

IGNACIO GÓMEZ DE LIAÑO

Forsaking Writing

MUSEO NACIONAL
CENTRO DE ARTE
REINA SOFIA





Poema de la destrucción (Poem of Destruction), Pamplona, 1972.
Participants: Pedro Almodóvar and Ignacio Gómez de Liaño



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Ignacio Gómez de Liaño: Life as a Poetic Text¹

Lola Hinojosa

Free art from works of art, allow art to be energy, action, liberation, participation, libertarian commune of sensoriality and imagination, an active outpost of a world of solidarity.²

If there is a word that can signify the work of Ignacio Gómez de Liaño, that word is “writing.” Since his early invitation to forsake—or even violently reject—a certain traditional version of the gesture of writing,³ Gómez de Liaño has “written” a long intellectual career. The seeds of the extensive literary and philosophical oeuvre that he has assembled over more than forty years are based on a relatively short period of work spanning from 1964

¹ This study stems from the donation of Ignacio Gómez de Liaño’s personal archive to the Museo Reina Sofía and spans from the mid-1960s to the late 1970s. The archive consists of a voluminous collection of artworks, unpublished documents of various kinds, and publications. It includes works by Spanish artists such as Elena Asins, Felipe Boso, Julián Gil, Julio Plaza, José María de Prada Poole, Manolo Quejido, Herminio Molero, Eusebio Sempere, José-Miguel Ullán, Enrique Uribe, and Gómez de Liaño himself, as well as international artists such as Alain Arias-Misson, Julien Blaine, Henri Chopin, Adriano Spatola, and Paul de Vree. The documentation section contains numerous letters, typewritten and handwritten texts, notes on lectures, and other materials relating to the fields of poetry, philosophy, and academia.

² Ignacio Gómez de Liaño, “ANTIPRO” (1970), *Perdura* (Madrid), no. 15 (1979); see pp. 67–68 in this volume.

³ Ignacio Gómez de Liaño, “Abandonner l’écriture,” *Revue OU – Cinquième Saison* (Sceaux), nos. 34–35 (February 1969); see pp. 65–66 in this volume.

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to 1972. Less than a decade dedicated to poetic experimentation from a singular, heterogeneous position that, as Gómez de Liaño himself acknowledges, “has been a living element, whose roots are from dense forests,”⁴ and which persists in his writings to this day. A brief period marked by the intensity of the time and the context, by the urgencies of a generation that had embarked on a desperate quest to break down the boundaries between art and life. A time also influenced by Liaño’s youth—he was just eighteen years old in 1964—and by the groundbreaking spirit of the international avant-garde, if it can be considered to encompass the Madrid scene of the 1960s and 1970s.

The figure of Ignacio Gómez de Liaño is both centric and eccentric, and multifaceted. He was a poet, historian, teacher, cooperative member, and an organizer of seminars and exhibitions. In short, he was a prominent part of a close network of Spanish and international artists, the study of which does not only give shape and meaning to the work of a particular author but also allows us to “go beyond”⁵ and attempt an operation that has so far proved difficult: to situate Spanish experimental poetry within the narratives of art history. Although it has never been completely absent from these narratives, it has remained an insular and hazy chapter.⁶ It is in this sense that the figure of Ignacio Gómez de Liaño seems to be a key case study allowing us to think of experimental poetry as an archipelago rather than an island.

An insatiable reader—as his early writings attest to—with a background in linguistics and philosophy, despite his youth Gómez de Liaño attained an unusual degree of erudition in

⁴ Ignacio Gómez de Liaño, interview with the author, May 2019.

⁵ Gómez de Liaño, “ANTIPRO.”

⁶ Juan Albarrán Diego and Rosa Benítez Andrés put forward a similar argument in their anthology *Ensayo / Error. Arte y escritura experimentales en España (1960–1980)*. Their aim, they say, is “to identify dynamics and debates that allow us to rethink the intersections between visual and written arts in Spanish experimentalism.” “Introducción: Arte y escritura experimentales en España (1960–1980): ensayos, diálogos y zonas de contacto para la redefinición de un contexto,” *Hispanic Issues On-Line* 21 (2018): 3.

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which a variety of intellectual interests converged. This erudition placed him in a unique position within Spanish experimentalism in the 1960s, which was generally not very permeable to foreign influences and indifferent to intellectualisms, in a sense somewhat like the early avant-gardes, with figures like Ernesto Giménez Caballero and Ramón Gómez de la Serna. As well as knowing Greek and Latin, Gómez de Liaño was influenced by the Frankfurt School, and especially by Theodor W. Adorno. His thorough study of other philosophers such as Max Bense, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Henri Lefebvre provided him with a thorough knowledge of Marxism, Hegel's idealism, and European structuralism. He also studied international experimental poets, especially the concretists and spatialists.⁷ Linguistics, in particular Noam Chomsky's theory of generative grammar, also influenced his poetic work.

Despite this theoretical voraciousness, Liaño played an active role in Madrid's busy social life, connecting with various student and bohemian scenes. A generation captured in his diaries,⁸ it featured an equal mix of beatniks, hippies, psychedelics, and occultists. Above all, there was a lively opposition to Franco that, in his closest circles—with few exceptions—was not linked to any kind of political activism, but rather to a pseudo-anarchic and unprejudiced spirit that sought to achieve greater degrees of freedom.⁹ A regular at Café Gijón in Madrid, Gómez de Liaño

⁷ His archive contains numerous handwritten notes on his talks on concrete and spatialist poets.

⁸ In 1972, Gómez de Liaño began writing diaries, a personal kind of writing that characterized his output from that date on. See Ignacio Gómez de Liaño, *En la red del tiempo 1972–1977. Diario personal* (Madrid: Siruela, 2013).

⁹ The development of underground art in late-Francoist Spain was anomalous with respect to neighboring countries. The dictatorial context meant it was closer to the situation in other countries such as the Southern Cone of Latin America and Eastern European countries, which also experienced censorship. The dematerialization of the artistic object, and the fact that they positioned themselves outside the market and outside traditional forms of production, circulation, and exhibition, allowed artists to engage in experimentation in countries under repressive regimes, to bypass official institutions and criticize their structures. This was the case

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maintained contact and friendship with several other writers in the circles of the so-called *novísimos* (“newest ones”). However, in aesthetic terms, he was exploring peripheries that were far removed from the poetic territory of these authors.¹⁰ Liaño’s most intimate circle has always consisted of visual artists, some of whom he has known since adolescence, such as Herminio Molero, the brothers Enrique and Manuel Quejido, Paco Salazar, and Fernando López-Vera, who were his fellow students at the Instituto Cardenal Cisneros high school in Madrid. They have been joined by many others over the years, creating a map that is too large to draw in its entirety in this brief cartography but can help us find our bearings and guide us through the contaminations and intersections of the heterogeneous Spanish experimental scene.

Internationalism and the Socialization of Poetry

Ignacio Gómez de Liaño’s first contact with experimental poetry took place in the fall of 1964 at the Juventudes Musicales (Musical Youth) in Madrid, where he joined the group *Problemática 63*.¹¹

of what historian Simón Marchán Fiz dubbed “new artistic behaviors” in 1970, subsequently renamed “conceptualisms” by recent historiography. These practices were studied at the time (Valeriano Bozal, Marchán Fiz, and so on) and, above all, in recent years. Political activism close to the Communist Party of Spain and its links to “ideological conceptualism” may explain this critical prominence. However, in the case of the experimental poetry that began immediately before, a series of circumstances influenced by Francoist developmentalism gave it some very interesting connotations that have perhaps not been analyzed from this perspective, some of which will be mentioned in this text.

¹⁰ Art critic José María Castellet compiled *Nueve novísimos poetas españoles* (Barcelona: Barral, 1970), an anthology featuring what he considered to be nine of the most innovative poets of the 1960s. The selected poets are presented in two sections, the more culturalist “Seniors”: Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, Antonio Martínez Sarrión, and José María Álvarez; and the “Coqueluche,” closer to pop culture and the counterculture: Félix de Azúa, Pere Gimferrer, Vicente Molina Foix, Guillermo Carnero, Ana María Moix, and Leopoldo María Panero.

¹¹ Fernando Millán and Enrique Uribe joined the group in 1964.

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The importance of the *Juventudes Musicales* movement in breaking the isolation of Franco's Spain, and the key role of contemporary music in the revitalization of Madrid's cultural scene, has been outlined by Javier Maderuelo,¹² but it is a subject that remains understudied. *Problemática 63* was set up with the intention of organizing an introductory program on contemporary art. It extended the framework of the study of music to include painting, film, theater, poetry, and science by means of "aulas" (classrooms),¹³ in which small groups could organize meetings, talks, film screenings, and recitals.

The "literary classroom" was directed by Julio Campal, a Uruguayan poet considered by historiography to have been a cornerstone in the introduction of poetic experimentation in Spain. His pedagogical work initially focused on the dissemination of the early avant-gardes, especially figures such as Stéphane Mallarmé, Guillaume Apollinaire, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Vicente Huidobro, and Tristan Tzara, although from 1965 he also focused on more recent experiences in poetry. Inspired by Campal's enthusiasm for regeneration, many other local agents collaborated with *Problemática 63*. One of these was the critic and poet Ángel Crespo, who introduced Brazilian artistic practices in Spain thanks to his friendship with João Cabral de Melo Neto, a fellow poet and secretary of the Brazilian Embassy in Madrid. Together with Pilar Gómez Bedate, Crespo coedited *Revista de Cultura Brasileira*, which featured Brazilian concrete

¹² Javier Maderuelo, *Escritura experimental en España, 1963–1983* (Heras: Ediciones La Bahía, 2014).

¹³ *Aulas* was also the name of the main publication of *Juventudes Musicales*, *Aulas: educación y cultura*. Iñaki Estella examined how a magazine funded by the Education and Culture Service of the Delegación Nacional de Organizaciones served as a tool for introducing avant-garde trends—through translations of Karlheinz Stockhausen, John Cage, and others—and for opening up to the international market, whose ideal target was a horde of university students dissatisfied with Franco's autarchy. See Iñaki Estella, "Problemática 63 y la revista *Aulas: educación y cultura*. Estrategias del experimentalismo tras el silencio," in *Ensayo / Error*, ed. Albarrán and Benéitez, 74–97.

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poetry and the work of the Noigandres group. As the written arts had suffered from the censorship of Franco's regime more than other fields, the arrival of Brazilian publications directly through diplomatic channels was a clever subterfuge. Meanwhile, the Basque poet Enrique Uribe had been in contact in France with spatialism, a movement theorized by the poets Pierre and Ilse Garnier,¹⁴ authors of the "Manifesto for a New Poetry Visual and Phonic."¹⁵ Uribe translated several fragments of this and other texts by the Garniers for the magazine *Aulas*. With Campal, he also organized the first exhibition of "concrete poetry" in Spain at the Galería Grises in Bilbao (1965).

Gómez de Liaño played a leading role in this second stage. With Campal and Fernando Millán, he organized the *Exposición internacional de poesía de vanguardia* (International Exhibition of Avant-Garde Poetry) at Galería Juana Mordó in Madrid (June 1966), and then at Galería Barandirarán in San Sebastián, which was directed by Campal. Surviving correspondence suggests that Liaño featured strongly in this show.¹⁶ One of the important aspects of these exhibitions was the inclusion of Spanish artists alongside the long list of foreigners,¹⁷ on equal terms and without

¹⁴ Ignacio Gómez de Liaño's archive includes letters to Pierre Garnier as well as translations and notes on his writings.

¹⁵ Pierre and Ilse Garnier, "Manifeste pour une poésie nouvelle, visuelle et phonique" (September 30, 1962), *Les Lettres* (Paris), no. 29 (January 28, 1963).

¹⁶ As he himself recounts, "I embarked on an extensive international correspondence, from which I have kept many addresses and letters ... which also allowed me to send my first two visual poems, which I created in the fall of 1964, to the Belgian magazine *Labris*. In the first of these, I made a kind of tapestry using only the letter *i* ... and the other began with the word *bielo* [ice], creating a kinetic poem through its structure."

¹⁷ Works by Ignacio Gómez de Liaño, Julio Campal, Blanca Calparsoro, Pilar Gómez Bedate, Fernando Millán, and Enrique Uribe shared space with those of Alain Arias-Misson, Max Bense, Julien Blaine, Augusto and Haroldo de Campos, Henri Chopin, John Furnival, Ilse and Pierre Garnier, Mathias Göeritz, Eugen Gomringer, Ferdinand Kriwet, Franz Mon, Décio Pignatari, Adriano Spatola, and Paul de Vree, to name but a few of the most significant influences on the Spanish scene and especially on Gómez de Liaño.

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any sense of inferiority. This attitude illustrates the desire to join the ranks of the international avant-garde, despite Spain's peripheral and anomalous position. Aside from the canonical visual arts (painting and sculpture), Spain's experimental art was almost entirely without impact abroad, and could even be suspected of collaborationism with Franco's regime.¹⁸ As historian Iñaki Estella writes:

in its origins, visual poetry sought to play an important, by no means marginal role.... Even if only for a short time, it was able to represent values associated with modernization: internationalism, contemporaneity, scientific objectivity and technological progress.¹⁹

Accordingly, the instrumentalization of culture by Franco's regime after Spain joined UNESCO (1952)—which supported *Juventudes Musicales*—and signed the Pact of Madrid (1953) did not just extend to painting but to any form of expression that could promote a new image of progress and openness.

Gómez de Liaño's desire for independence led him to leave *Problemática 63*, although he maintained strong emotional ties with the group, as evidenced in the "Seminario de información lírica y de vanguardia" (Seminar on Lyrical and Avant-Garde Information), which he presented at the Faculty of Philosophy and Literature of the Universidad de Madrid,²⁰ where he studied philosophy and directed the poetry class. The texts accompanying these activities, which were based on the postulates of Walter

¹⁸ For example, Henri Chopin's refusal to accept an invitation to attend the Pamplona Encounters in 1972 for political reasons.

¹⁹ Estella, "Problemática 63."

²⁰ In the diptychs published for the event, the words "dirigido por" (directed by) are crossed out and replaced by "presentado por" (presented by) Ignacio Gómez de Liaño. In addition, some words in bold print conclude with the following phrase: "we thank the poet Julio Campal for his participation as a special guest at this seminar," which already seems to be a sign of the conflict of authorship between the participants that would end with Liaño's separation from the group led by the Uruguayan poet.

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Gropius's Bauhaus and Max Bill's Ulm School, proclaimed the socialization of the new poetry and the need for it to become a social consumer commodity, all within the sociopolitical context of economic developmentalism.

New Solidarity

In the mid-1960s, there was a large and rich international network of experimental poets. Gómez de Liaño's internationalist aspirations led him to become part of it very early on. The letters and diaries in his archive contain the addresses of some eighty poets spread over more than fifteen countries in Europe, Asia, and Latin America. In the summer of 1966, once these first contacts had been established, he embarked on a journey through France and Italy with the intention of meeting them in person. In France, he befriended Julien Blaine, Jean-François Bory, and Henri Chopin, and in Italy he met Arrigo Lora-Totino, Carlo Belloli,²¹ and Adriano Spatola, in an encounter that was one of the foundational moments of the trip, as he recounted in a letter to Julien Blaine:

Arrigo Lora-Totino was very kind, but had some shortcomings I will tell you about. In my opinion, he stops at concrete poetry, specifically concrete poetry that works with structures and structural models. He discovered concrete poetry two years ago, but nowadays he moves around a lot. I don't think he is in the vanguard like Spatola, say, or yourself, but we should keep an eye on him. Unfortunately, *Modulo* and some other recent publications have been detrimental to Spatola's projects, which are, in my opinion, the most interesting in our field. And going back to Totino: he remains a concrete poet free from any kind of semiotic weight that transcends the text. He works hard on phonetic poetry and uses many technical strategies. In Milan

²¹ Carlo Belloli was the founder of visual poetry in the 1950s, before the Noigandres group's "Plano-piloto para poesia concreta" (1958).

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Carlo Belloli, *Cielo, mare, albatros*
(Sky, Sea, Albatross), ca. 1951

I went with Totino to meet Belloli; Belloli lives in Basel (Switzerland) and also in Milan, he knows many languages, and he is also a teacher, etc. His main activity is criticism as a visual arts theorist, but he is also very interested in avant-garde poetry. Belloli is from the same generation and style as the great masters of concrete poetry, a wonderful expert on typography and all those elements that are so dear to the concrete poets.... Belloli is a very interesting artist even though I don't agree with his thinking, which seems to me very bourgeois, but that doesn't diminish his avant-garde work. And Spatola. What can I tell you about Spatola, given that you already know him? He is really with us on our front. He seeks, he fights, he works!²²

In the following years, Gómez de Liaño collaborated with many of the artists in this international network, directly through

²² Unpublished letter from Ignacio Gómez de Liaño to Julien Blaine, Madrid, October 28, 1966.

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joint works and publications, and indirectly through invitations to participate in some of the events he organized in Spain. Henri Chopin stands out among them, not only for his importance in the narrative of European experimentalism, but also for the close friendship he maintained with Gómez de Liaño until his death, for his enormous influence on him, and for having introduced him to figures such as William S. Burroughs and Brion Gysin.²³ As an experimental artist in the 1960s, Chopin voluntarily worked in a situation of precariousness and marginalization, as an artist, curator, independent editor, and teacher, as well as the distributor and promoter of his own work. A pioneer of sound poetry from the 1950s on, Chopin focused on variations of the human voice, understood as the action and language of the body. In his phonic poems, the strong bodily presence—sometimes ironic, sometimes unintelligible raw material—is modulated by key sociopolitical moments of the twentieth century.²⁴ In 1958, Chopin founded *Cinquième Saison* (called *OU* from 1964), an audio-visual magazine that contained sound recordings, posters, and original works signed by their authors. Contributors included members of the Lettrist movement, Fluxus artists, and contemporary poets such as Jiří Kolář and Paul de Vree. But it also included works by artists from previous generations, such as Raoul Hausmann, thus establishing a genealogical link with the Berlin Dada group and the earliest phonetic poetry actions. As part of this circle, Gómez de Liaño published in Spain the numbered folio *La sensorialidad excéntrica de Raoul Hausmann 1968–69. Precedida de: Optofonética 1922* (The

²³ Chopin introduced them at an anti-festival in Ingatestone, Essex, in 1969, and from then on they maintained a friendship and correspondence. In fact, Burroughs's translator in Spain, Mariano Antolín Rato, also an underground writer, met the American personally through Gómez de Liaño.

²⁴ In 1943, Chopin was deported to Germany after a year hiding out in Houdan. He spent several years in prison and in hiding before being repatriated to France. He later enlisted as a soldier to fight the Nazis. Twenty years later, after the failed revolution of May 1968, he decided to settle in England.

A B A N D O N N E R

1. Un essai sur l'homme et sur un de ses produits - l'écriture - ne peut être un essai humaniste.
2. Un essai humaniste suppose que l'homme "est", que ses produits "sont"; en outre suppose que reste vraie l'idée platonique du sacré et de l'immuable, ici substance aristotélicienne.
3. Mais le sacré et l'immuable ne donnent de sûreté qu'à la race qui détient le Pouvoir dans ses entreprises (et emprises) en lui donnant par mots - et par écrit - tous les moyens. A S S E Z, o u i, A S S E Z !
4. Les solutions (prétendues) humanistes, en tout état de cause trompent - faussent - la culture, ou la fixent. Elles sont au service de l'Ordre culturel établi, produit du statut socio-économique, dont on connaît les pouvoirs aveugles.
5. Contre ces pouvoirs, j'aime les mots-valeurs : essayer, chercher, car derrière eux il y a : ne pas accepter l'origine, l'immuable, de la culture. Essayer, chercher, c'est au contraire aller au-delà de la culture, c'est la mettre au cargo, c'est créer des substantifs comme possibilités, c'est supprimer des barrières, c'est imaginer, affranchir, ouï, affranchir et CONSCIENCE à vivre.
6. Abandonner l'écriture. Oui ! il faut abandonner l'écriture, telle qu'elle existe, telle que nous la subissons, la nôtre enfin, qui est connue au point qu'elle est utilisable par la Bureaucratie !! laquelle est dépositaire du sacré !
7. L'écriture actuelle n'est plus celle qui put répondre à l'homme, au contraire, elle le sépare, elle contraind : l'orthographe, par les années perdues que ses études nous donnent, elle-même détourne l'homme de ses imaginations.
8. L'écriture telle que nous l'avons figée tout, y compris la culture, elle immobilise. Ne voit-on pas qu'au vingtième siècle, surtout, les auteurs en inventant toutes les formes possibles, ne purent se contenter de la seule écriture, telle qu'en elle-même elle se propose ! Pensons à des Joyce, à Pierre Albert-Biberat, à Kafka, qui, c'est une constatation, allèrent loin au-delà de l'écriture pour elle-même !
9. C'est urgent, c'est le "faire" des poètes qui inventent les écritures mettant l'accord et l'accent sur la réalité de chaque homme = "ND" !
10. C'est le travail des poètes : inventer des écritures qui ne soient pas répertoires de prétendues connaissances. Oui, les poètes doivent inventer les moyens qui orient le monde, car le monde se fait, il ne se connaît pas.
11. Une remarque : c'est un lieu commun de dire que les hiéroglyphes ou les idéogrammes ont fait une race, celle des scribes, prêtres, mandarins... Je pense tout le contraire. C'est l'homme qui fait paraître la race, c'est lui le maître de l'écriture... En passant à celle-ci toute priorité, c'est la rendre utilitaire, au sens où elle devient l'Ordre, et bien sûr l'Ordre de l'exploitation.
12. Et sous l'Ordre, les Grands Mots : Religion, Bien, etc., sont les hauts produits de ceux - de la race - qui exploitent, sous couvert du sacré, du formidable, de la marque. En pendant ce temps, les exploités construisaient des pyramides !

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13. Bref, l'alphabetisme c'est plus désormais qu'une exploitation. C'est de plus une pseudo-culture, avec ses références finalement totalitaires. Et ce sous couvert du sacré, pour lequel il est dépositaire.
14. Contre cela, il y a la réalité de l'imagination. Sans cesse nouvelle, sans cesse contredite, diverse toujours, toujours inassaisable.
15. C'est l'imagination seule, ses ondes, ses mouvements, ses réceptions, ses projections, ses cris, ses refus, ses pensées, ses libertés, qui est le paramètre du temps et de l'espace. C'est l'imagination, qui se charge, se décharge, qui est la culture universelle, et plus jamais l'écriture, en ses sciences contraignantes qui ne furent que codes provisoires.
16. Vouloir des écritures, c'est vouloir se détruire. Ordonner un texte, c'est se détruire.

(e x t r a i t)

M. 68

L' E C R I T U R E

Ignacio Gómez de Liaño, "Abandonner l'écriture" (Forsaking Writing), manifesto, *Revue OU - Cinquième Saison* (Sceaux), nos. 34-35, February 1969

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Eccentric Sensoriality of Raoul Hausmann, 1968–69. Preceded by: Optophonetics 1922, 1974), containing Hausmann’s last visual poems, an original graphic work by Chopin, and a text by Gómez de Liaño.

It was in *OU* that Ignacio Gómez de Liaño presented his first manifesto, “Abandonner l’écriture” (Forsaking Writing), written in 1968 and published in 1969. In the manner of the early avant-garde manifestos, Liaño’s three published manifestos—in addition to “Abandonner l’écriture,” there was also “ANTIPRO” (1970–71) and “Palabra y Terror” (Word and Terror, 1971)²⁵—sought to shake up the established order and to suggest new forms of language that did not fantasize about other worlds, but made it possible to experience this one differently:

Against everything, the stupidity of everything. Against art, the stupidity of art. Against culture, the stupidity of culture. Against ourselves, the stupidity of ourselves.

It is the work of poets: to invent writings that are not registers of alleged knowledge. Yes, poets must invent the means with which to create the world, because the world is made, it is not known.²⁶

Cooperativa de Producción Artística y Artesana

On his return from his trip to Europe in late 1966, Gómez de Liaño distanced himself from *Problemática 63* and from Julio Campal, who was considered too authoritarian by some and an undisputed master by others. This parting of ways has been read by historiography as a split in Spanish experimental poetry, giving rise to two branches: one represented by Grupo N.O., which preserved Campal’s memory and legacy (he died shortly afterward in a domestic accident), and the circle of artists around Ignacio Gómez de Liaño. However, it is necessary

²⁵ Published in in Javier Ruiz and Fernando Huici, *La comedia del arte* (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1974).

²⁶ Gómez de Liaño, “ANTIPRO” and “Abandonner l’écriture.”

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LUGÁN, Elena Asins, Julio Plaza, and
Ignacio Gómez de Liaño, Chartres, 1966



to break with this interpretation based on antagonism. Leaving aside circumstantial confrontations in a period of political urgency and agitation,²⁷ it precludes any attempt at a lucid reading of the artistic practices of the artists involved. The two groups followed different aesthetic paths: while Group N.O. focused on the page and on the articulation of a visual and semantic language theoretically connected by graphic symbols and the mass media, Gómez de Liaño was more interested in action and artistic intervention.

The group of friends linked to the Instituto Cardenal Cisneros decided to continue working collaboratively, but in the form of a cross-cutting, nonhierarchical association: an artists' cooperative. Eusebio Sempere was its mentor (although he was never a member), and early members included Julio Plaza, Elena Asins, and LUGÁN,²⁸ as well as other writers such as Julián Gil,

²⁷ They went so far as to accuse each other of pro-fascism. See Albarrán and Benítez, "Introducción," 4.

²⁸ Ignacio has often told the story of how he met these three friends by chance in the summer of 1966, when they picked him up while he was hitchhiking to Paris. Plaza, Asins, and LUGÁN were driving to The Hague to visit the Mondrian retrospective.

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Fernando Carbonell, and Francisco Pino. Alain Arias-Misson and Lily Greenham, who were based in Madrid at the time, also participated in this cosmos, which was given the name *Cooperativa de Producción Artística y Artesana* (CPAA, Cooperative of Artistic and Artisan Production).

Despite having looked into the legal mechanisms for setting up a cooperative,²⁹ the group was not granted a permit by the Francoist authorities, although this did not prevent them from continuing to operate as such for almost three years. Gómez de Liaño was in charge of drafting the “*Declaración de principios. Estética y sociedad*” (Declaration of Principles: Aesthetics and Society), which was distributed to the national and international artistic community by mail, but was not published at the time. Analyzing its message, it is not difficult to understand the regime’s refusal to finance the group, although it was not subject to excessive censorship either. The “Declaration,” a kind of founding manifesto, was not then Gómez de Liaño’s individual speculation, but a consensual way of thinking shared by all the founding members. Adorno’s discourse on ethics and politics runs through the text in various ways, especially in the notions of “freedom” and “solidarity” as a means to reflect on the place of the individual in modern society.³⁰ The connection between aesthetics and society was to take place through the reorganization of the material conditions of life, and the group advocated the social function of art and the rejection of the commodification and fetishization of objects. Tired, no doubt, of artistic manifestations such as Informalism, they defended objectivity and meaning over mere expressiveness. From the perspective of a “revolutionary art,” to quote Vladimir Mayakovsky, they aspired to “aesthetically design society.” Gómez de Liaño developed many of these ideas in texts written during those years, including “La nueva

²⁹ The archive includes handwritten notes on this research, not in the author’s handwriting. The Quejido brothers even took a course in cooperativism. Manuel Quejido, Interview with the author, April 2, 2019.

³⁰ Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (1966), trans. E. B. Ashton (London: Routledge, 1990).

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poesía y los problemas de la Estética contemporánea” (The New Poetry and the Problems of Contemporary Aesthetics, 1967) and “Situaciones probables” (Probable Situations, 1968).

