

TALLER
de popular
serigrafía

TALLER POPULAR DE SERIGRAFIA (2002-2007)

ON THE STREETS

To mobilize in masses, rebel against the repressive order, give voice to accumulated anguish, was the spontaneous response of the people to the speech made by President Fernando de la Rúa on the 19th of December 2001 when, close to 10:40 PM he announced the beginning of the situation of the state on the national radio and television channels. The end and the new beginning of a dramatic day that started out with ransacked supermarkets in the morning, civilian confrontations the rest of the day, political repression, 5 deaths and hundreds detained.

That night, the hundreds of thousands united at the Plaza Dos de Mayo ran in euphoria for the first time the slogan "Everyone out!". Later, years of silence and obedience to the political and the middle classes of society before the dictates and mandates of the neoliberals, and after months of feeling drowned produced by the drastic measures of economic adjustments dictated by the government, the high rate of unemployment and the confiscation of savings to protect the banking system as the last detonant, that night the stepping down of the minister of economics, Domingo Cavallo was precipitated, a news that was celebrated like a victory for those protestors united in different emblematic points of the city. The following day, when there were already more than 35 deaths due to political repression in various cities in the country, President De la Rúa and the members of his government finally abandoned their ranks.

In the next few days, you could see on the television the parade of names that occupied the presidential position (after a few days or even only after a few hours), in a representation crisis like no other, while there were mixed feelings of uncertainty and lighted spirits of people on the streets calling out to recover collective political initiatives through different forms of popular expressions.

The surge of a popular assembly in some populated cities of the country, principally, Buenos Aires, is the immediate heritage of the popular uprising of the 12th to the 20th of December. Following months of social outbreak in every neighborhood of the capital, unusual political situations were repeated: neighbors united in benches and parks, workers, students, people who have saved up some money, businessmen that who were defrauded by the banks, political activists of diverse tendencies occupied the public spaces to debate what to do and how to move on.

Since the 90s, a lot of organizations of unemployed workers in the periphery and in the local interior of the country, in their resistance towards political neoliberalism and their ravages, had made it their identity banner to occupy the public space and make collective protests. It would be in 2002 when a sector of the urban middle class would lend their voice to condemn this hegemonic discourse. A period of reconstruct the social cracks would be initiated during the last dictatorship and the years at the peak of neoliberalism, already in democracy.

In the neighborhood of San Telmo, neighbors would gather in public spaces centric to the neighborhood, and start organizing themselves to join the successive "cacerolazos" (named after the protesters who would make noise on the streets using casseroles). They would debate proposals, start to try out answers to problems they had in common. That is how the Asamblea Popular de San Telmo – Plaza Dorrego came to emerge.

With the desire to accompany and foster this newly found process of community participation that rose during the days of the 19th and the 20th, the Taller Popular de Serigrafía initiated its activities (create and print serigraphed images within the context of the protest), first as part of the Asamblea Popular de San Telmo-Plaza Dorrego, then later on, as an itinerant art collective wherein more artists from different neighborhoods would join later on.

SERIGRAPHY

In a society with different sectors within its population that had to learn to be silent, hide its political positions, and bury books in order not to disappear, be typecasted, persecuted by the military dictatorship in the 70s, the eruption of a street art practice that would allusive images of social conflicts on the garments that the protestors, passersby could wear – t-shirts, sweatshirts, jeans – is a sign, that is in one way or another, subverts the culture of self-censorship.

Going further than just disseminating the face of Che Guevara, printed in black ink on countless red t-shirts, bearing an image that openly expresses the adscription of a contemporary social claim and show it off on one's body, shows it to other voices that most mass media often ignore, is an infrequent gesture even in its almost 20 years of repressive regime. Make visible these prints within the cotidianity of work, in the neighborhood, in the school, as a disruptive gesture that, peacefully communicate, interpret, and to a certain point, instigate social participation.

Artistic activity as a dispositive to disseminate the new political image, that, in the aleatory routes that people who wear these t-shirts make, brings about a sign of identity everytime the TPS displays its table full of printed t-shirts is an indicator that up to a point the movement that rose in 2001 tried to instate new social and cultural practices in a society that have accepted it passively during a very long time as a mere spectator of a collective destiny.

Even though the establishment anteriorly intended to restore the discourse of hegemony, it cannot be negated that barriers have been burned and new sensibilities and political ideas have been able to circulate through diverse modes of spatial popular participation generated from the encounters produced in the summer of 2002.

MANIFESTA

The development of different festive and creative modes of protest run through most part of the Argentinian assembly movement. The "cacerolazo" is just one of these expressions. Its spirit can compare itself to the different emblematic movements of this epoch, the

movement of global resistance and the habitual street fanfares that recuperate, for the sake of social protest, the creativity and communicativeness proper of a carnival.

In the second half of 2002, with the goal of getting funds to construct a neighborhood community center, the San Telmo assembly organized a cultural event and chose to call it "Manifiesta".

