

IMPOSSIBLE GLOSSARY

G O A I  
L S R O

*Authorship*

I P S B E  
M O I L

Diego del Pozo Barriuso  
Christian Fernández Mirón  
Left Hand Rotation

## *Going Beyond Artistic Authorship*

### Diego del Pozo Barriuso

The relationship that artists, creators, or cultural producers establish with their status of authorship determines the characteristics of their production, and the results and processes of that production. In my case, I have been working as a visual artist individually for more than fifteen years, but also as a member of several art collectives—C.A.S.I.T.A., Subtramas, and Declinación Magnética—with which I develop projects of a collaborative nature. For me, artistic practice is a need; the arts allow one to produce things that are unthinkable by other means. It implies freedom, risk, and imagination, if we are truly willing to accept them. Artistic practice presents a constant challenge, as a result of which I am able to acquire knowledge about others and about reality and its potential for transformation, because artistic practice offers a multi-faceted view of the world. Whether individually or collectively, I produce works, images, and affective mechanisms.<sup>1</sup> I create situations that promote encounter and dialogue. I work with museums, contemporary art centers, galleries, and cultural organizations both public and privately self-managed.

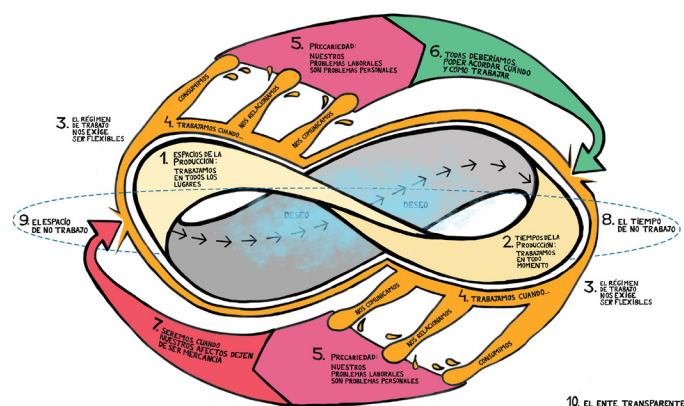
In 2005, I was lucky enough to connect with a group of artist colleagues with whom wonderful synergies emerged. The need to create together and our concern for the precarious conditions that had already begun to plague the cultural sector drove me to get involved in the C.A.S.I.T.A. collective, which was my first collaborative art project. The original members of C.A.S.I.T.A., founded in 2003, were Loreto Alonso, María Íñigo, and Patricia Fesser.<sup>2</sup> Currently, the permanent membership is comprised of Loreto Alonso, Eduardo Galvagni, and myself. Along with Kamen Nedev, who was a member of the collective from 2006 to 2008, we produced the project *Ganarse la vida: El Ente Transparente* (Making a Living: The Transparent Entity).<sup>3</sup> Realizing this project and reformulating the collective for a new stage of existence allowed us to enter a period that was one of the most intense times of shared enthusiasm I can remember with respect to artistic creation. Through this project we took on the task of answering numerous questions we posed to ourselves personally and as artists about the reality of work, understood in a broad sense, and the way in which it conditions our lives. We were intrigued by researching the

1. See chapter 5 of my doctoral thesis entitled “Dispositivos artísticos de afectación: las economías afectivas en las prácticas artísticas actuales” (Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2015), in which I take an in-depth look at the notion of artistic mechanisms of affectation, <http://eprints.ucm.es/30669/>.

2. See <http://www.ganarselavida.net/>.

3. See <http://www.ganarselavida.net/ganarseLavida/ELPROYECTO.html>.

consequences of the fact that the artist/virtuoso/entrepreneur was becoming a social model for all workers, by embodying the parameters and demands of the new immaterial producer.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, we regarded the collective as a space for experimentation with new notions of artistic authorship that included the development of collaborative practices. As we also continued to realize our own individual artistic work, we had to unlearn all of those vices of modernity's model of the individual artist that had formed part of our education. We experienced firsthand the potentialities of this process, developing artistic works on the basis of what we understood as “aesthetics of insecurity.” Among the projects we developed, we produced situations of an immaterial nature, such as creating dialogues at assembles or carrying out actions together about the realities of work.<sup>5</sup> We conceived the collective as a platform in which members could come and go as they please, depending on the project, and which ultimately revealed a diffuse, highly flexible collective structure that encouraged alterations in its makeup. The collective's name



C.A.S.I.T.A., *Decálogo del Ente transparente* (Decalogue of the Transparent Being), 2006

4. Regarding the notion of virtuoso, see Paolo Virno, “Virtuosity and Revolution: The Political Theory of Exodus,” in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 189–209. Regarding the concept of the entrepreneur, see Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (London and New York: Verso, 2005).