The underlying solidarity of the CPAA was not about creating joint works. Each member had their own personal artistic projects, and the work of the cooperative revolved around looking for frameworks and funding to organize exhibitions and public programs in the field of experimental poetry. The spaces available in Madrid for the development of marginal art were few and full of particularities. University colleges and faculties provided a favorable environment for dialogic and collaborative associationism, a space in which it was possible to develop avant-garde ideas with a certain freedom. In this sense, the Instituto Aléman and the Institut français played a fundamental role. The key was the diplomatic freedom enjoyed by these institutes that functioned like small embassies in which the official bodies of Franco’s regimes did not interfere.³¹ At the Instituto Aléman in Madrid, the group had several necessary allies: the deputy director Hans-Peter Hebel and, above all, Helga Drewsen, the director of programming, who had already collaborated with Luis de Pablo, president of Juventudes Musicales and founder of the electronic music laboratory ALEA. Drewsen contacted Gómez de Liaño to ask for his support in organizing an exhibition of German visual poetry, and Liaño offered to organize the exhibition *Letras imágenes texto* (Letters Images Text, 1968) through the CPAA. This collaboration also gave rise to the first edition of the *Nuevas Tendencias: poesía, música, cine* (New Trends: Poetry,

³¹ The Instituto Aléman in Madrid (around 1965) and Barcelona (from about 1972) played an important role in shaping, firstly, poetry experimentation—Gómez de Liaño was the main mentor and continued to collaborate with the Instituto Aléman beyond the CPAA—and, secondly, the “new artistic behaviors” with Simón Marchán Fiz. Both Liaño and Fiz taught at the Universidad de Madrid and shared a friendship and interests, leading them to work together on various occasions, such as organizing the exhibition *Impulsos. Arte y computador* (Impulses: Art and Computer, 1972). They were responsible for the programming links between the Instituto Aléman and conceptualism.

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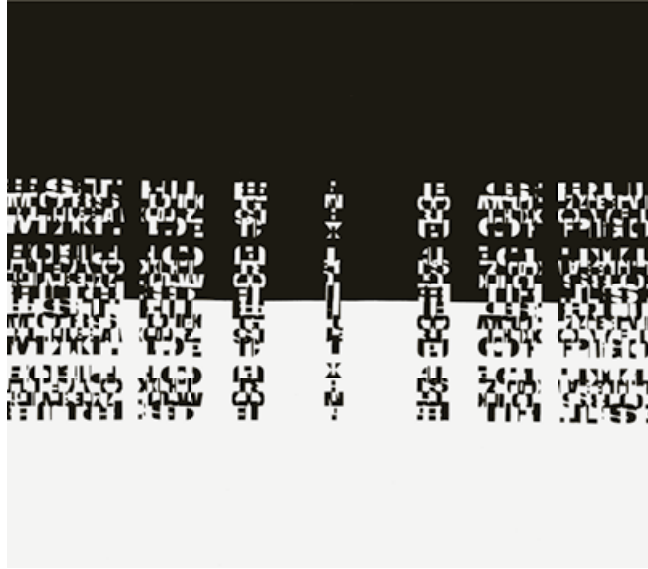
Manolo Quejido and Herminio Molero (graphic design)
and Ignacio Gómez de Liaño (text), program leaflet
of the seminar *Nuevas tendencias: poesía, música y cine*,
Instituto Alemán, Madrid, December 1967

Music, Film)³² program in December 1967, with guest speakers including Eugen Gomringer and Reinhard Döhl, two of the main exponents of international concrete poetry. Thus began a close collaboration between the Instituto Alemán and a group of very young students who were surprisingly well-informed and knowledgeable about what was happening abroad.

³² The papers presented were published by the CPAA, accompanied by a text by Gómez de Liaño. The program was designed by Herminio Molero and Manolo Quejido. The second edition of *Nuevas tendencias* (with a poster designed by Elena Asins and Fernando López-Vera) was directed by Gómez de Liaño in February 1969. Participants included Max Bense, with the lecture “Art and Computer,” and Gerhard Rühm, with “The Foundations of New Theater.” Rühm and Lily Greenham participated in a recital and in the staging of their play *rund oder oval* (Round or Oval), directed by Francisco Salazar. Ignacio Gómez de Liaño imparted the lecture “Writings of Imaginary Cultures,” the unpublished text of which is included in his archive.

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Ignacio Gómez de Liaño, *Est mors* (Death), 1965-66



The CPAA also organized other exhibitions: *Exposición rotor internacional de concordancia de artes* (International Rotor Exhibition of Concord of the Arts, 1967), *Nuevo lenguaje* (New Language, 1968), and *i* (1969). These shows managed to present works by leading national and international artists from diverse backgrounds working in various media and disciplines on a shared poetic language of experimentation. The film screenings, phonetic poetry listening sessions, and collaborations with contemporary musicians in all these programs attest to the desire to merge different media.

However, the cooperative was disbanded in 1969, as its expectations had not been met. The death certificate was signed by Gómez de Liaño, López-Vera, and Salazar in a text whose title was a lucid declaration of intent: “La CPAA. Enfermedades de la cultura española. Fin de grupo de combate sin oponentes” (The CPAA: The Sickness of Spanish Culture; End of the Combat Group Without Opponents).³³ The ideals of social revolution

³³ *Madrid* [newspaper], July 11, 1969; see pp. 99–102 in this volume.

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with guerilla overtones, which had been present in the group since its declaration of principles, clashed with its need to secure financial support from official institutions and to integrate in the Francoist regime, which were essential for its survival.

Centro de Cálculo

Another space for experimentation was the Centro de Cálculo de la Universidad de Madrid (Computing Center of the University of Madrid, CCUM),³⁴ a true artists' laboratory. Gómez de Liaño landed as coordinator of the "Seminario de Generación Automática de Formas Plásticas" (Seminar on the Automatic Generation of Visual Forms) in September 1969, on his return from a study trip to Cambridge. He imposed a more theoretical emphasis, but without losing the nonhierarchical, stimulating process of application to artistic creativity. At that time, Liaño had just joined the teaching staff at the Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura de Madrid (ETSAM), where he became friends with the architects José Miguel de Prada Poole and Javier Seguí de la Riva, who were also teachers and participated in various CCUM seminars. It seemed inevitable that he would end up becoming part of the project, both because of his existing knowledge of the information theories developed by Max Bense and Abraham Moles, and the expertise he acquired after his return:

I spent a lot of time on linguistics, I studied under Francisco Rodríguez Adrados. Then, during the 1968-69 academic year, I had the good fortune to become closely involved in the linguistics department at Cambridge, which was run by Professor [J. L. M] Trim. The teacher I was closest to was Professor Pieter A. M. Seuren, the leading generative-transformational grammarian in England, even though he was Dutch. In fact, he gave me a signed a copy of his book *Operators and Nucleus*, with an inscription in Latin. And

³⁴ Artists previously associated with the CPAA, including Asins and Quejido, among many others, passed through there.

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they happened to invite Chomsky to give a lecture, I think it was the first time he had ever left the United States. I told him that the precursor of those generative grammars, which I had been studying in the preceding months, could be found in El Brocense's *Minerva sive de causis linguae latinae*. And I told him why I was familiar with that work: because my grandfather had published an opuscle, a small study of El Brocense, and he had a magnificent edition of this work, which at that time had not yet been translated from the Latin.... As I recall, in the next edition of *Cartesian Linguistics*, Chomsky added a note mentioning this precedent. My interest in grammars bore fruit the following year when I joined the staff of the Escuela de Arquitectura and the Centro de Cálculo at the same time.³⁵

In addition, Liaño had the privilege of attending the opening of *Cybernetic Serendipity* (1968) at the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) in London.³⁶ The exhibition was a milestone in cybernetic experimentation at the time, and presented the then astonishing results of the collaboration between artists, composers, poets, engineers, and mathematicians, revolutionizing both art and science. Ever since the discovery of photography and film, innovations in new technologies have always provided new languages with which to challenge and question the limits of art. It was an activity that the CCUM engaged in at the highest level.

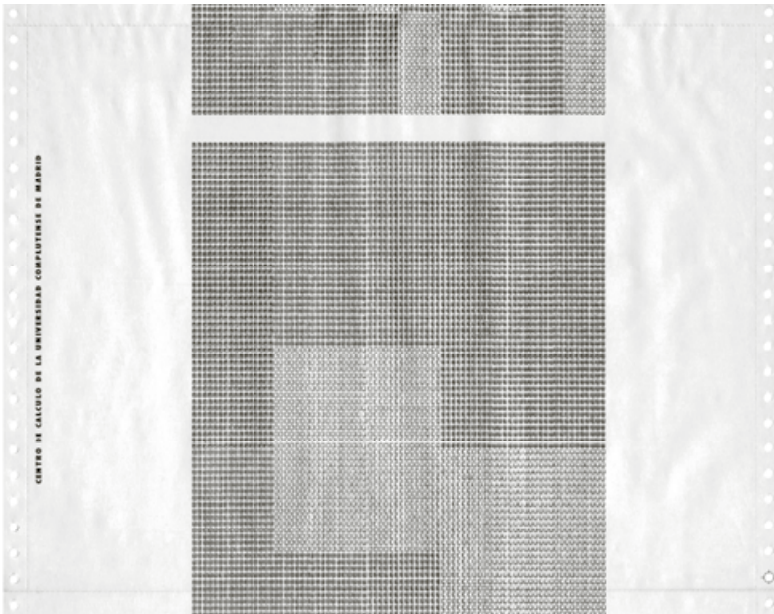
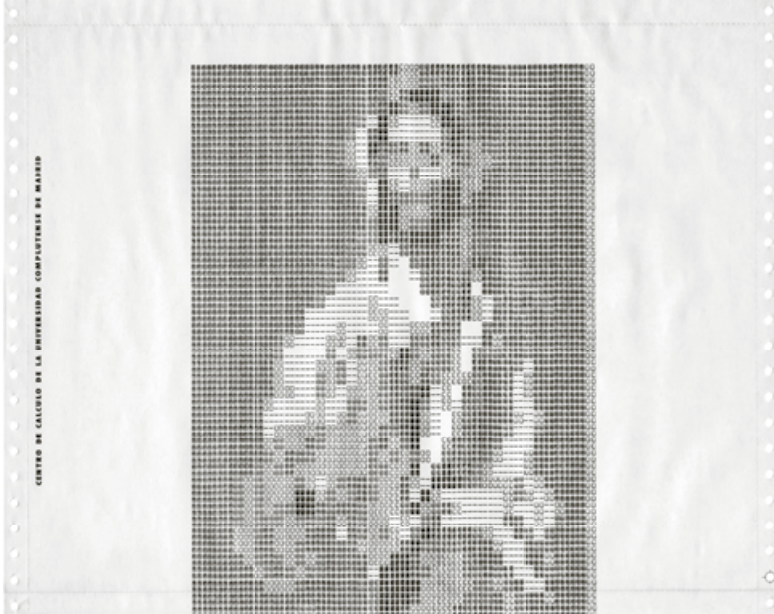
These experiences were a turning point in Gómez de Liaño's artistic practice. He moved away from the semiotic use of typography as in his early poems—along the lines of spatialism and Franz Mon's "poetry of the surface"³⁷—and turned to research into chance, automatism as a guarantee of objectivity, and the

³⁵ Gómez de Liaño, interview with the author.

³⁶ At that exhibition, which he attended on Lily Greenham's recommendation, he ran into Max Bense, whom he would later visit at the Universität Stuttgart, and many other artists and thinkers working on computer art.

³⁷ Franz Mon, along with Eugen Gomringer, Hansjörg Mayer, and Max Bense, is part of the generation of German poets who created a new poetic language. They all acknowledged their indebtedness to Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés*.

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Ignacio Gómez de Liaño, *El Redentor*
(Christ the Saviour) from *Apostolado de*
El Greco (El Greco's *Apostolate*), 1970-71

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practical application of transformational generative grammars and of information sciences. Thanks to the participation of his architecture students, he was able to materialize his research on generative grammars and “perceptronics” in two concrete works: *Apostolado de El Greco* (El Greco’s Apostolate, 1970–71) and *Investigación acerca del reconocimiento y generación automática de los patios platerescos españoles* (Research into the Recognition and Automatic Generation of Spanish Plateresque Courtyards, 1970–72).³⁸ Guillermo Searle, his student at ETSAM, was in charge of implementing the computing side, while Liaño worked on the theoretical rationale of the projects. In the first of these works, they sought to establish an analytical method that would allow them to lay the foundations for a generative grammar of painting. Starting from El Greco’s *Apostolado* in Toledo Cathedral, they carried out a mathematically controlled geometric-chromatic study with the aim of applying a process of abstraction or “constructivist” simplification (now we would call it “pixelation”) to the figures, transforming the information contained in the figures of the apostles into something like a Piet Mondrian.³⁹ The second project, which they worked on for two years, was their most ambitious. Inspired by the study of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Liaño sought to devise a unique logical-mathematical method based on an analysis of the forms, textures, and markings of various plateresque buildings, which could then be applied to any architectural space. This project was not completed due to Liaño’s dismissal from ETSAM in 1972 for failing to prevent one of his students from carrying out an artistic action during one of his classes.⁴⁰

³⁸ Enrique Castaños Alés analyzes both of these projects in his doctoral thesis, “Los orígenes del arte cibernético en España. El seminario de Generación Automática de Formas Plásticas del Centro de Cálculo de la Universidad de Madrid (1968–1973)” (PhD. diss., Universidad de Málaga, 2000), 180–86.

³⁹ Ignacio Gómez de Liaño and Guillermo Searle, “Pintura y perceptrónica. Estudio de transformaciones en pintura,” *Boletín* (CCUM), no. 22 (March 1973): 73–93.

⁴⁰ Gómez de Liaño’s relationship with the institutions of the Francoist regime was without tension and his concern for freedom of expression

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Gómez de Liaño's objective at the CCUM had more to do with speculation, experimentation, and the idea of possibility than with achieving definitive material results: "scientific aesthetics is one of the most fascinating quests in science today, but I am convinced that its formulations are not capable of exhausting the artistic phenomenon."⁴¹

Public Poetry: The Urban Revolution

Gómez de Liaño's interest in architectural form developed into a notion of the city understood as public space for intervention and for the imagination. His friendship with the Belgian-American poet and artist Alain Arias-Misson, which began in 1965, was probably the most important space for thinking and sharing in his entire experimental oeuvre. Arias-Misson had lived in the United States and various European countries, including Spain. He arrived in Barcelona, where he met Joan Brossa, and later settled in Madrid with his wife, the painter Nela Arias-Misson. His house became a place of welcome, discussion, and creation for Gómez de Liaño and other members of his circle, especially Herminio Molero, the Quejido brothers, and Fernando Carbonell.

The friendship between Arias-Misson and Gómez de Liaño was one of close synergies. Liaño brought a philosophical dimension to Arias-Misson's works,⁴² and he in turn helped to introduce the component of action in Liaño's work. Action was necessary to achieve one of his principal desires: "to take poetry into life, to transform life into a poetic text." The decisive moment was when Arias-Misson invited Gómez de Liaño and other members of his group to participate in a public poetry project entitled *A MADRID (TO MADRID, 1969-70)*. As poetic activists,

in universities is reflected in the numerous leaflets and reports collected during those years and kept in his archive.

⁴¹ Ignacio Gómez de Liaño, *Madrid* [newspaper], January 15, 1970, 20.

⁴² They met in 1965 thanks to the exhibition he had been invited to attend at Galería Juana Mordó. In Arias-Misson's own words, "I began to educate myself philosophically thanks to Ignacio." Cited in *Alain Arias-Misson. Public Poems. 50 años de escritura pública* (Madrid: Ediciones Asimétricas, 2018), 96.

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Alain Arias-Misson, *A MADRID*
(TO MADRID), 1969



they wandered through the streets of central Madrid carrying large letters arranged in varying combinations at different points along the route. “A MADRID” became “DADA” as they passed by the Café Gijón, “MARIA” next to some public urinals, as a secret declaration of love, “DAR,” “RIADA,” and so on, and finally “ARMA” (weapon) in front of the Congress of Deputies, where the police abruptly interrupted the piece.

This and other public poems that Liaño subsequently created with Arias-Misson or with other collaborators—most notably *PALABRAS FRÁGILES* (Fragile Words)⁴³—were condensed expressions of the flow of their endless conversations, which is reflected in their correspondence on new poetry, linguistics, and philosophy. The French philosopher Henri Lefebvre—whose books from the 1960s and 1970s, annotated with sketches and handwritten notes, are still held in Liaño’s archive—was key in the definition of the city that Liaño and Arias-Misson defended through their action poetry. In his notes, Gómez de Liaño draws a distinction between “street” and “monument.” The positive characteristics of the street are: it is a place of encounters and spontaneous theater; it promotes playful and symbolic functions, processes of freedom and life; it is a propitious place for writing,

⁴³ The content of these poems is described in *Arias-Misson. Public Poems*.

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demonstrations, revolution, and so on. In regard to monuments, Liaño pointed out the dialectic opposition between ethical power and aesthetic power—transcultural and of utopian significance—in contrast to their repressive role as symbols of the state and the church as colonizing institutions.⁴⁴

Lefebvre's theories of urban space and the urban revolution, and his notion of everyday life, were at the heart of this public poetry.⁴⁵ Lefebvre's motto was simply to change the city in order to change the world ("changer la ville, changer la vie!"). Everyday life, which he sometimes referred to as "the level of dwelling" when using Heideggerian language, cannot exist without an urban revolution. Revolution in the sense of a deconstruction of the space that separates art and life, with the aim of merging the two spheres and transforming both. The overlap with Lefebvre's ideas is key to understanding Guy Debord's Situationist International, an avant-garde movement that, in turn, emerged from the poetic revolution of Lettrism. Situationism and the public poetry of Gómez de Liaño and Arias-Misson shared some characteristics: the idea of the *dérive*, a space for strategy and play in which to bring about "subversive" situations to change everyday life, behavior, and actions, in what Liaño called an "anthropological revolution."⁴⁶ In Franco's Spain, these issues took on a political signification of enormous critical importance.

Imbued with the 1960s spirit that swept the world (although its impact was less intense in Spain than in other places), Gómez de Liaño devised an action/practice that he called *Pic-Poems*.⁴⁷ Under this umbrella, he organized several *Pic* sessions with the participation of other artists including Herminio Molero and Pedro Almodóvar. Galería Seiquer and the Instituto Aléman in Madrid and Barcelona were the spaces that welcomed Liaño's

⁴⁴ Some of these notes were transcribed in *Arias-Misson. Public Poems*.

⁴⁵ Henri Lefebvre, *Le langage et la société* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1966) and *La Révolution urbaine* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972).

⁴⁶ Gómez de Liaño, "ANTIPRO."

⁴⁷ An explanation of the term (which has its origin in the words "picante" and "pig") and some of the scripts for the works are included in this volume, pp. 137–138.

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Ignacio Gómez de Liaño, *Laberinto del aire* (Labyrinth of Air), Madrid, 1972 (Photo: Pablo Pérez-Minguez)

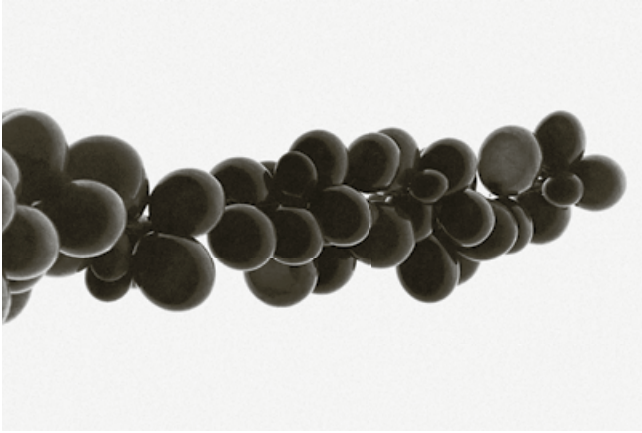


action poems. There were few examples of actionism to speak of before the 1970s in Spain, other than the group Zaj,⁴⁸ a groundbreaking shared space that has been insufficiently acknowledged. With Juan Hidalgo, Liaño participated in the program *Arte en fiesta* (1972) at the Instituto Aléman. Hidalgo presented his performative installation *Lanas* (Yarns), and Gómez de Liaño devised a “labyrinth of air,” with design drawings by Prada Poole. In all of these poems, the ironic, playful attitude, rooted in the absurd in the work of writers such as Eugène Ionesco, Samuel Beckett, and Antonin Artaud, speaks to us of the eclectic, carnivalesque context of the Madrid avant-garde.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ “Running parallel to our work as experimental poets was the group Zaj, and I went to all of their concerts. We coincided in the avant-garde, but they were musicians, and I was a poet.... Looking back from a historical perspective we were very similar, more so than we thought at the time.” Gómez de Liaño, interview with the author.

⁴⁹ Beyond Mikhail Bakhtin’s theories on carnival in the popular culture of the Middle Ages, which apply to a different historical era, in previous

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One of the most significant moments in this timeline and genealogy was the 1972 Encuentros de Pamplona (Pamplona Encounters) which, according to historian José Díaz Cuyás, were both the high point and the last hurrah of Spanish experimental art.⁵⁰ Ignacio Gómez de Liaño was in charge of programming the public poetry section at the Encuentros. He also participated in person with his group of “agitators,” with whom he had been carrying out street actions for some time. In some cases, they were a true poetry commando. Examples include the time they dyed the water of the fountain at the Plaza de España red with aniline dye, so that it looked like blood. Or the time they wandered through the Museo del Prado dressed in polyethylene ponchos, in a kind of fusion between the tropicalismo of Hélio Oiticica’s *Parangolés* and the anarchistic drifting of Jean-Luc Godard’s *Bande à part*. Javier Ruiz had been responsible for bringing this group of students from the recently created

publications on Spanish artists from the 1970s I have emphasized the “carnivalization” of the Spanish avant-garde in the Spanish version of carnival, the *verbena*, from Gómez de la Serna to Maruja Mallo, who saw the *verbena* as a “revolutionary and liminal” space.

⁵⁰ José Díaz Cuyás, ed., *Encuentros de Pamplona. Fin de fiesta del arte experimental* (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, 2009).

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Universidad Autónoma—long-haired types including Armando Montesinos, Gumersindo Quevedo, and Fernando Huici—into Liaño’s circle (Liaño also referred to them as “los Autónomos”). As several of them have recounted, Liaño was crucial in their experience of experimentalism. At the meetings held in his loft, their conversations ranged from anarchism to architecture, Dada, action art, William Burroughs, Giordano Bruno, hallucinogens, and public poetry.⁵¹ The works created at the Encuentros consisted of various *Poemas aéreos* (Aerial Poems): white letters hanging from color balloons spelling out random, interchangeable messages—like the word MARX, which they broke up to avoid problems with the secret police—and strange snakes made out of helium-filled black balloons.

The Imagined City and Machinic Poetics

The aftermath of the Pamplona Encounters and his repressive expulsion from teaching at ETSAM led Gómez de Liaño to enter a new, more intimate and reserved period. Herminio Molero invited him to his home in Ibiza, and they embarked on various creative processes during his stay there. Those months of introspection and psychotropy allowed him to establish a new dimension of the city in his works—the mental and speculative city—creating a series of imaginary poetic architectures: *Jardín gramatical* (Grammatical Garden), *Orografía poética* (Poetic Orography), *El bosque de la letras* (The Forest of Letters), *Retina de Madrid* (The Retina of Madrid). During this time, he began to read Frances A. Yates’s *The Art of Memory*, focusing on Giordano

⁵¹ *La reina loca*, by Mariano H. de Ossorno, seems to have initially sparked Liaño’s curiosity for this group. After the Pamplona Encounters, the publication morphed into the magazine *Perdura* (1972–74), to which numerous national and international poets were asked to contribute. Gómez de Liaño published his “ANTIPRO” manifesto in its pages. See Antonio Montesinos, Mariano H. de Ossorno, and Antonio Areán Fernández, *Archivo Ossorno 1971–1975. Me recuerdo de aquellos revolucionarios que corrieron a abolir los relojes* (Madrid: Dos Paredes y un Puente Ediciones, 2015).

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Herminio Molero, *Retrato de Ignacio en Ibiza*
(Portrait of Ignacio in Ibiza), 1972

Bruno and his feats of memory.⁵² He saw it as the incorporation of poetry into architecture, since the art of memory is based on constructing mental buildings, into which the things that are to be remembered can be placed as images. It was at this point that Gómez de Liaño conceived his poetry machines: *Teatro del olvido* (The Theater of Oblivion), *Teatro del ojo* (The Theater of the Eye), and *Ruedas de la fortuna* (Wheels of Fortune). He even came up with a device for composing poetry, and laid the foundations for *El juego de las Salas de Salas* (The Game of the Rooms of Rooms).⁵³ These artifacts appear to be inventions that could conjure up Marcel Duchamp's discoveries, but actually evoke much earlier predecessors: Rafael Alberti, Leonardo da Vinci, and, in particular, the Count of Villamediana, a provocative Spanish

⁵² Gómez de Liaño is one of the world's leading experts on Giordano Bruno. Frances A. Yates, *The Art of Memory* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966).

⁵³ Ignacio Gómez de Liaño, *El juego de las Salas de Salas* (Madrid: Siruela, 2018).

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From 1973, Liaño turned his attention to another form of writing. The many articles he wrote about the artists who continued to be part of his affective network were simply an excuse to carry out a new exercise on the literary page.⁵⁶ From then on, he wrote texts on subjects from the Lead Books of the Sacromonte of Granada to Gnostic and Manichean diagrams. As he himself has pointed out, he gave up experimental poetry because he considered that the avant-garde could not be systematic, that it could not become an Academy.⁵⁷

The Archive as Narrative Desire

The body of materials amassed by Gómez de Liaño allows us to explore experimental poetry in Spain, despite the gaps and voids resulting from his particular development. Liaño has zealously conserved works and documents (his own and those of others), but he has also given away or loaned many others, in keeping with an inherent duality: the systematic, encyclopedic, almost protean nature of his personality, together with the anti-commercial, utopian, and in a sense libertarian spirit of the period in which this archive was assembled.

But what are we talking about when we conjure up the notion of the archive? We know that a set of materials or documents does not function as an archive until someone considers it such and bestows on it a certain order, a systematization, an interpretation. The archiving gesture is performative, and it determines the meaning of the archived material. An archive is thus a grammar that different languages can build on, evoking a range of readings. While an archive remains closed, the only possible reading is the “historical *a priori*” that Foucault refers to,⁵⁸ a set

⁵⁶ A compilation of these texts has been published in Ignacio Gómez de Liaño and José Luis Gallero, *Libro de los artistas* (Madrid: Ediciones Asimétricas, 2016).

⁵⁷ Gómez de Liaño, interview with the author.

