

IMPOSSIBLE GLOSSARY

G O A I
L S R O

Autonomy

I P S B E
M O I L

Jordi Claramonte
Rogelio López Cuenca
Alexander Ríos

Autonomy and Modes of Relation

Jordi Claramonte

The word “autonomy” is one of those terms that should be carefully defined and specified because the effects can vary greatly depending on who uses it and to what end.

Autonomy is not something one can be “for” or “against.” Autonomy is, to start, a *manner of understanding* all kinds of biological, psychological, and social processes, among which, of course, we include art and its practices. To quote Francisco Varela, we might say that the new aesthetics, instead of being mainly concerned with heteronomous units which relate to their world by the logic of correspondence is concerned with the autonomous units which operate by the logic of coherence,¹ and with the exploration of dissonance.

But in addition to being a form of intelligence of living processes, autonomy also requires that we draw an axiological horizon without which this discussion would become indiscriminate. The axiological dimension means—to start with a simple example—that it is not the same for a judge to demand autonomy vis-à-vis political power for the realization of his or her work as for a police officer inclined to abuses of the judge overseeing his or her duties.

This is because—implicit in our inquiry into autonomy—it begs the question that autonomy will only be regarded as such to the extent that it is contagious, in other words, to the extent that its application in a particular area will lead to more autonomy in other areas directly or indirectly connected to the first. Thus the judge who demands autonomy vis-à-vis executive power will secure through that demand an extension of autonomy's general domain: we can all organize our own lives with greater guarantees if there is an effective separation of state powers. On the other hand, the officer who demands autonomy in order to torture at his own discretion manages to undermine the general domain of autonomy, because a society in which a police officer can arrest and torture *autonomously* would be a society in which organizing our own lives would become considerably more complicated.²

1. Francisco Varela, “Laying Down a Path in Walking,” in *Gaia: A Way of Knowing; Political Implications of the New Biology*, ed. W. I. Thompson (Great Barrington, MA: Lindisfarne Press, 1987), p. 50.

2. Using the contagiousness of autonomy as a criteria would help to clarify positions such as that of scientists who demand autonomy from the church in order to be able to carry out their research, or that of a company working with genetic modification who demands autonomy to impose and disseminate genetically modified seeds.

Having firmly established this principle, we can put to bed the institutional and contagious character of autonomy in order to focus on a few other interesting details.

And autonomy, if it is to be contagious, must be organized to meet the demands of different scales of deployment and different functional orientations.

Thus during the Enlightenment—in its salons and its newspapers—there existed a highly influential form of autonomy, an autonomy that basically operated by instituting, consolidating, and multiplying spheres of artistic and intellectual production functioning independently of the court and the all-embracing power of the absolute monarch. This form of autonomy, which was explored extensively by our friend Habermas,³ can be called the “autonomy of the Enlightenment,” or “enlightened autonomy,”⁴ and it is a form of autonomy that might function when strategically planned, over a long period of time, creating the conditions for this contagious expansion to occur, and keep occurring. So its expression takes artistic forms such as the sonata, in which musicality has no need to take refuge in or justify itself through moral or religious content, or produces social and intellectual contexts such as cafés, salons, or the first (Renaissance) academies, where the discussion of art need not comply with the official criteria that still govern the political realm.

But, of course, with autonomy the same happens as in many other fields of human activity: we soon forget that which was fundamental to its origins and covert what we do into a sloppy imitation of what it once was. When this happens, enlightened autonomy first stops being “contagious,” and then, over time, also stops being “autonomy.” This is what happened when the academies were co-opted by the king and the salons turned into mere excuses for chewing the fat, as was the case in France under the Sun King and his successors in the century following.