5. To review the idea of the *invertebrate*, see the book based on the thesis by my colleague from C.A.S.I.T.A., Loreto Alonso Atienza, *Poéticas de la producción artística a principios de siglo XXI. Distracción, desobediencia, precariedad e invertebrados* (Monterrey: Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, 2011).

created a game with letters that was itself a metaphor for the need to expand the notion of authorship.<sup>6</sup> We constituted a cultural association, because the system requires you to have an official tax identification number if you want to be acknowledged as an entity. Oftentimes, if we failed to include our own names with that of the collective, its existence was considered illegitimate. This situation led to profound debate among us over the collective's relationship with productivity, authorship, and the varying degrees of acknowledgment it received. Some of our debates had to do with the age-old conflict over the idea that if you act using the system's tools, you can only produce things in accordance with its logic, which implies that one must act outside or at the fringes of the institutional framework in order to produce works in another manner.

In parallel to C.A.S.I.T.A., I lived other rather exciting collective experiences. Since 2009, I have been involved in the collective Subtramas (Montse Romani, Virginia Villaplana, and myself), which focuses on the artistic production and research of collaborative audiovisual practices. And since 2012, I have formed part of the artistic collective Declinación Magnética (DM; consisting of Aimar Arriola, José Manuel Bueso, Eduardo Galvagni, Juan Guardiola, Sally Gutiérrez, Julia Morandeira Arrizabalaga, Silvia Zayas, and myself),<sup>7</sup> whose most important objectives from the very beginning have highlighted problems involving colonialism. The three collectives were conceived as experimental communities to explore creative methodologies of a collaborative nature and the construction of new prototypes for artistic and cultural production. In all of them, work processes intermingle with important emotional relationships. DM and Subtramas are comprised not only of artists but also curators and researchers. In all three processes, we have implemented a “suspension” of our own subjectivities to transform our individual ways of working into others of an assembly-based nature, giving rise to aesthetic and productive decisions that make a hierarchy-free space of collaborative creation possible. As a result of all these experiences, I understand artistic authorship from an openly heterodox perspective. Following a process of reflection and analysis about specific practices, I would like to discuss several issues I consider of

6. The name is an acronym whose meaning changes depending upon the project carried out by the collective. For instance, in the project *Ganarse la Vida: El Ente Transparente*, C.A.S.I.T.A. meant “Cómo Articular Situaciones Ilusionantes entre Trabajo y Arte” (How to Articulate Inspiring Situations Between Work and Art), whereas in the project initiated in 2011, *No es Crisis, es Crónico (Observatorio de fragilidad emocional)*, C.A.S.I.T.A. signified “Crónica Afectiva y Subjetiva de Interrelaciones en los Tiempos Actuales” (Affective and Subjective Chronicle of Interrelationships in the Current Times).

7. Declinación Magnética (DM) came to life within the context of a research group known as *Decolonizando las estéticas y el conocimiento* (Decolonizing Aesthetics and Knowledge), an initiative of Matadero Madrid and Goldsmiths, University of London. See <https://declinacionmagnetica.wordpress.com/>.

vital importance with respect to the transformation in the status of artistic authorship that has occurred over the past twenty years.

### The Artist as a Model of Neoliberal Production and Self-Exploitation

It is clear that immaterial collaborative practices and the proposal of a new form of institutionalism have led to profound transformations in the status of artistic authorship over the last two decades. However, despite the enthusiasm such processes may provoke in terms of the creation of more democratic and more diverse societies and productive systems, one continues to see a consensus within artistic milieus with respect to the status of the artist's "genius," which has been with us since the dawn of modernity. Nobody seems comfortable with this designation, but in truth this idea is supported by the means of production, largely dependent upon the hegemony of the art market and its interests, which thus legitimizes the figure of the solitary, self-sufficient, competitive artist who must, continually, produce marketable works. This condition causes contemporary artists to assimilate the "rock star" model, a phenomenon that has also affected curators—and now even collectors! It is important to reflect upon the consequences of artists and other cultural agents that aspire to follow this model, and who is benefitting from this.

