

'What are we waiting for, assembled in the forum? The barbarians are due here today.'

Konstantinos Kavafis, *Waiting for the Barbarians*

In this famous poem, Kavafis speculates on an arrival that never happens. The barbarians never arrive, in a suspended time during which power aspires to impose its reason to the point of absurdity. Civilisation grants itself the privilege of an arrogant wait, in the security of its superiority over the uncivilised world. Waiting for the barbarians is recognition of its own barbarity; it is the struggle between the intelligence of the individual and submission to power. It is historic narrative in suspension, the space of resilience, of entropic disturbances that colour history. When the reference is dystopian, it can only prompt a heterodox genealogy. Kavafis' story, which Coetzee later masterfully rewrites, is that of human paradox, which shows us that we are unprotected, at the mercy of the ideological elements. From this perspective, addressing the modern project as the grand project of thought, politics, culture and art, as the desire to build a more just society, is merely stating a narrative of emancipatory processes and dystopian drifts. As opposed to an orthodox view of history, modernity has to be seen from a critical perspective of its arrogant discourses, revealing how these very discourses break down and are questioned in everyday life.

Indeed, it is the crisis of modernity, the discovery of the bankruptcy of the modern movement that provides the starting point for Domènec's research and his critical essay which materialises as sculptures, installations, photographs, videos and interventions in public space. All of these projects fundamentally revolve around issues such as the distance between utopias and social realities, speculation about the public dimension of architecture and the ideological precepts that determine it, socio-historical mechanisms and what comes in between them, and factors that condition memory and forgetting. Analysis and questioning of the discourses of authority and power in different contexts bring us to the variables and the extent of disorder, to the extent of doubt. Disturbing the hegemonic discourse impedes the order of the discourse.

'There has never been a document of culture which is not simultaneously one of barbarism.'

Walter Benjamin, *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, no. 7

Outstanding among utopian genealogies is the Icarian project. In 1840, Étienne Cabet published *Voyage en Icarie*, rejecting oppression by the minority in power as well as the class system of the modern world. In the preface, the author indicated that the book was a treatise on ethics, philosophy, and social and political economy, a compendium of the community doctrine that aimed

to suppress inequality based on the principle of fraternity. His ideas were brought to Catalonia by Narcís Monturiol. Monturiol published Cabet's book at his own press and used *La Fraternidad*, the newspaper he edited and the leading communist medium, to condemn social injustice in the world and express his desire for a better one. In this context, somewhat ingenuously, the Icarian idea of regenerating the world extended fast in radical circles, among workers and progressive intellectuals, with followers including figures such as Ildefons Cerdà, Josep Anselm Clavé and the doctor Joan Rovira i Font. In Catalonia, a large group of followers decided to take part in the founding of an Icarian community in the United States in 1848, a project that did not prosper. *Voyage en Icarie* (Journey to Icaria, 2012) refers to one of the few utopian projects which, despite failing at the first attempt, managed to create various communities that continued for a while. The work illustrates the ephemeral glow of the utopian project, of the desire that was never fully realised and quickly died out.

A few years previously, numerous Icarians had taken part in the revolt of La Jamància, which took place in Barcelona between August and November 1843. It was a popular uprising against the liberal Spanish state, quashed by a military intervention directed by General Prim, involving the bombardment of the city from Montjuïc Castle and the military fortress of the Ciutadella. In 1882, a statue was erected in the general's honour in the park built on the site of the old fortress, a way of paying homage to a figure who was controversial not just for his actions in the city, but also for his interventions in the colonies. *Monument enderrocant* (Demolished Monument, 2014) shows the empty pedestal, now with another symbolic value after the statue was demolished by the Joventuts Llibertàries de Gràcia (Gràcia

Libertarian Youth) at the start of the Civil War, in an act of political iconoclasm that years later was to be delegitimised with the restitution of the icon in the form of a replica made by Frederic Marés.