The word, the appeal, "manifiesta" therefore resignates and converts itself into a catalysts of political-cultural action. An invitation, more than an imperative, to express, to go out into the streets, to celebrate a ritual of encounter with others. Protest as creation. A collective process that derives from different new forms to inhabit/transit/appropriate the public space, to feast and share the rebellion.

The symbol reappears in one of the posters that the Taller Popular de Serigrafía designed for the first anniversary of the 19th-20th December revolt. The image printed on paper and t-shirts during the mass protest march, that in its non-linear route, trace a map that signals the places where a year before some protestors were assassinated during the political repression on December 20. Collective action to ease the pain for the loss and pay homage to recover the affectiveness and the creative potential of social protest.

MANI-FIESTA: a play with words that combine the ideas of protest and fiesta

COLLECTIVE MEMORY

"San Telmo tiene memoria" (San Telmo has memory) was the motto reached by the collective consensus of the San Telmo assembly on March 2002. This was then converted into the image of the artists that were integrants of this assembly, it was then transformed into the poster asking people to form part and celebrate cultural day against terrorism in the state.

The action was done in Plaza Dorrego, a few days before the new anniversary of the coup-de-etat perpetrated by the military in 1976. The day included performances by popular artists and musicians, theater groups, poetry reading and the development of two open workshops, a drawing workshop for kids and the other for serigraphy. With the intention of divulging serigraphy an art, a trade and possibly a source of work for those unemployed in the neighborhood, introductory brochures were distributed to those who went up to the table while new posters were printed and distributed with the motto "San Telmo tiene memoria."

This image/motto that has been put on different t-shirts that have reached the print table (anonymous gesture that was started the trademarked dynamics that characterized the following actions to come by the Taller Popular de Serigrafía) was seen multiplied in the torch march on the same day running through the streets of San Telmo remembering those who disappeared in the neighborhood. During the walk that was going to former Centro Clandestino de Detención (Candestine Detention Center) also known as "Club Atlético" (Athletic Club) those posters covered the walls illuminated by the torches, on the background, never-ending drums could be heard.

In front of the ruins of the "Club Atlético" (the building was demolished to construct a highway), where around 1,500 people passes through its doors and tortured, the majority whom of which disappeared, concluded the activity of this grand cultural day. It was a small victory in the battle to become visible in historic territories and recover collective memory.

At present, the "Club Atlético" has been converted into a space of memory. Anthropologists and investigators are recovering the information that has remained below the ruins and a monument as a homage to the persons that have disappeared will be erected below the highway.

RODOLFO WALSH

On the 25th of March 1977, the Grupo de Tareas de la Escuela de Mecánica de la Armada (one of the biggest clandestine detention centers in the country) intercepted in plain city center, the writer, journalist and revolutionary pro-Peron militant, at that moment was clandestined, Rodolfo Walsh. From this day forward, the famous Argentine writer remains in disappearance. It is believed that Walsh came to distribute in different mail boxes his Open Letter to a Writer to the Military Junta, dated the date before, March 24, 1977, the day of the first anniversary of the civil-military coup d'état that toppled down the government of Isabel Peron and that exercised terrorism in the state until 1983, wherein 30,000 personas have disappeared in different systematic disappearance plans of the most sinister people of Latin America.

This letter sent by mail to the Argentinian press and correspondences of foreign media was the last one he wrote. "The censorship of the Argentinian press, the presecution of intellectuals, the raid in my house in Tigre, the assassination of my dearest friends and the lost of my daughter who died fighting against them, are some of the acts to which obliges me to this form of clandestine expression after given my opinion liberally as a writer and journalist during almost 30 years. The first anniversary of the Military Junta has motivated a balance in state actions in official documents and speeches, where you have managed to call justifiable are errors, those that recognize them as errors are crimes and those that omit them are calamities." ...so the letter starts.

Even though there has been an intention to silence him, 32 years after his disappearance, the voice and work of Rodolfo Walsh continues to inspire thousands of readers, militants, young journalists of the base movement.

The serigraph of his portrait, realized by the TPS based on some of the most recognizable photos of the writer, was printed in 2002 in the little park in San Telmo that bears his name, within the framework of the activity to recover collective memory. In the Plazoleta Rodolfo Walsh neighbors of the Asamblea Popular de San Telmo carry on various of their public interventions: communal food sharing to the homeless of the neighborhood and "familias de cartoneros" (families who informally work, who, at night time, collect paper and cardboard to sell them to the recycling companies, most of them young and kids). Various music festivals, open radio and cultural days are celebrated in homage to those who have disappeared are also done in this same space.

IMPUNITY

During the few years after recovering democracy, the government of Raul Alfonsín (1983-1989) implemented the investigation of crimes against humanity committed by the Armed Forces during the dictatorship, and also, the unprecedented “Jucio a las Juntas Militares” (Justice to the Military Junta) – nevertheless, in 1986, only a year after the model sentences of the military heads, the same government implemented what was called “Leyes del perdón” (Forgiveness Laws): the Ley de Punto Final (Final Point Law), and later on, the Ley de Obediencia Debida (Law of Forced Obedience). These laws signified the acquittal of most of the military implicated in the genocide executed in the state between 1976 to 1983. The end of justice, the advent of impunity. In pretence of putting an end to the construction of memory and the unending search for the truth and justice that –even in times of dictatorship- initiated by the Madres of Plaza de Mayo and other families of detainees and people who have disappeared.