Moreover, the change in the productive paradigm that has gradually taken hold over the last forty years has brought with it the development of cognitive capitalism, making creativity, along with flexibility, a principal requirement of all workers for the purpose of creating a truly dynamic and productive economic system. As a result, within neoliberalism all people are creative subjects or could become creators, an idea rather distant from Beuys's notion that "every man is an artist."<sup>8</sup> In line with these changes, it also appears as if the art world, particularly in the last decade, has replaced the old-fashioned notion of genius, and its reformulations, with that of "genuine creativity," a trait once again unique to artists, allowing them to initiate collaborative projects or works with social implications. In this sense, we should carefully review how this new artist involved in collaborative and participatory projects exercises authorship. It would rather seem that the creative industries have restored the artist to a status of "neo-genius" that, even though obliquely influenced by the paradigm change provoked by the conceptual practices of the 1960s and 1970s, has assimilated these influences in their least radical form, at times aestheticizing their more subversive aspects and at others merely supplanting them.

8. Joseph Beuys et al., *Joseph Beuys: Life and Works*, trans. Patricia Lech (Woodbury, NY: Barron's Educational Series, 1979), p. 255.

In one way or another, the notion of authorship revolves around the construction of a strong individual figure who is authorized by this authorship before other subjects. Authority is not a problem in and of itself. Sometimes it is necessary. The problem occurs when it turns into authoritarianism. What is important here is to understand that this principle of authority is designed to protect neoliberalism's productive values, which are profoundly authoritarian as a result of the greatly imbalanced social relations they create. In this respect, it is troubling to see how artists assimilate the conditions of neoliberal ideology in a way that reproduces the subject model that perfectly represents the prototype of the immaterial producer, obsessed with capitalizing on every moment and encounter in daily life, to the point of being accused of embodying a neoliberal personality that provokes a neurotic and predatory form of competitiveness among their peers.

Artist Liam Gillick, though highly critical of these accusations and a believer in the artist's ontological potential, admits: "The challenge is the supposition that artists today—whether they like it or not—have fallen into a trap that is pre-determined by their existence within a regime that is centered on a rampant capitalization of the mind."<sup>9</sup> If we think about the ontological potentialities of artists, understood to be subjects capable of inventing new visual, cultural, and social forms, this challenge should involve pointing out and/or producing forms alternative to those of the dominant systems. However, today's artists appear to be engrossed in a spiral of self-exploitation, with the objective of positioning their work in the market. In fact, the discontinuous nature of the visibility of an artist's work in the art world is precisely the key to making this exploitation sustainable.<sup>10</sup> Self-exploitation and discontinuity put the artist in a situation of intense material and existential insecurity. Thus it is even more troubling to find that artists who strive to produce work that questions the hegemonic means of production—which means putting other collaborative methodologies into action—must create much more work at a much higher personal cost. Consequently, such artists exploit themselves more than they do as individual artists, as the art system delegitimizes new

9. Liam Gillick, *Why Work* (Auckland: Artspace, 2010), p. 3.

10. As pointed out by Marcelo Expósito, "the exploitation of artistic labour is *intensive*, because it is exercised in the overall time that you commit to your work, but the key to its economical sustainability for the institution resides in the fact that it is formalised discontinuously: you only get paid for the specific project, exhibition or investigation or the number of hours 'you work'. The extent to which this kind of exploitation is widely accepted in the arts is because, obviously, your activity is presumably 'gratifying' in terms of vocational self-expression and freedom. Also because your subjection to the institution is irregular in terms of labour-income, but constant in symbolic terms and in *its forms of subjectivisation*: the artist is taught to *always turn* to the institution as a guarantee of legitimacy and, above all, the 'relevance' of his or her own activity." Marcelo Expósito, "Inside and Outside the Art Institution: Self-Valorisation and Montage in Contemporary Art," trans. Nuria Rodríguez, *Transversal* 10 (2006), <http://eicp.net/transversal/0407/exposito/en>.

collaborative ways of working for several reasons: there is no interest in investing in these processes that have no clear market potential; the system co-opts them in order to turn them into something marketable; and progressive institutions, with neoliberal economic and productive structures, are unable (with rare exceptions) to offer dignified production conditions to artists and the communities involved.

It is not a matter of giving up the potentialities of individual authorship. We cannot cease to believe in the strength and transformative capability of what individuals can do on their own, no matter how small their actions or gestures may be. It is a matter of reflecting upon the way in which a certain work system lies within and affects the social realm, and what values, structures, conditions, and lifestyles it creates. At the same time, more study is required of the mutations that need to take place but have yet to occur in the status of artistic authorship, the conditions and means of production, and institutional structures in order to define the potentialities of certain collaborative practices that aspire to create other social constructs.