Iconoclasm is a struggle for political control of space which takes the form of an attack on systems of representation, the destruction of images of power personified in the monument, and the symbolic and ideological constructions it generates. The monument is an expression of power that occupies, colonises and hierarchises public space. It is rhetoric by definition, and it is reaffirmed in the public space where it acquires meaning. It is power that gives it meaning, and decides what is to be remembered and celebrated, but also what is to be forgotten. Monuments legitimise history but they also make it disappear. The iconoclastic act generates an empty space which creates a symbolic value and produces a need for reconstruction with a new meaning. The destruction and reconstruction of the monument denote the various strata and meanings of power. Political iconoclasm entails a rhetoric of superposition of discourse and a form of revolutionary anti-hegemonic urbanism, and the conception of an autonomous public space. The great paradox of iconoclasm is the discovery that it is never permanent, that images are destroyed but then often restored. There is an implicit and necessary sense of permanence in the very essence of the monument; in the iconoclastic act, the time of the monument is not linear time, it is time in suspension.

'The red dawn of riots does not dissolve the monstrous creatures of the night. It clothes them in light and fire, and scatters them through the towns and across the fields.'

Raoul Vaneigem, *Treatise on Living for the Use of the Young Generation*

While the French Revolution of 1789 was more bourgeois in nature, the Paris Commune was the first movement of revolt to aspire to establish a popular, self-managed political project. To cite Benjamin, 'the Commune puts an end to the phantasmagoria holding sway over the early years of the proletariat. It dispels the illusion that the task of the proletarian revolution is to complete the work of 1789 hand in hand with the bourgeoisie. This illusion dominates the period 1831–71, from the Lyon uprising to the Commune. The bourgeoisie never shared in this error. Its battle against the social rights of the proletariat dates back to the great Revolution, and converges with the philanthropic movement that gives it cover and that is in its heyday under Napoleon III.¹ The Commune was the moment when the foundations were laid for the utopian, transformative, radical and revolutionary thought that emerged in the following years. Although short in duration, lasting from 18 March to 28 May 1871, it was activated with sufficient intensity to enact a series of radical measures and actions ranging from self-management in factories to the secularism of the state, among others.

One of the urbanistic decisions taken by the Paris Commune was the demolition of the Vendôme Column, advocated months earlier by Gustave Courbet, for which he was tried and sentenced. Erected to commemorate Napoleon Bonaparte's victory at Austerlitz, the column symbolised oppression and power. As in the case of the statue of General Prim, it was reconstructed after the fall of the Commune with the return to 'order'. The GIF *L'Ascension et la chute de la Colonne Vendôme* (The Rise and Fall of the Vendôme Column, 2013) reproduces the construction and destruction of the column, its fall and rise as a symbolic image of revolutionary processes. Any revolution needs transformations that are as

immediate as possible, and perceivable as breakaways from the established order. Once the revolution is over, order, symbolic and real, must also be restored quickly. *Playground (Tatlin in Mexico)* (2011) refers firstly to the Mexican revolution, started in 1910, which, frustrated by infighting between the different factions involved, was unable to prevent the economic oligarchy maintaining power. It also revolves around the critical reactivation of the monument, by means of a resignification of its use and location. In this case, Domènec uses the iconic device that is the model for the monument to the Third International that Tatlin designed between 1919 and 1920 in honour of the constitution of the Soviet state and the new social order (finally, the model was all that was built in the project for what was to have been a 400-metre-high monument). In this work, the Tower becomes an anti-monument: a playground, as a way of reactivating the non-existing monument, situated first in a bourgeois setting and, finally, in an outlying area lacking in recreational and service spaces.

At the end of the First World War, the Spartacus League, a Marxist revolutionary movement headed by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, was founded in Germany. This group backed a short communist revolution in Berlin in January 1919, which was quashed by Germany's Social Democratic Party and the Freikorps, a far-right paramilitary corps that killed the Spartacist leaders. When Mies van der Rohe was commissioned to build a monument in their honour, he wanted to crown it with a large star with the hammer and sickle emblem of the Communist Party which was to continue the ideas of the Spartacist movement. *Den toten Helden der Revolution* (To the Dead Heroes of the Revolution, 2018) is about the capacity of monuments for political activation. When the firm Krupp, Nazism sympathisers,

refused to make the sign, Mies reformulated the order and asked for five steel diamonds, innocuous shapes in themselves but which deployed their full symbolic potential and gained a voice when put together. In 1933, the Nazis tore down the star with the hammer and sickle, and included it in an exhibition of confiscated communist insignia at the Museum of the Revolution in Berlin, a propagandistic display where the symbolic power lay in the distortion of the elements shown out of context, in a counter-effect that was also used in the Degenerate Art Exhibition. This work questions the symbolic space that the sculpture introduces into the public and the ideological spheres in which it is formulated by the artist and the authority that commissions it. Mies van der Rohe's discourse is modern in the field of architecture but highly ambiguous in political terms, differing before and after Nazism. The Nazis demolished the monument in 1935.

