

An Ecology of Artistic Work: the Project, the Experiment and the Context. An Interview with Muntadas

The video installation *Between the Frames: The Forum* is the result of an investigation into the mutations of the art world in the 1980s, carried out by Muntadas throughout that decade and extended into the 1990s and early 2000s by the elaboration of apparatus for presentation and exhibition. From 1983 to 1991 the artist carried out interviews with 156 figures from the Western art world, representing the different kinds of intermediaries who come between the work and the public: gallerists, collectors, curators, museum guides, art critics, media professionals and also artists, questioning them about their roles, their values, their functions, their activities, their responsibilities, their conceptions and their profession. Muntadas then selected sequences from the video recordings of these interviews to compose seven separate tapes, which he calls chapters,¹ each one focusing on a certain kind of art world professional. These chapters of *Between the Frames: The Forum* are structured as follows:

Chapters 1 and 3: The Dealers, the Galleries

Chapter 2: The Collectors

Chapter 4: The Museums

Chapter 5: The Docents

Chapter 6: The Critics

Chapter 7: The Media

Chapter 8: Epilogue (about artists)

¹ There were originally eight chapters, but the artist merged two of them, 'The Dealers' and 'The Galleries'.

To present these tapes, the artist conceived an exhibition apparatus: an open, circular structure that brings to mind the Panopticon. Seven cells are organised round a central space, each of them housing a monitor on which one of the chapters is played. At each exhibition, this structure is adapted to the specificities of the host space. At the CAPC Musée d'art contemporain in Bordeaux (1994), Muntadas himself split these up into seven sections, which he distributed around the institution's public and office spaces.

At the turn of the 1990s and 2000s, on four separate occasions, the artist delegated the conception and realisation of the device for presenting the videotapes to other individuals, whom he called the interpreters, with reference to the performing dimension of music and other arts. Thus, in the framework of the travelling show *On Translation: The Audience*, presented successively at the Witte de With (Rotterdam, 1999), at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (2000–01), at the Berkeley Art Museum (2001), and then in the group show *Audit* at the Casino Luxembourg (2001), *Between the Frames: The Forum* was actualised by the interpreters in a series of different configurations, each of which renewed the way it was read and interpreted.

In 2010 the Museu d'Art Contemporani in Barcelona (MACBA) acquired *Between the Frames: The Forum (Barcelona)* in the form of the installation conceived by Muntadas, that is, with the seven chapters, and the panoptical device adapted to the space of the institution, to which are adjoined photographs of the various actualisations of the work made in the course of its history. At the same time, the recordings of the original 156 interviews have been placed in the MACBA Study Centre as archive documents that can be accessed by researchers. Far from fixing or closing the work, this twofold acquisition opens up new avenues of interpretation and analysis regarding this installation by Muntadas, the procedures and methodologies that it deploys, and the artistic institutions that it has occupied.

This interview concerns four of the main moments of the elaboration of *Between the Frames: The Forum*: the interviews and the editing of the video tapes ('The discourse'), the panoptical modes of exhibition ('The forums'), the delegation of the modalities of presentation ('Interpretations') and the acquisition of the work and its archives ('Archives'). What emerges from this is an ecology of artistic work that Muntadas has developed over the years, and that is articulated around three notions: the project, which develops over the long term; experimentation, or the desire to put into motion and reformulate propositions; and, the context or concern to anchor the work in singular contexts of presentation, whether cultural, linguistic or institutional.

This interview was given in the months of March and April 2011, prior to the first presentation of *Between the Frames: The Forum* at MACBA, before the modalities of its exhibition had been finalised.

The discourse

Anne Bénichou: You did the interviews that make up *Between the Frames* between 1983 and 1991, at a time when the art system was going through big changes marked by the rise of the market and pronounced institutionalisation. In these interviews, were you trying to grasp this process of change and its impact, to critique it and show the pitfalls? After all, your own artistic career did begin in the very anti-establishment atmosphere of the 1960s and 1970s.

