does not have to be artistic or nonartistic, scientific or nonscientific, coherent or incoherent. Accepting the “excluded middle” implies putting the everyday in brackets and trusting in the conviction that it is possible to live in at least two spheres of reality at the same time and be free in one of them. This is the duality of the theatrical experience. What makes baroque thought unique, then, is its questioning of the ontological preeminence of what is represented.¹⁰ That a figure covered in gold might be more valuable than a figure of solid gold makes no sense to a realistic ethos, which tends to disregard play as well as magic. This is why the baroque ethos is potentially so subversive, for in its excesses it expresses resistance to profitability and order, the hallmarks of capitalist modernity.

Such resistance is represented here by the gold statue of the Quimbaya chief in particular. Whether the item is genuine is of no concern in the context of theatrical performance. But in the context of a museum, an institution committed to guarding against counterfeits, a place where replicas ought only to be found in the gift shop, the question of authenticity is highly significant. Not only the logics of theater and museums collide here, but so do the logics of creation (live) and conservation. Issues relating to ownership rights in communal heritage are also raised and given added emphasis by the fact that the communal was, in this case, denied at origin, for it is a product of colonial appropriation. But according to the baroque ethos, authenticity is meaningless and issues of genuineness can be answered via the excluded middle; that is, by moving into the realm of fiction, which is simply the staging of the problem itself.

10 Theodor W. Adorno defined the baroque as “the art of absolute decoration” in *Ästhetische Theorie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), 236, cited in Echeverría, *La modernidad del barroco*, 210.

Mapa Teatro’s fiction is baroque inasmuch as it values the power of fantasy and does not seek to curb excess. And it is not baroque inasmuch as it values—greatly—the reality that surrounds it, in multiple senses. Mapa Teatro’s “laboratory” is located in a part of Bogotá that was, until recently, a working-class neighborhood in the city’s downtown historical center. The building is a “found space,” an observatory onto the city’s popular imagination, and a meeting place open to new experiences and problems that are not necessarily art-related. This willingness to work where the bulk of the city’s bodies are physically located has been a feature of several projects relating to historical-architectural and social-urban matters and has led to a fictional reconfiguration of two research methods: the archaeological and the ethnographic.

Project 24: Variations on “House Taken Over” (2017) was the result of what might be called an archaeological-fictional procedure: several items salvaged from the Bing Theater, set to be demolished as part of a remodeling of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, were moved to the nearby fossil laboratory at the La Brea Tar Pits and Museum and examined as prehistoric artifacts. The relics (though fictitious) became the material, the laboratory (a real place) became the performance space, the scientists became the guest actors, and an old film projector became the apparatus that enabled this impossible convergence of disparate times and realities to occur. Archaeological fiction is not only a matter of displacing time; it effects research methodology too: Mapa Teatro’s laboratory analysis relied more on intuition and chance findings than it did on traditional scientific procedure. A unique object or a revealing document can thus serve as a punctum to the research, which is no less rigorous as a consequence and is carried out using archives, history, and the space itself.

Mapa Teatro employed the same archaeological method for *Of Lunatics, or Those Lacking Sanity*, which is presented as part

of the *Fisuras* program. As the archive was “excavated,” the Museo Reina Sofía disappeared and the Hospital General y de la Pasión reappeared, the original incarnation of a building that is emblematic of the reigns of Ferdinand VI and of Carlos III and therefore of Spanish enlightened absolutism. Documents were recovered from the archive, one of which gave the project its title, and the work revealed that the Sabatini Building had primarily been financed using revenues from natural resources extracted from the Indies, especially gold from the New Kingdom of Granada, as established by Philip V in 1717. His successors promoted a reformist agenda that sought to improve the conditions in which the sick and the insane were cared for, an initiative that coincided with an ambitious plan to reorganize the way Spain’s overseas provinces were governed, redefining them as colonies in an attempt to make them as profitable as France’s overseas territories and to fend off the British and the Dutch.