Existenzminimum (Minimum Existence, 2002) is conceived as an allegory about the failure of the political project of modernity, converting the monument into a small portable dwelling 'which takes us back to the memory of the recent history of Europe from the unhappiness of the present'. Built at human scale, *Existenzminimum* moves between the monumental scale of sculpture and the minimum scale of architecture. In 1929, Frankfurt hosted the International Congress of Modern Architecture (CIAM), centring on the attempt to define the subsistence dwelling ('Die Wohnung für das Existenzminimum') – that is, the basic conditions required to live a normal existence. The Congress was trying to solve the problems caused by the war, the resulting social conflicts and the need for the mass construction of quality housing for the working classes. That same year saw a stock market crash and a global crisis which, in

the case of Germany, prompted the rise to power of National Socialism. The intention of the CIAM was to create a framework of cooperation between architects interested in improving social conditions and the intervention of public institutions to regulate construction and establish basic housing typologies. The consolidation of Nazism in the German government nipped these aspirations in the bud. *Existenzminimum* weighs the conditions of political iconoclasm in relation to the desires and contradictions that surround it, and the dystopias of social and housing conditions.

'They want to turn us from dwellers
in houses into their users.'

Walter Benjamin, 'Julien Green',
Selected Writings

The sociologist Henri Lefebvre reflected on the need for everyday life to free itself from the function it has under capitalism, which imposes habits on individual and collective life, and reproduces and perpetuates relations of domination. In the trilogy *Critique of Everyday Life* (1947/1961/1981), he refers to the city as the space of aesthetic subversion of everyday life and demands what he calls the 'right to the city', the need for society consciously to produce its space. In fact, since the end of the nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth, modern architects designed projects that oscillated between utopia and the possibility of producing physical spaces, environments and dwellings for the working class to improve living conditions and encourage the construction of a more equal society.

The conversation piece was an eighteenth-century English genre of painting comprising informal portraits of groups. In addition to the literal meaning of the phrase, it can also refer to objects of exceptional interest

that spark conversation. A series of works by Domènec bear this title and reflect on some paradigm buildings of modernity and its desire to regenerate social housing and collective life. *Conversation Piece: Narkomfin* (2013) focuses on the building of this name designed in 1929 by the architects Moisei Ginzburg and Ignaty Milinis, of the OSA Group (Organisation of Contemporary Architects) in Moscow. OSA published the journal SA, and its contributors included major figures such as Le Corbusier. In 1927, two years before CIAM II in Frankfurt and the construction of this building, SA devoted an issue to the 'dom-kommuna' or appropriate form of collective housing. Illustrating this concept, Narkomfin was designed with an annexe containing communal services, while keeping the dwellings independent. After some radical experiences forcing individuals to live collectively, this proposal toned down expectations and encouraged what Ginzburg called a 'socially superior mode of life', without imposing it, as the architect considered that collective life could not be enforced by construction.

Conversation Piece: Casa Bloc (2016) reflects on a building constructed in Barcelona between 1932 and 1936, designed by the architects Josep Lluís Sert, Josep Torres Clavé and Joan Baptista Subirana, members of the GATCPAC (Group of Catalan Architects and Technicians for the Progress of Contemporary Architecture). The GATCPAC was committed to solving society's problems by means of architecture and urbanism, and its mission was to analyse the situation, and find solutions and proposals for transformation. As regards social housing, it stated: 'A mean, miserable concept of life has governed the construction of worker housing in this country, and the result is an unacceptable minimum. The subsistence dwelling may be small in terms of square metres, but it cannot exclude fresh air, sunlight and