When this happens, the agents interested in fostering and extending autonomy must find a different way to organize their struggle. There then appeared

another modulation we will call “modern autonomy,” which is distinguished by its character of being much more tactical, much more adapted to each specific artistic practice. Modern autonomy, already present in the early stages of Romanticism, is notable for exploring and deploying a negativity capable of surpassing the limits of recognized and authorized artistic practices. Artists assume as their irrefutable role that of challenging the formal and material conventions of their art: they find inspiration in the irrational, the primitive, the medieval, the absurd... anything to prevent us from resting on our laurels, from the approval of the new society born as result of the bourgeois revolutions. Here, heteronomy takes on the guise—so reviled by Baudelaire—of the *philistine*, the normal person, the decent citizen who never steps out of line and who gets on with his or her affairs. Modern autonomy succeeds in continually challenging this model of socialization, and in so doing keeps alive the possibility of self-organizing our own lives, which now are no longer dominated by the absolutism of the ancien régime but by the technologies of the self so characteristic of bourgeois society.

This form of autonomy made sense for over a century and a half, but as occurred with enlightened autonomy, modern autonomy would lose its bearings and prove incapable of adapting to the changes to its context. Thus in the 1970s, when the counterculture was becoming the dominant paradigm, being “odd” or even shocking started to become a marketable distinction, fueling the new consumer economy and the notion of “personalized” design. This is particularly evident in the art world, where the games of avant-garde provocation not only no longer have the catalyzing effect of autonomy present at its origins but rather serve to endorse the existing status quo. Being original or groundbreaking in a consumer economy is by no means a guarantee of autonomy; instead it has become tantamount to an obligation, much like keeping oneself extremely busy, staying young, or traveling a lot. For this reason, institutions like the Turner Prize that once served to probe and expand the boundaries of art end up being the “symbol of the elite that, year after year, laugh condescendingly at the tabloid headlines, incapable of understanding the subtlety of their provocations.”⁵

This being the case, if both enlightened and modern autonomy have been overwhelmed and in a certain sense wiped out, can we still contend that the notion of *autonomy* itself has any value for us?

3. Especially in works such as Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1989).1.

4. The concepts of “enlightened autonomy,” “modern autonomy,” and “modal autonomy” are discussed in greater detail in Jordi Claramonte, *La República de los Fines* (Murcia: Cendeac, 2007).

5. Pablo Guimón, “Arquitectura no apta para elites,” *El País*, December 26, 2015.

Our hypothesis will be that if autonomy—as we began asserting—has something to do with the contagious capacity to organize our own lives, then neither the loss of direction nor the oversaturation that have overthrown enlightened and modern autonomy must deter us from thinking about and fighting for it.

In truth, there is no point revindicating this contagious autonomy if all it does is repeat the faults of the earlier forms we have seen enter into crises. We will have to propose a different form of autonomy that manages to steer clear of the shortcomings or “counterproductivities” (to use a term so beloved by Ivan Illich) of previous models, and avoid the loss of the little or lot that was valuable in them.

To do this we must explore some other configuration of autonomy that is compatible both with artistic languages and, inseparably, with the forms of living and organizational modes of our lives. This would bring us closer to the idea of Georg Lukács, who refused to think of artistic autonomy as a sort of fortified isolation, as a dimension unrelated to the social life of the work of art. Thus he affirmed that “the more organic the immanent aesthetic consumption of the work of art, the more able it will be to fulfill the social mission that gave it life.”⁶

We will uphold that what is present in this “aesthetic consummation” of the artwork and that also informs about its social deployment, is what we will call “ways of doing (things)”⁷ or “modes of relation,” which are made manifest in every artistic and social intervention.

This is by no means anything new: in the theoretical texts I wrote together with my colleagues in La Fiambrera in the late 1990s, for which we leaned on masters such as John Berger and Michel de Certeau, we were already saying that what we did could not be understood purely as a work of art, but neither was anything gained by considering it a simple act of activism. We liked to think that what was significant about what we were doing was *a certain way of doing what we had to do*, which we were already calling a “mode of relation.”

We undoubtedly wished to emphasize that what was important was not just what we were doing, which clearly had its influence, but above all *how* we did it, the “mode” from which we viewed the world and the trouble we got into. It seemed to us that this specific “mode of relation” with which we worked was what distinguished us and allowed us to adapt to others, that it was the key to our aesthetic and political efficiency, and was, of course, what we could contribute to our community.

