

Mary Anne Staniszewski

An Interpretation/ Translation of Muntadas' Projects

On Translation

To live is to consume,¹ or so it seems since the consolidation of global capitalism and communication networks during the last half-century. But this focus on economics can be expanded to the production of meaning. In what has been called a transnational, technological “networked society,”² to live is to translate.

Such an all-encompassing view of culture as translation marks Muntadas’ *On Translation* – an on-going series of installations, interventions, web sites, public projects, objects, videotapes, lectures, publications, exhibition materials, collaborations, and texts. This trans-media, transnational, site-specific enterprise exists in myriad languages, on the Net and in locations that have included New York, Madrid, Helsinki, Budapest, Santa Fe de Bogotá, Paris, Turin, São Paulo, Arad, Rotterdam, Kassel and Atlanta. Examining what the artist describes as “cultural translation as a contemporary phenomenon,”³ this project has not only dealt with the translation of languages, but of global treaties, political conferences, currencies, maps, knowledge categories, colors, telecommunications, computer technologies, and exhibitions. To see culture as a translation highlights the historical, interactive, dynamic, site-specific, and interpretative quality of meaning.⁴ Such a perspective on art and everyday life characterizes Muntadas’ entire oeuvre.

The Political Unconscious and Cultural Producers

For some thirty years, Muntadas has investigated a vast variety of subjects in order to reveal aesthetic, cultural, and social conditions that are marginalized, overlooked, or invisible – what has been called the “political unconscious.”⁵ This type of investigation is the foundation of his extremely diverse oeuvre that includes a variety of strategies and media. By producing a spectrum of enterprises to engage their related issues and to transform their particular contexts, Muntadas is one of a number of artists who clarifies and defines what could be called a “cultural producer.”⁶ Artists, writers, intellectuals, and really anyone in any field who works with a critical awareness of the institutional and ideological limits of their endeavors function as cultural producers. In this case, Muntadas’ exploration of translation crystallizes the inter-related issues of identity, culture, language, nationalism, internationalism, the mass media, and information and communication technologies. Very particular versions of these phenomena distinguish the modern era⁷ and, in some instances, they have gained predominance since the mid-twentieth century.



Modernity and its Frameworks

The late 18th century and early 19th century demark a shift in “the order of things” in Western culture. The well-known phrase is a translation of the original French title of Michel Foucault’s book examining these modern recon-figurations.⁸ Consciousness of modern nationalism and its counterpoint, inter-nationalism, developed in the late 18th century with the liberal, democratic revolutions. Cultural identity and nationhood then became linked to a common language, as was the case in France.⁹ After the revolution in the United States, there was even an attempt to create a different version of English to secure the new national identity.¹⁰ Not unrelatedly, inventions that have enhanced inter-nationalism – the development of information and communication technologies – share this historical berth. One of the foundations of global communications networks can be traced to the optical telegraph, which was devised for use during the French Revolution.¹¹ By 1844 Samuel Morse had perfected the electric telegraph and created the universal language of dots and dashes, Morse code.

Among the specifically modern manifestations investigated by Muntadas are fine art, the museum, the mass media, nationalism, and interna-tionalism. In his *CEE Project*, which was begun in 1988, the artist addresses the latter two issues by the re-presenting symbols of the European Union.¹² Muntadas produced a four-by-six meter carpet with the image of the European flag: twelve golden stars on a blue ground. The carpet/flag has been placed on the floor of twelve public spaces in the European Union, including a design museum in Ghent, an opera house in Thessaloniki, a library in Copenhagen, a city hall in Calais, a school in Frankfurt.¹³ Revealingly, there was no controver-sial reaction to putting this flag on the floor, as most likely would be the case if the woven image had been, for instance, a French, Spanish or USA flag. In the art museum, the public walked around it as if it were an artifact, at library they walked on it as if a rug. Muntadas has remarked these different “readings” of this flag/carpet taught him much about cultural translation and the power of a context to transform an audience’s interpretation. These responses also

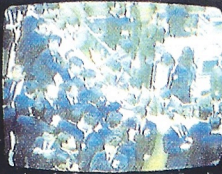
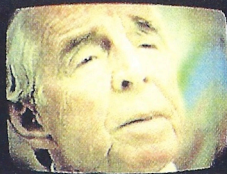
confirmed the artist's perception that Europeans are detached from the EU, see it primarily as a "commercial" entity, and have no nationalistic identification with such a symbol.¹⁴ A visual allusion to this was the one detail where Muntadas departed from the official flag: In the center of each star was embroidered an image of one of the then twelve EU nations' coins.