⁵⁸ In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), Foucault formulates the idea of the “historical *a priori*” and introduces the definition of the archive, which this text refers to. Foucault’s notion of the archive does not refer to the

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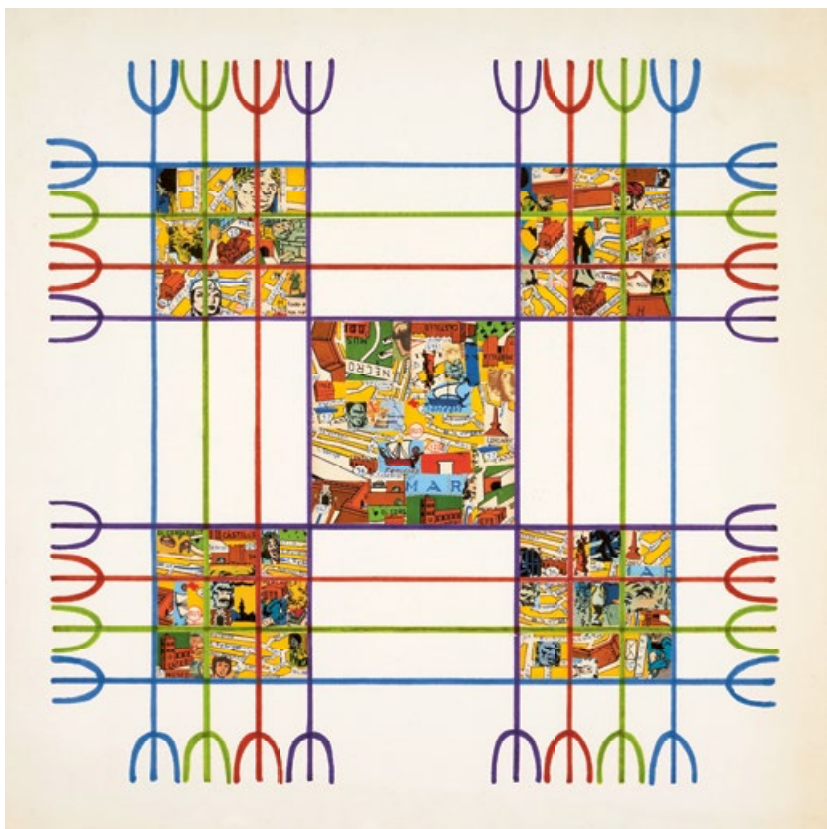
of rules and formal elements linked to a given historical context, the hegemonic reading of what has already been said: there is no room for counter-narratives. Opening up an archive means allowing polyphony, associating the materials in different ways, ensuring the possibility of recognizing both ourselves and the outside, of being able to glimpse history as a series of discontinuities and ruptures.

Most histories of Spanish experimental poetry have been written by their protagonists, as was the case in most of the countries in which these forms of expression carried weight. The most important poetry anthologies—outside of the strictly academic sphere—were put together by the poets themselves, while they created the works.⁵⁹ This dynamic generated presences and absences that have, in some cases, become entrenched, something that did not happen in the visual arts field. As such, any attempt at creating a narrative in the present must refer back to the archive in order to listen to these authors, not just through the texts but through the rich complexity of the various registers.

But, above all, Ignacio Gómez de Liaño's archive is a repository of encounters, made up of affects. Through the assemblage of collectivity, of process and solidarity, of the management of interpersonal relations, affect allows us to question the codes of artistic production of the historical period in which this community took shape. Under this reading, the figure of Gómez de Liaño emerges not just as a poet, or an artist, or a writer, but as the connecting link between writers and generations, and as an agitator in a certain avant-garde scene in developmentalist Spain, which teemed with productive multiplicities, resistances, and aesthetic/political lines of flight.

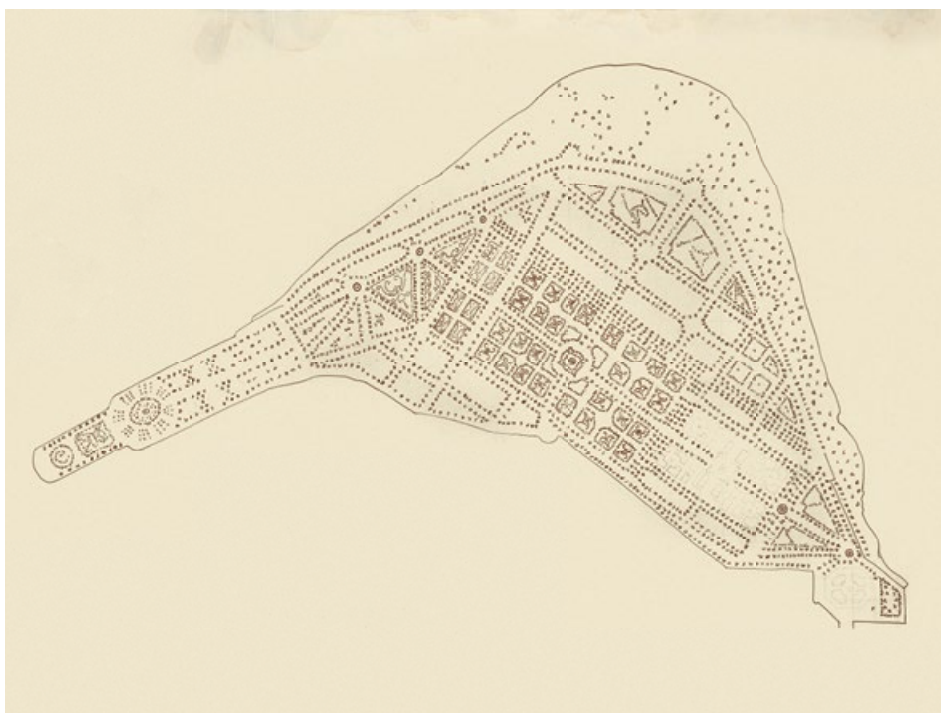
documents themselves, or to the building that houses them, but to the system of formation and transformation of statements, to the continuation of the discursive field.

⁵⁹ Ignacio Gómez de Liaño, Alfonso López Gradolí, and Fernando Millán are examples of this practice in Spain. In fact, the earliest anthology of Spanish experimental poetry, written by Gómez de Liaño, was published in the German magazine *Akzente* (Cologne, 1972) thanks to the Salamanca-born poet Felipe Boso who lived in Germany.





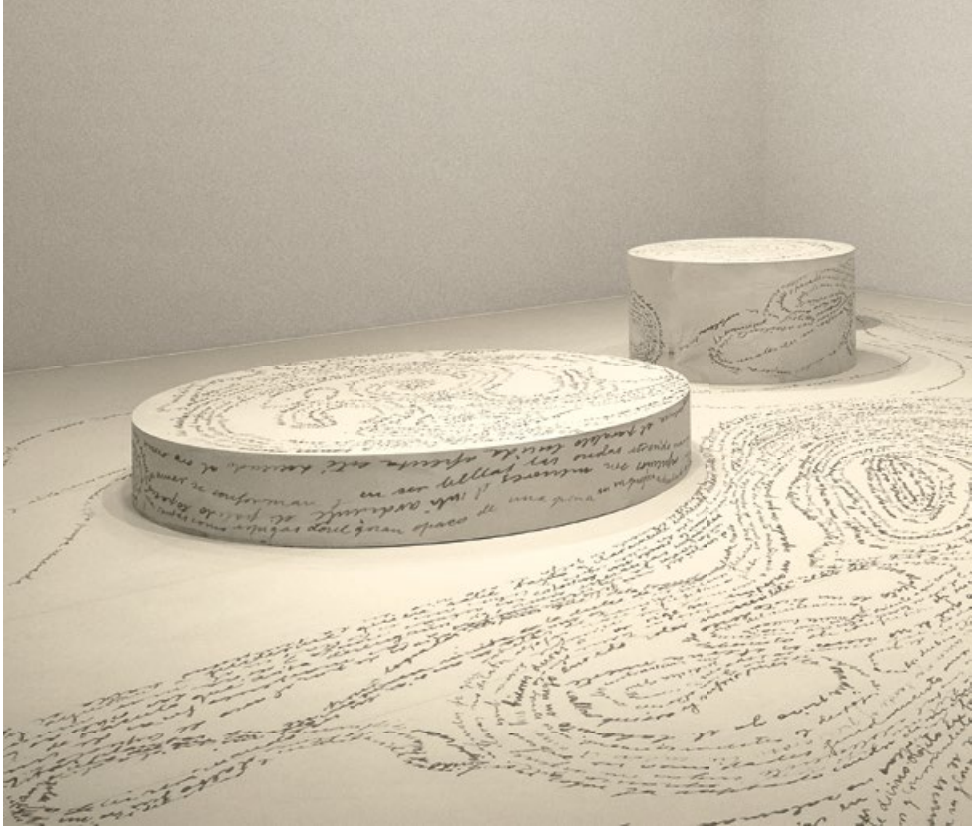
Juego del correo (The Game of Mail), 1972

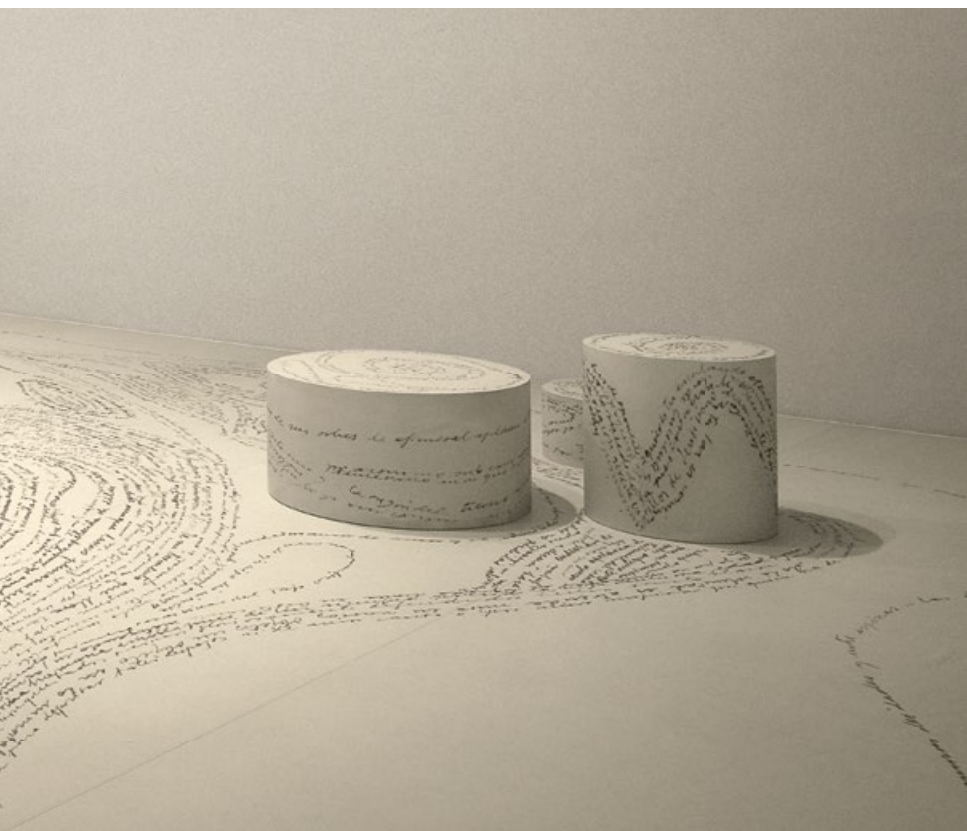




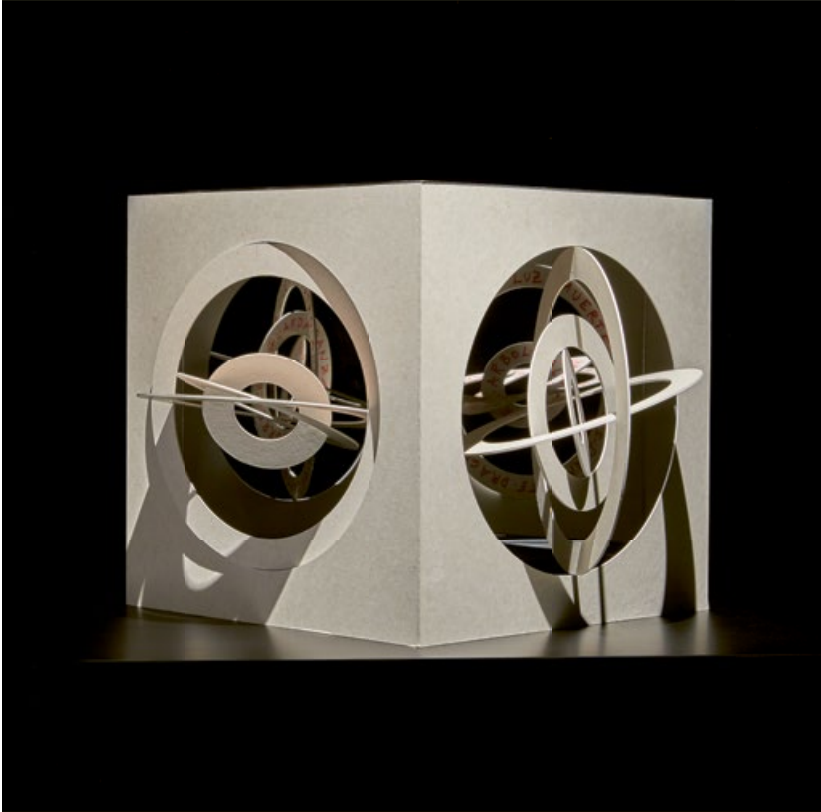
Orografía poética (Poetic Orography), 1972

Orografía poética (Poetic Orography), 1972
Installation at the Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid







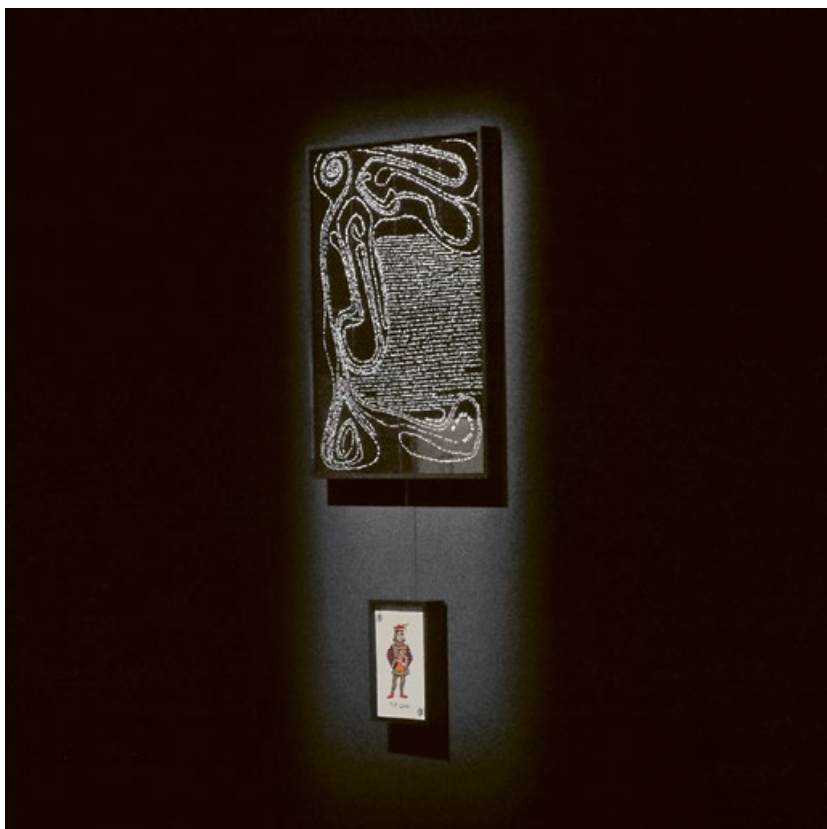


Teatro del ojo (The Theater of the Eye), model, 1972 / 2019





El juego de la lija (The Game of Sandpaper), 1974



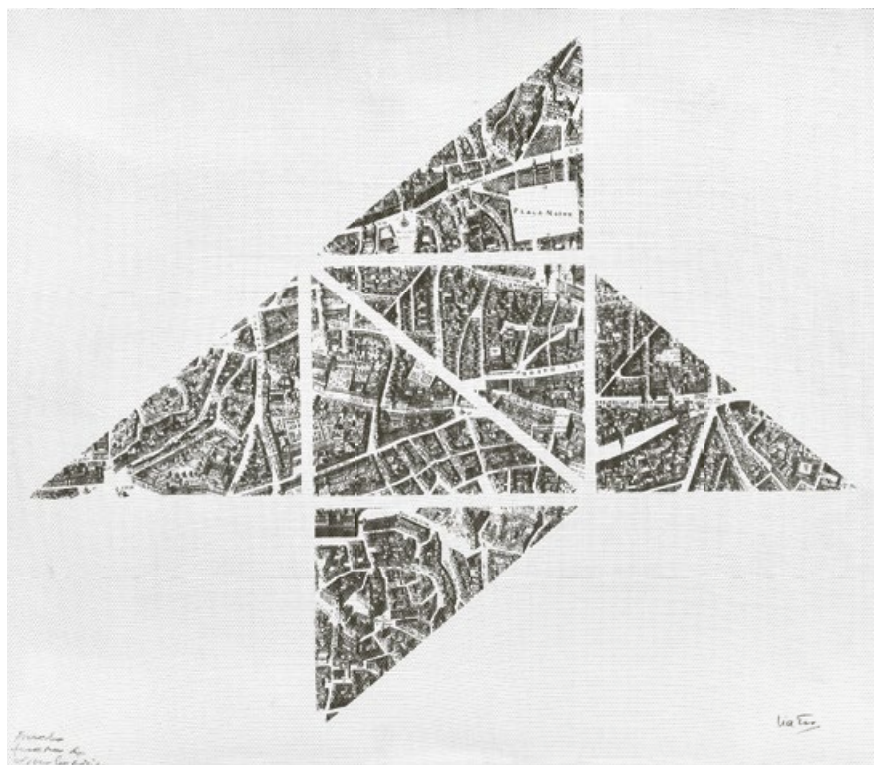


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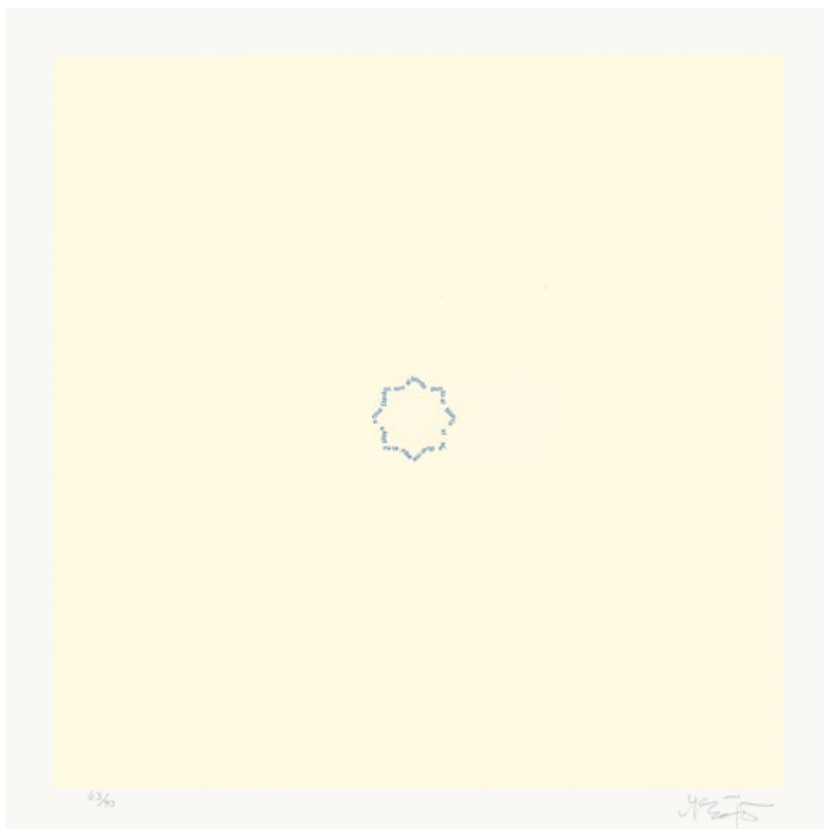
*Laberinto de papel (Labyrinth of Paper),
model, 1972/2019*

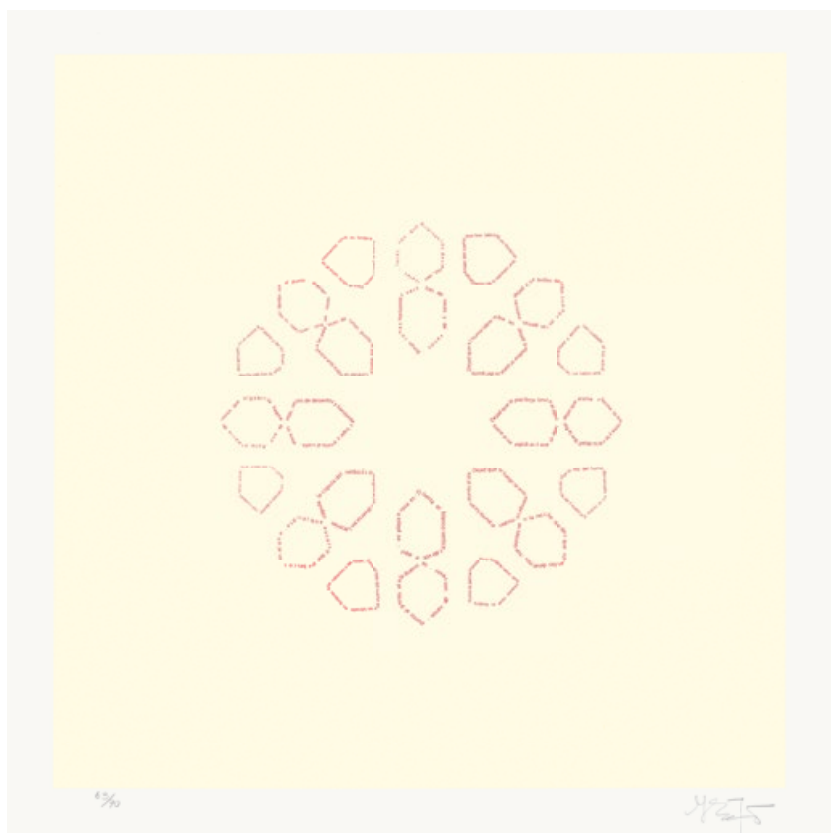
El juego de las Salas de Salas (The Game of the Rooms of Rooms),
1972./2019. Installation at the Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid

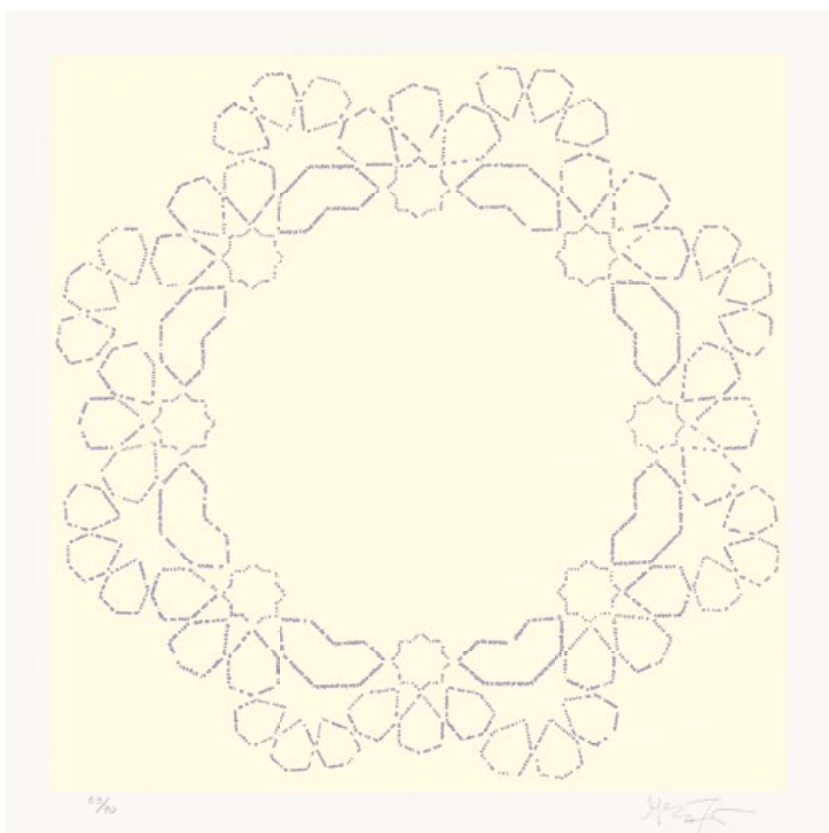


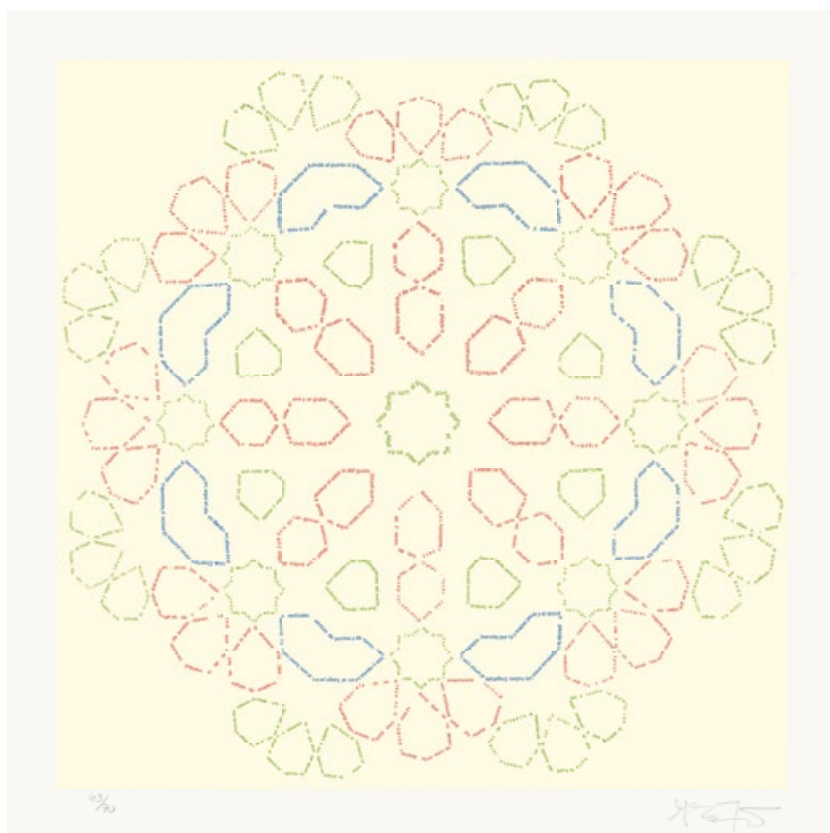


O ROSA. *Poema arábico* (O ROSA: Arabesque Poem) in four phases for *Elencar*, 1973. Portfolio of silkscreen prints, Villalobos Serigrafía Artística, 2015









Forsaking Writing

1. An essay on man and his products—writing—cannot be a humanist essay.
2. A humanist essay assumes that man “is,” that his products “are”; in other words, it assumes that the platonic idea of the *sacred* and the *immutable* remains true; Aristotelian substance.
3. But the sacred and the immutable only serve to give security to the class that holds Power, and they give it all the means to fulfill its undertakings and aims in words and in writing. ENOUGH, yes, ENOUGH!
4. The (so-called) humanistic solutions in all circumstances falsify—deceive—culture, *fixing it, vegetating it*. They are at the service of the established cultural order, a product of socioeconomic status; blind powers.
5. Against these powers, value-words: *experiment, seek*, because what is behind them is: not accepting the original, the immutable in culture. On the other hand, to experiment, to seek, is to go beyond culture, to push them aside, to create nouns as *possibilities*, to remove boundaries, to imagine, to cross, yes, cross, and START to live.
6. Forsaking writing. Yes! It has become necessary to forsake writing, as it exists, this writing that we are forced to endure, this writing that is the utility of bureaucracy! That is the depository of the sacred!
7. Today’s writing can no longer respond to man; on the contrary, it separates him, it constrains him—grammar, wasted years—; it pushes man away, it distances him from his imaginations.
8. Writing as it is fixes everything in place, including culture, it immobilizes. Is it not clear that, particularly in the twentieth century, writers who set out on the path of inventing all possible forms were not satisfied with writing as it presents itself? Think of Joyce, Albert-Birot, and Kafka... who took the path that takes writing—it is proven—away from writing itself!
9. It is urgent. It is what poets “do”: invent writings that place emphasis and agreement on the reality of each person: ME.
10. It is the work of poets: to invent writings that are not registers of alleged knowledge. Yes, poets must invent the means with

Originally published as “Abandonner l’écriture,”
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February 1969. Translated from the first published
Spanish version: “Abandonar la escritura,” *Perdura*
(Madrid), no. 15, 1979

which to create the world, because the world is made, it is not known.