Muntadas: All my projects start with my curiosity about a subject and my desire to understand how it works. This involves quite a long gestation. Before I get started, I need to be sure that the subject interests me enough. By the early 1980s the art system was being transformed. In the art world you have, on the one side, the work of the artists and everything to do

with the production of the work, and on the other the system, which constitutes an intermediary element: distribution, sales collecting; everything that has to do with the visibility of the work once it is made. The 1980s were a very particular period during which some of these intermediaries gained excessive power and prominence. I wanted to understand how this situation had developed. That is the origin of *Between the Frames*.

There is also one more specific motivation. When I was at the Long Beach Museum of Art to take part in the show *Comment*,² I heard the museum docents explaining the work I was exhibiting, *La televisión* (1980), and their interpretation surprised me. In the United States, docents are usually untrained, voluntary guides. They play an important role in museums. This experience got me thinking in a ‘microscopic’ way about the things that go on between art, the artist and the public.

I immediately had the idea for this project with a structure in several chapters, which I decided to keep. The first one I made was about the guides at the Long Beach Museum of Art and the Newport Harbor Art Museum. It now constitutes the fifth chapter of *Between the Frames*. From the outset I planned that it would take the form of an installation, a forum, enabling a discursive, reflexive and perhaps critical process. I say ‘perhaps’ because I didn’t originally mean to be critical. One becomes critical as the work develops.

A.B.: How did you choose the people you spoke to? Were they people you met in the course of your artistic activities, or were you trying to map the international art world? You wanted to produce a panorama of all the intermediaries who come between the work and the public. Did you also want to have a spectrum of ideas and opinions, including,

² *Comment*, group show, Long Beach Museum of Art, Long Beach, 29 May – 14 August 1983.

for example, representatives from alternative art centres and others from commercial galleries?

M.: The first phase was constructing the different chapters. Then, for each one, I asked myself: 'Who does what?' I began by concentrating on people I knew and my professional contacts. But I also interviewed people with whom I had no connections, people I'd never met, whom I knew about only from their work: exhibitions, writings, media. I sent everyone the same letter. I didn't introduce myself as an artist, instead I took a more 'objective' position as a researcher. I didn't talk about my artistic work to people who didn't know me. Some of them may have thought when they met me that I was a critic, a researcher or a journalist. Of course, a lot of them knew my artistic practice, but that wasn't important to me.

The project was carried out on a fairly modest budget. Having finalised chapter 5, I was awarded a grant from the Guggenheim Foundation that enabled me to continue. Later, I edited chapters 1 and 3 during a residency at Western Front in Vancouver. The interviews were shot with a small, highly mobile crew. Several interviews took place in New York because I was taking advantage of the fact that several people were there at the time. Many others were made during my own travels. In Cologne, for example, I was in an exhibition and so took the opportunity to talk to Evelyn Weiss, Kasper König, Joseph Beuys, etc. It was a very flexible working method. It wouldn't be possible to work like that nowadays, but at the time I took advantage of the independence provided by having highly mobile equipment. Caterina Borelli recorded nearly all the interviews, and we worked together on the editing. The project proceeded slowly. I didn't have the money to do 150 interviews in three months. That's why it took a long time. Besides, I preferred to work like that. It enabled me to add questions as I went along.

A.B.: How did you conduct the interviews? Did you ask precise questions or were the discussions quite open?

M.: There were established questions for each chapter. But in the course of our discussions new questions relating to particular individuals might arise. Sometimes I would reuse them later. This aspect of things is interesting when you look at the complete, unedited tapes.

A.B.: How did you select the material when you were editing and how did you organise it? Several chapters were subdivided under keywords, and you can see the same people talking about different issues. Did these keywords appear when you analysed the material you had obtained or do they reflect the structure of your interviews?

M.: Those are the keywords to my questions. They sum up my questions, which means that I don't have to be present in the image or on the soundtrack.

A.B.: Your editing is surprising in a number of ways. The people aren't identified, there's no subtitling, and the interviews are interspersed with images of motorways, escalators, trains, crossroads and factory machines (for the epilogue). You have opted for constant discrepancies between the soundtrack and the image. What was behind these formal choices?