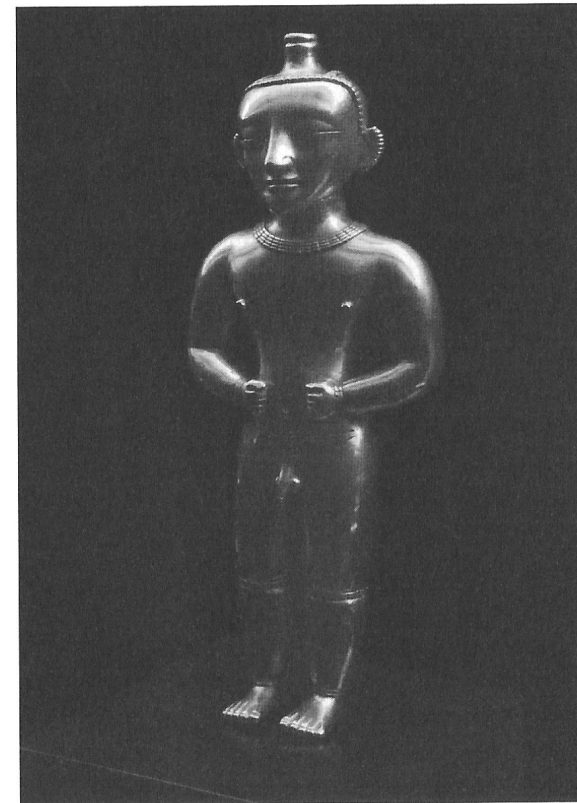
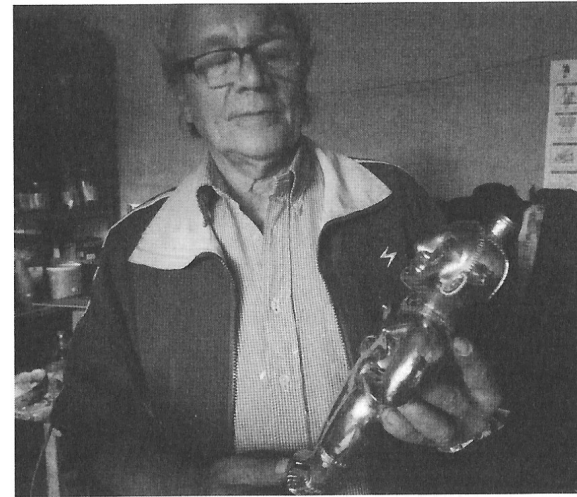
Archaeological research is then complemented by historical fiction. Mapa Teatro’s methods are, in this sense, similar to those of artists such as Walid Raad and Rabih Mroué, who, lacking the original documents that prove historical truths, have no choice but to *reconstruct* them. Raad denominates them “hysterical documents,” symptomatic of a silenced collective memory, the remnants of events and people erased from history.¹¹ *Discurso de un hombre decente* (The discourse of a decent man, 2012) was built around such a reconstructed document: the letter found in Pablo Escobar’s pocket after he was shot dead and in which he lays out his plans for Colombia were he to become president, including the legalization of drug trafficking. *La despedida* (The farewell, 2017) concludes with a

reconstructed situation, the silent conversation between Karl Marx and an Amazonian shaman.