And it was not simply the idea that a task could be addressed in one way or another: often it was precisely the mode of relation that *created* the task, or that allowed us to see it; and not only the task but also the means for carrying it out, and even the values out of which the task becomes necessary and possibly well-resolved.⁸

Obviously, all of this presented us with issues of a clear ontological nature. Would we argue that it was our modes of relation that *created* the world? Or would we, on the contrary, argue that the world was completely impervious to the modes of relation we were able to deploy? The old-fashioned idealists and the shabbiest materialism had agreed to lose their teeth over these stumbling blocks... but we were rather fond of our intellectual dentition.

So we would need specific categories in order to understand how each mode of relation gave rise to a different distribution of entities and contribute to “change it.” For us it was clear that there existing—what is called existing—only one world, but that it was not *the same* when a group of unemployed people, who had previously only been a series of government statistics, got organized, took to the streets, and, in the process, took hold of their own lives. These were the modes of relation that interested us, and it seemed that the way artistic practices were carried out, even the most classical of them, could help us understand this.

6. Georg Lukács, *Estética*, vol. 1: *La peculiaridad de lo estético*, trans. Manuel Sacristán (Barcelona: Grijalbo, 1967), p. 369. (No English translation available).—Ed.

7. The term *hacer* or *haceres*, “way/ways of doing (things),” which has taken on a currency in this discourse, was coined by Jordi Claramonte, Jesús Carrillo, and Paloma Blanco in their book *Modos de hacer. Arte crítico, esfera pública y acción directa* (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 2001).—Ed.

8. Classical aesthetics understands this well: it is no coincidence that the oldest name we have for ways of doing is poetics, which means nothing less than “making.” In the book *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt carried out one of the most finest studies about the nuances of “making.” Poiein, one of these, is a clearly performative form of doing or making, which builds its own task and the means it needs. All of this might help us to get rid of some of the more common misapprehensions in our perception of the aesthetic. To begin with, poetics, like modes of relation, could never be resolved in the clumsy terms of subject and object. We can’t say that subject S arrives and manipulates object O as he or she pleases; quite often subject and object seem to coproduce one another, as light-footed Gilles Deleuze astutely observed when he spoke of the “man-horse-stirrup constellation.” Each needs the other in order to exist and to become what they can be.

In order to do this we needed a clear comprehension of the inner workings of what Lukács called “homogeneous media”—the units with which it would be possible to fully conceive of a mode of relation, and through it to construct autonomy⁹ and give our lives a little dignity.

We then asked ourselves what exactly were modes of relation comprised of. What was in their makeup that could make them contagious, that would make them appropriable and adaptable to the most widely diverse circumstances, so that even poetics developed hundreds of years ago or created in utter isolation could resonate with us and bear fruit in our own work.

Many of the same questions must have been considered by Assemble, the group of architecture students who were awarded the 2015 Turner Prize, and whose work is based more on a manner of proceeding, a way of understanding collaboration, and the social and political articulation of what they do: “We’re not heroic characters who turn up and fix everything. We arrive somewhere and talk to people. We’re facilitators. It’s about working together and finding gaps. And if there are enough people working in the margins, we might find that things start to change.”¹⁰

The issue then is to investigate the conditions of a “modal autonomy,” an autonomy of ways of doing or modes of relation, given the objective of arriving at the composition—classically well-proportioned—somewhere between formal elaboration, political efficacy, and fucking fun.

All of my conceptual work of recent years has sought to clarify the manner by which these modes of relation are *produced*, these language games that permit different combinations and levels of experimentation, coherence, and effectiveness. I would like to use these terms to try to evoke the specificity of the aesthetic, the artistic, and the cismundane, which according to Lukács are the categories we should use to measure any aesthetic thought worthy of this name.

