SISTEMA OPERATIVO. COLECCIONES
Daniel G. Andújar
26 October — 20 January 2019
Sistema Operativo. Colecciones (Operating System. Collections), carried out in cooperation between the Centro del Carmen in Valencia, the Virreina Centre of the Image in Barcelona and the Museo Reina Sofía in Madrid, is the most exhaustive review of the career of Daniel García Andújar (Almoradí, 1966) to date.

The exhibition brings together fifty-three projects and covers the period from 1989 to 2018. It is structured around three areas and a prologue, El canon protegido – Los desastres de la guerra. Caballo de Troya (The Protected Canon – The Disasters of War. The Trojan Horse), an ephemeral intervention that took place this year in May in the Centro del Carmen. This performance followed in the wake of Burning the Canon (2017)—an action carried out at Documenta 14 in Kassel / Athens—and investigated the evacuation to Valencia of the Prado Museum in the autumn of 1936, as well as Spanish republican history, fallas culture and its imaginaries.

The first section of Sistema Operativo. Colecciones focuses on a documentary and chronological recapitulation of e-valencia.org, a collective and citizen-based platform, which existed before the emergence of social networks, although it shared certain convergent aspects with them, especially in its horizontal distribution of information, and operated as a hub of resistance against dominant policies in the Valencian Community between 1995 and 2015 which spectacularized, trivialized and commodified culture.

Pioneer in the political use of anonymity and the deployment of a kind of digital assembly, e-valencia.org anticipated systems of organizing from below, forms of divergence which brought to the field of the internet certain methodologies which later developed from activist agency. In another sense, e-valencia.org can be considered a critical observatory and an archive of news and testimonies about the friction between policies designed at the expense of the citizens and their outbursts, a seismograph that measures the ideological engineering of power, with its corruptions, oligarchies and opacities, as well as the demand for transparency and community participation.

e-valencia.org catalyzed numerous public sensitivities and different social, urban, cultural etc... conflicts, by means of a system of apparently great simplicity: a web page with articles taken from the media, together with authored ones, which were commented upon by the users. The collective administration of this site, which had as its two main working platforms the associations Ex-Amics de l’IVAM and Ciutadans per una Cultura Democràtica i Participativa, together with anonymous contributions which refuted, expanded or pointed out topics uncommented upon or directly hidden by media reports, made of this initiative a potential model of counter-information that extended
to other contexts, for example e-barcelona.org, e-sevilla.org, e-norte.org, e-stuttgart.org and e-madrid.org, amongst others. However, it was in the Valencian context where the page found its greatest resonance and most poignant use, perhaps due to the polarities created by the management of culture during the aforementioned period, and to the democratic deterioration that this caused.

It must be said that e-valencia.org was a controversial tool, especially because of how anonymous opinions were considered at that time, but also because of certain scatological information and nominal excesses implicit in any anti-establishment and dissident process. This lack of diplomacy, sometimes close to outburst and derision, is nowadays seen from other positions, manifesting itself as a reflection of social untimeliness and of the processes of undermining authority and expressing opinions.

In addition to the documentary compilation of various public actions of e-valencia.org—gadgets, brochures, videos, publications and a complete chronology—a new work has been produced in the form of a memorandum or testimonial book about the censorship this website suffered in 2003.

The second area, also specifically conceived for the Centro del Carmen, dialogues with the interior architecture of the exhibition space, with its monumental scale and its historical gallery aspect. Here is presented the work Master Pieces. Hack the Museum – El museo del pueblo (Master Pieces. Hack the Museum – The People’s Museum, 2017-2018), a kind of exhibition within the exhibition or museum inside the museum. This is the recreation of a series of «masterpieces» whose originals are part of the most outstanding museum collections in the world. They are “pieces,” in the most commercial sense of the term, canvases made by authors who occupy a heroic place in the dominant narratives of the history of art. However, despite their media over-exposure, together these paintings make up a vast panopticon on how popular emotional ideologies took shape, and how what we could call “a history of the feelings of the people” was configured over the last five hundred years, a history which finds an aesthetic channel through which to express itself in religious and pietistic art, in certain bourgeois pictorial manifestations, in bucolic fantasies or the more politically radical works of the avant-garde, as well as in the characteristic moralizing scenes of Protestantism.