open vistas. These are elements that everyone needs, which society has no right to deprive them of.'² In contact with Le Corbusier, the members of the group had visited the Soviet Union to discover at first hand the formulations being developed for social architecture, and together they designed a city renovation plan that was never implemented, the Macià Plan. They also attended the CIAM congresses of the time. The theme of the *Existenzminimum* and social housing involved complex, ambiguous processes about the power relations that determine ways of living, deciding what is necessary and appropriate as a framework of coexistence, and which needs should be met. Casa Bloc is a building designed as worker housing with collective services, which never provided the function for which it was designed, since, when construction was complete, at the end of the Civil War, it was immediately occupied by the military, who subverted the collective spaces and added a necrotic appendix popularly known as the 'ghost block', which obstructed the original project.

The third part of this series of works is *Conversation Piece: Les Minguettes* (2017). Les Minguettes is a neighbourhood of Vénissieux (Lyon) built in the sixties to house the working population and partially demolished in the eighties. It is known as the origin of the French *banlieue* riots and the climate of social tension on the peripheries of big cities. These banlieues are characterised by a high concentration of immigrant population from former colonies with low incomes and poor living conditions, by the poorly designed and constructed tower blocks, overcrowding, a lack of community services and poor communication with city centres and other districts, among other factors that prompted the *malaise des banlieues* (crisis of the suburbs) and led to major clashes. In Les Minguettes, after a period of great tension, the situation of vi-

olence was reversed and the end of 1983 saw a peaceful march for equality and against racism, the *Marche des beurs* (*beurs* being a pejorative term used to refer to the immigrant population from North Africa). The government carried out an attempt to improve conditions in the neighbourhood, demolishing some twenty buildings, the first of which was the 'Democracy' sector. The piece analyses the historical and socio-political mechanisms that led to the degradation, marginalisation and overlooking of certain areas, and includes a video in which, with images shown in reverse order, the building symbolically rises again to impose its dystopia, an ironic play on 'rebuilding modernity'. The demolition of a building or a neighbourhood is an act of administrative iconoclasm, linked more with spectacular institutional politics than with a real desire to introduce improvements. In the case of *Casa Bloc* and *Narkomfin*, the space of conversation or debate takes place on Formica chairs of the type found in kitchens in the fifties and sixties. It is literally the chairs that are having the conversation, as they provide the unstable pedestal for the models of the two buildings. The models are two sculptures without bases, deprived of the monumental dignity that a pedestal grants. In the case of *Les Minguettes*, it is the models of what is popularly known as the district's 'Red Square' which act as a 'pedestal' or a seat for the public, stripping them of the status of observable object and assigning them a dysfunctional use.

Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, Alvar Aalto, the OSA Group and the GATCPAC were leading figures in a modernity that aspired to create universal housing models for the working classes that incorporated all the necessary services, but which has been powerless and unable to meet the ideals of progress and welfare for all. As the designers of others' lives, the task of architects and urbanists is to

work with the context; it has a public dimension and political implications for social regeneration, affects the construction of the social imaginary, and conditions people's everyday lives. But it also has an ideological dimension, sometimes explicit, sometimes masked, for reasons of efficiency or functionality. Architecture can induce operations to cure, organise and sanitise the city by means of the housing and services it offers. Among the projects carried out by the GATCPAC in the framework of regeneration and improvement of living conditions of the working classes and socialisation of hospital care is the tuberculosis dispensary in Barcelona. This dispensary had two aspects: one medical, to monitor and eradicate the disease, and the other to repair the city.

Interrupcions. 10 anys, 1.340 metres (Interruptions. 10 years, 1,340 metres, 2010) centres on the figure of the poet and revolutionary Joan Salvat-Papasseit, a sympathiser of anarchist ideas, who died of tuberculosis in an insalubrious house at a distance of ten years and 1,340 metres before the tuberculosis dispensary's construction. But the promise of social regeneration for which the poet had fought and which the GATCPAC promoted with its architectural and planning practice was put on hold by the Civil War, when Barcelona was bombed, and definitively frustrated by Franco's dictatorship, which abolished any attempt at ideological disruption and encouraged a very different social housing project, such as the *Congrés* neighbourhood promoted during the celebration of the Eucharistic Congress in Barcelona, or the social dwellings in *Badia del Vallès*, which became a huge fraud, to give two examples near the city of Barcelona. At the time of the poet's death, tuberculosis was still an incurable disease leading to an irreversible situation; however, it was possible to improve the living conditions of the sick