This is important if we do not want to keep falling into the traps that any misapprehension on the issue will cause, as occurred with the aforementioned Turner Prize recipients when, with the best of intentions, they stated that “buildings are not icons or actions, but rather spaces people use.”¹¹ Social

or political commitment need not involve an unjustifiable impoverishment of the dimensions of our work. On the contrary, we are clearly committed to constructing and defending complexity and difference. In fact, buildings develop as an implementation of modes of relation in which there inevitably intervenes the effective, cismundane use to which they are put—naturally, and one must defend this—but we are dealing with modes of relation in which ultimately there also intervenes, inevitably and in different proportions, the iconic and the performative, the symbolic and the experimental. Finding the correct proportion between these different modes is vitally important, and it is what furnishes us with a mode of relation that is both powerful and beautiful.

Ultimately, each mode of relation will reveal a specific form of attention, a form of “curiosity,” understood in its original etymological sense, whereby the “curious” is he or she who “cures” him or herself of things, in other words, attends to and cares for them.

Or perhaps each mode of relation is a composition of at least three different types of care: repertorial care, which deals with the values of coherence and formal stability; dispositional care, which seeks the vigor of experimentation and play; and care for the effective deployment of all this, of how it occurs in the world and to transform this very world by virtue of its appearance.

Perhaps this is one of the fundamental objectives of modal autonomy: to specify and preserve the composition of our curiosity, to support and sharpen it, thus conjuring up the risk of becoming the figure that Nicolai Hartmann associated with the modern man, “restless and precipitate, dulled and blasé, but nothing inspires, touches, lays hold on his innermost being.”¹²

The modal autonomy the collaborative arts struggles for is grounded in these modes of relation. Modal autonomy can only be thought of as a laboratory for the production and the extension of autonomy through art and political action to other areas of our lives, and vice versa.

This is, among other things of varying benefit, what a large group of investigators were doing in the Laboratorio del Procomún (Commons Lab), particularly in the research group on Aesthetics and Politics of the Commons. On this occasion it was necessary for us to go much further and to broaden our vision

9. What this autonomy would consist of, and the different versions of it that had surfaced in aesthetic thinking from the Enlightenment to the lamest postmodern versions, was something that preoccupied me to the point that I dedicated a PhD thesis and later book, *La República de las Fines*, to the subject.

10. Guimón, “Arquitectura no apta.”

11. Ibid.

12. Nicolai Hartmann, *Ethics*, vol. 1: *Moral Phenomena*, trans. Stanton Coit (London: G. Allen & Unwin Limited, 1932), pp. 44–45.

beyond the activism we had been doing. We needed to put ourselves in the shoes of people who do flamenco or participatory urbanism¹³... and to be able to embrace ancient practices, such as Chinese wushu, and others that were only taking form, such as *parkour*.

We knew that some of these modes of relation, the most ancient or those linked to tradition, contained a great deal of what Lev Vygotsky called “crystallized imagination.”¹⁴ These were practices that, though by no means static, were presented as well-developed poetics with a relatively stable repertoire of forms, a repertoire that accepted those nuances of experience, those areas of sensibility that the poetics in question could embrace and assimilate.

On the other hand, the aesthetic commons is incomprehensible without other poetics that, perhaps because of their relative newness, placed more emphasis on what Vygotsky would have called “fluid intelligence,” which depended, to a large extent, on the variations and explorations that their users make in accordance to their ingenuity, or to the talent and disposition of those they rely on.

Thus, a great diversity of modes of relation would seem to be distributed according to the affinity shown toward what we will call either the *repertorial* pole or the *dispositional* pole. Undoubtedly, no mode of relation would lean entirely toward one pole or the other, but rather any poetics or any mode of relation could be understood as a specific though variable proportion, an alloy of crystallized and fluid intelligence,¹⁵ a mixture in which there might predominate either the maintenance of a relatively established repertoire or the dispositional variations that are still in the process of creation.

And yet, no mode of relation, no equilibrium between repertoire and dispositions takes place in a vacuum, in isolation from thousands of other equilibriums being forged at the same time. Moreover, whatever form the equilibriums ultimately assumed, if in fact viable, was something that exceeded the limited frame of each poetics: the craftsmen of the Arts and Crafts movement of the late nineteenth century, or the peasants of Chiapas in the late twentieth century, not only depended on their own particular modal equilibrium, but

were rather grafted onto, inserted into, an incessant struggle with a *complex landscape* that preceded them and situated them, a landscape that they could also change but with which they obviously needed to reckon. Every mode of relation thus appears as the articulation of a repertoire with certain dispositions in a landscape.