M.: What matters to me is what people say, the values and opinions that they express, but not necessarily who is talking. I don't want it to look as if some of these individuals have authority. I don't identify them because I don't want to mythify them, especially the ones who are very well known. The art world has suffered a great deal from this kind of mythification. All the people are named in the credits at the end of each tape. I dealt with the

**Chapter 1
THE DEALERS**

**Chapter 3
THE GALLERIES**





Chapter 2
THE COLLECTORS





interviews in a very similar way in several projects of mine: *On Translation: Fear/Miedo*, and, very recently, *About Academia*.

As regards the lack of subtitles, I think that differences of language and accent are very important for the way we perceive and interpret. We can't understand everything. By eliminating translation you lose information simply because of not knowing the language. However, I do allow the possibility of reading transcripts in the language of the country where the work is exhibited, by publishing these in a book accompanying the work.³ *Between the Frames: The Forum* has never been shown without these translations. However this reading is done afterwards. I want a perceptual experience with images and sounds to come first, then another experience with complementary information concerning the contents.

As for the images, I made my choices when I started the project at Long Beach. When I recorded the interviews with the guides, what I wanted to do was integrate images of the freeway in Los Angeles as 'open visuals' – that's what I call them. For me – but I'm not sure everyone sees it this way – they are part of the project's visual intent. I wanted to capture each person's ideas about their own role, without having to interview absolutely everybody. When I asked critics to define their functions they presented themselves as art historians, sociologists, poets or mediators. Each one has a very clear position, but not necessarily the position of a critic in a generic way. I thought this interpretation of roles was interesting. The open visuals worked in the same way. For each chapter there is the same family of images – the freeway, for example, but with different ways of looking at the freeway, and therefore different shots. The position of the camera changes: closer or more distant, varying angles, different perspectives. The open visuals

³ *Muntadas. Between the Frames (the transcriptions)*. Barcelona: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, 2011.

are metaphorical, in a way. By juxtaposing the critics' discourses with images of small and large waves filmed at San Diego, I am hinting at the variations in perspectives and intensities.

But it's up to each viewer to interpret as they see fit. That's why I keep well away from approaches that insist my approach is sociological, journalistic or archivist. It's a personal piece of work and the contents consist of a close-up on the art system.

A.B.: The chapter about artists is titled 'Epilogue'. So, in a sense you are locating it 'outside the frame'. Why is that? The artists you interviewed aren't representative of the scene in the 1980s. Rather, they embody, in different registers, a critical position with regard to the accelerating institutionalisation and commercialisation of art. Could you explain this decision?

M.: The epilogue is a way of concluding the project. With that idea in mind, I chose artists who had been working in and on the art world for several years. They had developed a certain experience, and knowledge. Some of them had taught at university. I didn't want to create an eighth chapter about artists but an epilogue that, like a prologue, would clearly reflect the intention of making an assessment.

A.B.: How and why did you decide to stop doing these interviews in 1991, another key moment when the values of the 1980s began to be called into question?

M.: A project takes whatever time it takes. In 1991 I felt that *Between the Frames* was more or less done, that there were enough different opinions and visions. You can't go on broadening a project for ever, there comes a time when you have to finish, although you may go back to it later. If I had to make *Between the Frames* today, I would add more chapters.

I would add chapters about art fairs, biennials and auctions, as phenomena whose visibility and power have grown more and more since the 1990s. They existed in the early 1980s but they didn't have the visibility they do now.

I therefore decided to finish the project and edit it. The real work is done at the editing stage. That's true for all my works, whether videos, installations, my current projects for São Paulo and Alphaville, and all the others. Some decisions, both small ones and big ones, are made locally when you're preparing the exhibition, which is also a kind of editing.

A.B.: Several theoreticians, including Benjamin H. D. Buchloh and, most recently, Alexander Alberro, have used the term 'institutional critique' to describe artists of your generation such as Daniel Buren, Hans Haacke and Michael Asher, as well as younger artists like Andrea Fraser, Fred Wilson, etc., because their work is about probing the framework of art, its institutions and underlying values. Do you think it would make sense to place *Between the Frames* in this theoretical perspective?