and alleviate their symptoms. Tuberculosis was an illness related to insalubrious lifestyles, alleviated by contact with nature, fresh air, sunlight, rest and a healthy diet. In this spirit, Alvar Aalto designed the sanatorium in Paimio (1933), opened a year before work began on the Barcelona project. *24 hores de llum artificial* (24 Hours of Artificial Light, 1998) subverts the spirit of the project and the original construction of the building with a scale reproduction of one of the rooms, with no windows or daylight: it bricks up the space, but also disables the furniture, denying its essence.

Part of the contradiction of modernity, thought and in particular modern architecture, lay in the opposition between ideological and aesthetic discourse. For Domènec, architecture is a 'political unconscious' that allows him to rework the critical and poetic world of architects such as Alvar Aalto, Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier, ideologues of the modern aesthetic project in the field of architecture, in order to reconsider the role of the artist. When Finland gained independence from the Russian Empire and after the short but bloody civil war that ensued, the Communist Party was closed down and the country underwent some years of conservative predominance and proximity to Germany's National Socialism regime, with the participation of Alvar Aalto. After the Second World War, the country was penalised for having collaborated with Nazism, and the Communist Party was legalised. In 1952, Aalto designed the House of Culture, the party's new headquarters. For its construction, an appeal was made to the community asking for the participation of volunteers. The work *Rakentajan käsi* (The Worker's Hand, 2012) sets out to review what affects and concerns us, what is shared, and what can be done collectively. In this case,

the worker community organised itself and worked voluntarily, collectively and free of charge, to create its own narrative in the face of the bourgeoisie that had occupied the preeminent position in the country. This work speaks not so much about architecture as about a collective effort, a utopia of joint effort that worked, but one in which history gave or removed meaning according to different events. The building lost its meaning when the Communist Party was dissolved in 1992 and in recent years it has been recovered as a cultural facility. *Rakentajan käsi* calls to a class awareness and pride, and, by revisiting history, seeks to give voice to the defeated, as Walter Benjamin proposed, aiming to restore the memory of the building to the workers.

'We do need history, but quite differently from the jaded idlers in the garden of knowledge.'

Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*

This quote from Nietzsche, with which Walter Benjamin heads one of his philosophy of history theses, speaks of the need to problematise the discourses of history and situate ourselves in the asymmetries, in the spaces of uncomfortable memory. In our recent history there is a dramatic episode, the Civil War, which was followed by a long dictatorship. *Arquitectura Española, 1939-1975* (Spanish Architecture, 1939-75, 2014/2018) comprises digital copies of plans of buildings and public works constructed by the government of the Franco regime using the labour of republican political prisoners. The images of the repertoire of constructions are a triumphalist, propagandistic catalogue of how a country was raised on the exploitation of the defeated. They represent a series of portraits, not of people in this case, but of buildings or spaces; portraits of architecture and barbarism

that speak to us not of the so-called 'reconstruction' of the country, but of the people who erected the buildings and the tragic conditions in which they did so. This series presents a kind of inverse iconoclasm and sanitation of a devastated country by means of public works and infrastructures that were built resolutely, by imposition, within a new order that had been established on the rubble of a past that was to be rendered invisible. The protagonists of that past were the silent, subjected labour force of the constructions of power.

Another form of sanitisation is the projection of the city's image through tourism. *Souvenir Barcelona* (2017) analyses the way Barcelona has been a pioneer in promoting tourism not just as a means to economic and cultural enrichment, but also as an agent of modernisation. This was the founding idea of the Sociedad de Atracción de Forasteros (Society for the Attraction of Visitors), an early tourist board founded in 1908 and with its publication *Barcelona atracció*n (1910–36), promoted by figures committed to the idea of modernisation, very close to the circles of the Regionalist League and headed by the mayor, Domènec Sanllehy i Alrich. From the start of the twentieth century, a stereotypical image of Barcelona was created: cultured, modern, Mediterranean, colourful, welcoming; an image more in keeping with a theme park, concealing stories of marginalisation, poverty, popular revolts, and repression. Domènec's postcards show other aspects of the life and history of the city such as its shanties, the burning of churches, and the bombing of the city during the Civil War together with recent images related to the citizen protests of 15 May 2011, immigrant internment centres and evictions. We see not just the problems, but also the contradictions, as in the postcard of the square named after Antonio López, first Marquis of