So, without too much struggle, we found ourselves equipped with three modal categories:¹⁶ the repertorial, the dispositional, and the landscape, which not only explained the contexture of the modes of relation that we were investigating but also permitted us to take a critical approach to them.

We could evaluate the comprehensiveness or expediency of repertoires, the vibrancy or variety of the dispositions, and the level of hostility or complicity the given mode of relation might encounter in the landscape. We could compare different modes of relation, explore their strengths and weaknesses, rigidities or instabilities, their potential alliances with others...

I think that all of this opens up a fascinating field of study in which the aesthetic is interwoven with the social and political, carefully respecting the specificity of each, but revealing exactly the commonalities in their makeup.

There is still much left to explore in the field of modal aesthetics,¹⁷ but it is obvious that the concept of modal autonomy can be as vitally important for aesthetics as the principle of autopoiesis was for contemporary epistemology, in showing us that from sand dunes to social systems, the key is learning to differentiate the forms of self-organization.

13. Or both, like Curro Aix and Santiago Barber, my colleagues from La Fiambrera in Seville.

14. Lev Semenovich Vygotsky, “Imagination and Creativity in Childhood,” trans. M. E. Sharpe, *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology* 42, no. 1 (January–February 2004), pp. 6–16.

15. As occurs in a metal alloy such as bronze, a mixture of copper and tin, the resulting modes of relation show new mechanical properties (hardness, malleability, resistance, etc.) while retaining the physical and chemical properties of the constituent parts.

16. We could call these “modal categories” insofar as they allow us to apprehend something in a certain mode. For example, we could think of Howard Gardner’s multiple intelligences in a repertorial mode, because they form an internally patterned set, or in a dispositional mode, because we can examine the details of how a single one of them reveals itself without relating it to the others. Repertorial and dispositional modes do not refer to different objects, they refer to the same objects in a different way; unlike what often happens with paired categories of content (organic/inorganic), modal categories do not have to be exclusive.

17. Here, I must refer to what I have been publishing online (<http://esteticamodal.hypotheses.org>), and particularly to the forthcoming edition of the first section of *Estética modal* (Model Aesthetics).

An interview with Rogelio López Cuenca

by Ana García Alarcón

Rogelio López Cuenca (b. 1959, Nerja, Malaga), who studied philosophy and literature, uses language as the core element in his projects. In the 1980s, he began his work as an artist, both individually and collectively as a member of the now defunct group Agustín Parejo School, where he developed initiatives in the visual arts for implementation in social and political contexts. Appropriation is a constant in López Cuenca's work, taking elements from our imaginary and both questioning and defending the use of such resources as a creative material. He thus challenges issues related to copyrights, encouraging the free and open sharing of our cultural resources.

—www.lopezcuenca.com

As a member of the former Agustín Parejo School collective, which was active between 1982 and 1994, you worked in collaboration. What led you to abandon collaborative work after APS dissolved?

The APS experience was very vital, very organic. The group was never created nor did it ever dissolve; it was just a handful of people who worked together for a while and did different things. As the group emerged out of a specific set of circumstances and a specific desire, when those circumstances disappeared and the desire waned the activity gradually slowed down and eventually stopped altogether. APS is the name that a group of people gave to the things they were doing, and to the life we were sharing at that time. To paraphrase Guy Debord, APS was a group of people who for a certain period of time “happened to be there.” We began when we were students, but little by little most of the others found jobs of one kind or another, and ultimately I was the only one who became a professional artist. The truth is that I didn't come across any collaborative opportunities or people motivated by a spirit of collaboration until early 2000, when a series of workshops on public art and urban interventions started to bring together, temporarily, several groups that gave new impulse to collaborative forms of work that since then have become increasingly common.

