

Notes

1. www.documenta12.de/index.php?id=1049&L=1.
2. www.canalcontemporaneo.art.br/documenta12magazines/_v2/sections.php?id=6&page=2#presentation.
3. <http://magazines.documenta.de>.
4. <http://magnet-ecp.org>.
5. <http://magnet-ecp.org/The-Beauty-of-Printing-and-the-Glory-of-Networking>.
6. Cf. 'The Next Documenta Should Be Curated by an Artist': www.e-flux.com/projects/next_doc/index.html

Canal Contemporâneo (www.canalcontemporaneo.art.br) holds and spreads information, knowledge and debate about Brazilian contemporary art in its different online modules. Basing itself on the concepts of Virtual Community (Rheingold), Radical Media (Downing) and Tactical Media (Garcia/Lovink), it has been effective in rousing communication and interaction, connecting people and institutions around the twenty-seven Brazilian states and over eighty countries. Its activism guides frequent journal articles and has encouraged political mobilization, for example, for the inclusion of the Digital Art in the scope of the Brazilian Cultural Funding laws (2004). Canal Contemporâneo took part in exhibitions such as *hiPer> relações eletro//digitais* (*hiPer>electro//digital relations*), curated by Daniela Bousso (Santander Cultural, Porto Alegre, Brazil), *Tudo aquilo que escapa* (*Everything that escapes*), curated by Cristiana Tejo (Museu do Estado, Recife, Brazil), *Ocupação*, (*Paço das Artes, São Paulo*).

The big lie

Dario Corbeira and Irene Montero, *Brumaria*

When *Brumaria* was invited to take part in the Documenta 12 Magazines Project, in February 2006, we were filled with enthusiasm. We drew up an ambitious project, 'Art: The Radical Political Imagination', which, based on post-1968 experiences and recent experiments in counter-hegemonic practices, tried to set up some critical-theoretical points of departure through a congress, two seminars, an online discussion and three issues of the printed publication.¹ However, the invitation had some special conditions: we had to respond to the three questions/leitmotivs that were to articulate the exhibition — 'Is modernity our antiquity?', 'Bare life?' and 'What is to be done?' From the outset, we found these questions ambiguous, shallow and excessively abstract, but at the same time, this ambiguity allowed us to tackle other subjects we were more interested in.

We thought it excessive that Documenta was asking us to contribute without giving us 'anything' in return, other than its image and its success in the media. Nevertheless, the Magazines Project appeared to be an interesting venture that would make it possible for us to establish relations with other editorial teams across the world and have different kinds and formats of exchange. From our perspective, it is important to open a global discussion about the social, political and cultural characteristics of the present and their reflection in, and contradictions and similarities with, the proposals, images and power-platforms that contemporary art is running; questions about forms of

government, global war, political artistic and editorial practice.

Finally, at the opening of the exhibition itself, we realized what Documenta 12 consisted in. The contributions of the ninety-five editorial teams, the transregional meetings (about which we have received no information), the materials contributed by the magazines, and the relations that had been established between magazines had not been useful. Documenta 12 looked just like the big five-year event that triumphant neoliberalism needs these days. One could feel the terrible 'richness' that the old and new Right are putting into the political playground, in contrast to a diminished and weak Left incapable of producing any changes, no matter how tiny.

In this context, art institutions, located within the culture industry inside an ideologically fragile cultural capitalism, are going through a moment we could describe as delicate and dubious, which places the market on top of all other discursive considerations. The 'Grand Tour' of Venice–Basel–Kassel–Münster, which Documenta should never have entered, became a planetary tribute to Art Basel, the market in its purest form, while the rest of the events have been criticized from all imaginable points of view. The art market has never had either so much power or so many consensuses around it. Documenta could have offered an analysis of the situation, making clear that there are more options when building a 'great exhibition' than the univocal market. But its view that simply by

avoiding the 'Top 100' artists it could keep away from the market just reinforced it.

In our opinion, there were two negative vectors in the Magazines Project. On the one hand, the time was insufficient to prepare such an ambitious project of exchanges. On the other hand, there was the enormous discrepancy between the director's and curator's (Buerger's and Noack's) exhibition and the theoretical approaches and texts provided by the more than ninety magazines. The three volumes edited by Documenta 12 Magazines, *Modernity*, *Life!* and *Education* (supposedly, a selection from the contributing magazines), reflect the interests of the curatorial team rather than the concerns of the editorial teams involved in the project; mirroring the weak conceptual and textual content of Documenta's catalogue. This catalogue, together with the exhibition's 'image book' and the three volumes, are an archive unconnected to the concerns, projects, ideological substratum and militant positions of the magazines. We could say the same about the 'transregional meetings' and the 'lunch lectures' scheduled in Documenta Halle during the '100 days'. These meetings and seminars continue the keynotes of the project: lack of propositional and ideological clarity, confusion about time and content, and a general lack of structure. The Magazines Project was the big lie of Documenta 12.

It was a huge discourtesy that Documenta and its director were not capable of inviting and assembling the magazines involved in Kassel and that Roger Buerger had no contact with them. The art market and the art bourgeoisie take artists' and theoreticians' 'immaterial production' more seriously than this. Documenta, which might have been expected to take its own intellectual, moral and political heritage more

seriously, seems to have been playing another game, in another discipline, and in a very strange place.

However, more positively, in spite of the problems, the brief and messy past, contacts between a significant number of editorial teams involved in art and cultural criticism have begun, the benefits of which we hope we shall see in the future. We have proposed continuing Documenta 12 Magazines beyond autumn 2007, expanding the project in time and possibilities, since from the beginning we believed in the necessity of this kind of association. We still think the Magazines Project has to constitute itself as an association of global counter-hegemony making possible the circulation of plural proposals and discourses. We live in a world that is politically unidirectional, economically anarchical and socially unfair, where the international Art Institution has become a big circus that takes place at art fairs and biennial exhibitions. In this circus the hegemonic magazines (*Artforum*, *Parkett*, *Flash Art*, *Frieze*, *October*) play a role that hardly questions the classist and perverse nature of this institution. Documenta 12 Magazines is already, in its own definition, a platform that can and should break the comfortable situation in which the Art Institution finds itself nowadays.

Notes

1. In the end, the project was reduced to a congress on Art and Revolution, a seminar with some of the staff from the Magazines Project and other editors taking part, and the publication of two *Brumaria* issues – *Brumaria 7: Art, Machines, Immaterial Work*, and *Brumaria 8: Art and Revolution*. Right now (August 2007), we are preparing a seminar, 'Money, Lies and Contemporary Art Centers', to take place in Kassel in September, along with a new issue devoted to Documenta 12 Magazines, *Brumaria 9*, consisting of a compilation of contributions from Documenta 12 Magazines' online platform.



brumaria

Artistic, aesthetic and political practice
www.brumaria.net

Brumaria 8 **Art and Revolution** " Spanish & English version "

Alexander Alberro
Jane Crawford
Alice Creischer &
Andreas Siekmann
Brian Holmes
Ana Longoni
Gerardo Mosquera
Suely Rolnik
Gregory Sholette
Eduardo Subirats
Feng Yuan

Brumaria 9 **Modernity? Life!** " Spanish & English version "

Roger M. Buergel
Art & Language
Marius Babias
Leo Bersani
Judith Butler
Andreas Huyssen
Maurizio Lazzarato
Pamela M. Lee
Mark Lewis
Jacques Rancière
Slavoj Žižek
Roger M. Buergel
Keti Chukhrov
Dario Corbeira
Carlos Jiménez
Oliver Marchart