Throughout his career, Muntadas has examined "archetypes" of modernity by creating complex and often on-going projects that are re-presented in myriad sites. In addition to *On Translation* and the *CEE Project*, which were begun in 1995 and 1988 respectively, *Exposición*, installed in 1985 and in 1987, are such examples, as are *Between the Frames*, initiated in 1983, and *The File Room*, started in 1994. These projects have been constructed to make visible social conventions and frameworks within which meaning and value are created. The artist's working method is characterized by selecting a very generalized social structure, and then investigating permutations of the idea in meticulous detail. Muntadas then reinterprets – or translates – these projects at a variety of international sites. In the past several years, the artist has featured this process by actually challenging curators to reinterpret his installations, as is the case for the presentation of *On Translation* at the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona. For this exhibition, which includes most of the components of *On Translation* to date, Muntadas has asked the museum director, curator and coordinator to address the previous installations and situations of *On Translation*. He has requested that they install "not a recreation," "not a documentation," but "an interpretation" in order to "maximize the consequences of the idea of translation."¹⁵

After the first installations of *Between the Frames: The Forum*, Muntadas began selecting individuals to act as curatorial "translators" of the piece. At the Witte de Witte in Rotterdam, Muntadas invited an Art History professor, Wouter de Nooy, to interpret and create the installation for the exhibition.¹⁶ At the Musée d'art contemporain in Montreal, he invited a sociologist, Guy Bellavance. For the Berkeley Museum of Art, he asked a philosopher, John Rapko, to do this; for the Forum d'art Contemporain in Luxembourg, he chose an economist, Robert Frankle. In keeping with Muntadas' working methods, this strategy magnifies what would otherwise be an overlooked feature of a social convention. By directing diverse professionals to be curatorial interpreters, Muntadas renders visible the fact that each presentation and installation modifies the work, which is something most visitors to an exhibition – and too many curators – ignore.



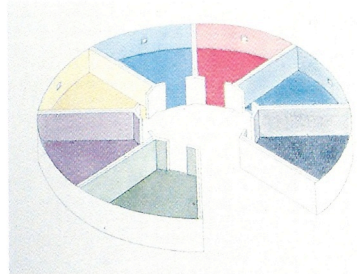
Chapter 2:
THE COLLECTORS



Between the Frames

Between the Frames – a video and installation project which includes four-and-one-half hours of video interviews of individuals who work within or contribute to the art world – is a representation of the art system. But this project is something more than a mere portrait of the people and institutions of the art world. *Between the Frames* makes visible the institutional, theoretical, and ideological configurations within which aesthetic meaning and value are produced: what could be called the contemporary art apparatus.

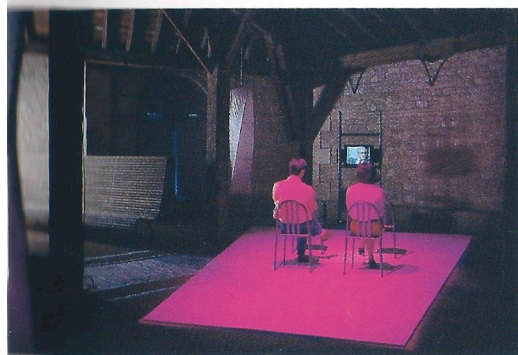
The videotapes, which were edited from some 160 hours of tape recorded from 1983 to 1991,¹⁷ are divided into eight chapters: “The Dealers”, “The Collectors”, “The Gallery”, “The Museum”, “The Docents”, “The Critics”, “The Media”, and “Epilogue” (composed of artist interviews). These chapters can be shown individually or together as screenings, on television or in one of the many installations, such as those at the Rotterdam, Berkeley, Montreal and Luxembourg sites. To distinguish the videos and screenings from the exhibitions, Muntadas titles the latter, *Between the Frames: The Forum*, the first of which was held at the Musée d’art contemporain in Bordeaux where the chapters were installed throughout the museum. Each chapter consisted of a video monitor and chairs placed with an area lit by a trapezoid of colored light. And each