11. Note: It is a commonplace to say that hieroglyphs or ideograms have given rise to a class, a class of scribes, priests, mandarins... But it is man who makes this class emerge, writing belongs to man... To give it so much priority is to make it utilitarian, in the sense that it returns to order, and, of course, to the order of exploitations.
12. And under order, the great words: religion, good, etc. Behold the high products of the class that exploits under the guise of the *sacred*, of *formalism*, of *morality*. Meanwhile, the exploited build the pyramids.
13. In short, literacy is nothing but exploitation. It is also a pseudo-culture, with its fundamentally totalitarian references. And all under the guise of the sacred, of its sediment.
14. Against all this, there is the reality of the imagination. Perpetually new, perpetually contradictory, always diverse, always unfathomable.
15. It is only the imagination, its waves, its movements, its receptions, its projections, its cries, its rejections, its thoughts, its freedoms; it is only the imagination, which fills up, empties out, universal culture, and never writing and its attendant sciences that were only provisional codes.
16. To want writing is to want self-destruction. To create a text is to destroy oneself.

ANTIPRO

a Shipments of culture! Shipments of art! Culture FOR, art FOR...: order, institutions, authority, the misery of power. That is the new police: art and culture that justify everything, that neutralize everything! Art and culture as fetishes of themselves! As lubricants and seductive containers of order! ENOUGH!!

n The time has come to act in consequence. To take action against art, which has become a guarantor of the existing order and misery. Just like sex. When creative, libertarian eroticism was turned into a commodity, it became the strongest guarantor of the existing order and misery. Denial and alienation of all autonomy and freedom. We must act! The social and cultural system has become material for urgent demolition!

t Art writhes vainly, in spasms. Between convulsions it moves, exhausted and exhausting, through fads and isms. And the new electronic technologies do not lead us toward yearned-for liberation, but rather strengthen that misery. Art forms part of an authoritarian, dogmatic, subjugated world! The antidote: forsake artworks, fetishes, free art from works of art, allow art to be energy, action, liberation, participation, libertarian commune of sensoriality and imagination, an active outpost of a world of solidarity!

i Nothing remains the same as itself. The old ceremonies, the old grammars, urbanity and precepts, in short: the institutionalized everyday has exploded. EXPLODED, NOTHING. Nothing remains the same as itself. And the world has become radically strange and alien to us. And art is also part of death. There are no possible horizons left: order stipulates that it is so. Poets: make horizons! Poets: return man to himself! Explode what has exploded! Start LIVING! Poetry: free the senses, free words, free behaviors, fight all kind of domination and fetishism!

p A long violence has begun, more terrible than any that came before. It is consciousness, struggling against itself to generate superconsciousness, in which opposites meet. It is the tension of history overcoming

itself. The anthropological revolution. Beyond domination and death. We must act! Attention! We must not get lost in the artwork. THERE IS NO ARTWORK. There is action-rest, action-creation, action-coexistence. Superconsciousness opens the way, the path we illuminate.

r Against everything, the stupidity of everything. Against art, the stupidity of art. Against culture, the stupidity of culture. Against ourselves, the stupidity of ourselves. Against the sweeping statement, the stupidity of the sweeping statement. GOING BEYOND. Against the world and what appears, the stupidity of the world and what appears. GOING BEYOND.

o To live is to go beyond order, beyond opposites. Beyond reason. To live ANTIPRO is to go beyond art and culture. Art is also order. Dissolve art. Order is part of death. Only because of order, life begins and ends. Dissolve order. Create fusion and confusion! Begin the anthropological revolution! Destroy history, living beyond its imperatives, its norms, its hierarchies, beyond power and obedience.

ANTIPRO. ANTIPRO. ANTIPRO. If it is, it is entropy. Not recognizing principles to reality. Reality is always deeper. Reality is reality and possibility. It is action. It is sensation and intelligence. It is it is not. It is reason living in the imagination. It is confusion, penetration, and extraversion. It is enlightened and fulfilled meditation. Orgasm and light. Garbage and diamond, and the opposite. It is overcoming opposites. It is not money, or money, or money, or anything abstract. If it is, it is anarchy. Not weight, or measure, or abacus, or electronic computer. It works freely. Not fruit. It is not art and it is not anything. It is not superior or inferior. It is it is not. ANTIPRO. It is the door of desire. It is what memory served and desire not frustrated is. It is agreement without a name. ANTIPRO is world-man-poem. It is to live and feel oneself living. It is freedom, risk, audacity, and companionship. Myth, chaos, cosmos. To cut oneself and feel no pain. To feel pain without cutting oneself. Continuous jump/continuous rest. Us and everyone else. The total destruction of what is in ruins. It is it is not. What gives up hope and what is hoped for. What cannot be imagined and is imagined. To be outside, being inside. Common, libertarian life. To reject what is produced: the whole as it is. The whole is the false. The whole is death. The whole is part of death. ANTIPRO. It is the way. Also utopia.

The Scope and Limits of Artmatics

[Handwritten note: *Remove the works produced here from my standard context. Informal and literary dialogue.*]

It will be difficult to consider the scope and limits of artmatics if we do not first define what we mean by this word. As you will have noticed, it is a new term that is intended to designate a new concept, that of an art produced from technological perspectives and determinations. Artmatics thus refers to artistic products that are the result of a more or less direct encounter with various aspects of technology: cybernetics, electronics, new media, etc. Naturally I am not trying to impose this term. I don't even know if it is more or less appropriate. It is true that José Miguel de Prada, who is here with us, predicted that it would catch on, but I don't know if I should trust him given that he invented "hypothetical aesthetometry," a subject on which he will speak to us this very afternoon.

A few days ago, I came up with a new and, we might say, more restricted definition of artmatics. In this case, we could say that artmatics can be considered the science of aesthetic analysis, or, in other words, the study of the levels, connections, etc., in which the work of art can be specifically resolved. I will refer to both subjects.

The first thing I want to do this afternoon is to take the work that has been produced at this center out of its usual standard context. I think that this extrapolation of the works will help me to understand them completely, dialectically. Taking them out of their context means removing them from modules, procedures, proportions, vectors; in other words, from all of that world in which they have existed so far. But this extrapolation creates a confrontation between the first definition of artmatics and the concept of art in general. Think of the contradictions that traditional painters seek in these works, and you will find the authentic essence of the contradictions of art in the technological world.

[Handwritten note: *it is not a question of turning art into a science, but of rectifying the scientific aspects in art. Science is the realm of stoicism and necessity. Art, on the other hand, is the realm of freedom, of the epicenter.*]

Technology: overdetermined world; art: not very determined world.
The concept of art from the Renaissance, Raphael, etc., until the present.

[Handwritten note: *Romanesque, Trecento, Renaissance.*]

The concept of perverse machines, this leads us to the conclusion that the world of machines is only sustainable from the libertarian world of art. Art guarantees its meaning. This is truly paradoxical and in contradiction with technical and scientific art.

Notes on the implications of art and science:

1. Goethe, Flaubert, etc. Interdependence between art and science, but art is less about the real world and more about the world of creation, invention, play, imagination.

In another age, machines were already declared artistic objects, when Marinetti wrote that a racing automobile is more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace. The truth is that a few decades on, the world is such that neither the automobile nor the Victory of Samothrace can express their beauty.

Now it is time to ask ourselves to what extent the art that is made here, these examples of artmatics, can bring about a qualitative change in the concept of art. I will say, frankly, I think that it can, but conditionally: only if it does not remain the endeavor of just one group. Today's artists must use modern technology if we want to see modern machines be machines that produce happiness, not standardization, etc.

2. The concept of artmatic environments, diverse artifacts, etc. But we should not forget that this qualitative change in the artistic field that artists can anticipate is ultimately a fundamentally sociopolitical endeavor, whose circumstances depend on an environment that transcends the artist.

3. The artist as inventor of aesthetic objects that can be realized as artistic objects.

On Concrete Poetry

—Don't even try. There's nothing to "understand" in painting. Painting doesn't mean anything.

We have heard answers like this hundreds of time from the condescending Cicerone of the moment. We have heard them at experimental art exhibitions, in front of abstract paintings at modern art museums, and from the teacher who is asked questions in all earnestness but somewhat doubtful of receiving the desired answer:

—Ok, ok, but could you tell me what the painting means? I really don't understand it.

Let him fantasize; we would hear phrases worthy of psychoanalysis:

—This looks to me like a herd of elephants at sunset. No, better still, I think you'll find this idea more natural, simpler: the painting represents an autumn day. Look, look at the leaden clouds looming... etc., etc.

We cannot downplay the paradoxical nature of the situation we have just somewhat ironically described, given that both the gentleman who goes to the exhibition and the artist come from the same world (or at least, they should both be able to perceive and interpret the same external impressions). And yet, it seems that they have nothing in common. Is it atrophy in the sensibility of the first, impenetrability in the expression of the latter?

We should assume that, broadly speaking, the same social, technical, and imaginative essence weighs upon the artwork and the person who contemplates it. We should also assume that the stimuli, the incitements of a famous abstract painting, should not be slippery, should not be lost in the lack of understanding of the man on the street.

Lack of understanding. Here is one of those phrases that we use all the time without noticing that we mean different things on each occasion. What does it mean to "understand" a work of art?

When a seventeenth-century gentleman saw the *Meninas*—and it is clear that he did “see” them—did he understand the painting? He could exclaim, “It looks real!,” and of course, even if that gentleman knew nothing of painting or language let alone artistic taste, he could always resort to a likeness to nature, to a certain supposed reality. And thus naïvely satisfied, he would go to the “gossip mill” to gravely pronounce his opinion on the art of Don Diego de Silva.

It seems clear that this discrepancy between the man on the street and the artwork is primarily due to the limited imagination, and even bewilderment, of those who manage the cultural “thing.” Basically, these are shortcomings in cultural policy. We cannot go into details here: whether it is due to the stagnation of the frameworks, to the selection of personnel, to a lack of funding, etc. But we should not surmise that artists want to be inaccessible (yes, it happens, but that is not what endures). This state of affairs is intensified by the confusion that is sometimes generated by the noisy hordes of critics, hack critics, and cultural social climbers, giving rise to those strange words with which they baptize artistic styles or series. They attach them like labels or brands, and if they are of little value as definitions or appraisals, I think they are even less so as advertising slogans.

In these texts I propose to shed light on some concepts regarding the most current art. I would be satisfied if the reader, having read them, feels less annoyed, less alienated and disconcerted by something as intensely alive and educational as art. An art that allows us to know more about the world—this world shaped by man—in which we move, the society in which we were born. An art that helps us discover its techniques and its values, that sharpens our sensibility and imagination, that achieves what Hegel wanted of art, a “bringing to our minds the true interests of the spirit.”

I don’t like to place too much emphasis on the differences between figurative and nonfigurative art, between a painting that copies nature and another which has no interest in a landscape or a man on horseback. Sometimes it is mistakenly thought that these two forms of expression have nothing in common. This conclusion would be like that of someone who thinks that a carrot and a lion have nothing in common. The differences are obvious, but the naturalist would tell us that they are both based on organic matter, that they belong to the vast domain of life and the biological sciences.

Let us enter into art, narrow down the field that is before us, and study how it works. Right away, a distinction must be made within the artwork: the subject matter of reality and the way of representing that reality. In other words, what is represented and how it is represented. In painting, the subject matter is extra-pictorial, or, more precisely, it is that which is outside the canvas and to which the painting makes reference through its own visual material, which can be a point of reference and source of intelligence for the viewer. To go deeper into this distinction and its corresponding significance, we must let go of a naïve preconception: the belief that we see things. No, what we apprehend are symbols of things, signs that we interpret through science, art, and our own experience. We do not see the “bull” or the “horseman” in a painting, but some patches of color that remind us of a bull or a horseman in the case of figurative art, but are not important per se. What is really important will be the overall relationships, the arrangement of the colors, the expressive configuration through which the figure appears. This, we shall see, is the native land of abstract modern art, what it chooses to emphasize over the battle or the portrait, which can, as a copy, serve as a mnemonic aid for the viewer or as an exercise for producing art, but never as a *métron*, as an aesthetic measure.

What happens is that through a process of laziness and assimilation, we usually identify with the “scene” rather than the “patches.” In an essay written around 1790 on naïve and sentimental poetry, Schiller already distinguished between the kind of poetry that is more concerned with ordering a platonic world outside language, as occurs in what he calls classical or sentimental poetry, and the other kind, the naïve poetry put forward by the Romantics, which is interested in the expressive power of language itself. The truth is that the great artist of all times never reduced himself to copying from nature, except insofar as it helped him to imagine, to interpret, to produce art. From a strictly artistic point of view, we can say that the family of King Charles IV in Goya’s famous painting *Charles IV of Spain and His Family* is a mere accident.

Georges Braque’s words, “let us forget things, and consider only relationships between them” did not merely allude to a fact that had been weighing increasingly heavily on art since the beginning of the century. The phrase also referred to a program that would radically affect the work of contemporary artists. From then on, artists

broke the chains of things, of models. They made their way through the relationships between these things, but disregarding them and not seeing them as univocal and absolute. They continued to move through a world in which things, objects, served only as abstractions, as distillations that they prepared in their imaginations and were then determined to produce only, not to reproduce.

The French Impressionists systematically began to break with supposed reality, and the logical consequence was pointillism. Cézanne, although he was a figurative painter, already focused primarily on the creation of geometric objects and crystalline proportions, through a series of stylizations of nature. Cubism appeared to pictorially tackle the new image of the world that was about to be introduced by the theory in physics of spatial relativity. This brings us to abstract art, in the second decade of this century. There is a well-known anecdote according to which Wassily Kandinsky, one of the founders of abstract art, returned to his studio one afternoon and was captivated by a splendid painting glowing on the easel on which he had left one of his own works. He soon realized that the light of the setting sun, hitting the canvas obliquely, had created this astonishing effect of light and color. Around the same time in the Netherlands, Piet Mondrian was working with strict asceticism on the two fundamental directions—vertical and horizontal—and with primary colors. These artists soon came together along with others like Paul Klee, Feininger, etc. A few years later, the union of abstract painting and architecture led to the emergence of Bauhaus architecture.

My aim was to talk about another, more recent form of art, from the postwar period: concrete art. But to plunge headlong into something as alien as art usually is for the ordinary reader a risk to be avoided. I hope that with what I have said and what I still have to say we have paved the way, allowing us to take up the subject again another day. Unfortunately, in journalistic chronicles, the chronicler often goes into details that are disjointed or irrelevant and superficial, or too abstruse—and also dubious.

To conclude, I would like to stress that a work of art, from any era or culture, cannot be understood, even if it is before our eyes every day, unless we notice the role that two series of variables play within it. The first has to do with the structure or configuration that organizes the material (paint, words, etc.). The second has to do with certain external conditions—socioeconomic, historical,

geographic—and with something I consider very important: the discovery of new techniques and materials. On another occasion we will talk about photography and its relationship to the decline of figurative art.

Abstract art exists within these two series of coordinates, and it is by no means an extravagance or the feverish dream of individuals bordering on madness or esotericism. It is true that the functions of imitation that so occupied traditional art no longer concern it fundamentally. But we should bear in mind that the world today is wider and deeper, and it has more compartments, sometimes in the form of labyrinths. And as intellectuals, our mission is to find Ariadne's thread.

* * *

To address this large, young field of art that has been called “concrete,” we are compelled to consider it within the perspectives opened up by abstract art in the previous article. Art is an activity, and, within the overall process, the abstracting effort on which abstract art focused has been crucial in the displacement of many of the terms that played a part in artistic creation.

The boundaries between abstract and concrete art have often not been clearly defined either by theorists or by the artworks themselves. An abstract painting may have a presence that is typically concrete. In principle we can say that the difference lies in the position that the artist takes with respect to the external object. In an abstract painting, the external model still counts in the representation. It is stylized, modified, abstracted. We can still perceive the shapes, colors, and tones of organic life on the canvas.

The concrete artist, on the other hand, is not interested in this type of abstraction. He chooses to “ideate” and then express. He chooses to invent, independently of external objects. To discover new relationships.

I will now transcribe some important words that are not very well known but can help us to understand concrete art. Here is a text by Hans [Jean] Arp (*On My Way*, New York, 1948): “I like art but not its substitutes. Naturalist art, illusionism, is a substitute for nature.... We do not want to copy nature, we do not want to reproduce, we want to produce.... The works of concrete art should not be signed

by their creators.... Concrete art aims to transform the world. It aims to make existence more bearable. It aims to save man from the most dangerous folly: vanity. It aims to simplify man's life. It aims to identify him with nature. Reason uproots man and causes him to lead a tragic existence. Concrete art is elemental, natural, healthy art." The quote is sufficiently clear and expressive in itself, and this is not the place to argue some controversial points that Arp falls into, such as art's "saving" mission, according to which art would not just be a substitute for nature but also for religion. There is also the idea of reason uprooting man and plunging him into the black chasm of "tragic existence." I think the reason that Arp refers to is pseudo-reason or non-reason: the positive reason of which the technocracy is now the ultimate agent.

The reader will probably be wondering whether there is some common substrate shared by abstract and concrete art. I think there is, and we can summarize it as follows: in both, the signifying value of the media involved in representation is reduced to the actual media themselves. In the case of painting, for example, it is reduced to color, line, shape. Of course, the figurative painter does not perceive reality in an univocal, complete, immutable way, but rather uses it to produce art by interpreting its signs. But it is in concrete painting that reality becomes the autonomous reality of the work itself. Whoever is familiar with the Hegelian theory of art as the sensible realization of the idea will see to what extent concrete art accepts this postulate, acquiring greater rationality. It also seems evident that in order to arrive at concrete art it was necessary to first pass through abstract art.

In "Abstraction in Science and Abstraction in Art," Susanne Langer rightly observes that "the abstractive processes in art would probably always remain unconscious if we did not know from discursive logic what abstraction is." However, it should not be deduced from this that abstraction was already present in figurative art. Rather, as noted by Max Bill, one of the founders of concrete art and the prime mover behind the Zurich group, "ultimate reductions of natural phenomena will not by abstraction alone come to life or become a real and authentic unity." Hence, concrete art is the "becoming-concrete of abstract thought." This idea—note the Hegelian lineage—may correspond to the general outline of the work, and it is what unifies the media used by the artist. In "A Few Words on Painting and Sculpture"

(1947), Max Bill writes that “even though there is no art without objects, concrete art consists of a process of materialization, of the realization of the object.”

At the beginning of this text we pointed out that it is often difficult to formally distinguish between abstract and concrete works. But the specific postulates of concrete works may allow us to make a distinction between the latter and the former. Concrete art is characterized by more rigorous proportions and boundaries, by more precise shapes. Amorphous patches of color, a kind of magma with organic undertones, prevail in abstract paintings, and the colors are more natural than industrial. None of this comes into play in concrete art: it is the platonic spirit of the geometrician, the designer, turning their back on the organic, but for the purpose of producing, like nature. Nature with its stoic imperturbability, remaining the same year after year. The artist always renewed, always with the task of revealing to the spirit new worlds—artificial paradises—on which to shed light.

On a Concrete Poetry Exhibition

After taking in the exhibition, the writer was able to extract two elements from the material on display: the “linguistic” element—words, linguistic signs, graphics—and the “artistic-plastic” element—the design of language in space, or the structuring of language in time, phonetic poetry.

For the time being, concrete poetry represents one more stage in the development of poetic language that does not unfold haphazardly, but in keeping with the logical evolution of linguistic forms in poetry. And also with the evolution of the relationship between the poetic subject and the language in which it is externalized, and that of the conditions imposed by socioeconomic development today. Concrete poetry tries to overcome (and at least in theory does overcome) the conflict or antagonism that always appears in lyrical expressions: the conflict between the poet’s subjectivity and the external or objective word. A rupture that has become increasingly acute since the industrial revolution, with the subsequent predominance of objects and the distortion of individual and social life. The fact that current capitalist development has increasingly blocked the spontaneity between the poet (or any other person) and the outside world forced the poet to uproot himself from it instead of becoming part of it. Thus he gradually withdrew into himself, creating that virginal, ivory-tower lyrical poetry so typical of the Second Industrial Revolution, which is strangely dematerialized as a counterpoint to the growing materialization—Juan Ramón Jiménez, Rilke, etc. However, the starting point and foundation of lyrical expression is language, with which lyrical poetry manages to be nothing more than a closed monologue:

It is the poet’s subjectivity making language sound that creates lyrical expression, but language is a material that, like artistic, architectural, and architectural material—painting, architecture, sculpture, music—has arrived at the present moment in an ongoing crisis of forms. This is so precisely because the forms are alienated from themselves, and thus in a constant process of reification. The succession of styles and treatments of material, and their failure in our century—failure for music, visual arts,

and poetry—was a result of the objective deficiency of artistic achievement. An “apple” could never be visually copied because they are two different things—the thing and the copy of the thing. This crisis of form also occurred in poetry, which was constantly in the predicament of stylizing the language in an attempt to stop its reification, its solidification, its failure.

Poetry has been a decade behind the other arts when it comes to creating an objective linguistic-poetic field, focusing on itself rather than the vagueness of external reality.

The result has been the creation of concrete poetry. Lyrical expression in this kind of poetry has overcome the moment of “conflict” through its unreserved surrender to the object. External objects are no longer described, at most they are allowed to arrive, they are trapped with language, which cites them with its objective expressions. A concrete poem acts like abstract painting or like music after Anton Webern, through concrete or inalienable objects.

* * *

The artistic-visual level is determined by a requirement of the language itself. A language that, as we have seen, is fundamental in all lyrical expressions. The linguistic element—words—has a material (visual or phonetic) configuration and can *only* be disposed of through abstraction, because the linguistic element exists de facto in space or time. WHITE in the center of the page is not the same as WHITE in the corner, or in spaced-out letters, etc. Similarly, whispering WHITE is not the same as shouting WHITE or putting the word through a pulse generator and a reverberator. These are objective qualities of the linguistic element, just as using *romancillo* is not the same as using *ottava rima* form in the metric convention of Western lyrical poetry. But the possibility of design is included in the spatial arrangement of the linguistic element, a possibility that has been sidelined by “linear” Indo-European languages. In contrast, Chinese is a typically logical syntax that stems from the spatial arrangement of discreet linguistic elements.

A Chinese person would consider the Latin phrase *Illi canes albi qui venerunt* redundant and pedantic, because of the accumulation of masculine plural nouns. To the Chinese, there would be five

immutable elements, whose syntactic relationships of gender and person would be determined by their position in space.

It is these spatial possibilities that concrete poetry promotes, just as for different ends it promotes, or, better still, exploits, advertising posters. This explains the speed with which concrete poetry has become international in scope and also the possibility of its being incorporated into the world of linguistics, of mathematical sorting, posters, advertising, TV, film, radio, architecture, etc.: fields in which traditional poetry has been unable to find its place or sometimes any place at all, and in which it is inevitably mutilated. It is not its content but its structure and function that makes concrete poetry lay claim to being the socialization of poetry.

Ten years after its birth, concrete poetry has proliferated and spread all over the world. It is not uncommon for some of its components to still carry the baggage of Surrealism and Dada. These will have little to do with the future of concrete poetry, but its roots certainly draw on experimentation and adventure as aesthetic principles and the best incentive for coming up with new expressive discoveries. Technical advances in kinetics, atoms, the cosmos, etc., will be incorporated by poets, who will not describe them *with* language but conjure them up *in* language. Max Bense's idea that to write is to *produce* from language, rather than to *apply* it, is totally applicable to lyric expression, and particularly to concrete lyrical poetry. I think that the best and most generic name is CONCRETE—given by the Noigandres group from Brazil and by Eugen Gomringer. Others, more or less generic, are experimental, spatialist, constructivist, semiotic, semantic, phonic, phonetic, objective, kinetic, etc. In any case, the name will be decided by the poetic expressions themselves, not on a whim, even that of the writer.

Brief historical summary: pre-texts, that is, clear “breakthroughs” in the evolution of poetry culminating in concrete poetry: Mallarmé (*Un coup de dés*), Apollinaire, Khlebnikov, Zdanevich, Morgenstern, Marinetti, Balla, Éluard, Tzara, Kassák, Breton, Pierre Albert-Birot, R. Hausmann, van Doesburg, Huidobro; and some Creationists and Ultraists like Venna, Cummings, Lage...—some are painters, Lage makes random music. But with his constellations (1953–62), Eugen Gomringer is the first typical concrete poet. He was secretary to Walter Gropius at the Bauhaus, he had links to the concrete art and

painting of the Zurich group led by Max Bill, and he was secretary at the Ulm School of Design (Switzerland), the successor of the Bauhaus. Similar results were being achieved at the same time in other parts of Europe—France and Germany—and above all in Brazil, with the Noigandres group in São Paulo. These, together with Gomringer, were the initial milestones. It should be noted that they did not know each other. Later, it was Noigandres and Gomringer that gave the name “concrete poetry” to their work.

Since the middle of the 1950s, concrete poetry has spread through most of Europe, including socialist countries, parts of the East like Turkey, Japan, etc., and America. The most important centers are: Paris, São Paulo, Tokyo, Prague, Stuttgart, etc., with numerous magazines: *Vou*, Japan; *Labris*, Belgium; *Tafel Ronde*, Netherlands; *Les Lettres nouvelles*, *OU - Cinquième Saison*, and *Approches*, France; *Tlaloc*, England, etc. Names of the leading concrete poets: Décio Pignatari, Augusto and Haroldo de Campos, José Lino Grünwald, and Ronaldo Azeredo in Brazil; Emmett Williams and Alain Arias-Misson in the United States; Heinz Gappmayr and Claus Bremer in East Germany, etc.

The New Poetry and the Problems of Contemporary Aesthetics

People often ask whether the aesthetic revolution that took place in the visual arts and music in the early twentieth century also had an impact on poetry. Indeed, various arts shattered certain conventions and aesthetic criteria that had reached the limits of their signifying potential and no longer responded to the demands of today's society. This break immediately opened up a broader field of possibilities. Ignorance of the revolution that took place in poetry means that it is considered a reactionary cultural form that is resistant to change. In this article we will see the unfairness and absurdity of indicting twentieth-century poetry.

It seems inevitable that there has been a so-called aesthetic revolution in poetry if we accept the view that all cultural expressions, including of course the avant-garde, reflect an underlying structure. At the aesthetic level, the avant-gardes were a response to the newest contradictions. The complexity of contemporary life endorsed their stubborn multiplicity and continuity. In fact, the avant-gardes are defined by their categorical being-in-time, by their eagerness to help resolve the latest social and aesthetic contradictions. Their objectification in the form of various "isms," certifying their death as well as their birth, is due to our society's structural condemnation of anything that does not bend to its imperatives. To be more precise, death—the impossibility of a normal, non-spasmodic life in the avant-gardes—lies in the refusal to allow them to act upon real situations, side by side with material structures.

Avant-garde works are by no means ephemeral, marginal, failed cultural crystallizations. Such claims clearly serve immobilism. Meanwhile, so-called traditional art ignores the new conditions of life, and its frustration becomes more obvious when it tries to insert new content in old forms. Vladimir Mayakovsky's famous dictum that "there is no revolutionary art without revolutionary form" can be understood in the strict sense here. This does not mean that avant-garde art is now the only justifiable art, to the exclusion of all else. Rather, it appears that the determinations of avant-garde art coexist alongside others that justify the existence of reactionary art.