If, as the filmmaker and writer Alexander Kluge points out, the opera is a portrait of the existential yearnings of the European bourgeoisie, this other popular museum, composed of reproductions of great paintings freely accessible on the internet, not only updates the Benjaminian dictum about technical reproduction and the loss of the aura, but, above all, hacks—hence the title of the work—the very foundation of the museum as a unique and exclusive repository of aesthetic memory, as well as the sacramental notion of authorship and the transformation of this into financial merchandise. Turned into a gallery of illustrious paintings captured on the net and on a life-size scale, the hall of the Centro del Carmen becomes another new corridor identical to those found in the most famous museums, the central hall of the Prado, any of the Louvre galleries, the rooms of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the National Gallery or the Hermitage. Places for the crowds and for tourist epiphanies, spaces where the audio guide’s narrative surpasses the discourse of the specialist or the curator.
Estamos vigilando – Ocup.do (We are Watching – Occupy d), 1992
Donostia - San Sebastián
Foto: Daniel García Andújar
Technologies To The People Photo Collection, 1997
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid
Photo: Joaquín Cortes / Román Lores
Líderes (Leaders), 2014
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid
Photo: Joaquín Cortes / Román Lores
Los desastres de la guerra (The Disasters of War), 2017. Documenta 14
Fundació Suñol, Barcelona
Photo: Éric Pàmies
The antagonisms, already outmoded, between high and low culture, between masterpiece and souvenir, are updated in Master Pieces. Hack the Museum – El museo del pueblo, placing at the centre of the debate patrimonial reappropriation, the production, use and access to knowledge, as well as the liturgies of the art and museum system as custodian of memory or as a place for symbolic and economic laundering of the history of art, all of which is under the wing of a chronology of the aesthetic emotion that links Titian with Malévich, Bosch with Van Gogh.

The third area unfolds between the Renaissance cloister of the Centro del Carmen and the city streets, between the knowledge integrated in the museum and the learning that expands outwards to its environs. Thus, the Language Property™ installation (1997-2018) takes up emblematic interventions that artists such as Muntadas or Lothar Baumgarten carried out in this same architectural space during the nineties. On the other hand, Democraticemos la democracia (Let’s Democratise Democracy), an action that Daniel García Andújar has been carrying out since 2011 in diverse contexts and formats—as an aerial banner on a flight between Murcia and Alicante on International Workers’ Day and in Barcelona during the day of reflection prior to the Autonomous and Municipal Elections in Catalonia, on May 21, 2011, in full occupation of Plaza Catalunya by the 15M movement; or as a set of photographs of people carrying this slogan before political monuments scattered all over the world—appears once more as an anonymous exhortation on one of the buses of urban route Line 5 in Valencia. Language Property™ and Democraticemos la democracia share in the same use of the slogan, although in two opposite directions: as a socio-linguistic etiquette and as a proclamation that breaks into the citizen’s landscape.

Both cases operate, so to speak, within a cross between semantics, that of the museum and that of the street, that of the dissuasive language of corporations and that of activist communication.

In addition to this general structure, and now following the itinerary of Sistema Operativo. Colecciones, the exhibition begins with a kind of “portico of glory” which receives the visitor. This is the Líderes (Leaders) installation (2014), where a vast collection of portraits of 20th and 21st century political personalities appears, filtered through a screen of parody and visual caricature. This cosmology of political iconoclasm, which paradoxically uses resources characteristic in advertising, leads into the area dedicated to e-valencia.org and to a set of works that contextualize the latter with other projects about real estate speculation. Here we find works which range from CACSA (2005), a video that travels through the City of Arts and Sciences of Valencia like a promotional video or an experiment in surveillance similar to straight cinema, to La cultura del ladrillo (The Culture of Bricks, 2004), about the system of institutionalized political corruption under cover of the territory; from Objetos de deseo (Objects of Desire, 2010), about the “kleptomaniac oligarchy”—in the artist’s own words—that deployed its mechanisms in cities such as Barcelona, Valencia and Palma de Mallorca, to Diligencias previas (Preliminary Measures, 2017) and Se vende (For Sale, 1993), this last piece, a premonitory work of García Andújar’s concerns about the embezzlement of territory and the commercialization of public space.

At the entrance to the atrium lies the anti-falla created in collaboration with the fallero artist Manolo Martín, which was presented as part of the performance El canon protegido – Los desastres de la guerra. Caballo de
Troya which, as we have discussed, would anticipate the current exhibition. Next to it, occupying one of the side rooms, is the project Los desastres de la guerra (The Disasters of War, 2017), with which García Andújar participated in Documenta 14 in Kassel / Athens. This work goes into depth on the links between warlike iconography, canons of representation of the body, and identity and patrimonial memory. The famous aphorism of Walter Benjamin—“every document of culture is a document of barbarism”—resonates in the project in a notorious way, although perhaps a new application should be added, to do with the canonization of beauty, which is, at the same time, a normative certificate and an index of persecutions against that which resists standardization.

The body is a recurrent theme in the trajectory of Daniel García Andújar. In fact, the work conceived for Documenta 14 comes to summarize some previous proposals that are shown with the aim of creating a certain thematic thread. Body Research Machine® (1997), a project of Technologies To The People®—the fictitious corporation under whose name the artist worked between 1996 and 2011—, already focused on the use of the human body as the “martyr of capitalism”, questioning the appropriations of our DNA by leisure and consumer companies. This work, which heralds a series of pieces developed by TTTP and included in this exhibition, together with three emblematic collections—Photo Collection (1997), Net-Art Collection (1997-1999) and Video Collection (1998)—, is linked to Hackers (2001), another proposal on the “incarnation of evil”, that is, materialising danger in a visible and prosecutable body. This project brought a “human face” to the viral codes and to the interviews carried out with the most dangerous hackers of the moment, whose veiled physiognomy deflated the threat that these individuals personified.