was placed within a different area of the museum corresponding to its subject. “The Critics”, for example, were in the library; “The Docents”, in the education department. For the second installation of the piece at the Wexner Center in 1994, a circular pavilion was built, with a central circular area that was empty and with the chapters forming galleries radiating from this center. Muntadas self-consciously conceived *Between the Frames* at the Wexner Center as a contained structure within the “deconstructed building” designed by Peter Eisenman. Whereas at Bordeaux’s “very constructed building” with traditional galleries, library and bookstore, he chose to “explode the piece” and “scatter” it throughout the institution.¹⁸

Key to understanding Muntadas’s formulation of *Between the Frames* is the fact that the individuals interviewed in the tapes – with the exception of the Germans and Japanese who speak in English – use their native languages: Catalan, English, French, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish. Text translations were offered in exhibition publications in the languages of the site. If Muntadas had treated the tapes in the conventional manner and had them translated or had added subtitles to match the language of the location’s population, this would have made the issues of cultural and linguistic differences





inaudible. It would have produced what the artist has described in another context as a “decaffeinated experience.”¹⁹ This multiple language soundscape and installation which mirrors such diversity, allows the visitor to circulate “between the frames” to metaphorically hear and glimpse parameters of a social system, the art world.

Another essential aspect of this piece is the focus on the periphery, the marginal, the frames that engender the discourses within which art is produced. Missing from this portrait of the art world is what might traditionally be the centerpiece of an exhibition and the entire aesthetic enterprise: the work of art.

Exposición / Exhibition

Muntadas’s concern for the boundaries that define and limit a social territory took its most literal form in his installation, *Exposición*, presented in Madrid in 1985, and translated as *Exhibition* in New York in 1987.²⁰ Similar to *Between the Frames* where the centerpiece – the work of art is missing – in *Exhibition* there were no paintings, no sculptures, no videotapes, just frames, three video monitors, a slide projector, a film projector in Madrid, and a light box in New York. There were no ambient lights. Nine *tableaux* comprised the show: “The Print Series”, “The Drawing Series”, “The Photo Series”, “The Triptych”, “The 19th-Century Frame”, “The Slide Projection”, “The Video Installation”, “The Billboard”, “The Film Projection in Madrid”, and “The Light Box Display” in New York. Each was lit according to standard practices associated with the type of work usually presented within each kind of frame, or in the case of the video monitor, for example, the screen was blank and just tuned on. The “Photo Series” frames had a low intensity illumination used to protect light-sensitive photographs. The triptych, which could be perceived as evoking the scale and grander of “heroic abstraction,” was displayed centrally signifying a higher rank in the hierarchy of value and power when compared with the smaller The “Drawing Series”, which were mounted on the wall near the desk area. By accentuating light – traditionally associated with idealist and metaphysical aspects of fine art – Muntadas paradoxically rendered the historical and material conditions of the modern gallery. Illuminated in this installation was what the viewer does not ordinarily “see”: the social conventions that shape aesthetic worth, the “political unconscious” of an art exhibition. This is what

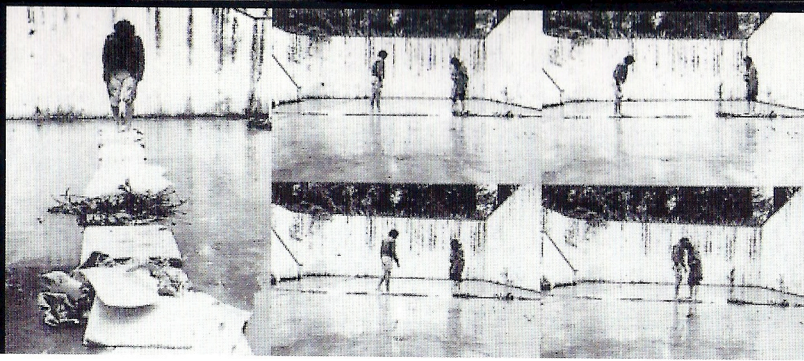


Marcel Duchamp did with that other framing device, the pedestal. By placing an object of everyday life, a urinal, on a pedestal, Duchamp revealed in this gesture the cultural contingency of aesthetic – and by implication – all meaning and value.