Addressing the subject of the new poetry forces us to expand and improve our understanding of the limits of poetry. It forces us to address the phenomenon of poetry. In his discourse “On Lyric Poetry and Society” (after emphasizing the primacy of language in lyric works), Theodor Adorno says, “The highest lyric works are those in which the subject, with no remaining trace of mere matter, sounds forth in language until language itself acquires a voice.” Indeed, language is the foundation of poetry and any attempt to understand poetry without language would be futile.

But a definition originating in the center of language can help us understand the manifestations of the new poetry. Language allows us to emphasize its transcendent or abstract dimension, that is, the references beyond words. At the same time, we can focus on its material dimension and its properties, which are studied in disciplines such as phonetics, morphology, etc. This dual aspect is bound up with linguistic areas, which specifically condition poetry, insofar as languages and writing systems tend toward one of the two tendencies.

Agglutinative languages allow us to develop the inner workings of language. The same can be said of ideogrammatic writing, in which the signifier and signified overlap and complement each other. An ideogram is not a symbol but an object of philosophical and artistic value. Concepts are expressed in a concrete rather than abstract form. On the other hand, the linear system of Indo-European languages reduces the possibility of overlapping of content and material elements.

Since the nineteenth century, there has been an increase in the number of poets turning to the linguistic world, away from the extra-textual. Raoul Hausmann recounts how the poets Achim von Arnim, Hölderlin, and Novalis undertook in-depth studies of language and semantics, with a particular focus on phonetics. In *Phantasmus*, Arno Holz used words of nine, ten, and more syllables, playing with the mechanics of language. Holz also used a special form of graphic layout. Baudelaire thought that what poets see is symbols, and Hugo Friedrich claimed that contemporary poetry takes us into a world whose reality exists only in language.

Mallarmé initiated these experiments brilliantly, with a remarkable awareness of what he was embarking on. In his book *Un coup de dés* (1897) and later writings, he took a revolutionary approach to poetry, rationally making the most of typographical possibilities to connect the work as a whole. He brought the new poetry within the realm of

the probable, with the new poet taking control of chance and critically addressing the poem itself. The Futurist movement with Marinetti and Dada with Hausmann and Schwitters contributed to the revolution. Without forgetting to mention Apollinaire, P. A. Birot, Huidobro, Theo van Doesburg, L. Venna, and Ilia Zdanevich, to name just a few. They all took poems outside of the small circle of readers and into the streets, presenting them to the reading/gaze of all. So the mutual influence of the new poetry and propaganda was foreseeable. But as Max Bense notes in *Aesthetica (Ästhetische Information)*, by focusing on commercial interests, propaganda relegates aesthetics to mere stimuli, impoverishing language for the sake of commodities. We may have been excited when art began making inroads into the world of posters, but disenchantment soon followed as we became aware of the unsustainable demands of commodities. What really matters: the alienation of the artist.

Other poets who are precursors of concrete poetry and the new poetry in general are Cummings, who smashes words and gives space an expressionist value, and Pound, who in *The Cantos* uses a kind of ideogrammatic method that he arrived at through his Chinese language studies.

There was a vacuum, a cultural lull, during and immediately after World War II, which resulted in a cultural crash as well as an economic crash. But some bridges in the development of avant-garde poetry survived. By the early 1950s, a poetic movement emerged with extraordinary force at various points, and soon spread throughout the world. It was called concrete poetry, and it consisted of a rational way of understanding and constructing poems. This new poetry addressed the perceptual level and was produced at material levels that gave rise to the content. As well as what we could call visual, it also included aural or phonetic work.

In early 1950s Brazil, we find the extremely active Noigandres group, whose members include Augusto de Campos, Haroldo de Campos, Décio Pignatari, Ronaldo Azeredo, etc. They mainly worked on the mechanisms of language and described poems as “useful objects.” They were influenced by the Brazilian tradition of 1920, and the work of Oswald de Andrade and João Cabral de Melo Neto. The 1958 Noigandres Pilot Plan says, “concrete poetry: product of a critical evolution of forms.” Noigandres are very closely linked to groups based in Stuttgart and Zurich.

Around the same time, in Switzerland, Eugen Gomringer was making similar works, which he called “Constellations” (1953–62). When he met Pignatari in 1955, Gomringer accepted the term “concrete poetry,” coined by the Noigandres group, to refer to the new poetry. Around 1953, Gomringer had written that “the aim of the new poetry is to give poetry an organic function in society again, and in doing so to restate the position of the poet in society.... [I]ts concern is with brevity and conciseness.... Its objective element of play is useful to modern man ... Being an expert both in language and the rules of the game, the poet invents new formulations.... In the constellation something is brought into the world. It is a reality in itself and not a poem about something or other.”

In 1956, he wrote that “if the poet’s attitudes are positive and synthetically rationalistic, his poetry will be so. It will not serve as a valve for the release of all sorts of emotions and ideas but will consist of a linguistic structure closely related to the tasks of modern communication, which are influenced by the sciences and by sociological factors.”

The Italian poet Carlo Belloli can also be traced to the origins of concrete poetry. In 1951, he published *Corpi de poesia* (Poetry Bodies), and in the “istruzioni per l’uso dei corpi di poesia” (Instruction for the Use of Poetry Bodies), he wrote that “a poetry body is an object composed of words set free, not fixed in space: visual words...”

From that point on, different developments and experiences have multiplied and spread throughout the world. In France, concrete poetry, practiced by Pierre and Ilse Garnier and the poets who gathered around them, has become known as “spatialism.” The group seeks to “defolkify” languages and raise them to the cosmic level, to create texts that vibrate and give off energy when projected into space. Spatialism can be broken down into mechanical poetry, semantic poetry, kinetic poetry, phonic poetry, etc., and it has integrated poetry into architecture. In many senses, Frans Vanderlinde in the Netherlands, Ivo Vroom in Belgium, Seiichi Niikuni in Japan, and Enrique Uribe in Spain travel along similar paths to spatialism. In Czechoslovakia, it influenced Jiří Kolář, Jiří Valoch, Josef Hiršal, and Bohumila Grögerová. In their book *Job-Boj* (the struggle of the young), Hiršal and Grögerová create critical distance through humor, satire, and the grotesque. Ladislav Novák also participates in this satirical trend in some of his phonetic poems.

In Japan, the magazines *Vou* and *Asa* are dedicated to the new poetry. Together with Yasuo Fujitomi's and Seiichi Niikuni's concrete poetry in the strict sense, poets such as Kitasono Katue, Motoyuki Ito, and Toshihiko Shimizu experiment with different systems of symbols together with purely linguistic ones.

In Italy, Franco Verdi and Adriano Spatola have devised a series of highly evocative symbols and spatial adventures based on linguistic elements. In Turin, Arrigo Lora Totino actively engages in phonetic and visual experiments with a strong structural bent. In conjunction with *Tool* magazine, Ugo Carrega and Vincenzo Accame work on the visual-semantic aspects of language. Claudio Parmiggiani and Nanni Balestrini from Italy also deserve a mention.

In Britain, Cavan McCarthy continues some aspects of the investigations of spatialism through his magazine *Tlalic*. In Scotland, the Benedictine priest Dom Sylvester Houédard touches on the mystic side of concrete poetry, exploring the energetic potential of words. Gloucester-based John Furnival, a poet and painter, plays with the potential for movement in the poetic object, through foldouts and pop-ups. Ian Hamilton Finlay uses similar strategies, making poetic "toys" and incorporating photographic elements into concrete poetry. He is now working on integrating the new poetry into amenities such as swimming pools. Like many other "spatialist" concrete poets, he actively participates in kinetic investigations.

German poet Ferdinand Kriwet combines technical perfection with a magnificent command of the concrete possibilities of German. He debuted at the age of eighteen with the book *rotor*, and his subsequent works *Hörtex* (Radio Texts) and *Sehtex* (Visual Texts) present universes studded with words and linguistic elements of varying scales.

In Frankfurt am Main, Franz Mon is producing two distinct types of work: on the one hand, programming linguistic sequences on different levels; and, on the other, reducing poems to fragments of words, as part of a rigorous program. These works represent the outer limits of concrete poetry. Having exhausted the aesthetic possibilities of words as the only structural element, poets have entered other fields of signification—semantic fields—in which words are simply one part of the whole. We could call this new development concrete-semiotic poetry.

Within concrete poetry in the strictest sense, we have the Stuttgart school, dedicated mainly to the mechanisms of language,

with Helmut Heissenbüttel and a group led by Max Bense. Their investigations revolve around rationalist analysis, the systematic study of textual information. Ludwig Harig, Reinhard Dohl, and Claus Henneberg are also part of the Stuttgart group. Hansjörg Mayer primarily focuses on typography, and Ernst Jandl, who lives in Vienna, is also very close to the Stuttgart group, as are Claus Bremer, Heinz Gappmayr, and some works by Carl Friedrich Claus. It is impossible to mention everyone working on the new poetry around the world, either individually or in groups, so it must suffice to take note of its new horizons. The new groups include Praxis, in Brazil, which has a strong innovative and revolutionary spirit, although from the aesthetic point of view it appears to be a strategy to expand its scope and social impact, at least for the moment.

In France, Julien Blaine, seconded by Jean-François Bory, has been experimenting with a new concept of poetry—semiotic poetry—that goes beyond the boundaries of concrete poetry and into territories where it is possible to introduce poetics, words.

Edgardo A. Vigo, Jorge de Luxán Gutiérrez, and Luis Pazos work with *Diagonal Cero* magazine. They have started to work with the latest trends in poetry, projecting their experiments in phonetics, posters, and semiotics.

Closely linked to concrete poetry “to be seen,” we find phonetic works like those of Paul de Vree (who is also a visual concrete poet) and others who work in the same field: Garnier, Novak, Mon, etc. Arthur Pétronio, a true pioneer, and Hans Helms were both among the first to work with phonetic poetry. The phonetician Henri Chopin also co-creates phonetic films. He does not see the new poetry as part of a framework. He believes that text has been totally superseded or that it will, at most, become part of a kind of entertainment that does not yet exist: paratheater, ballet...

Recently, the new poetry has found its way into theater and the world of show business. These kinds of incursions have mainly been carried out in France and Italy. In Spain, Francisco Salazar and Adolfo Hernández de la Fuente have tried various setups, using mime, gesture, lights, multispatiality, rotor action, and words as essential tools for theatrical communication. The French and Italian experiments still seem to lack awareness of the “spectacle/public” that must necessarily go hand in hand with theater, and consequently it will be difficult for them to become shows for audiences. The

Spanish attempts are certainly based on a constructive arrangement of theatrical elements, playing with the full range of their concrete potential for expression and signification, without losing sight of an audience that must be captivated, taught, made aware, and presented with problems—their problems—in a precise way.

In short, by recovering and developing all that it contains, the new poetry works as the surest generator and mediator for objective, concrete communication. It connects the world of signification to that of the visual arts and sound. Concrete poetry, like all arts, operates in space-time, which in this case is of course semantic space-time, because it must give rise to signification and because reading is ordered within it. As in the other artistic aspects presented in the exhibition, the aesthetic problem cannot be reduced to simply negotiating a set of criteria or conventions, but rather to the idea that beyond these criteria and conventions lies a field of operations that is even larger and more in line with today's social demands.

Concrete poetry began by simplifying, but by no means diminishing, language and the poetic object. Rather, it expanded them and activated their full range of possibilities. In any case, the aesthetic information of a text does not preclude the concrete presence of other, not strictly linguistic information. This can be seen in the most recent form, semiotic poetry.

In Spain, the new poetry has the firm support of Enrique Uribe, Fernando López-Vera, Herminio Molero, and Ignacio Gómez de Liaño, who create and disseminate it. A few months ago there was a great step forward with the founding of the *Cooperativa de Producción Artística* (Cooperative of Artistic Production), where it continues to grow, spread, and regenerate.

Probable Situations

Over the last few years, a rather persistent series of attempts has been made to incorporate Spain into the experimental poetry movements that, deliberately taking concrete poetry as a starting point, are flourishing in many European, American, and Asian countries. Exhibitions, lectures, seminars, and publications—circumstantial for now—testify to those efforts. Looking back, weighing up the last two or three years, the word “pessimism” springs to the lips. But we will not utter it, even though there are reasons for doing so. Anyone can easily see that the impact has only reached a minority, which can hardly be considered large, and, worse still, does not necessarily have an ongoing interest in it.

Among the signs of pessimism we have just mentioned, we readily include arguments from “authority,” which is no less reliable for being ineffable anonymous authority. Indeed, some sensibly believe that our very particular, special, and unparalleled idiosyncrasy is hardly fertile ground for something foreign. Something radically foreign, they say. But we do not think this argument can easily be sustained. If we accept it, we would have to agree with those who were against the implementation of the printing press in fifteenth-century Spain, because it was presumably an evil invention, being as it was foreign and alien to the Spanish spirit. We would also have to agree with those who opposed liberty, equality, etc., under the pretext of being something foreign. And they were right: the famous words referred to a state of affairs that is totally foreign to Spain. At this rate, we would have to think that Spain is different, as the tourist slogan says; we don’t think we will weaken its power of attraction by contradicting it. Because other than the special grace of God, the reasons Spain could give to justify its status of “being different” are the same as those that all countries could attribute to themselves. And so, seemingly miraculously and following this singular reasoning, we would discover that we are all different, inimitable, mysterious, and various other myths.

In our view, the most serious thing about the obstacles blocking the aforementioned efforts is the growing inability of large sectors of our population—starting with our so-called intellectuals—to

react, to feel surprised, or even annoyed. Through some mysterious mechanism of self-defense, pure indifference becomes utter jadedness. Perhaps due to an inescapable economic fact: the fear that in the blink of an eye, what appeared to be a small pile of five-cent coins will have turned into a pile of one-cent coins. But this response, or lack of response, should not make us pessimistic. It was, after all, foreseeable, and although it is folly to find solace in numbers, this does appear to be affecting traditional poetry, both young and otherwise, which has institutional funding that supports it, or perhaps destroys it. This poetry has not managed to break the narrow margin of its audience, perhaps because it is beyond its power to do so. Admittedly, in its defense, this kind of poetry circulates in a particularly stoic system. Its products are consumed by those who produce them, thus demonstrating the excellences of poetic-economic self-sufficiency. This state of affairs is almost as upsetting to the poets as the actual practice of poetry that they engage in. It makes us think about the inferiority bricoleurs must feel in relation to the world of engineers and other professionals. If only our literary bricoleurs would aim their irony against bricolage itself, we could start to believe that their sense of inferiority was well on the way to disappearing.

That said, there seem to be no structural obstacles impeding the feasibility in the Spanish scene of these experimental movements, which only ignorance or frivolity can dismiss as aestheticist, snobby, etc. The bullets fly without pause and with less than desirable rage, from all directions. Meanwhile, in this trench of sorts, we come up against the clerks of anti-experimentalism. "That's enough experimentalism," they say. And very politely, but with an obsolete, *démodé* precision, they attempt to strike it down with specious words. "That's enough experimentalism," they repeat, before sensibly and solemnly appealing to the need to move beyond experiments to answers. The contradiction that appears in this rebuke can only be compared to that of "common sense" employed as an anti-innovationist battle cry and defender of the established rules and patterns. The contradiction is obvious when we realize that without experiments even the smallest discovery, the tiniest glimmer of a solution, is impossible. Human praxis does not repeat the problems it poses, nor has it been so kind as to attach an answers section. Until we have an answer, though not in the strictly arithmetic sense, experimentation is inevitable. This can be seen more clearly in the sciences, because what is at stake in

their findings is human nature itself, or, less laudably, the politics of the “prestige” of nations.

From what has been said so far, our cultural scene may not appear to be the best breeding ground for experimental movements to take root. Almost the opposite is true: the economic and political isolationism that preceded these last few years, together with certain deficiencies in cultural information, have imprinted on our intelligence a somewhat provincial or even fearful spirit. This spirit is the antithesis of the one that emboldens a young culture. Spanish culture will end up becoming one, but not without conditions. Indeed, it is no longer enough to merely point out the lag in our literature, our culture, its low standard in comparison with that of other European countries. Instead of lamenting the downfall or death of our culture, it would be more practical to sign the death certificate and remove the actual corpse. A corpse so actual that it has not forgotten to chase the shadows of our glorious ancestors.

We had all the more reason to fear that after a period of strong censorship and paternalism we would immediately be forced to witness a spectacle of frayed nerves and insecurity complexes, with their corresponding apathy and stagnation. Reactions such as these are constantly appearing, and this is precisely what writers and artists should focus on raising to the level of consciousness. Writers should be seen as professionals in need of maturing, rather than a class to be eradicated. Because while our intelligence, in the past—those golden times—came to see giants instead of windmills, it now appears to suffer the opposite optical defect, seeing windmills where there are true giants, perhaps with the vague hope of driving away the real giant.

We would like to confess our misgivings about writing an introduction. Introductions are a form of literary creation in which the creative nature of the task is not clear to the writer, who has a fear of being gratuitous and superfluous. This happens in moments of lucidity, where the writer sees that the task is hypostasis of social conventions: do not approach anybody—in this case, “anything”—without a prior introduction. Under circumstances such as these, the introducer—particularly if heterodoxy and exhibitionism are part of his writer’s syndrome—will not be able to resist the attraction of a libertarian doublespeak by which he can circumvent expectations. The outcome is likely to please everyone: the result is there to be seen, and yet the writer has managed to fool everyone.

The supposed aristocracy that writers lay claim to and the superiority they like to display—over those they are introducing, and then over readers—is only a mask with which they hide their humble origins. Writers of introductions emerged with mercantilism, and they alternate between the roles of sales agent and public relations in literary creation. Later, their experience of the thing earned them a trust by which the terms of literary creation are turned upside down: creation takes place, but the goal is the unveiling ceremony. This is just a step away from the falsification of artistic or literary creation. Clearly, this whole thing about writing introductions has all the hallmarks of a tragic myth: a precarious existential situation added to the fear of being superfluous to the thing being introduced.

As for us—we dissolve our status in the plural “us” in the hope of sublimating it—we do not feel we can escape that fate, even though in this particular case it was our choice to write the introduction, which presumably means that we are addressing the subject in question because we are interested in it.

We have reduced the long list of questions that the papers comprising this volume could give rise to, boiling them down to two key issues. We will formulate these two questions and then expand on them, which will not be a repetition of the papers, nor should it be, nor should it not be.

The two questions are: What should the poet’s role be in today’s society? And what answers to this question do experimental concrete poems provide? As we can see, the osmosis between these two questions allows us to address and expand on them together. This implicit bringing of poetry and society face to face may come as a surprise, as much to intimist poets as to the epigonic offshoots of social poetry. The presence of reality—which may or may not be a social situation—as a theme in poetry does not determine the implication of poetry in society. Indeed, some poems, like some paintings, do not address reality even though they could not be understood outside of the social context and the historical dialectic. As its etymology suggests, poetry is a form of production, with all the economic determinations this implies. We are all aware of the changes that have taken place in society over the last few centuries. We accept that change is natural. But what we accept for society, we deny to poetry. Poets still rely on the same elements as in the past: language and information symbols. But they are not so unchanged that the meaning of “shoe” today is interchangeable

with the meaning of the same word six hundred years ago. The signifier is the same, but the economic, aesthetic, and psychological constellation around it is not. As in the past, poets continue to arrange words in order, but their formal statutes have changed.

Pretentiously placing themselves beyond material conditions, poets use this pretension to justify the sublime in their works: their purity and sacredness. But it would be more reasonable to see this pretension as a rejection of the increasingly constraining world of the market, the world of commodification.

Look at the streets of our great cities, the neon signs, advertisements, publications, and words: a world saturated with language assails us in a mass of gestures, signs, messages. The insolence of this deluge of words is only matched by the hypocrisy with which each of them hides. The same words used to transmit an order of war will later serve to turn war into the ideal state of man. The words in catch-phrases and electoral programs will be used to deceive “naïve” and trusting citizens.

If we allow that poets are aesthetically responsible for language, with a freedom that was not enjoyed by language theorists or the now extinct species of love-letter scribes, then it is up to poets to demystify language, to free it from illegitimately imposed jargon. In doing so, it would be pointless for them to turn to rhetoric in a desperate attempt to galvanize corpses from past eras. This would only increase confusion. Rhetoric is the only bastion available to the poet, young or not, determined to follow the ghosts of tradition.

Poetry remains a phenomenon of language concentration. The formal statutes of Renaissance poetry: rhyme, constituent accents, figures of poetry, etc., confirm this phenomenon, but concentration in poetry refers to the reader’s level of concentration, to their capacity for tension or attention. But there is almost as much distance between today’s reader as the subject of psychic movements and the reader of six hundred years ago as there is between the constellation of objects and situations that influence their psychology.

The rhythm and the forms of the sonnet may have been captivating in other times, when the visual and acoustic field was very limited. Today, the power to fascinate has been illegitimately appropriated by advertisements, slogans, posters... surrendering to commodities. That said, this process of linguistic reduction is also occurring in experimental concrete poetry, as Eugen Gomringer’s paper points out.

But it is not even necessary to compare eras. The Western system of lyric poetry, originating in the Italian Renaissance, has only been elevated to the status of touchstone—unfairly downplaying other systems of poetry—because of the economic dominance of the West, not for reasons inherent to the system. This dominance has served to crush others on an excessive scale, supporting mythical descriptions of Indo-European peoples. But care was taken to establish a justification in the cultural superstructure: we crush because we are superior. Unfortunately, this has blocked many doors to understanding other cultures. Let it suffice for now to point out that Western poetry is by no means the criterion for all poetry.

We are almost done. Many will reproach us for not having really answered the key questions posed above. Paradoxically we will reply that it did not depend on us, but rather on the reader who finds that the questions have not been answered. What's more, if we are looking for culprits, there are two close at hand: the content of the papers, and the uncomfortable fact that this is purely and simply an introduction. These two factors combined mean that it is impossible at this time to “really” answer the questions, as the dreaded reproach would have it.

Some final words. I am sorry to have written more than I hoped to, and I am even sorrier to have reasoned. We know, when dealing with the “avant-garde,” that our audience ends with an act of faith: either I agree or I don't agree. The reasoning is irrelevant. Thus a ditch is dug that is difficult to cross and almost impossible to navigate. And it is economically dubious, because in addition to the work of digging out the soil, there is the work of filling it up again. Here we have a linguistic paradox: a burying can be an unearthing.

Meaning and Meaninglessness of Technological Art

A.

1. Let us imagine that we are not in this room: dais, no-man's-land, audience/consumers, etc., but in a room with a hexagonal floor plan. Six triangular areas with their respective corridors, and the speaker in the center. This arrangement impels:

- a. The mobility of the speaker and the audience.
- b. A decentering.

Let us establish a central dais: ridiculous sacralization, affectation.

2. Dais: no-man's-land, lecturer's land; elevated area, set apart, "the differentiation of culture"!

3. Elongated venue ---> moving railbus.

4. Venue with the audience inconsiderately centered.

5. Venue based on components, mobile modules with the capacity for movement, transitions. We can activate them or program them randomly (these devices would be very suitable for the Council of Ministers or the National Headquarters of the Movement) ---> Field.

6. Imagination is not gratuitous because it disrupts the imposition, the unquestioned affirmation of that which exists. This is not a gratuitous exercise but a dialectical one, a self-criticism of the environment. I do not think: we are in the best possible environment, and then speak on the basis of this supposition; rather, I speak on the basis of an environment that can be criticized. An environment—in this case a venue—is not a "fact," it is not a completed present perfect: a fact is such in insofar as it still acts upon us, and we must beware that its inductions do not lead us astray. A fact—the fact of my environment—does not have "meaning" once and for all, but rather acquires meaning by collaborating with or hindering social aspects.

This leads to another self-criticism, aimed at a more useless and pursued(?) medium: language.

B.

7. Conjecture of the title: when I gave the text its title, I considered complete what was only an exploratory aspiration, induced by various previous relationships, contacts, and experiences.

The title assumes that the speaker can pass judgment on technological art in regard to something as serious as its meaning. This attitude is typical of the idealistic cultural critic: aristocraticism, "labels." The title is in keeping with the "dais" and with what is inside it. In advertising, it is called "catchy." Possible title: "On Art and Technology."

8. But what is the use of questioning the meaning or meaninglessness of technological art when we do not know the conditions that a discourse must meet in order for it to have meaning. Is it meaningful to talk about T. A.?

For Baudelaire, nature was still a forest of living symbols that we could walk among; for primitive man, word—expression—dance. "Historical decadence": writing.

Let us remember the tantric rites, the mantras, the physical body and the written body, etc.

9. Nature is no longer that living forest, it is a manipulated, instrumental one; its reason is not in the concrete possibility of a fairer life, instead reason has hidden itself in the scientist's blackboard, clothed in formulas.

C.

10. The opinion that technology has a strong instrumental nature seems to be gaining ground. With this statement, it appears that the sphere of goals—happiness, justice, etc.—had been overcome, that technology is the devil, the inevitable devil of a perfect world. However, the instrumental nature of science is a socio-historical fact that has become more pronounced with the advance of the instrumental nature of society, the individual, etc. For example, language: Is it not an instrument?

Technology is man's ultimate attempt to establish himself and reconcile himself with the world. But this opinion is contradicted by day-to-day experience, in which everything from the car wheel to the TV set, the pencil sharpener, etc., confines itself to "working," and this work removes rather than supports man's autonomy and liberation.

But since the Greeks, there has been a theory of art as technology that I would like to refer to: *technē poiētikē*. In this framework, technology was a form of production. What it produced was rationality, a rationality that was not alienated from man; it was the ally of the good man: beauty.

It is true that even then technology was highly instrumentalized, but technology and instrument were not linked together, nor were word and instrument, nor sculpture and instrument.

If the most striking aspect of technology is its role as a human activity that produces reason, art is the culmination of a reason that is, in spite of itself, objectified, reified.

Poetics is the coherent culmination of technology, and only a technology that is disengaged from the creativity of freedom, as is the case today, can be seen as a repressive phenomenon.

Technology and art act, they interact like two dialectical poles, like two stages in a humanizing process. However, the historical reality of technology—the fact that it is a human activity—ties in with its practical function. In this sense, the discourse on technology has been one-dimensional. Technology is technology of destruction, as in Auschwitz, in Indochina, and in Dabia... But not just technology, also the media, words, the hands and eyes of the myths of men. The universal irrationality of the existing order has its safeguard in the rationality of a "human product" that is alienated, turned against itself.

In capitalist society, the technological discourse knows only one phrase: deference to the status quo. Technological art is the libertarian attempt to remake today's conceptual apparatus, (that) the aesthetic does not decline the sensual, or the conceptual. Art mediates between formal reason, concept, and sensuality. But the dimension in which technology and art could really come together is a historical dimension, and that historical dimension is brought about by violated everyday life: behavioral patterns ---> neurosis, repression, one-dimensionalization... must be violated.

The solution is not to turn art into science, but rather to turn science into art. But this, as much for figurative as concrete art, can only be achieved in the density of history and the end of history (understood) as domination.

Technology has no meaning other than as a purveyor of justice, of reason, in other words, as...

Even so, the category of “historicity” goes beyond history, insofar as history implies the denial of happiness.

To be—to be exact

To be—to be instrumental

To be—aesthetic / free

Given that technology has been justified as a procedure of conquering nature, what does it mean to conquer nature? Wouldn't it be better to say humanize nature? Shouldn't technology have an impact on this humanizing process? To conquer nature is not the essence of man, nor of technology, but it is rather a historical disposition, like the instrumental. Non-alienated technology, that is, poetic techne or technological art, is not in the sphere of stoicism and necessity, but in the sphere of freedom. A distinction must be drawn between technology and technical (production), as between art and artwork. The different technologies, and the different arts, deny art as they create it, because they stop it, they fix it. (Dada, public poetry... [as opposed to that fixation]).