The following section could be included under the heading of “Grammars of the Other” and brings together a series of works carried out during the nineties, in the midst of the emergence of anthropological and sociological analyses—sometimes tremendously paternalistic and colonial—on the discriminatory notion of “Otherness”. From Soy Gitano – Echastri 14 (I am a Gypsy – Echastri 14, 1992), a series of posters, murals and interventions in public space, up to Señores Africanos (African Lords, 1994), a performance and collection of second-hand clothes in collaboration with Emmaus ragpickers in Donostia; from the book dikipen (1995) to Se rumorea... Centro de refugiados del pueblo gitano (It’s a Rumour... Gypsy Village Refuge Centre, 1999) and Roma Refugees Centre (1999), two proposals that parodied the architecture of integration, here we see the unresolved tensions between identity and recognition, between the exploitation of difference and coercive policies based on trivializing cultural hybridity.

In line with this idea of sociological control, a series of projects are shown based on surveillance and the commercialization of urban space. Thus, Las tablas (The Tables, 1989-1992) is a very early incursion based on the theme of the corporate logo as a sign of a new law, that of financial and advertising capitalism. Estamos vigilando / We Are Watching (1992) and Estamos vigilando – Ocup d (We are Watching – Occup d, 1994), with the Bajamar collective (Ricardo Basbaum, Igor Vamos, Dale Yeo, Elizabeth McLendon and Daniel García Andújar), on the beach of Donostia, as part of the Muntadas workshop at Arteleku, are proposals that question the vigilance of the security guard, that is, who watches over the one who watches. This theme is complemented by Arte e ideología (Art and Ideology, 1995), Elemento de utilización política (Element
of Political Use, 1995) and Krupp, Thyssen Krath Dortmnd (1996), three works that, as posters, adverts and postcards, pointed out a possible apparatus of agit-prop against the excesses of power.

A specific section on institutionalized violence and its liturgies, on the parodic hollowing out of its own semantics is made up by Armed Citizen (1998-2006), a series of models of guns sold online with which to “arm the citizenship”; the kit of uniforms characteristic of the riot forces (2012), as well as Naturaleza vigilada (Nature Watched, 2015), a video where the artist dresses or strips himself of a bulky police uniform in an incompatibly bucolic space, the old Los Barruecos wool laundry, in the Vostell Malpartida Museum (Cáceres).

Opposite this area, there is a selection of works belonging to Postcapital Archive (1989-2001), a project developed by García Andújar between 2006 and 2010 that takes the emblematic dates of the Fall of the Berlin Wall and the attack on the Twin Towers of New York to establish a kind of short era of exacerbation, a kind of delirium of capitalism in the very savage process of capital flow. Here the visitor can see Postcapital Timeline (2008), an endless succession of images that form a scathing trailer about this period and its ideological, social, media imaginaries, etc.; Old Media Noise (2006), a soundtrack compilation of neoliberal cacophony, made up of fragments of propaganda, political broadcasts, financial and commercial news, and images of the masculine entertainment industry based on sex and sport; El Capitalismo / El Comunismo (Capitalism / Communism, 1990), a work that rescues two manuals of elementary ideological pedagogy, forgotten in the cellars of our memory, whose mould invites us to reconsider what we have learned or forgotten about the politicization of the world; and, finally, Honour (2006), a piece that recreates the aesthetics of the cinema or black box—as opposed to the white cube—, where the “gamification” of war is shown, that is, its transformation into video-game aesthetics and, at the same time, its bloody and real horizons.

In dialogue with this proposal, also inside a black cube, we find The Butterfly Funnel, Camino Real (National Historic Trail) (2016), which was part of the project presented during the artist’s residency at Artpace, in the city of San Antonio, Texas. This audiovisual piece reflects on the migratory and commercial policies in the border area linked to the city, contrasting them with flows which are unrelated to history, personified by the monarch butterfly, which, year after year, migrates from southeast Canada and the Rocky Mountains to the state of Michoacán, and from the Great Lakes to the Yucatan peninsula, travelling more than four thousand kilometres in little more than six weeks painting a funnel shape in the sky that narrows until it reaches the central lands of Mexico.

Finally, closing Sistema Operativo. Colecciones in the manner of a frontispiece one of the most important projects of García Andújar can be seen, the theatrical and monumental logo of Technologies To The People®. Under this are presented various significant projects of this philanthropic and digital corporation, amongst which should be pointed out the Street Access Machine® – iSAM™ (1996), a machine which donates money to those ignored by the banking system, giving them access to the money supply in the midst of the plastification and monetary digitalization of the nineties, as the global use of credit cards caused exclusions in large areas of the world population.
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