

## TOUCHING EACH OTHER MORE

I'm delivering this article at the wrong time. Completely outside the requested deadlines. This is not an apology. It is a declaration of intent. Deliberate.

I have written this article several times, but always late. The thing is, I've left the draft copy ready, waiting to be sent, so many times that when I've gone back and reread it, it no longer interested me. I didn't have the strength to take charge of words. This is what sometimes happens with the articles. That's why what you read is also what has been written and rewritten. That's why what follows ends and starts again on several occasions. I was about to send it when all this happened. This article is many articles before.

Writing, like art, like the body has its moment. Writing is not automatic, no matter how many good habits you adopt or how disciplined you are. Articles pop up, just like shapes, just like custards are baked, in the same way that the leaves on walnut trees break out in spring. We have grown used to living in a time where everything must adapt to market demands. As a result, we have converted our words, our hard work and effort into elements of production. We have found a way for human beings to adapt to this demand with fertilisers and heinous genomic transformations. We eat genetically modified food so that we can eat more quickly. We all know the difference between a home-made custard and a shop-bought one, between a tomato nurtured with love and one produced to be eaten as soon as possible.

These days have turned into an event of such magnitude that we are unable to quantify it. The impossible has happened. The body of knowledge that operated in the land of the symbolic and all things material has been put on pause, and a martial code set up in its place. We are enduring, to a greater or lesser degree (modulated by our status and privilege) an unprecedented violence with a military language that established itself in our lives just like that.

We have gone from living "in real time" to living in "the time of the real".

What is happening is that the world has come to a standstill. What has really stopped is the production system and as a result the economy based on material goods... because the small economy, the human economy has never been so acute and so full of perspective (just as our breathing has never been so in line with the Earth's). The lockdown has taken us to the land of our emotional attachments and loved ones.

We are shut up at home, having given up all our individual rights to the voice of national law, with barely a word of protest. In a tremendous exercise in docility (we are very docile in spite of everything), we have laid down everything that we had been suspecting on the table, in the hope of understanding again. It is difficult to think of any critical gesture from Foucaultian biopolitics in times of Leviathan. There is no alternative but to throw yourself into looking inwards. We watch how the lines of control are displaced to the individual, more segmented than ever, torn away from the social, we are left crouching and subdued,

in a silent surrender without resistance. Submitting to the master. Tied up tightly (I love you Saint). Almost all our theoretical tools have been shot to hell, almost all the bodies of understanding have been knocked down by the immensity of the events, and we have, if we hadn't already done so, collapsed. But we are able to hang in there because if we pay attention, we realise that we still have each other and, in particular, ourselves.

Now that we are confined to home, the true impermanence of everything for which we almost never had time is revealed. How distressing. Another time. It appears that the feminist economy, which says that we should place life before us (resuming conversations with Priscila, with Maite and with Zuhar), could indeed give us ground for this imposing situation in which we are apprehended. Nothing will be what it was and pretending it is will be a huge mistake. The compelling tale of the already failed global liberalism will want to tell us that everything will return to normality with that same old story and growth. We need to be more united than ever. If, during these weeks, we are learning to stay still and diminish...or, in any case to grow like plants (from the inside out, downwards, slowly and without moving from our position), we should incorporate it now in order to activate it later. Let us be what we are now but without lockdown. It will make us better.

That's why I've returned, in these days of taking it easy, of social distancing, of looking inwards, of courage, of cooking with care, to that article I was asked for where I had decided I should talk (such matters) about the time of art. Let this almost be a declaration. The virus is talking more about us than we are talking about it. I don't even want to mention it.

Some of us have been living with a virus all our lives. Close, very close. This is not our first pandemic, nor is it the first insignificant structure to isolate us, confine us and intimidate us. Nor is it the first time we have felt violated by an invisible shadow. Now what is happening is, quite simply, that it appears that all society has been affected by this minuscule enemy and feels intimidated. This wave of panic caught me with my lesson learnt. I feel, in this respect, that for the first time ever, I am playing at an advantage, because for some of us our skin has always been a battle field and touching a very political gesture.

The present time we are experiencing with such anxiety is a time for art. It is the time for art and for science. Two spaces which pass each other by and collide far more than it might seem. Do not confuse science with medicine, and do not confuse medicine with surgery. Because surgery is power while medicine also includes herbs and sorcery. These are samples of subjectivity (of gestures, of salves, of outcry and totems), the ones that showed us what this is and what scale it occupies. The numbers will be produced from statistics and how it is told will be up to future historians, but the scale of this time has to do with other things, and these are things which can neither be touched nor related. Politics has failed. We are currently facing a time exempt from account, immense and difficult to describe. It is a time for everything that cannot be named, a magical time. Without going many miles away, or so far back in time, the speeds of the technique and the virtues of the science and technology baccalaureate have been swept up by stories in which people teach what they are able to draw, cook, sing or write. It appeared that the subjects which had no purpose

are those which give a sense to living. A drum in the times of Instagram. Conspiracies in the solitude of homes.

Right now there is no capacity for speech, only practice. This has already happened with AIDS. When there were no technical tools or analytical capacity, there was experience and practice. Experiences so overwhelmed and so overwhelming that alone they became a situation. Nothing more was required, that's what you did and that was that. You plodded on while friends fell by the wayside or were arrested. No matter whether they were doctors or policemen. Precisely. Repetition of the game but forcibly. Gestures of meaning, immediate contrahegemonic response. It has taken us two decades to incorporate that praxis and those movements -I think of voguing or the dilemmas in this respect, dear Aimar, dear Jesús- in order to understand to what extent they fit in today's situation.