Technology, like language, is the full realization of man, without compromising his balance with nature. Even more so if it is poetic techne, artistic language.

Demiurge.

The instrumental is imitation or abstraction, but with the understanding that it is an instrumentalization that does not burn itself out.

The CPAA: Diseases of Spanish Culture The End of a Combat Group Without Opponents

Four years ago, the group of young artists known as the CPAA (Cooperativa de Producción Artística y Artesana / Cooperative of Artistic and Artisanal Production) came together around the possibilities of taking action to galvanize Spain's cultural scene, which did not happen. This was the group's fault and the fault of what we could call the "scene." The group's objectives were to enable artists to break free from the various social and commercial agents: galleries, organizations, existing exhibition centers, etc., which were, and are, thought to have little to contribute to a social type—the artist—whose role is to be what Adorno called a "standard bearer of freedom."

The CPAA believed that these figures were the neutralizing elements of a kind of work that by virtue of being intellectual and artistic, must also be critical and disruptive. Artists should not be considered individuals to be integrated into an endlessly homogenized and standardized society. They should have an attitude of solidarity toward their work and other professionals, which should be a progressive, avant-garde solidarity. Artists should be more rigorously conscious of their duty to be critical and disruptive of the excessive artistic and cultural sanctimoniousness, of the advertising hypocrisy and cant that the consumer society appears to demand. In short, the CPAA wanted independent, socially aware, cutting-edge artists. It would thus offer young Spanish artists the "other" alternative, which did not and does not exist. The CPAA's role in disseminating international experimental art—painting, design, poetry, film, etc.—is quite well known. What needs to be discussed is whether or not it reached the intended levels of solidarity and independence.

The inclusion of the words "cooperative" and "artistic production" in the group's name was not just programmatic. For a time, it was thought that it would help secure the all-important trade union subsidies required to get the project up and running. With this in mind, the group struggled with endless paperwork, forms, and formalities, all to no avail. So they were forced to abandon that path and start "making do." Now, on taking stock, we believe that the

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cooperative took a wrong turn when it decided to go ahead without having secured financial support.

The fact is that the goals of enabling artists to be independent and to dedicate themselves to their work “professionally,” of raising their critical, combative awareness of their potential social attitude, were clearly fading. The cooperative moved further and further away from the aims outlined in the Declaration of Principles, in the Statutes, and in many (“perhaps too many”) documents. Now, as we embark on a critical—self-critical—review of the group, we know only too well that we need to call into question a much broader matter that is radically poisoning the “scene.”

Successes and Failures

The first failure of the CPAA was the previously mentioned failure to secure funding. The second failure was not finding other paths (aside from the trade union subsidies) by which to get started. The third was the failure to suspend the “cooperative” model (four years on, we have reasons to believe this). The fourth failure was the easy success—yes, it counts as a failure—granted to young people, to groups that bring renewal, when in reality passive skepticism of culture, art, and ideas, is the native land into which we were born.

The successes we can mention are the *Exposición rotor internacional de concordancia de artes*, and the art and lecture programs organized at the university, the Instituto Alemán, in the provinces, etc. But these successes don't fool anybody. They may have been a success for this or that person, on this or that occasion, but they say nothing about the objectives set out four years ago, which are obviously the only ones that count.

The incorporation of new members and collaborators was another success that must count as a failure. In many cases these collaborations were simply utilitarian, based only on the thought of amazing personal benefits: an exhibition, a lecture, documentation, networks, files, etc.

Paradoxes of the “Scene” and “Groups”

As soon as artists focus only on personal gain, they automatically deny and disqualify themselves from effective, critical combativeness. They

deny their status as artists. There lies the contradiction of “groups,” the fact that, however young and innovative they may claim to be, they ultimately want to be absorbed by the “scene” instead of modifying it. Or rather, the very desire to modify the scene is an attempt to become part of it. Despite the cooperative’s good intentions—at the moment of truth, actions speak louder than words—it probably fell into the very thing it wanted to avoid, into a cultural world in which ignorance, envy, and unbridled fantasy prevent good intentions from being carried out. In short, there is no point in talking about the false new generations, the constructivist groups, the so-called critics.

Review of Responsibilities

It is unnecessary to mention the absurd and grotesque machinations and scheming against the cooperative by other artists who probably felt personally marginalized from the CPAA, when in fact, if they were, it was because of their own mindset. Clearly, the cooperative was a particular way of thinking, a certain mentality, rather than a group of people. These artists made two types of accusations: on the personal level and against the group as such. With the same evident bad faith in both cases. They spoke of ultra-Pyreanean finances, collaborationist opportunism, sectarianism, etc. The fact is that these critics (we could name at least a dozen names) should not have been so sure of their professional integrity, of not being guilty of doing or having tried to do the very things they were accusing others of. But we will let this pass, as we do not want to take on the role of judges.

There are various kinds of responsibilities. Some have to do with artists as such, and how they come to terms with their work. Others have to do with the kinds of groups that are formed with the idea of “innovating,” only to be “absorbed” and accepted, destroying academies in order to build their own.

Professionalism or Con

Is there any alternative in sight? We could suggest “seriousness” as an option, but why speak of seriousness when behind this word lies the same stagnation and contempt for culture we have just mentioned. On the one hand, today’s artists have been outdone by technicians who perform some of their tasks better than they do. On the other,

they are overwhelmed by technology itself, by new techniques that shift the foundations of their work. We should start by allowing artists to approach their work professionally, which means freely—with critical freedom, not old boy networks, the picaresque underworld, or insubstantial chit-chat. Professionalism means devoting oneself to production, rigorous research or investigation, solidarity with social demands rather than the demands of the “scene.” We are not advocating a homogenous unity of views, but a common kind of awareness and attitude.

The rest is a con, and it is pointless to carry on with “false new” renewals. And any artist who ignores the critical demands of his status is a con artist.

Remedying the Irremediable

What we have written here is simply the death certificate of a combative group that never happened, that failed to find opponents, as opposition and innovation became fictitious. The lack of remedies on the horizon may turn out to be a catalyst by which artists can finally decide on a clear mission. Although we should beware of falling prey to the words of the reactionary French politician who said, “The impossible! Easy. The difficult! Done.” No, triumphalism solves nothing for artists or politicians.

Ignacio Gómez de Liaño
Fernando López-Vera
Francisco Salazar

Concrete Poetry—Public Poetry

what was poetry?: MAKING. language energy. fabrication of objects through language. there were given themes (x, y, z...) topics (x1, x2, x3...): rules and precepts—metaphor, rhetoric—(if x+y, then xAy); there were given... each era had its body, a certain availability of language energy. what was poetry?: ARTIFACTS.

these objects, these artifacts, were delicate, almost immaterial, sensitive transistors, emitters/receivers of waves that reflected our being our thinking our always frustrated IMAGINATION, the “understanding that creates nature” (Kant) of our impotencies: our UTOPIAS: of our utopias: our REBELLIONS.

to seek new poetic forms is to seek new forms of life, the others, the old forms, are imagination and life in chains

to seek new forms of imaginary poetry is to insert imagination into the world. concrete poetry sought to materialize an ideal world in language, the one we are always trying to get close to, even as we create it; the world that the light of paradox guides us toward, a world that is rooted in the struggle of our images and our words.

concrete poetry undertook the construction of a kind of poetry that revealed the freedom to understand language, and also the order of that understanding.

but this poetry was “fixed” on the page, black on white; it was bound to books and their surrogates; it was not in the objects themselves, in the street, the butcher’s shop, the bus, the park, etc.

NOW: above / below / against / for / behind / in front of concrete poetry, in things, from, over, with things and life.

PUBLIC poetry

public poetry is the world, a world that only manages to come into being, to really open up not when it affects or moves us but rather when we affect it, when we move it, when we revolutionize its waves and its paths and its defeats, when

WHEN

and it is insofar as we move it utopically that we make public poetry. because above all public poetry is

IMAGINATION IN POETRY

The Writer in the New Situation

In Michelangelo Antonioni's film *La Notte* (The Night), we are confronted by a writer's professional crisis. The crisis of Giovanni Pontano (Marcello Mastroianni) is not due to exhaustion or to a lack of material to write about. As he confesses to Valentina (Monica Vitti), his problem is not "what to write, but how to write it." Pontano has not lost the ability to feel: around him he can see other men move, he sees them writhe in their hate, in their loves, in their stupidity. He can see that other people go hungry and pursue justice and freedom, that they are steeped in weariness and so on, but all of this comes to him as a clump of signs devoid of meaning. It is vague, ungraspable, absurd. A blind fate runs through everything he sees. His own vision is eclipsed by a deeper kind of blindness, a vertigo corresponding to nothing. He can feel himself slipping inside, he is alien to himself. In the film there is a succession of false laughter, noises, movements, gestures, haste, words, and all of it seems to be suspended in the air. It is the measure of nothingness, it does not conform to anything.

The crisis of the writer Giovanni Pontano is above all the crisis of Giovanni Pontano the man. What he writes seems to him gratuitous because his own life has lost meaning, it has lost a transcendent—I do not mean supernatural—significance that sustains it. His relationship with his wife Lidia (Jeanne Moreau) also breaks down in the face of the boredom of a routine based on nothing: human relationships no longer have "true" meaning, the only thing left for Antonioni's characters in this film is a kind of "mutual compassion" (Antonioni's words).

Until his crisis, a series of more or less acknowledged values underpinned each of Pontano's actions, giving what he wrote a reason for being: his behavior, his profession, were justified. Each card he turned over, even if it increased his unease, promised other cards still to be turned. Now all the cards were facing up. Beneath those values he discovered emptiness. It is a trick, nothing. "I have been tricked, I have allowed myself to be deceived. I am alone. I have to start from scratch. There must be something. I can't see anything, but the very fact that I can say I CAN'T SEE ANYTHING, isn't that something? I have to move, to talk, to write, to love, and to say yes or no, but how

does one talk and write and love...? Can all this behavior that seems to me so immediate conform to anything? Is it merely absurd, with no restitution possible?"

The crisis has taken place, and it does not just affect the writer or the intellectual. No man who considers himself a form of life, of behavior, can avoid wondering, anxiously and uneasily, about the meaning and justification of his actions, his life. The bourgeoisie at the splendid villa in the film can lose themselves in their businesses, their yachts, their cruises, or their "orphans," as in the case of the aristocratic marchioness. They prefer not to directly question the values that guide their actions. They can, in short, avoid finding an answer, a solution, as Antonioni himself does—although he does admit with great sincerity: "We have not been capable of making any headway whatsoever toward a solution of this problem... I don't care to, nor can I, resolve it myself; I am not a moralist ..."

Be that as it may, the crisis is before us. The crisis of an entire inadequate, unsatisfactory ethics. It is necessary to dismantle the situation, to unmask the men, to see them in a new light. Only thus can we "reach" their truth: what they are, what can guide their behavior, etc. Then, when *La Notte* ends, we do not know how Pontano will overcome the crisis, how he will behave in the future. Antonioni provides no other elements, no clue other than the situation itself. The visual beauty, the aesthetic we perceive in the film, in the social class that it describes, cannot be the clue. It cannot be the answer. Perhaps this visual splendor and the absence of a clear ethics are responsible for suppressing any power it may have to act as a wake-up call for bourgeois audiences. Deep down, these audiences are flattered. Why wouldn't they be? A crisis like the one Antonioni presents to us, in all its splendid setting: Isn't such a crisis the best adventure? The best sign of an "interesting," happy life? Giovanni Pontano is not a broken being, but a most fortunate creature.

Even so, Pontano will have to face his relationships with Valentina and Lidia in one way or another. He will have to reject or accept the job with Valentina's father, he will have to write or not write, and if he writes he will have to do it in a certain way. There are no cards left unturned and he must play. Any gesture will be an action, even the absence of a gesture will itself be a gesture. Whatever Pontano does, he will leave a mark, a sense of existence. He will have taken a stance. Depending on how he "acts" he will create his

existence, his answer. The situation is out of control, why not take control of the situation?

Today, perhaps more than ever, we can see the new generations searching for a form of behavior of their own, one that they can use in their lives and their activities. These young generations have come up with solutions that are different in scope and certainly new. In many cases, they are not clearly defined forms of behavior but a somewhat flexible attitude, with distinctive characteristics. There is still the fear of another disappointment: it is not safe to play it safe. Perhaps this explains the positive ineffectiveness that pervades these groups. "How should we act? Why should we act?" are still questions without a proper answer. We could say that the way these groups behave shows the lack of other better ways. They are in themselves aspects of the crisis. Think of the typically rebellious attitude of the Beats or the Angry Young Men; the "Panic" attitude arising from the speculations of Fernando Arrabal, Pablo Brodsky, Alejandro Jodorowsky, etc., of the man bequeathed by them, and Samuel Beckett and Eugène Ionesco; of the attitude of the Hungryalists in India, the Nadaists in Colombian, the Lunfardo Generation in Argentina, which quite significantly began as an effort to overcome the crisis of the Revolution. In the Soviet Union, there is every reason to believe that Yevgeny Yevtushenko is emblematic of an attitude like Allen Ginsberg is to the Beats. These movements strive to define their respective positions. To a greater or lesser extent, they are heirs to the climate that shaped Marxism and Existentialism, and to the discoveries that these systems achieved. As a result of the force that these movements are assembling, I think it is now time to carry out a social analysis of them, a phenomenology. I would like to draw attention to the fact that a rebellious attitude is characteristic of all of these movements—from Yé-yé to Panic. A clean attitude that is almost always ineffective or inoperative, and therefore different from a revolutionary attitude with very concrete goals. Jean-Paul Sartre talked about the extent to which rebels depend on the sovereignty that they fight against, how this confrontation ends up being a mere gesture of defiance against the unsatisfactory status quo and how great resentment and guilt end up paralyzing them and turning them into parasitical beings. The rebel's being, the pattern of his existence, comes precisely from the bourgeoisie against which he rebels. He does not "exist" on his own. Sooner or later, the rebel will end up defining himself, his actions

will inevitably define him, and he will take up position on the right or the left. Nonbelief in a flawed morality does not mean that there is no valid “other.” Such a morality must be deduced from the human condition itself. “I wear myself out, I burn out, I laugh frantically, our, your, their disillusionment; conspire, alcohol, another whiskey, champagne, how is my lady? No, I don’t want to, mommy, mommy, I’m hungry, to hell with the imbeciles. Me, an imbecile? No, no, let us burn, pigs more pigs, our screams, let us burn, exhaust ourselves, be consumed, for nothing, emptiness, boredom, nothing.” Situations like this consume themselves. In any case, the experience of situations of negation, of emptiness, etc. can be retrieved to understand oneself, one’s potential and needs. As Existentialism has shown, man has begun his liberation and with it his recovery, free of alienation. In today’s world, as in Antonioni’s film, everything suggests that a necessary, “unique” series of reasons for being has collapsed, and that in the ensuing confusion no other reasons can be found to replace them. God no longer allows himself to be sensed; he has, as it were, evaporated. God is no longer “valid,” he does not exist, he is outside, we are inside, he is useless. Each person must turn to his or her own experience to understand what this means. God was the great life insurance. He required of us certain renunciations: to believe without seeing, the mysteries, to wait, divine providence. But in return I was his son, I “was,” simply, like Him. The vagaries of existence were a practical joke, “that” was to be ignored, because they were given in a person. However, man has now started to accept the human condition. God is superfluous, everything is superfluous, but I, each person, does not want to be superfluous. We exist, we accept our existence. Then comes anguish, which is nothing other than the fear of making a false move when we carry the weight of all men, without support. “To be or not to be,” we are the singular, fragile, disoriented novices. We are King Lear deprived of “his” center, of “his” mantle, of “his” kingdom. Nothing is yours, Lear. You wander, alone; that is all. Job was a lucky man compared to this “other” man. Shakespeare’s tragedy is repeated in his Count of Gloucester, his Edgar, his good guys and bad guys. History is not reversible, all we can do is think of ourselves as existence. We can not continue to wait for a being to come and redeem us from life—which would require us to deny it—from the great sin of “being” alive. We cannot keep playing the roles of Estragon and Vladimir waiting for Godot. Godot will never come.

Rilke said in a poem: "There was expectation on the plain / by a guest who never came." We move through the stages of freedom, that is our task, our liberation. This is the base condition of mutual understanding. For universal brotherhood, transactional solutions won't do. We are our intermediaries. Now when the exploiter, the dominating race, etc., looks, he must withstand the gaze of the "other." This is because the "other" is at stake, he thinks for himself, not through those who are above him. Here, in the gaze of the exploited..., unlike the rebel, a revolutionary stance is taken. It is not an empty gesture, merely challenging those who exploit him. It is a confrontation "for" specific demands, a whole approach to life, to human dignity. The reason they turn against the others is because in one way or another they oppose this need to be a person, this desire to transcend. Writers today live in this world, a world to which they are inevitably tied. Jesus's words "whoever is not with me is against me" can be repeated today: "whoever is not with the quest for human freedom is against it." There is no middle ground. Writers know it. Giovanni Pontano knows it. Whatever he does, he will have chosen a life that will be his own. He will be what he has done, what he has written. That which is written, exists. It is solid, it exists in itself, whereas the man, the writer, exists first and foremost, only in his actions.

It is in these terms that we must see the writer's new situation. The determinations of the aesthetic, ethical, pathetic, etc. writer in this degree of generality are superfluous. In the past, a writer, like any man, was not determined "in himself" by what he did. At most, what he did was part of his existence, irrelevant to what he was, because, above all, he "was," even before he came into existence. His truth was the theological foundation from which he was suspended. Now we have "this," which is close to us, which we can shape with our hands, follow with our eyes. The writer, as a professional, practices literature without letting go of himself, of others. Even the movements that may seem aestheticist, concrete poetry and spatialism, are on the plane of realignment, of personal activity, of creation at the service of people. Literature as a totally clean, fair game is a trick. Otherwise it would mean evading our very existence, even if some little aristocratic noses cannot stand it.

It is perfectly clear that whoever writes, no matter what he writes, is always inside the game. It is inevitable: we are imprisoned by this world that we tread, whether we like it or not. No matter what

we do, there will always be some reference to this world. We will always bear witness to it. There is no real escapist literature, two approaches will inevitably emerge: we will either refuse to make a pact with this environment, preferring to see it as something disconnected from us, or we will choose to embrace it and move toward it, without fearing that our skin will be torn or wounds will open and blood appear, that we will be left naked, without a mask. The first of these approaches would like to see each man as a type, a mask studied in advance. This, we say, is bad faith, hypocrisy: lies will never give rise to a desirable, happy world; they will not bring human solidarity, but loneliness. We imagine a man, a writer who cares about taking on the world, society, precisely because he cares a great deal about the world and society. We have this life, there is no other, this time, these situations, these elements, and no others. It is bad faith to ignore them, to leave them out. And it cannot be argued that he writes for eternity, for "all" men, because how can "these" be "man"? The true men are those who confront the world and rise up before it at every moment. But this is the world that some writers, in bad faith, pretend does not exist. We do not want to proclaim ourselves gods but men. Men who are alone in history and time, because only history and time are ours.

This is the new situation of the writer. He can only justify himself by what he does, what he writes. Neither God nor myths help him. He cannot wait, all he can do is act, write. He is no longer a precious object, a beautiful ornament in salons and cocktail parties, there are no groups or awards. He is simply a man who seeks his way, a man who takes action. We can follow the imposture of those who believe today's world is perfect and that nothing they do can improve it, that everything has been done and we are captives. Or else we can cry out that there are others who suffer in their flesh for this world to be perfect and they suffer hunger and war and they are burdened with the justice and the freedom of others, and we can cry out that this is why their freedom and justice are an imposture. The new situation is before us, the writer must choose his path. What he does will be his actions, and his actions will be himself. Or if he prefers, let him say, "Mommy, mommy, the bogeyman, boo-boo; I want a candy, I don't want to, he's bad mommy, very bad, ouch, it wasn't me, it wasn't me, etc." But can we say to hell with it all?

Writings of Imaginary Cultures

1.1. The paper I am going to read is a summary of various other works currently in progress, which address more rigorously and in greater detail the subjects whose connections, foundations, and conclusions are merely outlined here. This is the reason for our use of an almost essayistic language, a language that can, in principle, be considered particularly flexible for combining all manner of things. A language that does not bow to the conventions or prejudices of particular schools, or neglect to always return to what has already been said, in an attempt at ongoing critical revision. The eighteenth century, the golden age of the essay, demonstrated its potential for research and critical studies, although Lukács viewed the essay form with suspicion because of its “undifferentiated unity with science, ethics, and art.” Adorno, on the other hand, arguing against the ideology of the positive sciences, saw it as the critical form par excellence, as a dialectical way of treating and synthesizing language. The essay form still fulfills its salutary mission in this sense, as long as it does not fall, as is often the case, into dilettantism and clever phrases, into the *esprit* essay.

1.2. Be that as it may, we regret the essayistic tone on this occasion, its irresponsible acrobatics as regards the language it uses and the subject matter it seeks to address. Unless, that is, its actual subject matter is the essay form itself, understood as object, as an autonomous linguistic sequence. Seen in this light, the term “essay” would be particularly apt, in the sense of an attempt, an experiment, a hypothesis, in a similar sense to how theories situate themselves within science. But this should not lead us to think that the essay, by being named as such, becomes an “art of witticisms” or an invitation to a brilliant swindle.

We say that this essayistic tone is regrettable because the echoes of words like those that make up the title of this study, “Writings of Imaginary Cultures,” demand constant delimitation and precision, a decision not to extrapolate. They require that we do not lose sight of the formal commitment to the facts or theories that are being studied, to the presuppositions of language, to the methodological assumptions.

1.3 These considerations are even more pressing given the spread and intensification of the habit of thinking based on what words sound like. Also, we must now fear that some people may take this for a science-fiction essay, or a cabbalistic exegesis. Although I admit that the gratuitous exercise of fantasizing about cultures with the refined objective of then making up its texts would be justified by very good reasons, as we can see merely by looking at the confused and spasmodic spectacle of our culture, in which anything goes, williness and privileges, tribal and technological rituals and wars; and in which individuals become desensitized, stripped of the slightest hint of critical awareness, even by the so-called popular culture media. Unfortunately, even if we arm ourselves with knowledge of extra-terrestrial customs and cosmic unity, science-fiction and cabbalistic esoteric essays tell us little about problems near at hand, unless it is through metaphor.

1.4. Let it be clear, then, that we shall not speak about writings that stem from or deal with non-real (or fantasy) cultures. Any objection based on whether cultures are imaginary, on how we can talk about their writings, or how these writings could be real, are meaningless. And we will certainly not take into consideration those magical characters who believe that they have seen themselves in the written word, a subject we shall return to later. Indeed, we could provide a curious, amusing, and incredibly long reading list on the subject. We must not forget that most, if not all, peoples who attained the writing stage considered it to be divine in nature and origin. The respect felt by some Semitic peoples for their scriptures is well known, as is the fact that the Chinese for a long time considered the destruction of any written material to be serious sacrilege, even when its contents had been abstracted. Moreover, in the Chinese pantheon, Fuxi, the god who invented writing, also performed the sacred office of protecting trade.

1.5. This mentality of seeing something supernatural in writing is still very much ingrained. For instance, marvelous properties are sometimes attributed to the combination of certain letters, and there is a belief in the correspondence between written signs and the cosmos or the soul. We have all seen this deification of the written word in certain underdeveloped sectors, where it has not been displaced

by the materiality that modern communication technology so clearly reveals. I have written down a paragraph from François Haab's book *Divination de l'alphabet latin*, published in 1948, which reads as follows: "We want to show that the Latin alphabet ... is the ideographic representation of the great Greek myths, and offers a manageable 'signification' of the fundamental truths contained in man and within the universe, truths some, 'gods' that reveal the 'one' creative and sovereign truth." I need not say more.

2.1. This work consists of a series of general hypotheses that converge on the subject of writing, recognizing that the study of writing has a right to be considered an autonomous branch of human knowledge. These hypotheses accommodate developments in cultural anthropology and, particularly, in some of its sciences, such as linguistics, as well as their respective methodologies. These hypotheses will be presented as conclusions of the study. This work also consists of some subjects (the imaginary, culture, writing) and their relationships, connections, and methods.

2.2. Notwithstanding the rapid growth of the field of linguistics since the mid-twentieth century, there have been no deep and systematic studies of writing, other than at the scholarly level. Its objectives have not been defined, its methods have not been compared, and its place alongside the other sciences has not been established. It is true that we have great compilations such as those by Marcel Cohen, David Diringer, and Ignace Gelb, and also, in Spanish, by Manuel Aguirre. Rather than study the written object as a sign, or writing as a semiological system, these works explore the geographic and semantic framework in regard to the genesis and evolution of language. Broadly speaking, these studies have been similar to linguistic studies up until this century. They use the evolutionist, historical-comparative methodologies of the nineteenth century. There is one very brief, synchronous-descriptive study I should mention: chapter nine of Punya Sloka Ray's *Language Standardization*, published in 1963 in the *Janua Linguarum* series. This work develops an algebra to describe written symbols.

2.3. Regarding the subjects mentioned in the title of this study, we have proceeded in order of increasing specification: imaginary,

imaginary cultures, writings of imaginary cultures. We are aware that it may become impossible to build bridges between the subjects if we deal with them in a detailed or very independent way. Each subject presupposes the previous one, and it will only be possible to encompass them coherently and understand the lines of force at the end of the text. However, due to all kinds of limitations, this text must be like a mosaic or a scrapbook, perhaps at times emphasizing too much the caesuras between its parts.

2.4.1. Some everyday experiences, repeated at all hours, will serve as a link between the abstract level of the study and day-to-day life. Namely the flooding, the onslaught of writing, of the printed word, on the streets, in shows, at home, on consumer goods, etcetera. The most important thing is the linguistic sign, its ellipses, its orders or suggestions, the paradises it promises and the horrors it conjures up. However, all this information, or, in the case of advertising, all this information simulacrum, flows through a channel that is a definable kind of writing, specifically distinct from other forms of writings that can be imagined or have emerged at some point in history.

2.4.2. Another aspect is the extent to which orders are transmitted through writing, the extent to which these orders are fixed, imperative, prohibitive, etcetera. Not just to compel others to do or cease to do something, but also to prevent any kind of potential variation or transformation in the use of the language.

[Handwritten note: *As a backlash, this can give rise to the demand for the imaginary.*]

I do not think that the already famous slogan “power to the imagination” from the revolutionary events in France last May is a call to suppress bureaucracy, or to get rid of computers, but a reminder that they belong to the spheres of the social means and conditions, not the ends; a mindset that can be seen in overdeveloped countries.

3.1. Our first subject is the imaginary. To question the imaginary is, by way of rejection, to question reality—that which we think of as real. It has been pointed out, however, “that the problem of

reality is probably illusory.” But must we use only the jargon of metaphysicists, their definitions, and their approaches to the problems raised? Because this problem certainly seems to be the preserve of metaphysics. Thus, reality would be “that which” makes things real, etcetera, where “that which” or any other linguistic form is extrapolated outside of its congruent role as a sign within the system. Broadly, we could compare these linguistic extrapolations to the Pythagoreans’ extrapolations with numerals. Rudolf Carnap’s critique of metaphysics seems to me definitive, although we mustn’t forget Kant’s precedent. Carnap points out the infeasibility of metaphysics as a science. He says that “its pseudo-propositions” do not describe behaviors—nonexistent or actual—which would at least make his propositions either true or false. The propositions, he adds, express the feeling of life. In this regard, Wittgenstein says that “most of the propositions and questions to be found in philosophical works are not false but nonsensical.... [They] arise from our failure to understand the logic of our language,” as found in the *Tractatus*. However, the concepts addressed by metaphysics are not necessarily unusable in scientific knowledge. What is illicit is its method, its attempts to extract from certain structures of a language an absolute conception of the world, detached from any experimental verification. Indeed, Russell noted how the Aristotelian metaphysics of substance and form is the counterpoint to his logic of the subject and predicate.