M.: I am always against categories, like grouping by medium (photographic, video, multimedia, internet, installation, painting artists, etc.) or tendency. I define myself as an artist who works on projects and it is the projects and their specificities that lead me to explore different territories. If people associate me with institutional critique, that's fine by me, but I have no interest in belonging to that classification. Those sorts of things are perfectly secondary to me. It's an issue for the critic who elaborated the theory, that's all. Artists make projects, open up avenues, and critics make classifications. If they don't, they're lost! Even Buren: you can approach him in terms of institutional critique, but there are still many other angles on his work. Haacke, yes, he fits into institutional critique, but he also works on other interests and social phenomena. For me,

these classifications are part of that chain of operations carried out by art critics and historians.

A.B.: Not long after you'd finished editing *Between the Frames*, you showed the videotapes in a screening room. Could one envisage the tapes as constituting a work independently of the installation?

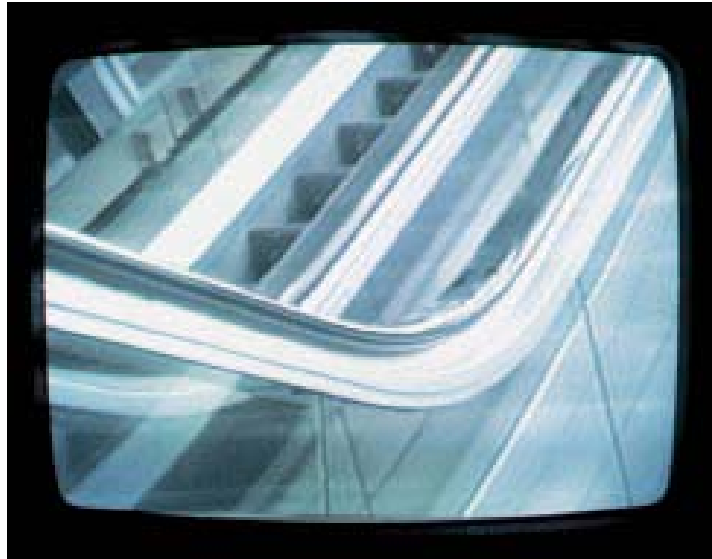
M.: No, the work was conceived as an installation from the outset. I made the first sketches and images of the circular structure at Long Beach in the early 1980s. The videotape about guides was shown at the Long Beach Museum of Art in an almost private way. The chapters on galleries and dealers were viewed at Western Front, Vancouver, where I did the editing, but for their informative content, not as an artistic project. I don't think that an individual chapter can function on its own; the important thing is the structure, the forum, the linking of different discourses. However, a chapter can be shown on its own, in relation to a particular context or subject, for more specific reasons. Thus the museum chapter was shown at the Fundació Antoni Tàpies in Barcelona as part of *The End(s) of the Museum*.⁴ It was an exhibition about the question of the museum and Manuel J. Borja-Villel, who was the director of the Fundació at the time, asked me if I wanted to show the museum tape in this context. I agreed and it was shown in a loop in the auditorium. That was the only time.

I didn't want to show the tapes alone, either, once they had been finished. On two or three occasions, I did it because the context was right. At MoMA we showed all the chapters over a period of two or three days in four-hour sessions. I was able to introduce the project, to talk about the installation

⁴ *The End(s) of the Museum*, group show, Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona, 15 March – 4 June 1995.

Chapter 4
THE MUSEUMS





and discuss it with the public. This presentation was pertinent because a lot of New Yorkers took part in *Between the Frames*. I also presented tapes at the Art Institute of Chicago in the same way. Still, they can be borrowed from Electronic Arts Intermix (New York) for pedagogical purposes – for universities, if they're interested. But the work is an installation. I look on the tapes as the installation software.

The forums

A.B.: For the installation version which you title *Between the Frames: The Forum*, you started by conceiving a circular spatial set-up which you describe as an 'inverted Panopticon'. Why do you associate the art system with the Panopticon, that 'figure of political technology' that, according to Foucault, is what characterises disciplinary modern societies? And why do you call your structure an *inverted* Panopticon?