You have realized projects with other creators, including *The Art of Seduction*, in which you and Daniel García Andújar brought together your archives.

And also with Antoni Muntadas and Eric Baudelaire, and these experiences have always been excellent. I wound up moving the work in one direction or another, depending on the circumstances. Either way, even work that is typically seen as individual, or more solitary, inevitably seems collective to me, inasmuch as we are working with languages that, by their very definition, have a social and collective character. One invariably uses tools that one did not invent, nor how they are used—at least not in the basic form. There is an infinite number of voices and viewpoints with which one is always

in dialogue or discussion, as much as with reality and contemporary debates as with aspects of the culture of the present and the somewhat recent or more distant past.

You have developed a number of projects with Elo Vega. Do you view your work with her as somehow following a thread connected to collaborative artistic practice?

Yes, with Elo there is the same naturalness that I mentioned with regard to APS, a permanent and fluid exchange. And with her as well, dialogue, criticism, or support often results in collaborative work, shared authorship.

I think we could pinpoint certain extremes of this question and the earlier ones in that: (a) one is living and doing things; (b) this living and doing invariably has a shared, collective character; (c) some of those things can come to be considered artworks or artistic work; (d) this condition is also assigned collectively or socially: it is granted or denied by the public, by users, institutions, the channels in which it circulates, the codes it employs, and so on; and (e) authorship is a cultural convention rooted in the idea of modern individualism. This last is very important for art history, which has constructed an entire mythology based on the achievements of great artists and masterpieces, and the market, which demands the identification of the uniqueness of a creator with a unique artwork, endowing it with exceptional value. All of this often makes it difficult to include information about the productive process, as both academia and the market consider it unnecessarily bothersome, a source of noise and something that devaluates the price of an artwork.

What do you think participatory or collaborative works can contribute to the social fabric?

Getting past art as consumption, entertainment, and spectacle. Combining it with other scientific disciplines and with social activism is what can grant to artistic practice an active role in rebuilding society in the face of the market's monolithic power over every facet of life. I

believe that the larger and more diverse the number of agents involved in an artistic or cultural project, the more likely it is to have consequences in this sense. But I should also point out that the most harmful and dangerous element is always fashion, the adoption of approaches that are only superficially collaborative methods of working, in other words, the aesthetization of participation.



Rogelio López Cuenca and Elo Vega, *Saharawhy*, installation, public intervention and website, 2012

An interview with Alexander Ríos

by hablarenarte

The work of Alexander Ríos (b. 1984, Bogota, Colombia) explores other forms of encounters and collective experiences that respond to diverse relationships between art, everyday life, and capitalism, and that use media such as performance art, writing, and installation. Through simple, commonplace actions, Ríos seeks to create a dialogue between art and daily life. During his project *Nómada* (Nomad), for three years he lived in different homes in various countries throughout the Mediterranean, exchanging his work as an artist for room and board.

—www.alexanderrios.wordpress.com
 —www.proyectonomada.wordpress.com

One of the most important aspects of your work is the bond between everyday, socially active life and artistic work. For you, is this the social role to be played by art, creating spaces of time and encounter?

Yes, I believe that art consists precisely in inventing and developing other ways of doing things, of encountering and communicating with each other, especially within today's system, which persists in standardizing and commodifying everything we do. This is why it is interesting that art as a creative force is trickling out into all places and situations on a daily basis: a constant questioning of what we know, a realization of possibilities.

It was need and recursiveness that made me combine artistic practice with everyday life. I organized my first exhibition about ten years ago in my home in Bogota, while my parents were away on a trip. It wasn't a conscious decision, it was simply the only place available to me. It was the same with *Nómada*. I had no way to pay my rent, so I came up with the idea of moving from house to house. At the beginning, I wasn't very conscious of what I was proposing, but I later began to realize the potential in working as an artist out of other people's homes, within people's everyday lives, outside of the traditional places for creating art. So, throughout those three years, I experienced firsthand the importance of helping each other, loving each other, and encountering each other. And this is what I want to try to do through my work, hoping that this makes a real contribution to people's lives, that it gives them something in a more direct manner. I like it when the word art becomes more difficult to define, when it becomes intertwined with our everyday actions.