[Handwritten note: *However, nothing can make us think that logical solutions can be allowed: to be extrapolated in entitatives.*]

3.2. Our interpretation of the concept of reality takes a different path. It has sociological roots, based on the analysis of the ideologies of social groups in conflict, of the interests at stake that, filtered through language, synthesize and organize the world.

[Handwritten note: *By reality we mean the reality of signs and of social acts.*]

This kind of sociological analysis of reality leads us to consider utopias, that is, attempts to build cities where there is no space for

them. As the urban planner Constantinos Doxiadis put it, between the bad city (dystopia) and the city that is presumably good but does not exist in reality (utopia), we must find and build “entropies,” cities that are appropriate and achievable. Because, as Karl Mannheim notes, “a state of mind is utopian when it is incongruous with the state of reality within which it occurs.” Ideology is fueled by reality, but by a reality as understood by the group.

3.3. However, the concept of reality must also be studied on a second level, the linguistic level, because it is embodied through signs, and more precisely through linguistic signs. The mere facts, factuality, exist for the mind, as Mannheim observes, “that they can be understood and formulated implies already the existence of a conceptual apparatus.” Thus, reality is a variable in terms of social conflicts shaped by language. Reality as object cannot be apprehended, and this has been evident since the disintegration of intellectual unity at the beginning of the modern age, when, as Mannheim put it, “the basic values of the contending groups are worlds apart.”

[Handwritten note: *The imaginary connects to the real, because the real, that is, social and semiological or linguistic determinations, become the coordinates within which the imaginary must move.*]

3.4. Francis Bacon’s “idols” were already precursors of these compartments of knowledge. Machiavelli used to repeat the adage that “the thought of the palace is one thing, that of the public square is another.” There is thus a shift from objective ontological unity to the unity supplied by the subject, through his or her perception of the world (which could sum up George Berkeley’s phrase *esse est percipi*), and then, in the Enlightenment, to the unity supplied by consciousness of self, etcetera.

[Handwritten note: *The world must then see itself as a group of messages, subject to different categories, closely related to the social historical stage attained.*]

3.5. Meanwhile, Max Bense draws our attention to what the language of metaphysics would call a growing abandonment of concepts of

“reality” in favor of concepts of “possibility,” adding that interpretations are never reality itself, but rather the signs of reality. This observation ties in to another by Hans Reichenbach, which is one of the fundamental statements of science today: “Gnoseological processes are simplified if we shift the focus from physical universes to physical languages.”

3.6. Certain data from the physical sciences—those which seem to most perfectly fulfill the models of classical mathematics—allow us to see the shift in perspective that has taken place in our conception of reality: the abandonment of fixed regular principles, which are replaced by statistics, by the calculation of probabilities. The term “imaginary” has not been absent from physics: think of James Maxwell’s “imaginary fluids,” seen as a synthesis of imaginary qualities around the time when statistics began to be used to analyze physical phenomena. Think also of the “virtual images” in Heinrich Hertz’s *Mechanik*. Later, with “The Notion of a ‘Closed Theory’ in Modern Science” (1948), Werner Heisenberg confirmed that the formula apparatus does not reproduce an objective event, but merely mathematically establishes a small part of the “objective fact” and, largely, an overview of the possibilities. The crisis that befell Newtonian physics—in which everything happened in accordance with the law—at the beginning of the century has created this new perspective in the study of the physical world that has led to a broader use of statistics, as can be seen in Maxwell, Ludwig Boltzmann, Josiah W. Gibbs, etcetera.

3.7. Although we cannot expand on these issues here, we would like to point out this caesura that opens up between what is commonly understood as a physical fact and what we can actually come to know about it.

The imaginary does not just exist in the framework of social facts, it can be found at the very root of language. All use of signs is recursive and variable in nature, and the discovery of the rules governing significant units does not show them to be constructively univocal, but rather always on the verge of revision. This can be said of all theories in all sciences. The stoic concept of nature, the concept of necessity, gave way to conceptions that may perhaps be overly relativistic, but are also much more sensitive to the objective

facts that gave rise to the study of nature; it gave way to an imagination of signs that is not irrationality, but a broadening of what is to be understood by reason or logic.

3.8. In this regard, the study of languages by anthropologists has been much more expressive. This is especially the case with studies that spring from the American structuralist school developed by Edward Sapir and Leonard Bloomfield, because their field of study included non-Indo-European and even Semitic languages, which are very different to those that had been studied before. We will mention just a few of their conclusions. After saying that it is illusory to think about reality without taking language into account, Sapir added that “the ‘real world’ is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached.”

Harry Hoijer’s and Benjamin L. Whorf’s studies of the Navajo and neighboring Hopi languages confirm these views through factors such as time, space, matter, substance, and the color spectrum. The fact that the Hopi language has only one word for the colors green and blue does not lead us to assume that there is a physical defect in the group, but it does establish semiological variations within the system. And even if it does not affect physical reality, it does have to do with social reality. I will disregard the extravagances that Whorf succumbed to, as C. F. Voegelin rightly points out, because they are not relevant to this study.

3.9. We will now propose some hypotheses as conclusions. The imaginary has two basic levels: a social level that must necessarily be taken into account in any cultural anthropology study; and a linguistic or semiotic level that has to do with natural or artificial languages. Summarizing:

1st. The imaginary stems sociologically from the separate worlds—linguistic worlds—in which conceptions of social groups appear. The diversity of these worlds depends on the level of conflict in which they find themselves.

2nd. The zone in which the variables come into play at the level of the imaginary is in language.

3rd. The imaginary is a quality of all knowledge and all theory. It has a logical, systematic foundation, a consistency in each of its various materializations. It opposes the determination and the regulation (necessary and univocal) of the phenomena studied and the rules used to interpret them.

4.1. Now the problem arises of how to adapt the conclusions we have reached after our brief study of the imaginary to fit cultural analysis: cultural anthropology on one hand, and the fact of culture itself, lived culture, on the other. We run the risk of extrapolating, because it is unlikely that everything that was said about the imaginary will apply to cultural anthropology. Also, as we pointed out at the start, the fact that this study is based on an intellectual trend toward increasing specification means that, analytically, the lines of configuration that emerged on examining the imaginary will also appear in the study of imaginary cultures. This inference is true because anthropology, like all sciences, emerges or takes shape in a strictly linguistic or semiotic plane, by means of the technique employed. This aspect of anthropological science is common to all sciences and all intellectual activity. But if this is true, and if it is also true that the imaginary is thinkable only through its connection with signs, with their arbitrariness, variability, and ontological inconsistency, it seems to us that to envisage a cultural imaginary is not only not contradictory but also necessary in order to think about the divergence and convergence that occurs between the various schools, and the very future of anthropological science. These are some of the points that we will examine later.

4.2. Another very different matter is the idea of an imaginary culture at the level of lived experience; or, inversely, a lived culture at the imaginary level. Of course, nothing could lead us to conclude that such a thing is possible, because the possibility would ultimately depend on cultural policy, on which we will say nothing. Here we will limit ourselves to considering whether it would be possible.

4.3. Let us emphasize the ideal or semiotic—that is, logical-conventional—nature of cultural anthropology, which becomes even more necessary when the objective facts that anthropologists work with are only reflected within a theory by means of signs, signs that only partially express the facts. In the cultural sciences, Heisenberg’s aforementioned quote takes on a new, more pointed presence.

In addressing the question of “social structure,” Claude Lévi-Strauss points out that it has “nothing to do with empirical reality, but with the models that are built up after it.” Social structure does not even equate to social relations, even though it arises from them. Essentially, it brings the concept of the system into cultural anthropology.

The point of departure is, of course, a thing that occurs in the world and is difficult to determine. This “thing” interests scientists not for “what it is,” but for its behavior, functions, and interdependencies. These define the thing in question, although the men of science also address its logical consistency, the consistency of the language used to study it. In other words, the methodological technique, which ultimately overdetermines the objective facts, resulting in it being presented to us in one form or another, based on this or that aspect. What is illicit is extrapolations of this language, which make one fall into the pseudo-propositions and nonsense that Carnap and Wittgenstein spoke of when criticizing metaphysics.

We access the system through facts. But as soon as we created the scientific model, it became possible to imagine other perfectly consistent models, cultural systems, and categories.

4.4. Understanding that it is an imaginary culture means shedding light on two aspects. First, to explore the methodological problems of contemporary anthropological culture to question whether they implicitly require this concept (the concept of imaginary culture), or the concept of metaculture. Then, if the concept of imaginary culture is indeed inherently implicit, we will find that the task of establishing the political framework, based on scientific foundations, in order to develop or change current cultural possibilities, is thinkable and theoretically achievable. There is a strong connection between these two aspects, and, paraphrasing Kant in the

spirit of “understanding makes nature,” we could surmise that by understanding and addressing these problems at the level of the imagination, it becomes feasible for them to become facts.

4.5. But are all these reflections merely utopias? Do they rest on clear facts within cultural anthropology? It is necessary to look into these problems more closely. Hoijer has pointed out how modern anthropology, for the last thirty or forty years, has “gradually moved from an atomistic definition of culture, describing it as more or less a haphazard collection of traits, to one which emphasizes pattern and configuration.”

It is worth noting that a similar process has occurred in most of the cultural sciences. The most representative of these, which generally serves as a model for the others, is linguistics. It is also worth noting that even though “structure” is the key word, the most modern theories—Chomsky’s transformational or generative theories—reject the purely taxonomic approach. Instead of starting from the smallest units—phonemes—they start from the traditional grammatical sentence, that is, from a linguistic sequence that already has a complete meaning. This reveals the different senses of the word “structure.” This series of facts leads us to think that structure is the formal level that acts as a framework for studying theories from a synchronic point of view, but also indicates a different possible use of the term.

In linguistics, the sticking point is between taxonomists and generativists. Will the same be the case in anthropology? Will its inventories lead us to study the rules that govern cultural formations? If we were to study these matters in depth, would it be necessary to use very complicated logical types of the kind that generative grammarians use to organize their studies, with typologies that conform to the object of study?

4.6. In cultural anthropology, we have already moved well away from unilateral genetic conceptions like those of Lewis Henry Morgan and Edward Burnett Taylor, stemming from the evolutionist ideas of the eighteenth century. The inadequacy of these became evident when their models could not account for the studies (and their conclusions) of other cultures that varied greatly in their conditioning factors, time and space, and by the fact that if they did

reveal something it was a heterogeneity that could not be reduced to such a narrow conception.

But we have moved just as far from the social-situational approach developed by Franz Boas, which emphasizes the relativism and particularism of cultural traits, forgetting pattern and configuration. To this school we owe extensive records, an efficient compiling system based on fieldwork that makes it possible to establish behavioral charts or inventories, and, thus, while not envisaging it, to give rise to the possibility of finding the structures that show the specific characteristics of each cultural system. The decision to embark on these studies from the point of view of thinking about systems—consciously or unconsciously—encourages the anthropologist to seek the universal categories of culture.

4.7. Recent cultural anthropology has produced effective models and behavioral paradigms, such as those developed by George Homans on kinship, for example. In many respects, it is in a situation similar to that of schools of structural linguistics before World War II. Current research largely focuses on the study of universal categories, even though it is known that their universality is limited. This endeavor has partly been due to the attention paid to linguistics, which, Clyde Kluckhohn says, “alone of the branches of anthropology has discovered elemental units (phonemes, morphemes) which are universal, objective, and theoretically meaningful.”

Around 1938, Bronisław Malinowski published his “universal institutional types,” as he would later call them. The search for cultural universal types has also been undertaken in other sciences, such as aesthetics with George D. Birkhoff, linguistics with George K. Zipf, etcetera. Although their achievements are highly debatable, these attempts illustrate a shift in perspective. They assume awareness of an inner logic, whose types in the various areas and levels of culture point to the shift in perspective of which we speak. This change brought cultural anthropology to a conception that is similar—but much more complex and heterogeneous—to that which generative grammars established in the field of linguistics.

4.8. I may be reproached for these attempts to align the problems and methods of linguistics with those of cultural anthropology, clearly ignoring their differences. But I consider it important for the study

of culture to take into particular account the work of linguists. The fact that we defend this idea here is not only because it would entail, within the economy of this study, a step forward on the subject of writing. It is also because, as Lévi-Strauss points out, language is the result, part, and condition of a culture. (These conditions were set out in the *Results of the Conference of Anthropologists and Linguists*, University of Indiana.)

4.9. C. F. Voegelin claims that linguists can discuss cultural problems through the transfer of contributions to the field of linguistics, rather than because language is part of culture. Although this does not mean that he does not consider language to be an integral part of culture. In the conference on anthropology and language at the University of Indiana, Henry L. Smith established, firstly, that culture is learned and shared behavior (a definition in line with that of Herbert Landar [*Language and Culture*, 1965]), or in other words, that it is part of culture. Secondly, that it is a system through which, to a very large degree, other cultural systems can be reflected. And thirdly, that linguistics has made more progress than any other cultural science in the description, tabulation, and presentation of its data. But the relevant connections between language and culture do not stop there.

Several recent studies relating to linguistics and anthropology even invite us to think about other types of relationships.

Earlier we cited Whorf's works on the Hopi, based on Sapir's theories, which we referred to in a quotation. In addition, we should mention Dorothy D. Lee's work on the Wintu, and Hoijer's on the Navajo. All of these authors are linguists and anthropologists. Although only in part, the study of these languages increasingly reveals the possibility of discovering logical types of a different order through comparative analysis, leading us to conclude that Western culture has carried out a provisional analysis of culture through its own language.

4.10. The comparative analyses and the subsequent discovery of new underlying logical types on one hand, and the results around the "universal categories of culture" with their necessary cultural assumption on the other, lead us to note some clarifications on what we understand by "imaginary cultures."

From the scientific point of view, a study of imaginary culture would consist of a synthesis of these different logical types, of the rules that govern these cultures. It would be a kind of meta-cultural science. Its right to exist stems from the logical models built upon cultural systems. This “metaculture” would be particularly logical, and if our premises regarding the creation of generative studies of culture are feasible, it would offer an opportunity to correct the system—“designs of living,” as Kluckhohn and W. H. Kelly call forms of culture—and also an opportunity to innovate and change them.

This emphasis on configurations—from which only these taxonomic or generative models could arise—is close to Adorno’s critical-cultural approach.

4.II. The study of configurations reveals disorders within the system: the absences or flaws, the malfunctions, etcetera. Accordingly, the study of configurations leads to an understanding of cultural products that are already ineffective, in other words, reified, and currently in a suspended state. The study of these suspended processes should, at least in theory, suggest possible processes of rehabilitation or creation. In this sense, the concept of imaginary cultures coincides with what dialectics means to Adorno: “intransigence towards all forms of reification.” To imagine cultures would not just be a formal activity of synthesizing cultural systems, but the possibility of creating culture, the possibility of new “designs for living.”

4.I2. Therefore, this first synthetic and formal level of imaginary cultures would not fall within what Adorno calls “social physiognomy” or within what he calls “skepsis,” because we would actually be dealing with cultural projects: the implementation or rejection of those that are culturally carried out. An imaginary culture would not just show the rules that govern a given cultural system, but also those by which it could be broken, reorganized, or disbanded. In this way, cultural systems would be the language of the object of study of cultural anthropology.

To do this, there are no formulas or keys. Instead, as we pointed out at the beginning, our conclusions are merely hypotheses for carrying out further studies.

We will end this section by recalling the words of Landar: “A language, as an exemplar of a universal social institution, may be characterized by a formal theory.... [S]o in the present decade we can predict that anthropologists will construct formal theories of culture.”

5.1. The Dewey Decimal System classifies linguistics between sociology and natural sciences, given that it is a social activity and a systematic study of language. It is true that many cultural anthropology studies share these characteristics, less consistently than linguistics. Where would we place the study of writings? There is no need to rush into an answer. Within the economy of this study, writings of imaginary cultures is the subject that poses the most difficulties.

Within the order of increasing specification that we have followed in addressing the various subjects discussed, the subject of writing is the one with the highest level of specification, and also the least studied so far, the one that is still the most undifferentiated, somewhere between linguistics, archaeology, epigraphy, aesthetics, etcetera, and other sciences. Writing remains to be studied as an autonomous branch of human knowledge, with statutes comparable to those of other cultural sciences. It even remains to be determined whether it deserves this recognition, whether there are sufficient reasons for it to stop being a simple appendage of linguistics, anthropology, the history of invention. In spite of these precautions, we are aware of the material status of writing as a channel for communication: we also have material for comparative studies, and other systems of writing are imaginable and, in fact, exist in the Western world.

5.2. Our immediate problem is how to articulate this last section of text. Can we talk about the writing of imaginary cultures without first agreeing on the components of a study of writing: aim, definition, levels, methods, etcetera? We will attempt to suggest some answers as briefly and rigorously as possible.

Numerous authors—Thomas Carlyle, Count of Mirabeau, Ernest Renan, Kant, etcetera—saw that the real start of civilization came with the invention of writing. So if writing can only exist in a civilization, a civilization cannot exist without some form of

writing. What we admire the most in civilizations that have reached a stage of considerable complexity, like Native Americans, is the primitive state of their writing, reduced to rough pictograms. Or even to a primitive tool based on knotted strings used to keep records, such as the quipus used by the Incas, which is identical to our own practice of tying a knot in a handkerchief to remind us of an appointment. Definitions in the spirit of Voltaire's "writing is the painting of the voice" are too restricted to be taken into account. In pictographic and ideographic systems, the connection with speech was very weak, so much so that speech and writing were two independent systems of communication. In any case, definitions of this kind make no distinction between speech and language, nor do they take into account script-related problems of another order in logic, musical composition, etcetera, which we will only refer to in passing.

5.3. The alphabetization of writing took place in the middle of the second millennium BC in some small Semitic states in Sinai, ultimately in response to economic and diplomatic circumstances. It was an attempt to simplify lines, to make things like transactions, records, and tax collection more portable and efficient. In one of the first monuments to use this writing, a small stele near the Temple of Baalat reads, "interest reimbursable in the temple of the goddess Baalat, 6%," and, on the back, "this is the 6% interest."

This kind of economic last instance was also at the zero point of writing, in Sumerian pictograms from the fifth millennium BC, created to record transactions between the temple, its outbuildings, rural produce, etcetera. Writing had a distinctive mercantile, codifying, fixing origin, when the political unity of cities emerged.

5.4. However, as Cohen points out, "in writing, as in all high-level intellectual activities, the influence of the production line only appears indirectly and in the background," which is what we mean by the term "last instance." The fact is, once these instances came into being, writing of any kind "in some sense evolved autonomously, more in keeping with the defects, excesses, irregularities ... of the written system than with the final—and thus difficult to determine—factors that condition its production. We should not forget that every writing system is a system of forms as well as meanings,

and depends on many circumstances: preference, the intended use, the materials used, the language it is to adapt to.” And evolution destroys formal balances.

5.5. At the start, we mentioned that almost all studies that focus on writing tend to follow a diachronic, evolutionist method, and only very coarsely touch on the systematic, autonomous nature of writing. We will start with a synchronic approach, based on the idea of writing as a *sui generis* system of sensitive symbols for recording messages, a definition that roughly coincides with Bloomfield’s and is close to Gelb’s, who describes writing as “a system of human intercommunication by means of conventional visible marks.” In short:

Arbitrariness of the sign—system
Intercommunication—fixing (or recording)
Symbol

While the primary function of language is social communication, the fundamental function of writing is to record communication. Alphabetization revealed the systematic nature of language and paved the way for an analysis of the existing system of signs.

5.6. The first explorations of writing lead us to several levels relevant to its study:

1st. The relationship between writing and other inventions intended for dissemination/communication within culture (that is, writing within culture).

2nd. The diachronic study of writing to determine the laws of evolution, laws of least effort, etc., that can be used to determine the conservative nature of writing with respect to language.

3rd. Studies of aesthetics, materials, etc. regarding the written sign.

What interests us now is to try to establish the laws of a synchronic-descriptive science and, above all, to connect writing to the conclusions regarding imaginary cultures.

We will avoid addressing possible applications (which in some aspects already exist) between information theory and writing, letter frequency, the relationship between letters and amount of information, etcetera.

We will establish the following levels:

- 1st. Phonetic
- 2nd. Morpho-syntactic-semantic
- 3rd. The level of the grammatical sentence

These levels already exist, the first in ordinary alphabetical systems, the second in Chinese ideogrammatic systems, and the third in logical calculations.

5.7. This paper would be too long if we were now to embark, as well we could, on a rigorous and detailed account of the questions we have merely touched on. It would be almost impossible to mention the general overviews or monographic works on these subjects. For obvious reasons we will summarize what has been said so far, although it is not much, on the subject of writings of imaginary cultures. These writings have to do with the logical types of writing as an instrument for cultural anthropology, or for what we have termed "imaginary cultures." But from the point of view of what we have called "lived culture" or the imaginary level, these writings also play an anti-reification role, a role against the arbitrary imperatives that pass through language by means of what is commonly called misunderstandings.

5.8. Let us turn our attention to these writings. In theory, they would not have to follow the conventions established by the existing system. They would have to emphasize critique on the linguistic level, introduce the possibility of creating new semantic relationships deriving from the extent to which conventional relationships were destroyed. These relationships would have to be disrupted by means of comparison. Since Dadaist art, we find this process of mutation based on the sign as an object that can be manipulated. In film, for instance, with Eisenstein and Pudovkin, in painting with Kandinsky, Mondrian, Schwitters, Klee, Feininger..., in poetry with Dada, Futurist, and Concrete artists. The mystical tone

of many of their manifestos may conceal this reality of objective change. It may endanger their achievements in the face of narrow, old-fashioned criticism. But the criticism of ignorant critics does not have authority, precisely because it does not understand the facts. These forms of expression, this new concept built upon a strictly linguistic base, holds the future of a new literature in which everyone participates and believes. I recognize that all these claims, even if they are consistent with the rest of the study, and perhaps for that very reason, would require that we look at the subject. In other words, that we connect with twentieth-century literature in order to see its lines of force.

Having reached the end of this paper, if this study is indeed essayistic, a complete review will be expected. Because although on the one hand the intellectual exercise that we have carried out can be understood as imaginary, it is certainly not so from the point of view of its writing. As we said earlier, we have limited ourselves to presenting the issues as a mosaic, as was inevitable. It is true that we wanted to present the imaginary level—which is not the same as the fantastic or irrational level—in which scientific theories, experimentation, and mystical thought are situated. We also wanted to establish what this imaginary is based on, and its effects on social and intellectual practices. We also saw that the concept of imaginary culture is not only necessary at a formal level but also in the specific field of social movement, as a collision force against processes of behavioral standardization and against the reification of the social products with which individuals in the consumer society increasingly identify. Channels for recording communication can never be taken as absolute, as sacred regulators, and current writing is one of them. These channels are largely the means by which individuals in social life are placed in the role of victims, even when the victims kneel at the feet of the executioner in a respectful and grateful pose. The subject of the imagination in power should make us see the hypocrisy of a culture in which freedom—that restorative simulacrum of the imagination—is only formal; in which if and where there is freedom of expression, it cannot be said that there is freedom of thought. And this is not the danger of technology but of the technocracy as a cultural or political form and its blind alliance with mythology, as can be seen in a film that I believe is now screening in a theater in Madrid.

This thick layer of determination represented by the information networks of today's world, the networks, when it comes to manipulation, are the surest bulwarks against freedom of thought. They are more structural than those of the feudal era. And we should do as in Schiller's *Don Carlos*, when the Marquis of Poza goes to ask King Philip II for the freedom to think. This is the enclave of the imaginary that we have spoken of.

In short, imaginary writings would be those that allow us to face the arbitrariness of cultural mediations, at the theoretical level, and on the concrete level of social practice.

Semantic Action Poem No. II

- 1) You have entered Galería Juana Mordó and are reading Semantic Action Poem No. II. Place your left hand in your pocket, rub your chin with your right hand, and repeat quietly: “Yes, yes, yes...”
- 2) Turn a quarter of a circle to your right. Take five carefully measured steps, with your head held high, a furrowed brow, and tense jaw. Stop, and as you consider the poem closest to you, exclaim “Oh!,” then place your hands on your hips, open your mouth, bow slightly, and say “Ha, ha!” very seriously, and turn, cynical, toward the center of the room.
- 3) As you make circles with your right hand, think about the following propositions: “All people are stupid, except me. But I am people...” Ponder this and utter two dry, skeptical “Ha, has” and walk in even, robotic strides to a corner of Galería Juana Mordó.
- 4) From your corner, separate your legs, interlace your hands, and twirl your thumbs while smiling beatifically and gazing at the sky. Recite: “The dark swallows will return... they will return, return...” sway your head, your body, as if you are about to faint; if anybody stops and stares, say: “The angels, the angels bottle-feed me, the little angels.” Then follow the wall to your left while holding both hands in the air, and whistle and clap while thinking, if you are male: “I’m the Gioconda!,” and if you are female: “I’m the nobleman with the hand on his chest!”
- 5) When you have taken a few steps, stop in front of a poster, raise your hands to the sky, place your feet together, and turn to the center of the room shouting “Eureka, eureka!,” if anyone stares or asks. Think: “This poem is this poem. This poem is not this poem.” Facing the room, shout: “I am me. I am not me. I am not not me. Eureka.” If anyone stares or asks, say: “The truth is not the non-truth.” I have finished Action Poem No. II.
- 6) Try and do it yourself, whether or not there is a gallery. Congratulations.

Pic-Poems I

What is a *pic* poem? Who can answer the question what is a *pic* poem? This undoubtedly belongs to the secrets of the company Telefónica S.A. Around two weeks ago, the following phone conversation (between Ignacio Gómez de Liaño and Herminio Molero) could be heard, among thousands of others:

—What do you think about using a common name in the program for all the public poems, for the action and participation poems? (the experimental poetry section was to take place a few days later, on Saturday, the 3rd of April, at the Seiquer gallery).

—Sure, but without making a big deal of it: I think it could be something to do with *sandwiches*. First we have to see what a *sandwich* is: it's juicy, chewy... no, that won't do. It's tasty. *Picante* [spicy]. *Picante*.

—That's it, that's the word, damn, pic-ante, pic, pic. I like pic. It's not bad. What do you think?

—I'm thinking that it sounds like the English word "pig," highly appropriate. And "pick" (look it up in the English-Spanish dictionary): *elegir, coger*.

And the poets hugged each other over the phone. They had found their "trademark." The printed program, which almost everybody received late, read: *Pic-Poems I*.

I. The Public Poem

—Is this the plastics warehouse?—on the phone again—I'm looking for twenty-four meters of clear plastic, three meters wide. It's called polyethylene 005... Yes, 12 pesetas a meter.

In other words, you could say it was the start of the public poem *fragile words*. They were spoken by a friend of the poet Ignacio Gómez de Liaño. Because the writer, Alain Arias-Misson, was in Brussels at the time, and still had to pass through Geneva (two truly poetic cities!) before arriving in Madrid to bring to life those "fragile words" that

would polyethylenically unfold in Calle Santa Catalina, near Galería Seiquer. (With words spoken over the phone to a plastics warehouse, the poem began.)

All the writers of this treatise agree that one of the characteristics of public poems is to overwork and exhaust those who practice them. Arias-Misson, primary pioneer of this modality, recently wrote, “The transfer of poetic energy to the public requires making a tremendous personal physical effort” (*De Tafelronde* XV, 3 and 4, Antwerp). Poetry, particularly public poetry, has a suctioning effect, it absorbs, it wants everything from us, so as to, with discreet alchemy, bring about the metamorphosis, the great leap. We shall see.