M.: The Panopticon is a model penitential system in which the warder is at the centre and the cells and the prisoners are all around him. To substitute the warder with the public puts viewers in the position of the guard. It's a symbolic way of asking the public to be alert, to 'keep their eyes open'. That is the reflexive dimension of the project.

The different chapters are laid out around this circle. Each one has a different colour: red, blue, yellow, green, purple, grey and black. This palette does not really correspond to the colours of the spectrum or to those of television. It establishes a relation between the colours, the interviews and the open visuals, but it's not a close relation.

A.B.: This circular structure that you made on three different occasions in 1994 (Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus), in 1995 (MIT List Visual Arts Center,

Cambridge) and in 1997 (Yokohama Portside Gallery, Yokohama) has the effect of isolating viewers, but also insulates the discursive material constituted by the videotapes from the space of the gallery or museum. Why do you want to institute that kind of break?

M.: The circle defines a territory, whatever the place where it is presented, a space that functions in the opposite way to a Panopticon. What matters to me is that, when viewers arrive, they should have a panoramic vision of it, and then after that they choose where they want to start. The final editing of the work is therefore not up to me. There is a kind of 'corporeal montage' that is done by the members of the public as they come in, leave, and stay for one, five or twenty minutes per chapter. The time spent in front of each chapter results from an editing decision: when do we start looking and when do we stop? The public takes on the post-editing work. They close the circle, so to speak.

This circle is a site for the displacement of bodies going from one space to another, back and forth. It's a way of activating the installation based on each person's interests and their singular way of looking. It's very different from a book, which puts forward a linear discourse. There is no linearity in the installation. Yes, the tapes are linear, but in the installation each person constructs their own narrative. It's an aspect that interests me greatly and that relates to the very notion of the installation.

A.B.: You exhibited *Between the Frames: The Forum* in 1994 at the CAPC Musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux, which is housed in the Lainé warehouses, a nineteenth-century commercial building, with an inner space in stone subdivided into vaulted aisles and galleries. You chose to fragment your circular structure, putting it around the whole building, linking the chapters to the functions of

specific spaces in the museum. In undertaking this very sophisticated occupation of the space, were you trying to prompt a rereading of the CAPC space, or a reinterpretation of *Between the Frames: The Forum*?

M.: It was a reaction to the architecture and to the institution. I found the CAPC highly structured as an institution. Jean-Louis Froment, who was the director at the time, had conceived a highly organised museum with a permanent collection, temporary exhibition rooms, a library, an educational area, etc. These spaces more or less matched the chapters that I had conceived. I could have put the circle in the central space – I was free to make the installation any way I wanted it – but I decided that it wasn't right, especially when viewed from the upper levels. I thought it would be more interesting to integrate each chapter into one of the institution's functional spaces. Thus, the guides were shown in the educational services, critics in the library, the media in the bookshop, galleries in the temporary exhibition spaces, and museums in the permanent collections. I placed the collectors in the personnel offices because they are sometimes on close terms, and this enables them to penetrate the 'backroom' – the institution's more private space. I had to negotiate that position because they told me it wasn't a public exhibition space, because it was private, and I replied that collectors could still have access to these spaces.

So, it was the very constructed space of the CAPC that made me deconstruct the work. In contrast, when I worked at the Wexner, a deconstructed building conceived by Peter Eisenman, I made the circular structure that integrated very well into the space and was protected there. Those are the two extremes of the interpretation: constructed/deconstructed, deconstructed/constructed. And then, of course, there are the interpretations made by other people.