### Challenges and Conflicts for Artists in Collaborative Practices

In the process of realizing projects with C.A.S.I.T.A., Subtramas, and DM, we detected certain situations of interest in the relationships of collectives as authors with the groups of people who implicated themselves in the projects. I remember, among others, the situations of the Public Assemblies about the Transparent Entity with C.A.S.I.T.A., with the newer and older workers at Matadero Madrid, or the relationships with groups of adolescents in the project *Margen de Error* (Margin of Error), with DM.<sup>11</sup> Based on the experience of these relationships, it is possible to articulate the conflicts and challenges with regard to the status of artistic authorship faced by collaborative practices, which need to incorporate other ethical parameters that are missing from hegemonic market logics.<sup>12</sup>

It is crucial to keep in mind that every relation of authorship generates a form of authority. It is thus important to establish a relationship that does not



*Declinación Magnética, Margen de Error (tableau vivant), Film still, Matadero Madrid, Madrid, 2013*

reproduce authoritarian behaviors under the aegis of authorship, as we are reminded by feminist biologist Donna Haraway.<sup>13</sup> All of this means operating from a position that leads to actions and knowledge position politically in relation to the people involved, their context, and their time.

It is also important for us to avoid producing artistic materials or actions that impinge on the aestheticization of the social process by prioritizing our own particular viewpoint or desire to produce a specific material. Social processes and movements are typically diverse in form; what is interesting about artists' role in them is how they can identify these forms and contribute to strengthening their potential for action and expansion. We must be careful to avoid adopting paternalistic, self-serving attitudes that might instrumentalize the communities with which we work. In addition to steering clear of capitalizing on the achievements of a specific social process, in this sense it is also essential to situate oneself and to negotiate the material conditions of collaborative tasks, which involves thinking ahead about how we are going to manage and negotiate with others the benefits of any symbolic (and at times material) capital that may result from certain productions in which we seek the involvement of these others.

11. See <http://www.ganarselavida.net/ganarseLavida/ASAMBLEAS.html>, and <https://declinacionmagnetica.wordpress.com/margen-de-error/>

12. We wrote about the situations of conflict between authorship and collaborative practices at C.A.S.I.T.A. (Loreto Alonso, Eduardo Galvagni, and Diego del Pozo), "El conflicto transparente," unpublished publication of El Ranchito de Matadero Madrid, 2012, edited by Iván López Munuera. Also see the diagram of this text: [http://www.formatocomodo.com/catalogos/catalogo\\_18.pdf](http://www.formatocomodo.com/catalogos/catalogo_18.pdf).

13. See Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (Autumn 1988), pp. 575–99, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3178066>.



Another relevant point about the epistemic power of representation causes us to reflect on the implications of representing an other or providing a space for self-representation. This subject was a major concern of Sub-tramas in the project *Abecedario Anagramático de Subtramas* (Subtramas' Anagrammatic Alphabet), which took form in artistic research on collaborative practices in audiovisual production.<sup>14</sup> We established various degrees of authorship in these type of practices, the processes of which often result in either the dissolution of authorship or the advancement of co-authorship:<sup>15</sup> (1) an artist or group of artists takes part in the life of the subjects being represented or filmed with a solid, long-term commitment, but the aesthetic strategies are not negotiated with them. The creative team is divided into roles (directing, camera, editing, etc.); (2) a group of artists among whom there is no division of roles, in which decisions are made collectively by team members, and the aesthetic strategies may or may not be negotiated with the subjects represented or filmed; (3) an unauthored model, in which all of the subjects involved, whether represented or not (those filmed and not filmed), decide everything together in a fluid process.<sup>16</sup> Over the last decade an important discussion has taken place over the need for artistic authorship for those collaborative practices that, ultimately, produce works,<sup>17</sup> such as those proposed by Claire Bishop.<sup>18</sup> Other voices, however, such as that of Grant Kester, prioritize the social over the artistic objective.<sup>19</sup> While the prevailing hegemony around the figure of the individual artist makes the issue of whether artistic authorship will or will not become

obsolete or irrelevant, it is still important to explore the epistemological possibilities of that which will continue to overflow, mutate, and expand. The problem resides in the fact that certain collaborative processes create spaces of exception intimately linked to the very experimentation, but without sufficient support in the cultural and artistic environment that invariably demands a well-defined, recognizable product to facilitate its distribution. For this reason, I find Bishop's stance to be too rigid, and though it is still of interest to produce works using these processes, it would be beneficial to do away with the demand that the objective is the production of works. Not only because of the enormous number of possibilities that are left unexplored, but also because of the great potentialities that exist in the relationships between performativity, research, and mediation. We could conclude that other sorts of visual, social, and cultural forms emerge through processes of nonauthoritarian collaborative creation.