The evening before the *pic* session, the public poem was still rolling, never better said, as the second stage was taking place in a garage. There, Alain Arias-Misson having arrived from hyperborean regions, the painter Nela Arias-Misson and the poets H. Molero and I. Gómez de Liaño had gathered along with Virginia Careaga. They had come together with the aim of painting in large letters the magical expressions FRAGILE WORDS on two oversized pieces of polyethylene, respectively, which were spread out on the floor of the garage, one on top of the other. Around them, the cars looked on congenially. What nobody will ever know is the surprise of the night watchman who appeared in the garage at the precise moment when our friends walked in like conspirators. Nela, as if trying to explain, dressed in work clothes, with paintbrushes and paint at the ready, thought to say:

—You see, we’re making a poem.

At 3:30 in the morning, exhausted, the improvised community of poets retired to rest.

A few hours later, at 8 o’clock on Saturday evening, the two plastic curtains were opened out and spread from one side of the street to the other. The wind flapped the magical expressions, FRAGILE WORDS, hanging in the air. Interrupt the traffic? Free up the space between the two curtains and invite a couple to penetrate the clear plastic and break the fragile letters by standing in the empty center of the strange public receptacle, and to embrace, or, naked, to engage in intercourse, conjuring up Apuleius’s *Golden Ass*? This may have been the plan. A beautiful plan! But what was real, and even more realistic, was to let the poem be activated by the traffic itself. The cars,

especially the taxis, wrecked the plans with the force of their metal bodies. That's right, to allow the vehicles to enter, piercing the curtains, not without hesitation, not without being urged to by the bystanders, not without being heckled. The vehicles were left to confirm the poem, breaking it. They broke the hymen.

Meanwhile, the poetic energy spread down the street, it came from everyone, in the form of excited glances, of shouts, it was mechanical energy trying to sustain the poetic polyethylene, after the onslaught of the cars. The poem was wrecked, the curtains were torn to shreds, the letters were broken into white scraps, scattered over the asphalt. Half an hour earlier, we could read: FRAGILE WORDS. Half an hour earlier. (What does "half an hour earlier" mean?) The readable, on being destroyed, had truly generated a timeless, practical reading.

2. The Ashurbanipal Poem

It was time to go into the gallery to continue the *pic* session within four walls. Waiting there, volatile, was an action (and repose and word and metamorphosis) poem by Ignacio Gómez de Liaño, entitled "Ashurbanipal Played the Flute!," dedicated to Hugo Ball in memory of the Cabaret Voltaire, as stated in the printed program. Before long, the shadows of Ashurbanipal and his flute would be grotesquely and spasmodically projected on the audience.

Parallel to the wall, two people—he a man and she a woman—were lying face up on the carpet, connected to each other by the soles of their feet. Moments later, I. Gómez de Liaño appeared, asking the room: What is an action poem? What is an action poem? But this time, he did not launch into talking about his experiences in action poetry by correspondence, he said nothing about women's passive resistance to action poems by correspondence. This, of course, belongs to the preliminaries. The action poem—which is in a sense a synthesis of Ying and Yang—is a rite, although it should be noted that it is a lyrical, ephemeral, and aesthetic rite. It comes to terms with life as a rite, not as standard words, but as action and as movement words. It is broken down into gestures, phenomena, words, intervals, leaps... Liaño began the first phase—participation poem—by shredding a few copies of *La Gaceta Regional* (back issues, Salamanca newspaper). He generously distributed the pieces among the audience and intoned,

“RAW ALPINDI, 28: In the light of recent events...” And from all the lips there began a large, effusive, informative column of sound. Minutes later: STOP! STOP! The hullabaloo stopped, and in the silence odd individual shreds of journalistic unreality were still sundered. Like in a chorus, Laura Valenzuela-Dibildos’s wedding echoed the events in Sierra Leone, an ad for soap counterpointed the religious newsletter... And at that moment, Ignacio Gómez de Liaño, who was standing near and between the two figures lying on the ground, put on a grotesque rubber mask, with toilet paper, moldy keys, etc., attached to it, and initiated the metamorphosis, letting fly, roaring, the Dada declamation “Ashurbanipal played the flute—the flute played Ashurbanipal” One of the stanzas said:

Anthropoid fevers connecting rods landfills crush grind collapse the street burns unpaved little blisters of tar and Koch’s bacilli spring advance through tangles of lost jungles and bullets RON RON RON FFFFFFFF ZUZUZI ZEZO TANKA RALANKA ASIMO ASAMO KURU and the successists and the suppressors giant iron spiders flying spiders Welcome Mr. Nixon! Waffles wafers cornflakes and yams for Superman and for Mr. Freedom a nylon-and-illustrated-newspaper sky oozes liquor and slogans.

Having read the grotesque poem, the reciter took off his mask, turned his back to the audience, made a large circular gesture with his arms inviting his recumbent colleagues to rise. They stood up slowly. The three embraced. The fusionist frenzy intensified, and the three, disoriented, collapsed. Someone jumped out from the audience and pounced with participatory fury. Meanwhile, “Ashurbanipal played the flute—the flute played Ashurbanipal.”

3. Communication “&” Communication

The two remaining poems “Communication, Naturally” and “&” by Pedro Almodóvar and Herminio Molero, respectively, began in the light of bright, playful constellations and almost ended in the best and most extreme *pic* style. “Communication, Naturally” consisted of two focal points (Pedro Almodóvar and Joaquín Lara) as emitters/receivers of messages that were passed from one hand to another through

the room, stopping—and being read—at one of the two sources. They said, “Sixty thousand pesetas, twenty thousand pesetas” or “It is a temporary stage of American trade” or “What color are you?,” etc.

Then Herminio Molero’s poem “&” entered the room, activated by the author and the beautiful Polish dancer Krysia Bogdan. Counterpointed and collage-like, the forms emitted by Molero alternated with the musical connections and the movements of Krysia’s body.

Actually, I am imagining this, I could not attend this last part of the session. Something on the street required my attention. A situation that I did not hesitate to describe as extremely *pic* had been unfolding intensely at the doors of the gallery for a few minutes. We had guests. I saw Josefa Seiquer and Ignacio Gómez de Liaño head to the door to do the honors. (I accompanied them.)

5. Happy End

An armed police patrol car was stationed in front of the gallery. Its contingent—in uniform and civilian clothes—was prowling around, looking for clues in the scraps of polyethylene, the plastic paint, and the clippings from *La Gaceta Regional*, trying to decipher the meaning of “sixty thousand pesetas, forty thousand pesetas” and “... American trade.” Good boys! Expectation, explanations: presence of mind in Josefa Seiquer, eloquence in Gómez de Liaño. Those people gathered in there, crowded together: Wouldn’t they be a bunch of eccentrics, fraternal but harmless madmen, *pic* people, *pic*... and nothing more? Judgment is suspended. (Bertrand Russell’s advice.) Madness is a political stance.

Karma DURBIMA

Session of *Pic-Poems*

This session of *pic* poems comprises various modes of experimental poetry. It is based on the developments in expression, style, etc. that have taken place beginning in 1950 in Western Europe with concrete poetry, which has been presented in numerous exhibitions and readings in Spain.

Pieces by Ignacio Gomez de Liaño

1) Object Without Object

This poem consists of a 90 × 70 × 60 cm cubic figure, around which character A performs a kind of simple dance for three or four minutes. Then, character B, who is inside the cube, takes out and displays to the audience a series of objects, namely: umbrella, transistor radio, light bulb, small bell, scissors, outlandish mask, and two posters showing the following:

pr	I	agua	cesto	gu	sto
	u t				
bris		agua	cesto	gu	sto
	zzzz				
risa		agua	cesto	gu	
sa		agua	cesto	gu	sto

2) Song of the Glass of Water

This poem is an invitation to silence and concentration. Paper cups are handed out, and then water is poured into them, which those present will later be asked to drink. The whole poem is carried out at a particularly slow and orderly rhythm.

3) Yang

This poem is accompanied by a recording of phonetic poetry composed with the sounds WAU and FAI, sometimes electronically manipulated.

A woman, A, stands motionless in front of the audience. Another two characters, B and C, hold up a polyethylene curtain with the word YANG painted on it; this curtain is in front of A. Character D uses scissors to cut the polyethylene into strips, tying together the ends of the resulting bands. D moves away from the group comprised of A, B, and C. The music stops and, suddenly, picking up a photographic camera, says, "Smile, please, for *Personas* magazine."

Ashurbanipal Played the Flute

Ashurbanipal played the flute
the flute played Ashurbanipal

The subway trains climb the lift shafts—ooze liquor and slogans—encroach upon skyscraper corridors UN USSR UAR STOP ISRAEL TARGAKA TARGANKA TAMARA TAMIRA BOLARMO ASIMUT ZIZARA ZARAKA TANKA KARALANCA ARKALA MURGU URGU BURURGU ZIZARA TARGATA despoil departments—Executives toast themselves in the dishwashers made in Kathmandu—streams of heavy oil—orgasmic sparks windows of air spurt UN USA UAR STOP ISRAEL limp nylon—waffles and corn-flakes for Superman and for Mr. Freedom

Ashurbanipal played the flute
the flute played Ashurbanipal

The season and the act of estrus has arrived Seat 600 and Minis 500 300 and small Fords follow the silky line of the yellow coupe ignorant eunuch—the virgin breaks her irons entangle and in the escapade the springs of the back seat pop out oh beautiful concerts! Elizabeth Hall!—the control box—will it be the Andean Cone?—opens like a vagina and the tube is exhausting USSR USA UAR STOP ISRAEL MARDULA AND ADULA OJUKU AYULA TEPESTO KULUKU OOOLO OOOOL GARGA DADANANA KAMPON RONRONRON the season of estrus the portion of ice the trembling of the veil the hair the milk the pus and the blood curdled

Ashurbanipal played the flute
the flute played Ashurbanipal

Anthropoid fever connecting rods landfills crush grind collapse the street burns unpaved blisters of tar and Koch's bacilli spring advance among tangles of lost jungles and bullets RON RONRON FFFFFFFF ZUZUZI ZEZO TANKA RALANKA ASIMO

ASAMO JURU and the successists and the suppressors giant iron
spiders flying spiders Welcome Mr. Nixon—waffles wafers
cornflakes and yams for Superman and Mr. Freedom—a nylon-and-
illustrated-newspaper sky oozes liquor and slogans.

Ashurbanipal played the flute
the flute played Ashurbanipal

The season of estrus has arrived and fake penises and muscles are
for sale and people make love and have the perfect orgasm in round
and trapezoidal beds UN USSR USA STOP ISRAEL NUORU
SUSUKA ARGOLA MAMANA GULUA KAROKA BLIMBIESTO
PAMPON EAT NAPALM FOR BREAKFAST with bacon
and cornflakes, cheers Mr. Freedom!—people are stupid not
ANTIPRO— The umbrella peels open shakes and erect plunges
into the shop window the glass howls with pleasure! TARZAN
SUPERMAN! and spurt streams of heavy oil its most exquisite
merchandise

ASHURBANIPAL PLAYED THE FLUTE
THE FLUTE PLAYED ASHURBANIPAL

Song of the Glass of Water

Meet up with a group of friends. Each person is to bring a clear container for the water.

A child pours water into each container. Contemplate the water. Each person, in random order, says a few words relating to water “water is...,” for example: “water is light,” “water is water,” etc.

Each person raises the arm whose hand is holding the container, and says what they see, what they feel.

Lower it, raise it, lower it again, and turn ninety degrees, showing the container to the person closest to you. Invite them to say what they feel as they look at it.

Bring the container back to yourself. Hold it with both hands, silently, and as you stare at it, imagine, let your fantasy soar.

And now, while the song of the glass of water is happening, bring the clear container up to your mouth, and drink slowly. And what you are drinking is (possibility) the song of the glass of water.

[Handwritten note: If possible: on a page staple or glue a plastic envelope such as the one enclosed, and insert the full text of the SONG OF THE SONG OF WATER, duly folded; otherwise, print the text and staple or glue it on a plastic envelope, which may be larger than the one enclosed.]

Impossible Presentation

Presentation?
Sempretation
Presentation?
Tasempretion
Presentation?
Sempre-in-action
Pre-Sen-Ta-Tion?

IMPOSSIBLE PRESENTATION

by
Ignacio Gómez de Liaño

Sentapration
Tapresentation
Pretasention
Sempre-in-action
Tion-Ta-Sem-Pre?
Pre-Sen-Ta-Tion?

IMPOSSIBLE PRESENTATION

Ladies and Gentlemen

Send language to the street
Send language of the street?
Send language on vacation
Send language to imagine?
Send language to the image
Send language to utopia?
Send the street to language?
Send the street of language

Send vacation language?
Send language images
Send the utopia of language?

IMPOSSIBLE PRESENTATION
Streets and Automobiles

Does the word bespeak the name?
The voice dislocates the world
Does the world dislocate the word?
Utopia dislocates the world
Does image utter utopia?
Speak unspeakable image

IMPOSSIBLE PRESENTATION
Beasts and Submarines

vox	via	viz
lux	luna	lid
ray	ria	roe
tú	love	yo
if	i	ma
gi	na	tion
sce	nds	tran
le	ro	pa
la	do	el
mum		
ble	im	pos
si	sen	pre
ta	tion	

IMPOSSIBLE PRESENTATION?
IMAGINATION IN POETRY

Three Terms

The three action poems that comprise THREE TERMS are consecutive; they have no background music, projections, etc., and no words are uttered in them. There is only a performer, who does not even have a name, and who will hereinafter be referred to as A.

Term I

A goes up to a table on which there is a trash can, a bowl of water, and a basin. From the trash can A takes out a series of paper letters and slowly places them on the floor, assembling the phrase THIS IS THE WORD or GIFT OF THE WORD. A then gathers up the letters and puts them in the bowl of water.

A takes them out of the bowl and uses pegs to hang them on a clothesline. As the letters are wet, A uses a hairdryer to dry them. Once they are dry, A puts them in the basin. As the basin contains alcohol, when A puts a lit match into it, a fire flares up. (The venue is equipped with extinguishers that would be used in the almost unlikely, almost impossible, case of an accident.)

Term II

A carries a large cardboard box onto the stage. A opens it and takes out another box that is inside the first. A opens the second box and takes out a third. A opens the third and takes out a fourth. A repeats this with seven boxes. The word "FRAGILE" is printed on each of the boxes. Inside the tiny last box, there are some little balls of tissue paper. When they are opened out on the ground, they spell the word FRAGILE. Once they have been smoothed out on the floor, they are placed in a glass jar.

Term III

A walks onto the stage. A stands in a certain spot, in silence. A counts a few seconds and then marks his position with a small cross. A repeats the operation at three other points. A joins the four resulting

points, forming the shape of a large parenthesis (). A then does the same thing again, creating a smaller parenthesis inside the larger one (()). Next, A takes several newspapers and slowly tears them into pieces (preferably not newspapers from Barcelona or Madrid so as not to offend sensibilities or encourage misinterpretations of the poem). Once the newspapers have been torn up, A hands out the pieces to those present, that is, the audience. When everyone in the audience has the pieces, A puts on a rubber mask of the kind you buy in novelty stores. As well as putting on the mask, A hangs a sign with the word PARENTHESIS around his neck. Once this is done, A gestures to the audience, inviting them to read the pieces of newspaper they are holding. A has his own. Then everyone starts to read their text. The result is a loud murmur in which it is difficult to make out individual texts, because each one is different; but what matters is the murmur of reading. Once the reading is underway, A goes in front of the audience and starts throwing large amounts of confetti over the people reading. A also throws confetti on the stage. Once this action has been completed and the readers have tired of reading, THREE TERMS come to an end.

Actions for the Pamplona Encounters

It is thus since Dada that action became part of the artistic process. John Cage incorporated it into music, and a few Lettrists used it in some of their actions.

Since 1964, Zaj organized public performances that may have been the first instances of these trends in Spain. This group was likewise among the first to systematically begin to implement action in the world.

Alain Arias-Misson—who worked with Zaj for a time—was the first maker of public poems: his poem *Palabras frágiles* (Fragile Words) consisted of placing two plastic curtains across a street, blocking the traffic; eventually they were destroyed by cars. At the Encuentros de Pamplona (Pamplona Encounters), Arias-Misson walked around carrying punctuation marks, punctuating the city as he went.

With him, Ignacio Gómez de Liaño and Javier Ruiz, Fernando Huici, Francisco Delgado, Lluç Alonso-Martínez, Ramón Melcón, Javier Mamely, Santiago Mercado, Chenchó, Eliseo, Antonio, Manuel Royo, and the musicians Luis Robledo and Ángel Luis Ramírez, with other friends, realized an ongoing public poetry activity during the duration of the Encuentros.

The plan was to carry out several public action poems and a private ritual. The following projects took place:

Ignacio Gómez de Liaño

Advertising procession: with black ribbons, candles, and hoods: pieces of advertisements—embedded in banners—are carried through the city and publicly burned at the end of a predetermined route.

Procession of cages: twenty or thirty cages containing living and dead animals and people—some beaten at certain times along the route—are paraded around the city.

Desemanticized procession: A group of people walk around the city carrying totally blank banners and posters. They hand out blank leaflets.

The spider web street: Made out of hundreds of rolls of toilet paper that are tied to objects, houses, and trees, creating an immense spatial web.

Semanticized trees: Various trees—trunks and branches—are wrapped in pieces of newspaper that protect their bark from the outside world.

Semantic balloons: Paper balloons—of the kind that rise when filled with alcohol—fly into the air carrying letters that disappear or burn with them.

Aerial constellations: A large letter is attached to a group of hydrogen-filled balloons. Several groups of balloons carrying different letters are paraded through the city. At a given moment, they are released.

TRY P.O.E. UBLIC-P

“MANUAL. POESÍA DE ACCIÓN—POESÍA PÚBLICA” (MANUAL: ACTION POETRY—PUBLIC POETRY), recently published by Agitadores (Madrid, 1982), between pages 32 and 28 we read: “How many poems fit in the Plaza del Castillo?”

If you take a letter for a walk, don't forget the cable address: Tralesapa. Kacy Lee claimed that a letter can contain the limits of action of the surface area in question, the density between inside and outside, and a compendium of the “general theory of deformation.” The angulation of the poem is, after all, a matter of usefulness from the various angles. “How many poems fit in the Plaza del Castillo?”

The castles that fit in a poem are on land or on pedestals, little by little a magnificent cataclysm, the bond of magic, and the hopes and horrors of the Human Condition. Dr. Tarratt, the inventor of Logomycin, addressed the *dramatis personae* as follows:

Corpus rich in image, flesh, and secrets. Three bodies and thoughts. Forget dirigisme and technical efficiency. Note that zero is the negation of the number, the anti-number. This non-number is what makes numbers work. That is the poem. I admit I have not yet understood the business of unity and plurality. That is the poem. The one cannot be explained without the multiple, nor does the multiple make sense without the one. The one is nothing but what it is not. The multiple is nothing but what it is not; or something of the sort. Can I really affirm that I have made just one poem in my life, or were there several? I walked the streets, I went to the post office and I bought a stamp.

“How many poems fit in a virus?” Watch out for the virus! Careful with the virus! The Burroughs Adding Machine Company has checked the incidence rate. It says: the arrangement of the screens, on which the poems are projected, has been carefully considered rather than intuitive, and is certainly not due to the vagaries of the chlorophyll function. For when a letter goes wandering, before being packaged up and sent by post to the Royal Academy of Language, it may very easily fall into a gutter. Further punished. The *Enchiridion*

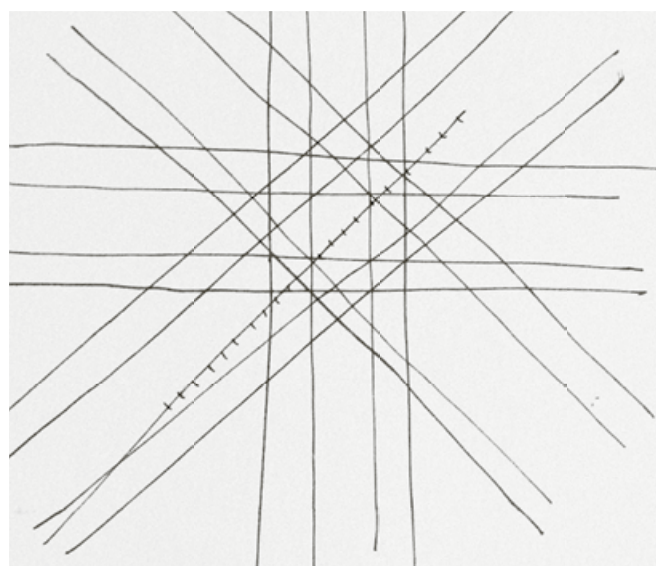
inventionis and *De libero arbitrio*, a treatise on gutters and sewers, explain that to see is to find poems, that one cannot see in gutters, but nonetheless, many honorary poems germinate in gutters. “How many poems fit in a sewer?”

Get together with some friends. Take seven consecutive breaths, slowly. As you breathe in, concentrate on a word. As you breathe out, say the word you thought of. Slowly. Then take colored markers and write on your body the words you remember. Look at yourselves in the mirror. Slowly. Take a bath.

Kacy Lee prescribed silence to poets, after pointing out the antibiotic of verbal action recently prepared by Dr. Tarratt. Logomycin—the name of this antibiotic—has a salutary effect on cases of acute logistic illness. It is recommended for bureaucratic technocrats and for most of those in recognized professions. Dr. Tarratt’s preparation can also be used as an emetic after lectures, colloquia, poetry readings, etc. “How many poems fit in Logomycin?”

The supranational committee for public poetry (SCPP), at a recent meeting in Ingatestone, Essex, England, agreed to submit to UNESCO, for the information of member countries, a proposal to eliminate once and for all environmental semantic contamination. The exceedingly simple proposal reads as follows: “All member countries shall undertake to remove one letter of the alphabet each year from all public and semi-public texts, without the option of reinstating it in later years. In twenty-five years’ time, twenty-five letters will thus have been deleted.” It is hoped that this measure will have drastic effects on the increasing semantic contamination. It appears that the United Kingdom—a trailblazer in decontamination work—is to implement the proposal in 1973, when the letter *i* will be deleted, followed by the letter *n* in 1974. Some commentators have pointed out that on the commemoration of Guy Fawkes on November evenings, the bonfires will burn brighter with the letter corresponding to that year. Thus, the *I* (me) will disappear from English texts, and the United Kingdom will become Unted Kngdom, Uted Kdo, etc.

“How many poems fit in a newspaper?” Today nobody questions the beneficial effects of action poetry and public poetry.



Elencar

Vertical deserts flash rhymes
White points and horizons dissect rhymes
Vertices of points and hollows
deserts sleep voices
Here wing is dart—ex tend is or rose

* * *

Points rhyme white
Hollow runes of horizons
Deserts that dissect flash
They point to the voices
Here sleeps wings—tend ex is or rose

Runes rhyme vertical horizons
Darts are to the point—point to the white
Flashes are what the deserts dissect
Vertices of voices of hollows
The wing sleeps here—is extend or rose.

Let the smoke carve the essences.
Let the dactyl glow sound in the gems.
Let the palace of taste savor.
Let the skin feign limits to water.
Let Aroma shape the inane and empty.

It is a pilgrimage diverse in lattices.
Excursus that plows kisses in the air.
Spiral that copulates the cupola of verse.
Place and point on the fly, eaves is of the air.
Broken space of rhythms that algebrizes fragments.
Celestial shadow that smashes words.

* * *

Darts that rune deserts
Vertical horizons flash to the point
Vertices of voices dissect the white
Rhymes of hollows—point to the point
The wing sleeps here—ex tend or rose is

* * *

Vertical rhymes dart are to the point
They dissect hollows and vertices of runes
Point to the wing
White sleeps here—or rose is extend
ex or rose is tend

La nube (The Cloud), Madrid, 1971. Participants:
Lluc Alonso Martínez, Ignacio Gómez de Liaño,
Fernando Húici, Armando Montesinos, Ramón Melcón,
Gumersindo Quevedo, and Javier Ruiz Sierra









Poema meteorológico (Meteorological Poem), Ibiza, 1972.
Participants: Ignacio Gómez de Liaño and Edison Simons





Los juegos del Espinario en el Jardín de la isla de Aranjuez
(The Spinario Games in the Garden of the Island of Aranjuez), Aranjuez, 1972. Participants: Ignacio Gómez de Llano, Sagrario Muñoz Calvo, and Edison Simons





Asurbanipal tocaba la flauta (Asurbanipal Played the Flute), Madrid, 1972. Participants: Ignacio Gómez de Liano and the audience at Galería Seiquer: Juan Navarro Baldeweg, Alain Arias-Misson, and Fernando López Vela, among others





Asurbanipal tocaba la flauta (Asurbanipal Played the Flute)
in the assembly hall of the Colegio de Arquitectos de
Barcelona, 1973. Participant: Ignacio Gómez de Liáño

La caja mágica (The Magic Box), Pamplona, 1972.
Participants: Pedro Almodóvar and Ignacio Gómez de Liaño





El canto del vaso de agua (Song of the Glass of Water),
Pamplona, 1972. Participants: Ignacio Gómez de Liaño
and the audience in the gallery

Laberinto de aire (Labyrinth of Air) in the assembly hall of the Instituto Alemán, Madrid, 1972. Participants: Lluís Alonso Martínez, Ignacio Gómez de Liaño, Eduardo González, Fernando Húici, Ramón Melcón, Armando Montesinos, José-Miguel de Prada Poole, Gumersindo Quevedo, Javier Ruiz Sierra, etc. (Photos: Pablo Pérez-Minguez)





Poema aéreo (Aerial Poem), Pamplona, 1972. Participants:
Lluís Alonso Martínez, Ignacio Gómez de Liaño, Fernando
Huici, Ramón Melcón, Armando Montesinos, Víctor Mira,
Gumersindo Quevedo, and Javier Ruiz Sierra

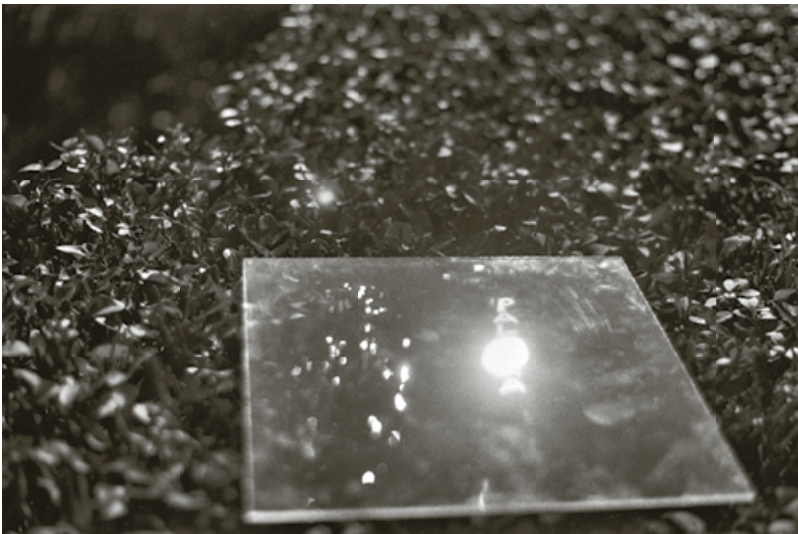
Tres términos (Three Terms) in the assembly hall
of the Colegio de Arquitectos de Barcelona, 1973.
Participant: Ignacio Gómez de Liaño





Intangibles, Madrid, 1973. Participants: Ignacio Gómez de Liaño and Fernando González de Canales





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Poema de la destrucción (Poem of Destruction), Pamplona, 1972.
Participants: Pedro Almodóvar and Ignacio Gómez de Liaño



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