The pardon decreed in 1990 by then President Carlos Menem as a favor to those military heads condemned during the government of Alfonsín in the coronation of this cycle of impunity in democracy. With the end of judicial process and pardon, the genocides and its accessories came to walk the streets of the country freely, from then on, the anonymity that the pact of silence have been conferred to them, a lot of them still carry out tasks in the armed and police forces during the constitutional era.

FIGHT FOR JUSTICE

A part from this deterioration, human rights organizations have not stopped in demanding and are raising their flags with more force: “Jucio y castigo. Ni Olvido, ni perdón.” (Justice and punishment. No to Forgetfulness, No to Pardon.) New methods of protests have been conceived that fight against these imposed obstacles of the laws of impunity. The second half of the 90s, young people whose parents disappeared due to political causes during the dictator formed the organization H.I.J.O.S. (Hijos por la identidad y la justicia contra el olvido y el silencio) (Sons for identity and justice against forgetfulness and silence).

In their search for a practice that would represent them rose the “escrache”, a political-artistic street action that have the goal of constructing, due to the lack of judicial condemnation, the “social condemnation” of the assassins, torturers and repressors around where they live. Bring to light their genocide past before the eyes of their neighbors that they come across on a daily basis in the bakery, the elevator, the corner. Take away their benefit of anonymity during a day of protest and action in front of their homes.

After the revolt of December 2001, the practice of “escrache” was seen fortified and wide spread. The organizations and artistic collectives (Grupo de Arte Callejero, etc., among others) that already participated in the Mesa de Escrache Popular, new groups and quagmire movements that permitted this political action to spread more and more. Between 2003 and 2005, TPS designed posters for various “escraches”. The printed posters were distributed to those who participated, the neighbors of those that were their that day, they were also posted on the walls of the surrounding areas of the house of every repressor uncovered.

Families of victims of the “gatillo fácil” also started to participate, placing names to the practice of political abuse that frequently happened in the suburbs, to shoot them, burn clothes in unjustified situations to young people of the popular classes. This abuse of system power that resulted in hundreds of deaths of young people every year is one of the legacies of the impunity of the repressors and their civilian accessories.

“¡Si no hay justicia, hay escrache!” (If there is no justice, there is “escrache”!) indicates one of mottos of the Mesa d Escrache Popular. This form of direct action is a tool chosen by the new generation to fight against the naturalization of impunity.

On the 27th of December of 2003, an “escrache” was done against Jorge H. Vidal, a medical forensic on the provincial police and appropriator of the sons of those who disappeared born in captivity, that was set free thanks to the Ley de Obediencia Debida y Punto Final.

Hugo Mario Bellavigna, a priest in a prison that infringed psychological torture to detainees for political reasons during the dictatorship and at present, is the parish priest in the church of the Chacarita neighborhood, was also done an “escrache” on the 27th of November 2004.

The persistent trajectory of the mothers, sons, ex detainees and families of the 30,000 persons who disappeared cannot be stopped. The laws Leyes de Obediencia Debida y Punto Final were declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 2005. Slowly, the justice that was interrupted 19 years before have restarted again.

On September 2006, the testimony of Julio Lopez, an ex detainee and presumed disappeared that survived the torture of the 70s, was crucial so that justice could determine the perpetual life-sentence to ex superintendent Miguel Etchecolatz. The day before sentencing, the key testifier disappeared without leaving any clue. His whereabouts is still unknown.

The balance of justice is still in red alert.

JUNE 26, 2002

On the morning of June 26, 2002, a mobilization of 4,000 unemployed moved towards the Puente Pueyrredon with the intention of cutting the access that connects the city of Buenos Aires to the south periphery. This action was discussed, approved and coordinated by various movements of unemployed people in different neighborhoods that tried to put social pressure so that the interim government of Eduardo Duhalde would attend to a series of demands: the pending employment payment plans, the increase in subsidies to the unemployed, the implementation of a new food plan, the distribution of consumables to the schools in the neighborhoods and the judicial acquittal of various social activists. Also the demand to put end to the repression against the protest movement.

The answer from the security forces and to those who controlled them was severe: 2 young people, Maximiliano Kosteki and Dario

Santillan, were violently executed and other 32 protestors were injured by lead bullets. A clear sign to various sectors of society that mobilized since before and after the 19th to the 20th of December 2001.