Reconstructed documents, situations, or characters infiltrate the artistic process as relational objects and fulfill the same function as stage props in other pieces. In *Horacio* (1994), Heiner Müller’s work was the prompt for an intense “social imagination” process undertaken with inmates at the Colombia Central Penitentiary, known as La Picota (The pillory). In *Prometheus* (2002–2003), another text by Müller was the catalyst for a similar procedure, this time with inhabitants evicted from the El Cartucho neighborhood in Bogotá. Both works, but especially *Prometheus*, were initiated using ethno-fiction techniques, a method Mapa Teatro repeated on subsequent projects. For *Of Lunatics, or Those Lacking Sanity*, the field of social experimentation was not Madrid but Caldas, the gold-mining region of Colombia where Carlos III sent the engineers Don Juan José D’Elhúyar and Don Ángel Díaz Castellanos to modernize the mines and make them more profitable. The Mapa Teatro team followed in the engineers’ footsteps, reconstructing the itinerary that led them to the Marmato mine, which had begun to be exploited before La Conquista (Spain’s colonizing of the Americas) and has forever been productive, resisting control by various factions during Colombia’s armed conflict—unlike other mines in the second half of the twentieth century—and the invasion of mining multinationals (which promote open-pit mining). Such resistance can be explained only by the strength of the local people, a self-regulating community that has preserved the Marmato mountain, which is burrowed full of tunnels, some of them hundreds of years old, and, like a baroque island, is surrounded by the perils of industrial-scale extraction and illegal gold mining, a business that is less visible but just as, if not more, profitable than cocaine cultivation and trafficking. By becoming implicated witnesses, exposing their bodies to the sensory experiences of the place and reacting to the stories of its inhabitants, Mapa Teatro’s fictitious ethnographers were

11 Walid Raad cited by Kaelen Wilson-Goldie in “Walid Raad: The Atlas Group Opens Its Archives,” in “We Are Old,” special issue, *Bidoun*, no. 2 (2004), <http://www.bidoun.org/magazine/02-we-are-old/> (accessed September 11, 2018).

able to build a symbolic bridge that connected the mine to the hospital and the Enlightenment engineers to today's miners. These miners were invited to take part in the work of fiction in the same way that special guests have joined in Mapa Teatro's previous projects, partaking in the journey and bringing their own memories, plans, abilities, and desires to the performance. This is what Juana Ramírez did in *Witness to the Ruins*, the inmates of La Picota in *Horacio*, the patients at the Tunja Psychiatric Hospital in *Sanatorio* (Sanatorium, 2006), Linda Lucía Callejas, Charlotte Sheider, Cristal Malabert, and Amada Rosa in *Exxxtrañas amazonas* (Stttrange Amazons, 2007), Genaro Torres in *Los santos inocentes* (The innocent saints, 2010), Danilo Jiménez and Jeihhco Wayfarer in *Discourse of a Decent Man* (2011), and the children of the Instituto Carmenza de Sánchez marching band in *Los incontados: Un tríptico*. Over the years, these people have shared the stage with Andrés Castañeda, Santiago Sepúlveda, Julián Díaz, Agnes Brekke, and the composer and DJ Juan Ernesto Díaz. If Don Ángel Díaz Castellanos (who ended his "insane" days confined within the very walls that now house the exhibition) is the relational character driving the narrative, the miners are the mediums that bring the delirium of the gold rush back to the present day, with all its symbolic and political implications. But the bodies of the miners, like those of the producers of this "gesture," are present only in a latent sense, and it falls to the museum's visitors to make them present; to make sure the fiction is not watered down and that the space is inhabited as a place of action and conflict; to ensure the objects and images are rearticulated as poetic thought and that the gesture is, ultimately, renewed as a manifestation of life.



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EXHIBITION

HEAD OF EXHIBITIONS

Teresa Velázquez

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EXHIBITIONS MANAGER

Natalia Guaza

REGISTRARS

Iliana Naranjo

BROCHURE

TEXTS

José A. Sánchez
Suely Rolnik

HEAD OF PUBLICATIONS

Alicia Pinteño

COORDINATOR

Mercedes Pineda

TRANSLATORS PORTUGUESE-ENGLISH

Pablo Lafuente
Rui Parada

TRANSLATOR SPANISH-ENGLISH

Jethro Soutar

COPYEDITING AND PROOFREADING

Christopher Davey

DESIGN AND LAYOUT

Julio López

PRINTING

ErasOnze

ALL IMAGES

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