

## **Arco Madrid 2010 | Expanded Box I**

### **Curatorial Statement**

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Back in 1997, Arthur C. Danto wrote *After the End of Art*, asserting that, after the Seventies, art entered a “post historical” condition, leaving behind the usual art historical narrative – based on a linear idea of progress – of which Modernism was the swansong; and opening a new era in which “everything can be art”.

This position has been questioned, in recent years, by art critics who claim that Postmodernism is dead, replaced by an art which insistently sets out to explore some of the forgotten dreams of the Modernist project in the light of recent developments in the current socio-cultural landscape.

In 2003, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev made a first attempt with the exhibition “I Moderni / The Moderns”; and in 2009, Nicolas Bourriaud took up the cause with the exhibition “Altermodern”. While Christov-Bakargiev talked about project-based practices and utopianism, Bourriaud underlined creolisation, globalisation and travelling.

While their discourse is slightly different, both Christov-Bakargiev and Bourriaud seem to agree that new technologies and digital culture play a central role in this change. Christov-Bakargiev wrote: “The digital world is internationalist, as were the modernists (...). The digital mind is a project-based mind, encouraging a

sense of ‘agency’, an ability to make choices and act.” And while the *Altermodern Manifesto* basically describes what Castells called “the information age”, Bourriaud’s previous critical statement explicitly indicates the programmer, the DJ and the web surfer as the cultural figures engaged in reshaping contemporary art practices.

On the other hand other critics are arguing that today innovation in art is taking place out of the fascinating yet limited box that we usually call “the art world”: in science labs, institutes of technology, as well as in public spaces and on the Internet.

If we compare these two different points of view, it is quite easy to see what they have in common: the idea that new technologies are consistently modifying the way we make art and our very notion of art.

This is quite obvious: Modernism itself can be described as the side effect of a revolution in the means of cultural production. At the time, some enthusiastically embraced the new media, some others had to reconsider the way they worked with old media, and some did both these things. Art changed dramatically.

The same is happening today, only amplified to a scale that is difficult to reduce to a theory. It is possible, and highly likely, that the digital revolution had a hand not only in the recent shift toward Modernism, but also in the end of that narrative that Danto identifies with modern art.

Having supported and shown art made with new media and technologies for more than ten years, the Expanded Box makes a seminal contribution to this process. Granted, we can’t be sure that the change will come from New Media Art. Maybe in the end traditional media will react to the challenges of the digital revolution in a way that more tech-savvy artists, too heavily focused on technology, would never imagine. In the meantime, however, we have to acknowledge that New Media Art is the best mirror of the world we live in. At least, I have yet to come across another form of art able to reflect the contradictions of our daily lives on the screen with the effectiveness of the Mattes’ performances; or show how language and narration reacts

to the translation processes taking place in a computer as von Bismarck and Maus' machine does. The other works look at advanced research (Gabrans), talk about chaos and complexity (Nepraš), explore artificial life (Boredomresearch), social use of technologies (Lozano-Hemmer), their appropriation and subversion (Jodi), the magic they can create (Vassileva). Isn't it "so contemporary"?