Various mass media communications have tried to give a version, first, that it was a confrontation between different protest factions, and afterwards, the version that political repression was an answer to the provocation by armed militants. A careful network to conceal the truth resulted very effective for a few hours, but had to be revised and questioned in the days to come when some photographs revealed another version of what happened that day: Dario Santillan, in his attempt to escape the police massacre found himself with Maximiliano Kosteki, who he didn't know, injured by a bullet in the train station of Avellaneda. When the security forces arrived Dario tried to ask for auxiliary help for the young man who was bleeding. He was also shot. Immediately, the bodies were dragged and re-located, the crime evidence was hidden, the station hall was cleaned in a sordid attempt to cover it up, but fortunately, the photographs and testimonies of witnesses permitted the act to be unmasked.

On January 2006, the material authors of the shooting execution, two policemen were condemned to a life sentence in prison by the justice system. But to this day the families of Kosteki and Santillan, together with numerous political organizations and human rights organizations continue to demand a sentence to those politically responsible for this repression perpetuated by the state.

Every year, the day before the 26th, a popular vigil is organized in the surround area of the train station of Avellaneda and the Puente Pueyrredon to commemorate what happened in 2002. In each of these encounters, numerous political, student organizations and artist groups come together to pass the night painting graffiti, make murals, video projections, concerts, make community TV transmissions, performances and interventions that convert the space where Dario and Maxi were assassinated into a scene full of vitality, resistance and creativity. Towards dawn, the preparations for a symbolical march are made, again cutting the traffic at the bridge where the tragedy started.

IN EVERY STRUGGLE THEY ARE THERE

With the massacre of June 26, 2002, not only were the elections celebrated earlier and the exit of the government of interim President Eduardo Duhalde, but also 2 names were added to a list of workers, unemployed, social militants assassinated in popular protests since recovering democracy in Argentina.

On April 12, 1995, during the peak of political neoliberalism, during the protest against the wave of layoffs and the shutting down of factories in the depressed electronic and industry dependent city of Ushuaia, Victor Choque, a construction worker was assassinated. It was the first known case wherein a protestor died through a police bullet right after democracy was regained. He would be followed by, among others, Teresa Rodriguez, a 24 year-old domestic helper assassinated in 1997 in a political repression against unemployed workers and doctors that cut the route in the province of Neuquen, and Anibal Veron, assassinated in 2000 in the northern locality of Tartagal, Salta, one of the worse areas hit by the economic crisis and unemployment provoked by the privatization of public companies. Teresa Rodriguez and Anibal Veron would become the symbol to the new movements of the unemployed that massively started at the end of the 90s with the profound crisis, and they adopted their names as emblems.

When 20 year anniversary of democracy was celebrated, it was estimated that there were more than 45 deaths in contexts of the repression of social protest.

DARIO SANTILLAN MAXIMILIANO KOSTEKI PRESENT!

22 year-old Maximiliano Kosteki was a recently on his way to become an artist: he played the base, juggler, participated in literary workshops and above all, painted and drew. In the last months prior to his death, a political concern awoke in him and brought him to join the activities of the MTD "Anibal Veron" de Guernica. Once there he collaborated in the communal cafeteria, in the garden, in the bakery and the library of the movement. Together with his companions they mobilized towards Puente Pueyrredon in the morning of June 26, 2002. It was his first manifestation and the first time he would join in cutting the traffic route and offered to collaborate with the organization in the helping out with the security of its manifestors. With this solidarity decision he started out the last day of his life.

With regards to the basis of one of his drawings, which is summed up by one photograph that his family had chosen and fragment of a text that Maxi wrote days before his assassination, the serigraph piece was created and later on a lot of his friends, families, companions would carry on their t-shirts, flags and placards in every day of fighting to demand for justice and punishment to those responsible for the massacre.

On June 2003, a year after his death, the recovered factory, Grissinopoli, more than 50 drawings, prints, paintings, sketches made by Max Kosteki could be seen in the exhibition "El artista que no dejaron de ser" (The Artist That Did Not Stop Being an Artist).

Dario Santillan was a reference to the youth of MTD of Lanus. He pushed the creation of a type of machine that would fabricate cement blocks used in constructing houses in the neighborhood of Fe where he lived and was a militant. He was the spokesperson of this sustainable work day after day. When a journalist would interview him he would make it a point to have them know those who made money with these plans for whom the manifestors fought against. At present, his companions at MTD, together with other groups of ocupados and desocupados, students, neighborhood militants created the "Frente popular Dario Santillan" (Dario Santillan Popular Front), that, under the slogan "constructing popular power for social change" continues to hoist flags for those that Dario and Maxi went out on the streets for.

THE PROTEST OF THE PEOPLE

The undertakings made on productive and communitary work, skill formation workshops, public education encounters are never done emphasizing getting media attention for the “movimiento piquetero” protest movement. Mass media always puts an emphasis on “violent” character and “destablizing” of the “desocupado” (unemployed) movements when they organize themselves to make demands. It is only when they decide to cut down traffic on the streets in the city center, a bridge or a route so that their demands are attended, will newspeople appear, always avid in looking for incidents.

In days prior to the massacre of June 26th, members of the interim government and journalists that replicated their speeches said that they considered these “war actions” this type of protests. In effect, that morning, protestors were already aware and waiting for an army ready to shoot if the order was given to them. And the order did arrive.