Comillas, a ship-owner and merchant who built his fortune on the slave trade, where we see immigrants calling for the rights of *manter*s [illegal street vendors selling items that infringe copyright], organised under the umbrella of the Sindicat Popular de Venedors Ambulants de Barcelona (Popular Street Vendors' Union of Barcelona), in the face of the police persecution to which they were subjected. The tourism promotion image is never dirty or conflictive, but these postcards show us the hidden, suffocated, rebel city, and its subversive narrative. They do not present the places as aseptic façades, rather speaking to us of what took place, of the conflicts and disappointments that happened there. If the souvenir is the memory that turns a visit to the city into merchandising, here souvenirs are dystopian propaganda, an alternative to the stereotypical imaginary presented by the tourist propaganda that sells the image of the city, and the city itself.

'[Naked life] means the life that can be killed but not sacrificed of the *homo sacer*.'

Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*

The Urban Warfare Training Center, also known as *Baladia*, which is Arabic for city, is an artificial city built by the Israeli army in 2005 in the Negev desert to train in urban warfare. As Eyal Weizman explains in the essay 'Walking through walls: Soldiers as architects in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict', the training model is based on the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari and radical artistic practices such as the works of Gordon Matta-Clark. The city is the new space of conflict, but it becomes a dystopian urban-planning model when war leaves its conventional scenarios and becomes a house-to-house war. *Baladia Future City* (2011–15) is the result of this dislocation. The

work relocates war in the museum space to reconstruct this modular city with the capacity to adopt the cartography of the places where intervention is required. Domènec uses the same reconstruction procedure that Dürer followed to produce the drawing of the rhinoceros, an animal he had never seen: in this case, he looked for images using Google Maps, asked soldiers for their testimony to find out what the setting was like and what it meant to train there, but also what happens when these fictional practices have to move to a real city with people who live there. *Baladia* presents us with an anomalous situation of implementation of force in a colonial context and a breakdown of the system.

Another dysfunction is *Nakba*, an Arabic term that means disaster or catastrophe. The commemoration of the Palestinian Nakba coincides with the celebration of Israeli Independence Day, two circumstances produced by the United Nations resolution to divide the territory between the State of Israel and Palestine in 1948. During the following months, part of the Palestinian population was massacred by Israeli forces and almost one million Palestinians were dispossessed of their property, their homes and their land, and displaced to refugee camps. The historian Ilán Pappé notes that this corresponds to a paradigm shift from war to one of ethnic cleansing, along with a cognitive system that allowed the perpetrators to deny the crimes against Palestinians and helped the world to forget. *48_Nakba* (2007) alludes to the memocide based on concealment and distortion, a memory erased by systematic negation and non-recognition of historical fact. The Nakba not only destroyed people's lives and erased villages and towns, it made everything disappear, like an act of obliterating iconoclasm, imposing perfectly planned colonial geopolitical

strategies. The documentary is based on the direct testimony of people who were displaced in 1948 and who describe their homes and their villages, places which no longer exist. In the mental space that the refugees construct in this no-place, there is a contrast between the reality of memory and physical reality. *Erased Land* (2014) is an exercise in inverse geography, eliminating Palestinian presence from the map of the West Bank to make the framework of Israeli occupation visible. The map is an act of iconoclasm that erases names, memories, and towns, like the Nakba did, thereby becoming the map of negation. Occupied space is also the theme of *Real Estate* (2006–07), a work that uses this name ironically to show that Palestinian land is a piece of property in Israel's eyes, and the colonial relationship in terms of 'property' which the State of Israel has with the occupied Palestinian territories, where Palestine is a dystopia in which the usurpation and erasing of history and Palestinian presence by the Israelis is global.