Installation as Ideology

The boundaries and frames of any social entity is the realm where ideological limitations reside. Often overlooked is the fact that these ideological dimensions of exhibitions, galleries, and museums are manifest in another framing device: installations.²¹ What has become the standard method – hanging works of art isolated on neutral-colored walls at a height for an ideal viewer – is a recent convention and a representation in its own right. Most viewers to an exhibition do not see this framework that emphasizes not only the autonomy of the artwork, but that of the spectator. Not unrelatedly, these types of displays can enhance a viewer's sense of an idealized, ahistorical independence and even free will – characteristics associated with the mythology of the modern humanist subject.

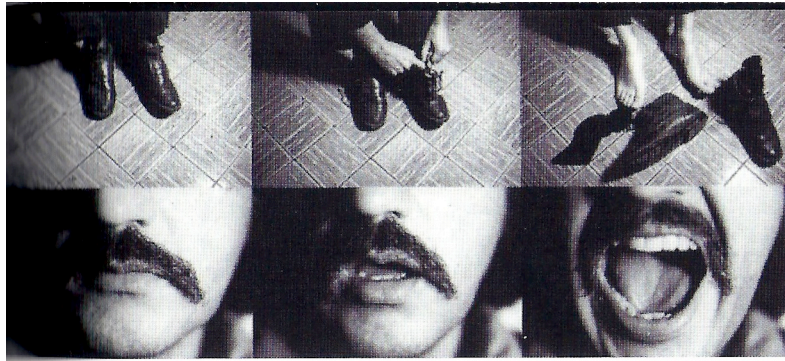
Displaying works isolated and in neutral-colored interiors became a convention from the 1920s to the late 1960s, and by 1970 much of the diversity of institutional display practices that had characterized the early years of modern art museums diminished.²² During the late 1960s and early 1970s was also when artists' relation to installation practices – and the political dimensions of the institutions and locations where they situated their work – changed. Although the avant-gardes had developed a variety of display practices throughout the first half of the twentieth century,²³ the late 1960s and early 1970s marked the years when artists' installations became commonplace. This was when conceptual, site-specific, inter-media and installation-based art proliferated. With landmark exhibitions such as the 1969 *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form* 1969 at the Berne Kunsthalle²⁴ and the 1970 *Information* at the Museum of Modern Art,²⁵ curators did not so much select specific pieces, but invited artists to create works for that particular exhibition. Each time such work was presented, it would be re-interpreted to suit the particular site and audiences. These were the years when Muntadas began exhibiting.



Early Projects

In the 1960s, Muntadas was producing primarily paintings. In 1971, however, he wrote a “declaration of intention” to do work that was less passive and more participatory and he stopped painting.²⁶ This was the beginning of Muntadas’s interest in having viewers interact with his work. The “declaration” can also be understood as the origins of his current use of the statement “Warning: Perception requires involvement” for the posters and public projects of the *On Translation* series. In 1971, Muntadas also began doing actions – what he described as “sensorial experiences” – exploring smell, touch and taste that were documented first in super-8 film and then videotape. These actions were events where the artist, individuals he selected to participate, as well as gallery visitors manipulated constructions; tasted, smelled, and touched food; rubbed things on their bodies; and, in general, interacted with objects, substances, and sensory situations.²⁷ Many of these actions were done in private and then the documentation became a public manifestation. Muntadas often conceives of this private and public dynamic as “the micro” and “the macro,” which is a polarity found in much of his work.²⁸ In *Experiencia colectiva n° 3 (olfato, gusto, tacto)*, which took place near Barcelona in 1971, Muntadas invited thirteen people, with eyes and ears covered, to touch, taste, and smell assorted materials (such as leaves, plastic, fruit, vegetables, wood, metal, grease), the walls, and each other, if they chose to do so.²⁹ An important aspect of the piece was that the thirteen people were of different nationalities, ages, professions and each was videotaped for their reactions to the experience.³⁰ Muntadas’ careful selection of socially diverse collaborators in this early action/installation serves as evidence of the artist’s persistent concern for issues of cultural translation.