Later after the massacre of Avellaneda, the discourse on the “criminalization of social protest” tainted the reality by which protestors fought for and were presented as public enemies. Dismounting this type of discursive apparatus is one of the battles that the social movement have to confront on a daily basis and it plays an important role in alternative modes of communication.

WORK

LIBERTY

“Recover the company was like getting back life. It was hard, but we have our reward. Each one is responsible for his own work, we work comfortably, we have liberty”, affirms Domingo, an integrant of the recovered factory Ghelco, the first to obtain temporary expropriation from the city of Buenos Aires.

One of the major challenges for workers who fought in order not to loose their source of income and recover companies brought to bankruptcy by former owners was to learn how to work without a “patrón” (protector). The outbreak of the crisis of an neoliberal model signified that for them the possibility of transisting into a new path, far from the oppression of every workday wherein their bosses exercised over them, recovering hours of work as non-working time. Heading towards being auto-administered, they found themselves experimenting with modes of work that had been explored yet. They freed themselves from individual pressure, discovered the power of collective responsibility and solidarity among the workers themselves, considering the fact that these were times of dictatorship and hard years wherein neoliberal capitalism reigned high.

But getting to this point was not easy. A few months camping on the streets had to pass, occupying factory premises in precarious conditions, and without getting paid a cent. A lot of times they had to resist eviction orders and police repression. Other times, they had to get out of the factory when this was again put into use and they had to restart their fight along the barricades.

The textile factory Brukman was one of the first and one of the most symbolic factories being occupied in the city of Buenos Aires. The decision to do it started the day before the popular rebellion of 2001, and from then on, the name they chose in order to continue producing was “Cooperativa 18 de diciembre”. Together with the ceramic factories Zanon, in the province of Neuquen, it was one of the first to suffer violent repressions before they were able to achieve expropriating it in favor of the workers on December 2003, 8 months after they were violently thrown out of the factory. During this time that they were camping in front of the factories doors, they received help from hundreds of social organizations, assemblies, student movements, artists’ collectives, and especially, from other recovered factories. On May 1, 2002, in Brukman, TPS launched their first image outside of the scope of the San Telmo Assembly. The help approved by the worker’s fight during the day commemorating Labor Day showed the existing solidarity between these new experiences of liberated work and the incipient movement of the urban assembly, in a escenario of social agitation that goes beyond the frontiers of the usual and fragmented scope of demands made.

On May 2003, artists and collectives, a lot of which acted were networking with each other since January 2002, decided to stage an event that would make visible the conflict in Brukman and that would serve as an production experience, debate and cultural exchange. Art and Trade – Cultural Week for Brukman, in which TPS was one of the organizing groups, it was only one of the many solidarity actions that the workers received and was significant in connecting the world of art and social resistance later on in the crisis of 2001. During the 2-year conflict, TPS produced a series of images to help Brukman that were printed in different day in the fight to recover the factory. The present global financial crisis produce a new wave of recovering factories that totals to more than 200 that already exist in the country. The recovered companies have grown in organization and development in the last years. Last June 19, a few of the ones recoved in the textile sector, among them Brukman, in the centric Hotel Bauen (also recovered and administered by workers) their first clothing fashion show developed by the self-administered companies that were recovered. TV actors, and also the workers themselves, walked as equals on the ramp, wearing sneakers, suits, sportswear and business clothes. An autumn-winter collection was exhibited with pride tagged by its creator as: 100% Dignity + 0% Exploitation.

STRIKE

SUBWAY

The privatization of public services that was initiated in the 90s not only left hunderds of thousands of unemployed, but also meant a setback in labor rights for a lot of workers, especially for young people. In Buenos Aires’ underground, this privatization swept away the historical 6-hour workday that permitted forms of contracting that denied worker’s rights. Towards the end of the 90s, a new wave of workers organized themselves and founded the basis of a new kind of syndicated democracy. One of their first objectives: recover the 6-hour workday and try to obtain the incorporation of new workers for the company. In April 2004 they decided to stop the subway trains in a protest that had not happened in the last years that included police repression and workers lying on the train tracks. Result: 600 new workers hired, their life conditions improved, better services for the users.

In October of the same year, in high spirits due to the success of their struggle, the delegates of the subway protest called other workers, unemployed and employed, to a series of open talks to debate proposals to solve problems that each sector was experiencing. To this end, they conceived the creation of an ample social movement that would allow debate in issues such as the reducing work-day hours in all types of professions and increase salary as a way to fight against unemployment and improve the quality of people's lives.

The struggle in the subway, according to their protagonists, was made "so that human beings will not stultify working". This is a fight that inspire and talk about the search for time to create, enjoy and develop a space of vitality. The *Movimiento Nacional para la Jornada Legal de 6 Horas y Aumento de Salarios* picked up this glove and in its newsletters, flags designed with the help of different collectives, among them TPS propagated it, this wealthy creator of the collective imagination: struggle and conquest of the past recovered so that the present workers would be encouraged to think and discuss the future.