Interpretations

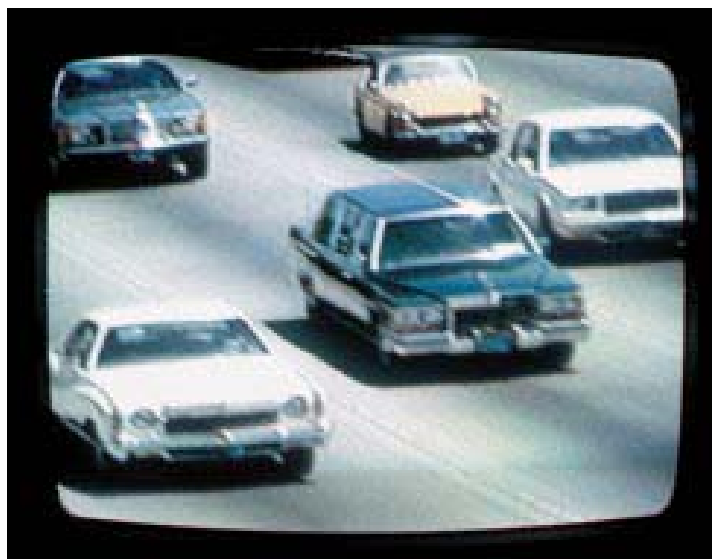
A.B.: On four occasions in 2000 and 2001 you delegated the spatial arrangement of *Between the Frames: The Forum* to other people. You compare this delegation to performing a score, based on a musical model. What, for you, is the nature of the partition in *Between the Frames: The Forum*?

M.: The musical comparison is not quite exact. I have used it several times because it enables me to explain this idea more easily, even if I know that the models are very different. The common musical relation of author to performer does not really exist in the visual arts. As I see it, the videotapes for *Between the Frames: The Forum* constitute the installation's software, and this software functions here like a score. All the performers received tapes, along with my letter explaining the idea behind the project and how I had worked. But I didn't provide any instructions as to how to deal with the interpretations. I gave a few pointers regarding my own spatial arrangements, in this instance regarding the subdivision into chapters, and on the rather subjective range of colours that I used. It was the tapes that travelled.

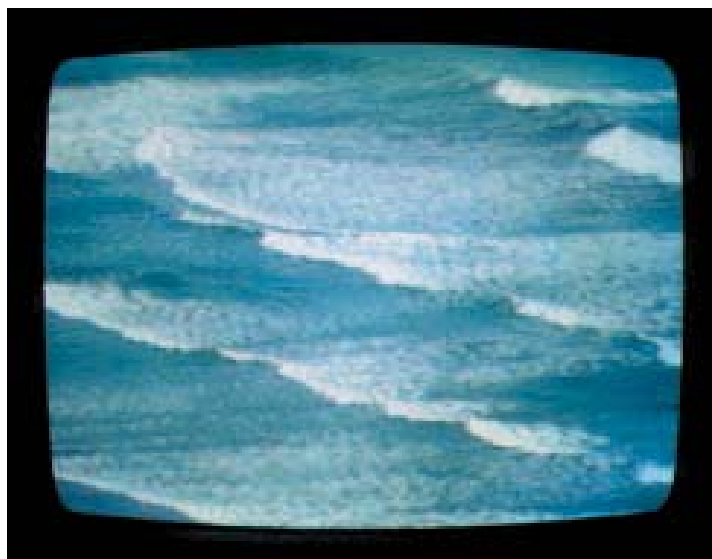
A.B.: The four people who successively interpreted the installation come from different disciplines. They were an art historian, a sociologist, a philosopher and an economist, although they are familiar with the art world. Why did you choose these areas of knowledge and these activities? Why did you put the emphasis on university backgrounds (three of them are university teachers)?

M.: Being in the university wasn't one of my criteria. People in the social sciences, art history and philosophy often work in teaching institutions. What were important to me were the disciplines and the way they looked at art. In Luxembourg,

Chapter 5
THE DOCENTS



Chapter 6
THE CRITICS



the presence of all the banks led me to choose an economist.⁵ It would also have been interesting to have someone from the field of communications. However, I did want the performers to be involved in the art system, but not shaped by it – to be at something of a distance from the system, while still being part of it.

A.B.: Could one envisage instituting a systematic and permanent regime of delegation for *Between the Frames: The Forum*? In other words, could you imagine a museum acquiring the work in a conceptual form and, for each exhibition, bringing in a new performer to materialise it? Or would you prefer the interpretations to retain their experimental and therefore momentary nature in the life of this work?