Your projects could not be realized without the collaboration of other agents. Notwithstanding, would you define your work as a form of collaborative artistic practice?

Absolutely. *Nómada* became possible thanks to the cooperation of the people who agreed to host me in their homes. Let's just say I was the one who came

up with the project and put it into action, but it only worked and came to life because of other people's participation.

My artistic work over the last year has resulted in collaborative projects, although at the beginning the proposals seemed to be headed in another direction. I was invited to exhibit *Nómada* at the Sala de Arte Joven in Madrid last June. But how do you exhibit an experience without killing it? That is how *Lo posible* (The Possible, loposible.wordpress.com) came into being, as a point of encounter, based on the relationship between art, everyday life, and capitalism, in which many people participated in an active way. Thus, the exhibition had to transform itself into a collaborative project so that it could describe another. Months later, I began work on a project for the Museo Reina Sofía's department of education, designing a workshop for young people. I thought it would be important to try to have a direct and, hopefully, permanent impact on their daily lives, so I proposed taking a trip to visit other art spaces and events, in dialogue with the museum, relying on the help and collaboration of more artists and cultural managers. In both of these cases, my role as an "artist" had been that of managing and organizing what was needed so that others could act, open themselves up, and get to know each other, discovering in this collaboration the very meaning of the projects.

Your project *Nómada* consisted in fleeing from a dependence on the art system and seeking protection and your livelihood in local networks and friendship. After this experience, would you say you have achieved greater autonomy?

In late 2012, I tried for a year to live off of art. I applied for several candidacies, while at the same time I began other processes that depended on me and put me in direct contact with people. I published the book *101 soluciones para salir de la crisis* (101 Ways to Get Out of the Crisis), I exchanged messages for change on the Metro to pay for my tickets, and I began to live life as a nomad. It was wonderful not to need someone to validate my work. I just offered something to people, and they decided whether they wanted a copy of the book, or a message, or to offer me lodging.

At the same time, living as a nomad I became dependent upon the people who took me in, and I had to adapt to their schedules, customs, and spaces, which was positive, because I had to develop my adaptability and repress

my ego, but also, even though I had proposed an exchange, at times I was a burden on people. Because I had no home, I was constantly forced to ask for help and be dependent on others. On the other hand, I wasn't economically independent either. I spent little, but that small amount my family sent to me.

That was an important part of the process, because I received a great deal from people. And only just now, because I have managed to realize my projects and receive so much support, am I starting to live on the other side. With a bit of money from the projects that have emerged I was able to rent an apartment in Madrid, and from that economic and spatial autonomy I will try to give as soon as I can.

At what point do you believe an artist can reach the highest degree of autonomy? Does being autonomous mean being conscious of your multiple interdependencies and being at ease with them?

Perhaps the time will come when we no longer depend on the idea of autonomy to create. That is to say, from the place we are at right now, based on our current situation, we can create; something like "do it yourself using what you've got and what you are." I mean that we will always depend on something or someone, so it remains to be seen how we will deal with this and take advantage of it. Hopefully it is possible not to depend on mechanisms and structures that do not share our ideology—with how complicated that is—but for the time being we have to try, taking advantage of that very condition of impossibility or contradiction in order to create.

On the other hand, I believe it is beneficial as artists to activate other more direct and more horizontal networks of interdependence with people, without necessarily needing the mediation of art institutions and without our artistic practice depending upon the approval of curators, commissioners, and juries.



Alexander Ríos, *Nómada* con *Peppe Giordano, Andrea Giordano, Enrico Giordano y Marilena Migliorisi*
(Nomad with Peppe Giordano, Andrea Giordano, Enrico Giordano and Marilena Migliorisi), Ragusa, 2014



Alexander Ríos, *Lo Posible* (The Possible), Sala de Arte Joven, Madrid, 2015

Jordi Claramonte is a philosopher and electrician. He would like to be remembered as someone who does things carefully.

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.

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Agents

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

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