ALL FOR THE LOVE OF THE MOVEMENT

"Our celebration is to demand: equality, liberty and diversity". Behind this proclamation and with a high spirit and with a celebration marking the rhythm of a parade, around 25,000 people mobilized themselves on the first Saturday of November 2007 starting from the Plaza de Mayo (where the city hall is located) up until the National Congress the 16th LGTBT (Lesbians, Gay, Transgendered, Bisexual and Transexuals) Pride Parade. The number of protestors doubled the following year, leaving behind that day in 1992, wherein under almost the same symbol, the first of its kind was made in Argentina, with the presence of no more than 250 people, most of them with their faces covered with masks in fear of losing their employment. Year after year, for the fight for LGTBT rights, it gets bigger and is celebrated more.

Its main demand has been the same throughout the years: same-sex marriage, implementation of a gender-identity law that would permit the person to carry a document with his name and sex that he has chosen, an anti-discrimination law in all the national territories, and the eradication of the penal code that explicitly criminalizes transvestites and homosexuals in 10 provinces in Argentina. The creation of a space for exchange and mutual help for persons victims of all types of oppression-discrimination, mainly those that are oriented towards sexual/gender identity, is one of the principal motors of the numerous network organizations and LGTBT movements.

"Different desires, equal rights" was the print that TPS multiplied in different t-shirts and all types of clothing on the 14th Gay Pride Parade in 2005.

We invited Pedro Brieger, journalist and member of the *Asamblea de Palermo Viejo* (<http://www.palermoviejo.netfirms.com>) to collaborate in writing a text to finalize and contextualize this book. During the years 2004-2007, TPS constructed its workshops in the former market in the neighborhood of Palermo, which was in disuse but was then recovered by its neighbors and the assembly in 2002. At present the activities made there are not only for the people in the area, but for associations, organizations and social movements. It is a public property which has common activities that are made by everybody. In the space, in a permanent manner, the *Trabajadores Teresa Rodriguez MTR La Dignidad* have their home office, the *MERCADO BIEN PUBLICO BONPLAND* (a project that was made between the social organizations and territories for the development of a Solidarity Economy <http://organizacionesenred.blogspot.com/2008/04/mercado-bien-pblico-bonpland.html>), *YO NO FUI* (civic-cultural non-profit association that works with artistic projects in the women prison of Ezeiza and with former women inmates <http://proyectoyonofui.blogspot.com>) and the school garden project of the *Escuela No 9 Lafinur*, among others.

The development of assembly practices is platform in community construction and self-administration. In that way, it is a framework of a society with government politics that is based on its participants and the excluded are included as excluded, new organizations struggle to find new ways of participation through territories that are self-administered and through the vitality of exercising assemblies. This makes it possible to reconstitute ties and social identities and re-signify spaces of struggle.

POPULAR ASSEMBLY

Argentina, together with Mexico and Peru, was one of the few countries that was taken as a model by international financial organizations in terms of neoliberal reforms that were implemented since the end of the 80s in Latin America. In Argentina, a generalized idea that all the public was "inefficient" was imposed and the stated had to be intimidated, that the only way in which service-oriented companies could work was to privatize them so as to cut costs and eliminate corruption. Lower public spending, open markets, flexibilize and "modernize" labor markets, eradicate syndical power and reduce social spending, among other postulates, was insensibly repeated in the mass media. Contrary, even social welfare promises were made, the breach in wealth distribution increased considerably, and so with it, poverty in extensive segments of the population.

The crisis generated by neoliberal politics is what permits us to understand the revolt of the 19th and 20th of December 2001 and the apparition of a new form of politics dominated as "asamblea vecinal" (neighborhood assemblies).

The assemblies did not come up because of some political party that would design a democratic form of organization of the masses as a mobilization base whose objective was to take political power. The way it was formed happened in different neighborhoods and were personal initiatives by individuals and had a neighborly character, that in most cases, most of them never really any active political participation.

The majority of assemblies started around the periphery of the federal capital that the highest poverty rate in the country and approximately 25% of poverty rate nationally.

To understand the surge of assemblies in big cities there is not point to consider the impoverishment of the middle class that gave rise to a new type of social class that is very heterogenous and which is hybridly referred to as "the new poor." This new category be-

longs to the professionals, those employed in the private and public sector that have fallen abruptly and have lost their position at work and cannot find a new one, other that have opted not to go on vacations, that cannot pay anymore for their kids to go to private schools nor the prepaid medicine that they acquired in the 90s, those they sell their cars, or those that started to reform their homes and now find themselves abandoning them.

The social decomposition, the unemployment and stereotypical fall of the middle class are social elements that have congregated to form a time bomb that erupted in 2001 and that resulted in the surge of the assemblies.