M.: MACBA has acquired the tapes of my rendition, the circular structure adapted for the Barcelona showing, to which I added preparatory diagrams and documentation from other renditions (texts, photographs, diagrams). The idea is not that MACBA should get a different person to interpret the work every time it wants to show it. It will show my installation. That doesn't mean there can't be other interpretations. You have to keep things open and it's for me to decide in response to requests and circumstances. There is at present a new interpretation at the Long Beach Museum of Art, the place where the project started. It is done by an independent Austrian researcher and curator, Doris Berger. The spirit of all this work is about experimentation rather than institutionalisation.

⁵ The work was reinterpreted by an economist for the group show *Audit*, Casino Luxembourg, Luxembourg, 29 September – 2 December 2001.

A.B.: In the exhibition *On Translation: The Audience*, shown at Rotterdam (1999), Montreal (2000–01) and Berkeley (2001),⁶ you exhibited three installations that the museums had to update: *Between the Frames: The Forum*, which on each occasion was reinterpreted by a new person, *The Board Room*, and *On Translation: The Audience*. In several interviews that you gave on the occasion of that exhibition, you identified three different kinds of updating, each corresponding to one of the installations: reinterpretation, reconstruction and recontextualisation. How do you distinguish between these three notions?

M.: For my exhibitions I have developed a working method that gives the curators important responsibilities. I look on the curator as the master builder, the producer of the exhibition. I often share out responsibilities as follows: I develop a new project and I ask the curator to articulate it with older works, and with the exhibition as a whole. That was how I worked for the exhibition *On Translation: The Audience*. In Rotterdam, Bartomeu Mari, who at the time was director of the Witte de With, Center for Contemporary Art, chose to set up a dialogue between those three works.

For the installation *The Board Room*, I would speak in terms of reinstallation rather than reconstruction. It's a closed work. The work was acquired by the National Gallery of Canada. We borrowed it and we reinstalled all the constituent elements, without trying to reproduce the original occurrence. I think the term reinstallation is more appropriate, in the case of a closed work.

⁶ *On Translation: The Audience*, Witte de With, Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam, 12 September – 7 November 1999. *On Translation: le public*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal, Montreal, 13 October 2000 – 7 January 2001. *On Translation: The Audience*, Berkeley Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley, 6 February – 29 April 2001.

Between the Frames: The Forum was also an older work, but it was reinterpreted for the occasion of the exhibition. After having shown it in several museums using my own devices, I thought it would be interesting to experiment with the way it was shown, to explore new ways of activating it. That was the first time I delegated its presentation in an exhibition, to Wouter de Nooy, an art historian in Rotterdam. This was therefore a case of reinterpreting the work.

As for the third term, recontextualisation, I'm not sure that it's quite appropriate if we're talking about *On Translation: The Audience*, which was a new project at the time. The idea was to have photographic triptychs on display for a year in the points of transit in the city's cultural institutions. When it was time for the exhibition, these triptychs were brought back into the museum to be exhibited. The question was as follows: how do you show within the museum work that has already 'lived' outside its walls? This is not the same thing as developing a project for the public space. It's another kind of challenge, quite a difficult one, because the idea is to 'relate' within the museum what has happened outside it.

These three works are based on complementary devices. The curators of the three museums in which the exhibition was presented played a very important role in articulating the exhibition and reactivating the installations, because they know their space, their public, their institution, and they know how to induce a certain reading of the work.

A.B.: I have the impression that the ways in which you bring in the curator vary considerably, depending on the works. Sometimes you give him or her a great deal of responsibility. In the case of *Between the Frames: The Forum*, you put them in an unusual position because they have to respond to a proposal for an exhibition form that is neither theirs nor yours, but that of a person with no experience of curating.

M.: It all depends on the projects. I want to avoid any kind of administrative or bureaucratic regulation of the way I show my work. Each project offers new experiments. It's never the same convention, or the same rule. In the three places where we presented the exhibition *On Translation: The Audience*, things worked out very differently. There is always a degree of flexibility.