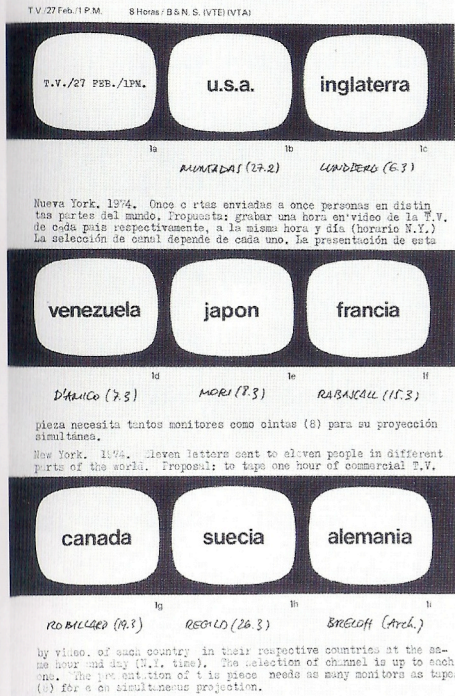
Recalling some of these events thirty years later, Muntadas stated that conceptual practices were new to Spain in the early 1970s and he reviewed the way the Spanish artist community did not have “first-hand” experience of the international shows during the final years of the authoritarian Franco regime.³¹ “My generation was totally isolated. The last international thing was pop and with a strong emphasis on abstract painting... There was no tradition for this type of work.” When gallery visitors were invited to interact with these materials and environments, “they practically destroyed part of the exhibition... For some of the things to be manipulated – structures made of wood and a series

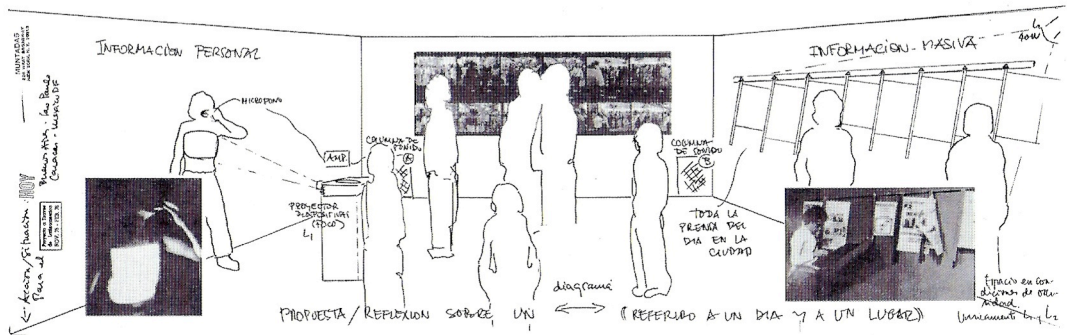


plastic bags hanging with different textures inside of them – a kind of vandalism occurred... I created a box-like room on a patio of Galería Vandres covered with foam on the inside walls and the floor. But some visitors became confused... there were strange violent reactions. Some of the work was destroyed. I think this is related to the repressive situation”... In Spain, at that time, “everything was very directed. It was not a participatory situation, which was related to it not being a democratic situation... All of these were proposals for the visitors and there was no tradition to participate in a country where you couldn’t vote.” A super-8 film *Muntadas* produced in 1972 is an eloquent reaction to the Spanish political and cultural context. In the film, *Muntadas* floats the newspaper *La Vanguardia*’s front-page close-up of Francisco Franco in the beautiful aqua water of a pool, and then the image “drowns.”³²

From 1973 to 1975, *Muntadas* was a member of *Grup de Treball* [Work Group], an interdisciplinary collective of artists, writers, musicians, and filmmakers formed to address political and social issues by making use of the public forum – what the artist describes as “an open window” – the art context could offer in an otherwise “closed” society.³³ “A lot of this work had to do with the end of Franco period: solidarity with prisoners, manifestos with workers, photo-text pieces, activism.”³⁴ The last presentation by *Grup de Treball* was at the Biennale de Paris in 1975, the year of Franco’s death.