### The Artist as Researcher and Mediator

The projects in which I have participated with collectives have all been closely related to artistic research processes, which at times form part of the artistic practice itself, and which also affects the status of artistic authorship. As Hito Steyerl points out, artistic research must therefore be understood as discipline and, at the same time, as conflict. Often the objective of any discipline has been to "discipline" others in order to dominate them, as one can also infer from the relationship between author and authorship. Thus it is a matter of accepting the idea of discipline with the conflicts that are circumscribed therein. In this sense, Steyerl proposes the idea of resistance as a counterpoint to that of discipline.<sup>20</sup> The processes of legitimization established by traditional disciplinary systems (those that defend universality, transcendence, impartiality, and objectivity) are in this way continuously

14. The project takes an in-depth look at the genealogy of these practices since the late 1960s and up to today in various contexts, as well as their methodologies. The *Abecedario anagramático* and all of the materials in the project can be consulted interactively at <http://subtramas.museoreinasofia.es/es/anagrama>. See the filmed video essay we created in 2011 on collaborative audiovisual practices online at <http://subtramas.museoreinasofia.es/es/videoensayo>

15. See the entry on the notion of collaborative work in our alphabet at <http://subtramas.museoreinasofia.es/es/anagrama/colaborativo>.

16. Regarding this system, it is indispensable to consult the projects and texts by the collective Cine Sin Autor regarding their idea of "unauthored" work, <http://www.cinesinautor.es/>.

17. In this sense, it would be appropriate to delve further into the relationships between artistic authorship, the autonomy of art, and political autonomy. On the one hand, I am highly critical of the way in which the autonomy of art is still understood within the field itself, because it highlights the transcendental nature of artistic objects for their commercialization. Yet I also realize that this is the feature that makes many of art's potentialities possible, because it allows spaces for political exception (if not distinction) and for creating new imaginaries contrary to the omnipotence of the logics of markets and creative industries. See Gerald Rauning, "Instituent Practices: Fleeing, Instituting, Transforming," *Transversal* 1 (2006), <http://www.eicpcp.net/transversal/0106/rauning/en>.

18. See Claire Bishop, *Participation* (London: Whitechapel; Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006); see also Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012), esp. ch. 1, 8, and 9.

19. In order to review the notion of social purpose in certain collaborative artistic practices, see chapter 1 of Grant Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011). To this end, I would like to mention two projects that were the source of much inspiration: *Park Fiction* (Hamburg, Germany) <https://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/parkfiction/>, and the film *Read the Mask. Tradition is Not Given* by Petra Bauer and Annette Krauss, <http://subtramas.museoreinasofia.es/es/contenidos/read-the-masks-tradition-is-not-given-leed-las-mascaras-la-tradicion-no-es-algo-dado->.

20. Steyerl points toward an aesthetics of resistance. She speaks to us about resistance against discipline; against notions of art science-history and proposed those of public debate against information; against the notions of the art market / creative industries, she proposes that of aesthetic autonomy; and against the specific, she proposes the unique. See Hito Steyerl, "Aesthetics of Resistance? Artistic Research as Discipline and Conflict," *Transversal* 1 (2010), <http://eicpcp.net/transversal/0311/steyerl/en>.

problematized. We are dealing then with lending credence to another sort of legitimacy, that which is created by the processes of action and creation that put up resistance to the system, making it possible to speak through the perspective of nonvisible conflicts. Thus an idea of “active research” is created that evolves into an “event” as result of the contact between people taking part in a specific situation. This event that, due to its performative implications, itself stimulates the research and its effects is categorically different from strictly theoretical speculation, implying a traditional scholarly study, because it means, on the one hand, introducing action, the motion of bodies, the perception of their emotions, and so forth, and, on the other hand, understanding how through making and practical experience invisible and crucial emotional elements appear that are marginalized or excluded from academic analyses biased toward a strictly rational and replicable legitimization of historically quantified data based on repetition and institutional acknowledgment over time. In this sense, we are once again problematizing the relationship between authorship and authority to encourage a broadening of the notion of legitimacy, this time with the age-old conflict between theory and practice, which would also be disrupted, because authorship is thus linked to a hybrid space overflowing with the production of knowledge and culture that does not correspond to “being a specialist or an expert in.”<sup>21</sup> In addition to mediation understood as negotiation, which I stressed when speaking about the challenges of collaborative practices, I want to emphasize the relationship between mediation and performativity. As an example we can use Subtramas’ participation in the exhibition *Really Useful Knowledge* at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (2014–15).<sup>22</sup> In addition to the *Abecedario anagramático*, we presented a mediation program along with another program of public activities within the framework of our installation *Cuatro preguntas para una utilidad que está por venir* (Four Questions for a Usefulness That Is Still to Come). In both programs, we put into practice what we understood to be “performative mediation.” This allowed us to create an artistic space in which the public—constituted in “walking assemblies”—and other social agents such as Marea Blanca and Marea Verde<sup>23</sup>, among

21. To me, it continues to be highly relevant to refer to Benjamin’s notion of the cultural producer. See Walter Benjamin, “The Author as Producer” (1934), in *Reflections: Essays Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), pp. 220–38.