I feel wholly responsible for a new piece of work. I myself need to experiment with new works to be familiar with them. Only after that can I delegate. The idea of a score to be read and performed – and delegating – are ways of getting things moving, of renewing interpretations. The notion of context is essential to this working process: the culture, the place and the institution allow you different ways of putting forward the works for interpretation.

A.B.: The exhibition set-up is a question that you addressed in several recent projects, following different modalities. In *On Translation: The Museum*, you ask curators to come up with a presentation device that could offer a synthesis of all your projects involving translation. In *On Translation: Die Sammlung*, you exhibit the protocols for exhibiting different instances of the same work, recommended by the museums or individuals who own it. And in *Between the Frames: The Forum*, you call on 'non-exhibition specialists' to conceive the presentation of your work. Has the 'exhibitional' or 'curatorial' set-up become a major field of investigation for you? And if so, why?

M.: I try to show how institutions interpret works through their exhibition set-ups. For *On Translation: Die Sammlung*, in Stuttgart,⁷ I borrowed copies of the same work from different

⁷ *Muntadas. Protokolle*, Württembergischer Kunstverein, Stuttgart, 18 June – 10 September 2006.

Chapter 7
THE MEDIA





collections. For each one there were different instructions for assembling it, deriving from the institution that owned it, although it was the same work. Some were presented on a base, others not. Some were framed with a passe-partout, others not. Some were exhibited vertically, others horizontally, etc. In a preliminary version of this work in Dortmund,⁸ I presented three sets of felt clothes belonging to Beuys, lent by different institutions. One had to be exhibited in a glass case, the other hung on the wall, and the third laid flat. These forms of presentation were not stipulated by the artists, who were dead, but by the institutions. We're not talking about major differences here, but they were significant.

Archives

A.B.: You have put the archives of *Between the Frames: The Forum* at MACBA. What do they comprise?

M.: I have always sought to distinguish between the work *Between the Frames: The Forum* and the source material, that is to say, the 150 or so unedited video captures that belong in the space of the archive and must be available for public consultation. They were digitised at Stand By in New York and the personnel at MACBA have organised them. I'm not against the idea that this material could be used for making another piece of work. I'm not trying to make that happen, but if someone was interested in doing it, I'd be very open. The terms of this use would then need to be defined with the institution. I made a work entitled *TVE: Primer intento* (1989) based on the archives of the official Spanish TV channel, and

⁸ *Muntadas – On Translation: Das Museum*, Museum am Ostwall, Dortmund, 24 May – 13 July 2003.

I've always thought that there could be other ways of looking at these documents: *Segundo* or *Tercer intento*. I think one must activate new discourses out of the archives.

I could also attach other documents, such as letters and diagrams, to these video archives. However, I don't want to produce a mythification of the work. I think there are essential documents that enable one to understand how I did my work, and that beyond that you are getting into a process of mythifying the work and the artist.

At MACBA, these archives are at the Study Centre. It's a separate building, just opposite the museum. As for the installation, it's presented in the rooms of the museum. This image of two buildings facing each other describes very neatly the two registers of *Between the Frames: The Forum*: the creation of archives that made it possible for me to produce a work.

A.B.: Are the photographs of the presentation devices suggested by the four interpreters integrated into the space of the work?

M.: Yes, because they relate to the work's interpretation. They are presented in the gallery, just beside the installation, as simply as possible. I think that the archive space concerns the material for the construction of the work and its score – the software – and the space of the work is part of the interpretation of the installation, my own and other people's.

A.B.: Are there aspects of all this that we haven't discussed and that you think are important?

M.: I would like to emphasise the question of time. I undertake projects without knowing how much time they're going to take and I give them the time needed for the work to get done. I think this time scale is very important, especially in a period when everything happens so fast: we are given three months to

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prepare a biennial, six months for an exhibition. For me, this concept of the project is very important; it institutes a way of working in the long term and generates a set-up that is ready when it is ready.

Chapter 8
EPILOGUE

