"(…) To a foreign artist from the first world, where art production is often measured by its efficacy, our art is incomprehensible.
The fragility and fugacity of the art we do are unintelligible to them.
They have trouble in coming to terms with the fact that our work is destined to disappear.
If you are not efficient, you ought to be, at least, typical or exotic…
Or at least sell your dictatorship as if it were a souvenir! Do something efficient! "

Carlota Beltrame, artist organiser of Trama in Tucumán, at the confrontation of art workshop.

ORGANISED URGENCY

Trama is a program for the stimulation and production of artistic thought, created in Argentina in January 2000.[1]

The artists who conceived this program, want to provide a mutable and fluid public space as a platform for the horizontal exchange of knowledge to create collective artistic language and thinking. We want to render visible those mechanisms that articulate the production of sense in art within this precarious context, and to legitimise artistic thinking within the social and political spheres.

We conceive *Trama* with the same uncertainty, mobility and flexibility with which one conceives a work of art in Argentina, a context in which no reference is stable: neither the exchange value, nor financial, political, legal, nor cultural institutions, and where changes in process are extremely fast, uncertain and profoundly wished for, specially since December 2001.

A year ago a series of historical events gave rise to specific sociological phenomena that defied with an appalling immediacy the conditions in which the artistic act appears, and the very role of art in a society in the process of remaking itself. In this crossroad, some of us artists are concerned with preserving our autonomy through self-management to do without the authority imposed by critics, theoreticians and institutions historically responsible for colonising the efforts we make to radicalise our practice.

The feeling of impunity and failure, in the face of a historical crisis like the one Argentina is going through may be overwhelming, but, oddly enough, many of us live through it as a genuine opportunity to change, a constituent moment, a true ground zero. A manner of social organisation is over, a new one starts, which we do not know what to call, but we do know that each one of us has a leading role in it.

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[1] The program organises research workshops, series of debates, and collaboration projects among artists in several cities in the country, with the same intensity. We share the outcome of the events organised by Trama in www.proyectotrama.org and in annual publications on paper.

In spite of the speeding up and of the apparent scattering of energy brought about by the breaking down of the social contract in Argentina, we have witnessed throughout the last twelve months the appearance of innumerable self-organised projects in every field, cooperative in character, organised within systems of direct democracy, with horizontal structures, curiously construed and articulated in a more genuine and lasting manner than when the democratic conditions provided by the State seemed "stable". New self-summoned initiatives that imagine, test and discuss new ways of collective organisation profoundly wished for have stemmed in every area and are now visible: picketers, *motoqueros*[2], neighbourhood assemblies, public psychodrama workshops, solidarity chains, workers cooperatives at expropriated factories, people who have been swindled, barter nodes, artists' initiatives.

We believe that if we may acquire any specific knowledge in artistic practice in Argentina 2002, it is this urgency know-how. A sort of permanently precipitated phenomenological reduction stimulates us and obliges us to take decisions at such speed and such flexibility of thought that only a critical state of survival brings about. In Trama we think that the work of art is the key to accessing this knowledge, and that the processes and questions this work brings with it become the specific tools to imagine desirable means of construction of collectivity.

As a strategy to radicalise these processes and questions we have put to use in our activities the confrontation of participants with references and thinking logic rooted in dissimilar contexts. Through workshops and collective projects we have explored the difficulty in "translating" the signs that construe the artwork, or the thinking displayed, when confronting each other. To make this confrontation effective we assured the presence of at least one "foreign" participant at each activity of Trama to cause this tension. These "foreign" visitors are not necessarily artists coming from other countries; in many cases they are simply artists from other cities in the country, or participants who put forward their points of view from other disciplines. Their role is to underline involuntarily with their questions, observations and projects the identity of the visiting context as an external constituent element, as a witness.[3]

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[2] Motorbike couriers which spontaneously organised themselves during the riots on December 19th and 20th 2001 in Buenos Aires, assisting victims of repression and distracting the advance of the mounted police who was beating and killing people.

[3] Philosopher Reinaldo Laddaga analysed the role of the "foreigner" in Trama during the series of debates: Redes, contextos, territorios (Networks, contexts and territories), organized at the Goethe Institute of Buenos Aires in November 2001.
(Laddaga, Reinaldo. Reparations, in Society imagined in contemporary art in Argentina, TRAMA, 2001, page 130.)

Of all the exchange projects put forward by Trama, the most conflicting one has been the one that took place between young artists, specifically between local artists from regions away from the art market system and artists from cities and countries from the "north". The first visible obstacle in these confrontations is the difficulty to beat the inertia established by what appear to be an ensemble of inevitable prejudices and fantasies on both sides.

Visiting artists tend to look for signs that confirm a pre-digested vision of the context, many times with the sincere intention of quickly acquiring references that allow them to shorten distances during the meeting; other times, because of their eagerness to go through the experience, looking for the efficacy of a fast food restaurant and the pregnancy of a thematic park; most of the times it is a vision that is the result of a confusion between both intentions.

Local artists tend to go through each instance of the confrontation without finding common ground for discussion with the visitors. Paradoxically, and as a result of this, they find, maybe for the first time, common grounds for discussion among themselves.

These first difficulties give rise to several questions: What is the value of exchange being used? What common language is possible? Which is the role of translation in visual language? And finally: Can we establish equivalents in what is different?