It was within this personal and political context of the sometimes aggressive public reactions to his actions/installations and the collaborations with *Grup de Treball* that *Muntadas* shifted in 1973 from video taping himself and individuals interacting with substances and sensorial situations to a broader conceptual framework of the individual interacting with social environments. His *Markets, Streets, and Stations* was a

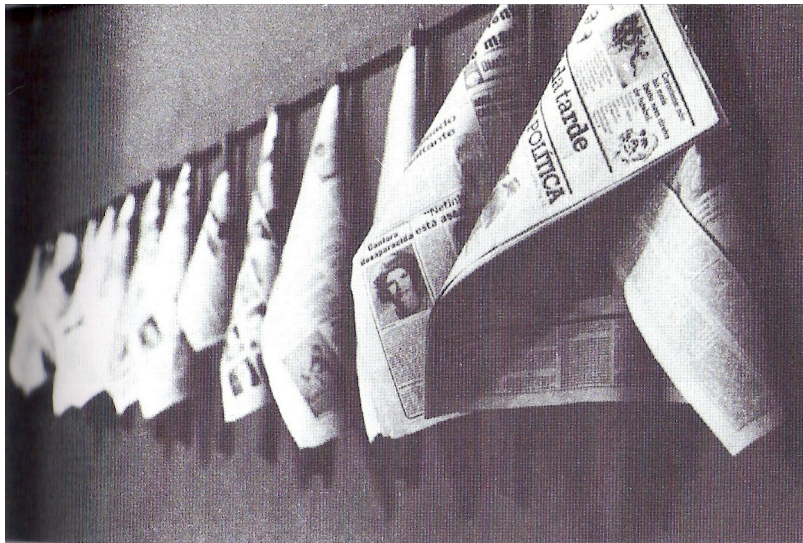




series of tapes recording people in public places in Mexico, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, and the United States. That same year, he produced another project that foregrounded issues of cultural translation that were implicit in *Markets, Streets, and Stations*. For TV/27 Feb/1 PM, he asked eight artists to videotape one hour of commercial television broadcast in his or her country on February 27th, at 1 PM. Exhibited at the Automation House in New York City, the installation consisted of eight monitors playing the one-hour broadcasts from Canada, England, France, Japan, Germany, Switzerland, the United States and Venezuela simultaneously.

By 1975, Muntadas had expanded his thematic interest in international and cultural site-specificity to include such concerns on a structural level by actually presenting a work in different locations. *HOY: Proyecto a través de Latinoamérica* was an action/installation that took place in Buenos Aires, São Paulo, Caracas, and Mexico City from November 1975 to February 1976.³⁵ Muntadas stood on one side of a darkened room with only his chest illuminated and with the sound of his breathing magnified by a microphone. On the opposite wall was large publication rack displaying local newspapers. The only thing that changed in each site was the publications and the type of gallery – in Mexico the event took place in a university gallery for example, and in Caracas at a modern art museum.

What Muntadas witnessed as he stood there in the dark could be interpreted as a tutorial in cultural translation. He remembers extremely different audience reactions.³⁶ In Buenos Aires, the visitors treated it as a “performance piece,” and seemed to just “try to understand the work.” In São Paulo, the viewers were “very attracted to the person, they put their hands on my chest, tried to breath at the same time as me,” and they ignored the newspapers. In Caracas, “they reacted as if it were a cocktail party or an opening. People kept talking and socializing and didn’t pay much attention to the work.” In Mexico, they “were attracted to the media. Someone lit it on fire. I saw newspaper