A final project centring on the dystrophy of the condition of modern possibility is based on the trial in 1961 in Jerusalem of one of the greatest criminals in history, the SS lieutenant colonel Adolf Eichmann. In his essay *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Zygmunt Bauman argued that one of the essential conditions that made the Holocaust possible was modernity, as this episode of history is deeply rooted in the very nature of modernity and the centre of modern social thought. Hannah Arendt followed the entire trial and in 1963 published the book *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, a report which 'deals with nothing but the extent to which the court in Jerusalem succeeded in fulfilling the demands of justice'.³ The magistrates' entrance to the courtroom was announced with 'Beth Hamishpath', 'The House of Justice' in Hebrew, the title of the first

chapter of the book which describes the stage set of the auditorium in which the trial was held, in the House of the People, designed with '[...] a theatre in mind, complete with orchestra and gallery, with proscenium and stage, and with side doors for the actors' entrance'.⁴ Designed as a stratigraphic hierarchy, the highest tier was occupied by the judges and the stenographers; on the next tier were the translators; lower down, the accused, his profile turned to the audience, in a glass booth specially designed to protect him, opposite the witness box; on the lowest tier, with their backs to the audience, the prosecutor and the counsel for the defence. *Audiència pública* (Public Hearing, 2018) is a reproduction of this silenced cabin that confronts us with history as ineffective witnesses and returns to us the responsibility for a case that is already a trial of history.⁵ It speaks to us of conditions of possibility. The barbarians might arrive. We're waiting for the barbarians.

'Because night has fallen and the barbarians have not come.
And some who have just returned from the border say
there are no barbarians any longer.
And now, what's going to happen to us without barbarians?
They were, those people, a kind of solution.'

Konstantinos Kavafis, *Waiting for the Barbarians*

The history of the modern world is a series of entropies and resiliencies, utopias and dystopias, euphemisms in the face of realities which disturb what was expected, that which has to be, imposed order. Of disorders of the system and its capacity to react to disturbance or adversity. Part of the project of modernity has been built on a series of strokes, gestures and traces that are eliminated and replaced, operating on permanent provisionality.

Not Here, Not Anywhere is a proposal which criticises a society that has distorted the modern project, a reinterpretation of the utopian contents of modernity, the discourses of authority and power established in different contexts and iconoclasm as exorcism of history and as functional alienation. The project reflects on modern paradoxes in works which subvert what is expected of languages, based on polysemy and breach of convention: architecture converted into sculpture; sculpture without a plinth, related not with public but domestic space; the image as a portrait of architecture; bricked up architecture, stripped of its use, or the space of real estate which, when occupied, speaks to us of political and human issues. But it also reflects on how words betray us. Ariella Azoulay denounced the violence implicit in the use of terms such as hostility or conflict situations to talk about constant harassment in all spheres of everyday life, and suspended forms of violence, built on the axiom that 'Even if everyone is watching, there is nothing to see', but which penetrates to the deepest layer. A latent, silent violence. *Not Here, Not Anywhere* is a reflection on the euphemisms of history, a critical look at the political strategies of historical memory and social empowerment, at the modernity that drifts towards an authoritarian, colonialist discourse and acts as an agent for the implantation of global capitalism. But it is not just an exercise in historicism: it scrutinises through contemporary eyes, submitting projects to the present context. Walter Benjamin presented a criticism of historicism as a tool of power and a credible symptom of efficiency and the unquestionable. In his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, he proposed seeing the past not as reconstruction or seduction but as a constructive principle, full of tensions, for the present time. 'There has never been a document of culture which is not simultaneously

one of barbarism. And just as it is itself not free from barbarism, neither is it free from the process of transmission, in which it falls from one set of hands into another. The historical materialist thus moves as far away from this as measurably possible. He regards it as his task to brush history against the grain.'⁶

Teresa Grandas is exhibitions curator at MACBA Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona.

¹ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, tr. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999.

² From the journal *AC. Documentos de Actividad Contemporánea*, the publication of the GATCPAC, no. 11, III (July–September, 1933).

³ Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. New York: The Viking Press, 1963.

⁴ Op. cit.

⁵ While the first chapter of Arendt's original text was entitled 'The House of Justice', in the Spanish edition it was rendered as 'Audiencia pública' ('Public hearing' in direct English retranslation). [Editor's note]

⁶ Walter Benjamin, *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, no. 7.