On December 19, after 10 at night, thousands of families united on the streets of Buenos Aires (and other cities in other provinces) with their little children on their shoulders, and including their dogs, in a festive air in spite of being mobilized to defy the state of the decreed place by the government that same night. A human wave swept the main avenues while thousands of people in the balconies hit, jokingly yet with high spirits, casseroles, converting them into weapons of resistance. And for the first time in the history of Argentina, a civil government was defeated by the mobilization of the masses without the Armed Forces taking part in it. The assembly had passed through 2 stages. The first was marked by the necessity to remain on the streets. The second, once it was consolidated, by the search for legitimacy in its natural habitat: the neighborhood.

Because the assemblies are a direct consequence for the necessity to remain on the streets, public spaces that have been massively recovered, it is not a coincidence that it started with people coming together in street corners or in public squares as a gesture of presence in the re-appropriated place during the 19th of December.

The first few meetings of the assemblies were the re-founding of (a.) politics, (b.) culture and (c.) space.

It's not because assemblies do not exist in the wide sense of the word, but they always came together just for an activity or a conflict, whether it be in the university or in the neighborhood, or even in punctually in the neighborhood to complain about something.

They were always initiated by some political or social organization then disappeared in a short time. The newness can be found in how assemblies came together on their own initiative, which permitted neighbors to be part of it from the very beginning. Everyone is an "owner" of the assembly and at the same time no one is the "owner" of it. Unlike political parties where one sums up to an existing structure and where there is a clear established hierarchy, in the assemblies anyone can incorporate at any given moment, it is a plan based on absolute equality.

Once the mobilization started to diminish – and before autumn came- the assemblies thought of abandoning the streets. Slowly the movement of street protestors abandoned the objective of reconstructing the social network.

One of the characteristics that the assemblies developed is combining demanding the state and the organizations on the border of the state, replacing them including those that were retired, like the products of the privatization process of social services. Taking into account the differences and particularities of each neighborhood, the assemblies organized communal shopping, public pots for those who need them, job placement for the unemployed, cultural encounters, cafeterias, marches against the increase in prices of the companies that were geared towards private services and helping the workers that had occupied the factories.

Taking states spaces and abandoned private ones –recovered by the assemblies- is one of the fundamental milestones of the assembly experience. Fruit of a necessity to have a physical space where they could come together during the autumn, where in many cases came about as a "physical" need ended up constituting a self-administered experience. The assemblies to vacant lots, spaces on the edges of the train tracks, abandoned clinics, bars, closed pizzerias or municipal markets abandoned for years, always with the objective of giving it a community content.

The assembly of the Palermo Viejo neighborhood recovered its municipal market that was semi-abandoned to impulse a market of fair economy and workshops of diverse social organizations, aside from having a communal cafeteria.

The spaces that were recovered were transformed into spaces of collective participation. Instead of only fighting for revolutionary power, after which everything would change, most assemblies constituted embryonic forms of alternative power that have become legitimized by the neighborhood and the local authorities.

The appearance of the assemblies have changed the social reality of Argentina in various aspects. On one part, the middle class empowered, after having suffered the consequences of state structural reforms without having articulated a social response, found spaces to organize themselves and transform its reality. Around the neighborhood rose a re-signified new socio-political dimension that transcends the mere living environment and status. This is also the case for the "piqueteros" protestors that also re-emphasized what is territorial.

Seven years have passed since the creation of the assemblies. The majority have disappeared and the ones that have survived have developed a qualitative change since its inception, passing through an epoch of mobilization (that they never really abandoned) to the construction of spaces of power based on an organization of neighbors, something that the State / Government is far from being able to develop.

It is clear that there are responsibilities that the assembly does not wait until the state does it: they take the initiative and do it themselves. That's how it worked with the abandoned properties: it does not believe that the state will fix them, but the assembly recovers them for the community, also, as a sign of power. It is most probable that we are in the waiting room of a new epoch, that of long-term productive projects of different social experiences.

It is impossible to know where the assemblies will be heading, but it is possible to affirm that because it is a new mode of political people-based participation, it is here to stay.

CRONOLOGÍA DE LAS IMÁGENES / CHRONOLOGY OF IMAGES

SELECCIONADAS PARA LA MUESTRA "EXPLORING THE RETURN OF REPRESSION"
SELECTED FOR THE EXHIBITION "EXPLORING THE RETURN OF REPRESSION"

MANIFIESTA / MANIFIESTA

Diciembre 2002 / December 2002

Afiche realizado a un año de los acontecimientos del 19 y 20 de diciembre ///

Poster made in one of the years wherein the happenings of 19 and 20th of December were commemorated

SAN TELMO TIENE MEMORIA / SAN TELMO DOES NOT HAVE MEMORY

Marzo 2002 / March 2002

Convocatoria a la jornada de repudio al terrorismo de estado, previa al 36 aniversario del último golpe militar (dibujo realizado por Susana, de la Asamblea Popular de San Telmo Plaza Dorrego) ///

Call for a day to condemn terrorism of the state, before the 36th anniversary of the last coup d'état (drawing made by Susana, of the Asamblea Popular de San Telmo Plaza Dorrego) ///

WALSH / WALSH

Marzo 2002 / March 22

Homenaje a Rodolfo Walsh, escritor y periodista desaparecido durante la última dictadura militar (1976-1983) ///