22. See <http://www.museoreinasofia.es/en/exhibitions/really-useful-knowledge>, <http://www.museoreinasofia.es/actividades/acciones-saber-realmente-util>, <http://www.museoreinasofia.es/visita/tipos-visita/visita-comentada/recorridos-saber-realmente-util>.

23. Marea blanca (The White Tide) and Marea verde (The Green Tide) are protest organizations formed by professional from the healthcare and educational sector. They are actively protesting against the budgetary cuts in these two fields. —Ed.



Subtramas, Action by MEDSAP-Marea Blanca in front of *Cuatro preguntas para una utilidad que está por venir* (Four Questions for a Utility Still to Come) during *Un Saber Realmente Útil* (Really Useful Knowledge) exhibition, Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid, 2014

others, actively intervened, for the first time ever, in the museum’s exhibition spaces. Performative mediation functions like a practice both distant from and conscious of the conflicts of certain relational aesthetics, which tend to aestheticize social relations in order to benefit the logics of consumption. With performative mediation, in contrast, authorship is mediated through the use of artistic means, which permits specific agents to act in other ways, within spaces and institutions.<sup>24</sup> As a result, the artist not only takes aesthetic concerns into account but also becomes involved in the mediation and distribution processes of everything that can be produced; the artist assimilates methodologies from radical pedagogy in a hybrid, multifaceted, decentralized approach. The artist becomes both researcher and mediator.<sup>25</sup>

The small experimental structure—still rather precarious in cultural processes before and after the crisis of 2008—that is comprised of the collaborative practices described above, as well as the situations and spaces that they promote, constitute just the tip of a large iceberg filled with prototypes useful to those communities beginning to introduce new forms of living as an alternative to those imposed by neoliberalism. Like many others, I wish for a prosperous expansion of this process, and that it may be accomplished with a large dose of empathy.

24. See Dorothea von Hantelmann, *How to Do Things with Art* (Berlin: Diaphanes, 2007).

25. See the entry on the notion of radical pedagogy in our alphabet at <http://subtramas.museoreinasofia.es/en/anagrama/radical-pedagogy>.

## An interview with Christian Fernández Mirón

By hablarenarte

For Christian Fernández Mirón (b. 1984, Madrid), informal education has been, and continues to be, pivotal to his perspective on the world and on work. Hybridization is, in a way, his specialty, as he combines art, design, education, and music projects, representing disciplines to which he has arrived through experimentation. The diversity of his projects makes him difficult to classify in an artistic sense, though perhaps their overriding theme is a search for collective intimacy. This search is what drives the multidisciplinary collective ¡JA!, and resulted in his *Conciertos mínimos* (Minimum Concerts); the erotic-subversive calendar of hirsute pin-ups, *Bears, Illustrated*; and the creative gymnastics called *La sociedad en las nubes* (The Cloud Society.)

—www.fernandezmiron.com

**In almost all your projects, you work with a large number of people whose collaboration at different stages of the process shape the outcome. To what degree does the figure of the author/artist remain important in this context?**

As part of the exhibition *Ni arte ni educación* (Neither Art Nor Education, 2015), I carried out a project called *Murciélagos* (Bat). Every Wednesday at seven o'clock in the evening we met at Matadero Madrid's Nave 16 to experiment with the limits and possibilities of our voices and our capacity to listen. The idea was to approach this project not as a workshop with a one-way transfer of knowledge but rather as a platform in which I was the catalyst, so that both the participants—with their individualities and differences—and myself could expand our knowledge, generating a group dynamic by which we could all learn from each other. That is why I called it a vocal research laboratory.

This approach was certainly utopian, but I have always known that I didn't want to be one of those artists who signs the front of the canvas, manifesting his authorship in the most visible place. I also dreamed of toppling hierarchies, so that all decisions could be collective. But I realized that leadership is necessary to insure the success of things that within a horizontal context could not flourish. In *Murciélagos*, for example, I had to assume a certain leadership role or else things wouldn't move forward. I decided that it was up to me to assume that role because, ultimately, I was the one who had initiated the process: I had a number of defined ideas at the outset and I was much more experienced than most of my colleagues in the group. As such, it seemed appropriate for me to lead (at least at specific moments), to suggest dynamics and names, make observations, and so on. And we should not forget that such proposals have a social aspect, as they bring together people who did not know each other before. So, obviously, my role consisted in breaking the ice and getting everyone to feel comfortable. The goal is to create a trusting environment so that people begin to propose things, to contradict, and to question. That is when a collective or collaborative process can truly begin.