Now we face another big one, of immeasurable magnitude and instead of queers and transsexuals, we are all dying. We all infect each other. We are all carriers. We are all afraid. We are all cut off, far away, leaving to one side the times of the system, the times of the market to save other people's lives and our own. This is what we are doing: looking after ourselves. Trapped in domesticity and confronted by the mirrors of the four walls. Barely able to move and living in the here and now, which is, undoubtedly, the moment of all moments. An accurate urge. A territory without dancing and with minuscule body language, but no less significant. Negligible body language, but also possible. And also possible with respect to the dominant discourse, also possible in the frontality. Also possible in all that is shared.

We live in a time which some would like to put into brackets, a bubble, so that everything returns to how it was before. We are being subjected to many forms of these imperatives, viral challenges and false news which deepen the feel of unease and lack of perspective. We are asked to stay busy with nonsense. I refuse. It is not a full stop. It is a full stop and new paragraph. What is happening to us is a representational milestone of the collectivity which turns into an experiential space for all confined beings. The plaza is our living room, from this community feeling. It is not a stumbling block, it is a chasm.

We are becoming bored. This is an important matter. We are saturated with information. Clearly. For some, the reflection produced from our own strange look in this dystopian situation (the dystopian lies in the look) is unbearable, and for others it is inflective. I do not want to go back to how we were before, or be the same person, nor do I want any of what I did to be the same. We should not. I want to construct from another position. Flatter, calmer, closer, slower, with more moss. More at the speed at which I watch the ivy outside my window growing. Become more of forest.

This is why this article, which was many, today speaks of the need to defend the practice of art as the only thing able to right this wrong. Our only safe passage. This article speaks of the time of art which is "the time of the real". And "the real" is not only what can be produced in the land of the symbolic, but also the real has to do, to be fair to Deleuze and to return to this plant growth, with the rhizome. The real lies in the scope of the community,

of care, in our home and in the home of the stew. Slow-cooked custard.

Now that we have no productive machinery, or a horizon for it, now that so many gears of efficiency are slowing down, disappearing or just imploding... now that everything we were so sure about is on the edge of the chasm of uncertainty... for the first time in a long time, I want to write. I wish to write. And if I wish to do so, which seems to be gastric, it is because I am responsible for my food and that of my family. Eating less, and more consciously, returning to potatoes and simple meals from my grandmother's kitchen, because it is a time of war. Do a lot with a little. I think about poetry to take control over the goods that we cook, about how important it is to give them a place and again, how eating is love and how plants grow at a rate that we can barely see because we are going /were going too fast.

I am writing these lines over other lines written before, and I delete the first ones because I no longer need them. Now my skin is of use to me. Skin. Skin and not eyes have become the most human sense. Skin that makes us tremble and that bristles, these days it is taut because I want another skin to embrace, to cry and to feel, but I cannot because the State of Emergency crosses this bond and forbids it. We have been warned that we cannot touch each other and we have stopped doing so. A distance condom, the umpteenth abstinence. A terrible and imperative martial law which pulls us apart. I fear that the body has a memory, like clay, even if we want to resume where we left off, this collapse has been engraved on it.

Once again time alone. Alone or in unnecessary company or obliged to share spaces with undesirables. Or in the worst case, shut up with the hangman. Whatever sort of cage we have been put in, it remains a cage for all of us. The first time in our lifetime that an impact has affected everyone at the same time. A landmark in the memory that rapidly enters our bodies, a similar event for everyone. The eclipse then. A meteorite.

A time of art, released from the market and its impositions. A few days, barely a few weeks, for a practice overwhelmed inwards, out of place in place, out of position in one position and out of the frame, but inside the frame, inventing, suggesting and leaping into other frames. It is time to take a calm look upwards, at the ground, in the water, at the plants, at colleagues, at the memories of lovers and of friends. It is time to do much with the little we have. Time for waiting, a very Spanish time. Without talking, because there is nothing to say, but doing what is occurring to each one, through your hands, your breast, your eyes or your pores. Whether it is skin, or rags or blood, it hurts.

Let's see whether this time for art takes from us, cures us, does not heal, sends us along another better path or is just that, a nasty interval which has diverted us, and the path on the way back looks even worse.

I am left with the small lights these days in the midst of tension that cannot be described, in empty soulless streets. I have thought about God and about praying. What can you do. I think about Félix González Torres and those beautiful works of art made using candies.

I have also thought about the pieces of leather created by Pepe Espaliú and about some articles written by Terence i Moix.

I write a lot these days, because I have tidied my clothes, the lost keys, the photos of when I was small, I have thrown away useless items and cleaned some objects that I needed to see with a new shine. I spend time watching how the night jasmine I planted at the end of February is growing and how the camellias are flowering. I don't want urgent work. I never want to have to deliver things late. I don't want to feel this breath on my neck ever again.

When all this is over, which it will be, we will have a lot to remember from when we thought we were immortal, infallible and skilled. We should not forget those feelings because they were the illusion of a thoughtless world. We will be better, more useful and more generous if, from this time of art, we reach the conclusion that the ivy will grow over the rooftops when this is finally over.

I am also writing this text to remind whoever asked me that the art district is necessary, now more than ever, and that this district should weave together communities and networks, relations, just as a kitchen full of simple and humble ingredients for slow cooking. Because we do not need a battle, and the art market was a conflict. What we need from this district is for it to be a neighbourhood community, a courtyard full of lights and a communal garden of wild flowers, weeds and rare plants. The market must be at the service of the people.

That is why it is better that this article, which was many and is delivered late, comes now. We face new times and new times need new formulas. If Bilbao has an art district, it should be a district which incorporates this time which is our lot to live, and is, for many matters, a good thing. We have already had too many occurrences, too many events. District comes from Latin and means to draw apart. In any case, we need to touch each other more.

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eduardohurtado.com  
experienciamoderna.com

edurtado@gmail.com

647820207