Homage to Rodolfo Walsh, writer, journalist, disappeared during the last military dictatorship (1976-1983) ///

PLAN DE VIVIENDA / HOUSING PLAN

Agosto 2003 / August 2003

Pedido de cárcel efectiva a los genocidas, durante el debate legislativo por la derogación de las leyes de impunidad ///

Demand for effective imprisonment to those responsible for the genocide, during the debate for the derogation of the laws of impunity

REPRESIÓN-GATILLO FÁCIL-IMPUNIDAD / REPRESSION-TRIGGER EASY-IMPUNITY

Diciembre 2003 / December 2003

Escrache a Jorge H. Vidal, médico forense de la Policía Federal durante la última dictadura militar ///

"Escrache" to Jorge H. Vidal forensic doctor of the Federal Police during the last military dictatorship ///

CURA CÓMPLICE / PRIEST AN ACCESSORY

Noviembre 2004 / NOVEMBER 2004

Escrache al cura Hugo Mario Bellavigna, cómplice de la dictadura ///

"Escrache" to the priest Hugo Mario Bellavigna, an accessory to the dictator ///

LO IMPOSIBLE SOLO TARDA UN POCO MÁS / WHAT IS IMPOSSIBLE ONLY TAKES A LITTLE LONGER

Agosto 2003 / August 2003

Pedido de cárcel efectiva a los genocidas, durante el debate legislativo por la derogación de las leyes de impunidad ///

Demand for effective imprisonment to those responsible for the genocide, during the debate for the derogation of the laws of impunity

A UN AÑO DE UN CRIMEN IMPUNE / A YEAR OF AN IMPUNE CRIME

26 de junio 2003 / June 26, 2003

A un año de los asesinatos de Darío Santillán y Maximiliano Kosteki a manos de las fuerzas represivas del estado ///

A year of the assassinations of Darío Santillán and Maximiliano Kosteki in the hands of the repressive forces of the state ///

ELLOS VIVEN EN NUESTRA LUCHA / THEY LIVE OUR STRUGGLE

20 de diciembre 2003 / December 20, 2003

A dos años del estallido de diciembre de 2001, y 20 años de democracia ///

Two years after the outbreak of December 2001, and 20 years of democracy ///

NI UN PASO ATRÁS / NOT A STEP BACKWARD

Octubre 2002 / October 2002

Afiche impreso en el homenaje a Maximiliano Kosteki, Darío Santillán y Carlos Almirón, en el barrio donde estudiaban y militaban ///

Poster printed as a homage to Maximiliano Kosteki, Darío Santillán and Carlos Almirón, in the neighborhood where they studied and were militants ///

PROTESTA / PROTEST

26 de junio 2004 / June 26, 2004

A dos años de los asesinatos de Darío Santillán y Maximiliano Kosteki ///

Two years after the assassination of Darío Santillán and Maximiliano Kosteki ///

NO A LA EXPLOTACIÓN / NO TO EXPLOITATION

Enero 2004 / January 2004

Imagen realizada para el Foro Social Mundial, Bombay, India ///

Image made for the World Social Forum, Bombay, India ///

OTRO PRIMERO DE MAYO EN LUCHA / ANOTHER FIRST OF MAY STRUGGLE

1° de mayo 2002 / May 1, 2002

Afiche impreso en la puerta de la fábrica recuperada "18 de diciembre" (ex Brukman) durante el acto de conmemoración del Día del Trabajador ///

Poster printed at the door of the factory recovered "18th of December2 (ex Brukman) during the commemorative act on Labor Day ///

TRABAJO Y LIBERTAD / WORK AND LIBERTY

2003 / 2003

En apoyo a las luchas de las Cooperativas "18 de diciembre" (ex Brukman) y "La Nueva Esperanza" (Grissinopoli) ///

To help the struggle of the Cooperativas "18 de diciembre" (ex Brukman) and "La Nueva Esperanza" (Grissinopoli) ///

SUBTERRANEA HUELGA / SUBWAY STRIKE

Abril 2004 / April 2004

Imagen realizada en apoyo a los trabajadores del subterráneo, en huelga por la reducción de la jornada laboral ///

Image made to help the subway workers in strike for the reducing the workday ///

LA CONDICIÓN PARA LIBERAR AL HOMBRE / LA CONDITION TO LIBERATE MAN

Octubre 2004 / October 2004

Dibujo que formó parte del primer boletín del Movimiento Nacional por la Jornada Legal de 6 horas y Aumento de Salarios ///

Drawing that formed part of the bulletin of Movimiento Nacional por la Jornada Legal de 6 horas y Aumento de Salarios ///

DIFERENTES DESEOS / DIFFERENT DESIRES

Noviembre 2003 / November 2003

Marcha del orgullo LGTTTB (Lésbico, Gay, Travesti, Transexual, Trangénero, Bisexual)

Pride Parade LGTTTB (Lesbian, Gay, Transvestite, Transexual, Transgendered and Bisexual)