**So could we say that an artist's role in collaborative and collective processes, in which there is invariably a social component, is that of a facilitator with a certain technical knowledge?**

When you put it that way, it sounds rather ugly, but there is some truth to it. Though I don't consider myself an expert in anything, in *Murciélagos* I was certainly the one who knew the most about the subject, as I did have the technical knowledge. And I do indeed believe that we shouldn't be afraid to take on the role of facilitator. Perhaps it requires a substantial sense of empathy, as well as certain social skills, charisma, and an extroverted personality. They are elements needed in the field of mediation, cultural mediation or otherwise, and I have always found them particularly useful for artistic projects as well, in order to effectively lead groups and resolve conflicts.

**Why then do you think artists are asked to coordinate projects that have a strong social character when they could just as easily be led by mediators? Whether we call it “spark,” “genius,” or “creativity,” there seems to be a widespread belief that true artists have the capacity to see the world in a different way and that this capacity is universally desired. What makes artists special compared to other creative workers?**

I have spent my entire life trying to debunk the myth of the tormented and volatile artist simply because it is not something I identify with. I think it is possible to discipline oneself without taming one's creativity. The arts can thus contribute new perspectives that allow us to reflect upon our surroundings from unfamiliar viewpoints. Art is a vehicle, and it can become a useful tool for having a social impact.

**But if the project is initiated by an institution that wishes to use it to have a specific kind of social impact, then the commission will involve more than just financing the work, because the agenda is more far-reaching. Socially engaged art projects initiated by institutions establish a commercial relationship between institution and artist that resembles the traditional client-vendor relationship. Is there artistic authorship in such a project?**

There are always limitations when you work with an institution. In 2012, the ¡JA! collective realized the *Terraza Matadero* (Matadero Terrace) project,

which consisted of creating an artistic program for twelve summer nights. I consider myself the author because I know what we contributed and what could not have been done without us. But I also remember that one sponsor vetoed some of our proposals. To avoid that ambiguity, it is important to also realize projects outside of institutional contexts, in private, intimate, and trusting environments. Only in these settings is it possible to create projects with another kind of exchange: complicity, food, personal intimacy, and so on. When institutions became interested in the *Conciertos mínimos*—held in domestic and personal settings—we knew that we should not try to recreate the same format but rather draw on the interest they had generated to design *Terraza Matadero*, which was a different project designed specifically for the space in which it was held.

Maybe I view all of this more pragmatically because of my origins in graphic design, where you respond to a concrete commission: a client who lacks a specific set of tools explains his or her problem to a specialist who does have those tools. It is good to be open to such an exchange of roles, to put oneself in the other's shoes and try to get inside his or her head. That, basically, is the empathy I mentioned earlier, and it is necessary in any social, collaborative project. You have to accept both leading and being led. And if it is done with the right approach, it is a refreshing change, even in the art world.



Claudia Claremi and Cristian Fernández Mirón, *Rest Energy* (Reinterpretation of Marina Abramovic & Ulay's *Rest Energy*), Madrid, 2010. Photograph advertising the call for proposals for the *Reformance* festival

## An interview with Left Hand Rotation

By Ana García Alarcón

Founded in Madrid in 2004, Left Hand Rotation works collectively. Eschewing individual artistic processes, it adopts the structure of an impersonal entity unaffiliated with the author and proposes production models that question traditional concepts associated with the authorial figure. Their work addresses social issues such as gentrification or consumerism, and they approach each project with the premise that the recipient is not merely a spectator but rather an active party essential to the transformation of a given social reality.

—[www.lefthandrotation.com](http://www.lefthandrotation.com)

**While in Left Hand Rotation's work individual authorship dissolves, to what degree is the concept of authorship and the anonymity of the members important in your work as a collective? What significance does the concept of the author have for you as a group?**

We always approach authorship as a collective condition. For us, there are no individual, isolated, or disconnected creative processes; all of them are tied to a continuum, a network of references and interrelations that reach back to the origin of culture. In fact, we could say that authorship does not exist, as far as being a presumption of intellectual property. Thus, our authorship is *collective*, dissolved, little more than a connection that ensures fluidity in a network of references—like a tag that groups an isolated set of actions, making it possible to weave a more complex discourse.

For example, in this conversation we could use Guattari and Deleuze as a tag: we conceive of our activity as work inhabited by many, a many-headed being without hierarchies and open to being influenced by the forces of the world.

**I understand that the romantic concept of the artist as a genius is completely foreign to your work, but to what point do you think this conception affects art production today?**

The concept of genius is a product of deceit. It presupposes the existence of an individual who begins with nothing and achieves originality in an extraordinary manner. It is a very dangerous mystification of the creative process that, today, reaches its peak of toxicity by legitimizing the concept of intellectual property, the right an individual (or a collective of individuals) has over knowledge presumably produced in isolation. Intellectual property is a tool employed by cognitive capital to turn knowledge into goods. The more knowledge is exchanged, the more will be generated. This contradicts capitalism's basic principle. Intellectual property was created as a means of artificially introducing the idea of scarcity to knowledge, and this is supported

by the conception of the creative process as disconnected from the network of knowledge and influences, with the concept of the genius as its icon.

**What is the role of the outside agents that you involve in your work? Could we say that they can become co-authors, thus generating collaborative work?**

We always say that we approach each project with the idea that the community is not a spectator but rather an essential and active part, the will and desire of which makes it possible to articulate the action. So, in a way, we do not approach it as “co-authorship with outside agents,” but we rather see it as more far-reaching, in the sense that everyone involved in a collaborate process is the collective. In other words, we do not share the ownership of a work but rather a period of time as a collective during which a situation is possible.



Left Hand Rotation, Cines Luna, Madrid, 2007. Intervention on the facade of (previously shut down) cinemas at Plaza María Soledad Torres Acosta, advertising a phantom film cycle on invisible problems affecting the city district

**Diego del Pozo Barriuso** is an artist, cultural producer and professor at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Universidad de Salamanca. He is also a member of the art collectives C.A.S.I.T.A., Subtramas, and Declinación Magnética. His work is motivated by affective economies, and how emotions are socially and culturally produced. Recent exhibitions include *Un saber realmente útil* (Real Useful Knowledge, Museo Reina Sofía, 2014-2015) and *Anarchivo sida* (AIDS Anarchive, Tabakalera, 2016).

**Ana García Alarcón** is a researcher, curator and a Doctor in Art History and Theory with the Universidad Complutense, Madrid. She has recently published the book *ARTE versus PUBLICIDAD. (Re)visiones críticas desde el arte actual* (Universidad de Zaragoza, Zaragoza, 2016). She regularly writes texts and articles, and curates projects on an individual as well as a collective basis. Together with Isabel Durante and Miguel Ángel Hernández Ana makes up the curatorial group 1erEscalón, and she is also a member of the curatorial team of Espacio Trapézio, an offspace in Madrid.



*Impossible Glossary* is an editorial project by **hablarenarte** that will grow steadily until the close of the CAPP project, planned for the end of 2018. This digital edition of June 2016 is comprised of seven independent chapters:

### *Agents*

"Constellations, Glossaries, and Functions"  
Es Baluard, Museo d'Art Modern i Contemporani de Palma

"Vanishing Points"  
Javier Montero

Interviews with Núria Güell and María Ruido

### *Autonomy*

"Autonomy and Modes of Relation"  
Jordi Claramonte

Interviews with Rogelio López Cuenca and Alexander Ríos

### *Authorship*

"Going Beyond Artistic Authorship"  
Diego del Pozo Barriuso

Interviews with Christian Fernández Mirón and Left Hand Rotation

### *Collaboration*

"Collaboration is Inevitable"  
María Mur Dean

Interviews with Maider López and DEMOCRACIA

### *Context*

"Walking in Ice, Artistic Practices in Context"  
Francisca Blanco Olmedo

Interviews with El Banquete and DosJotas

### *Work*

"Down to work! Ways of Doing and Activating within the Social Network"  
Selina Blasco y Lila Insúa

Interviews with Juanli Carrión and David Crespo

### *Return*

"The Return Is the Common"  
Haizea Barcenilla

Interviews with Alberto Flores (Makea Tu Vida) and Mawatres

The Impossible Glossary will be expanded over the coming years, the contents of which will be published digitally at [www.cappnetwork.eu](http://www.cappnetwork.eu) and [www.hablarenarte.com/capp](http://www.hablarenarte.com/capp). A selection of all the texts will be published in a paper edition in November 2018.

We hope for the widest possible dissemination of this publication. When quoting fragments or full texts, the following formula should be used: Full name of the author, "Title," in: *name of the chapter, Impossible Glossary*, ed. hablarenarte, (Madrid: hablarenarte, 2016), p. xx., see: [www.hablarenarte.com/capp](http://www.hablarenarte.com/capp)

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