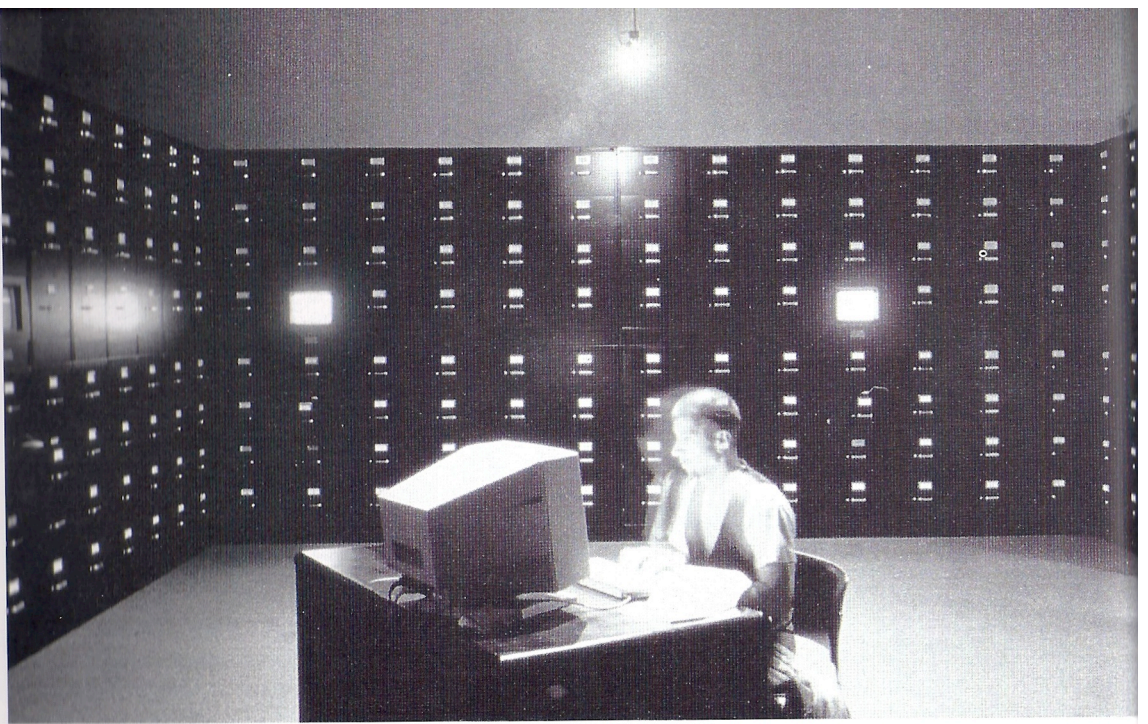


burning, then another person grabbed a fire extinguisher, it wasn't working, and then someone got a bucket of water and threw it on the fire... It was amazing. They were reacting totally to the media and this was very, very different from the other audiences' reactions to the same thing... Of course, all of this is a reduced, subjective interpretation... My interpretation."

Muntadas is part of a generation of artists that made the transition from a predominance of image and object making to a more expanded spectrum of options that includes performative, interactive, multimedia, site-specific, "time-specific"³⁷ creations that would morph and transform with each presentation. Considering Muntadas' career – comprising scores of projects, installed in sometimes a dozen sites – it is not coincidental that he has now chosen to foreground "translation," which could be said to be a foundation of his entire body of work.

TVE: Primer Intento

However much Muntadas's work may seem to be characterized by social rather than the personal concerns, any creative endeavor is, in a sense, a self-portrait of its maker. The origins of another major piece of his, *The File Room*, lay in the artist's personal experience, and it actually contains an autobiographical reference.³⁸ For several years Muntadas worked on a videotape dealing with the history of Spanish television. He was given access to the archives of Spain's only network at the time, TVE. Entitled *TVE: Primer Intento*, Muntadas described this video as a "memory piece..." "I remembered Spanish television from when I was a kid. It was part of my past and my native countries' background... It was a work dealing with forty years of Spanish history... It was made for a specific context and audience, the Spanish audience."³⁹ But when completed in 1989, the TVE would not broadcast the tape and would not explain why they would not show it. As is the case for many such broadcasts, Muntadas had initially signed a contract that gave TVE broadcast rights and



the artist rights for cultural presentations and screenings. But this contractual situation prevented the tape from ever being broadcast. It was at this point that Muntadas began thinking about doing a piece about censorship.

The File Room

The File Room installed in 1994 at the Randolph Street Gallery in Chicago⁴⁰ and simultaneously on the World Wide Web,⁴¹ is a public, open-ended, socio-logical venture that was conceived due to the artist's personal experience with censorship. Now considered one of the classic early works created for the Internet, *The File Room* is an archive for cases of censorship to which anyone can contribute. Muntadas's *TVE: Primer Intento* was one of the first cases posted on the site.⁴² *TVE: Primer Intento* is an especially appropriate point of origin for *The File Room* due to the fact that it was compiled from the archives of the Spanish television network. Similar to so much of Muntadas work, *The File Room* functions on "micro" and "macro" levels. The artist admitted that producing *The File Room* was "an exorcism" of his frustrating experience with censorship. Muntadas also described it as a reaction to the political and cultural controversies in the United States, with such cases as those of Robert Mapplethorpe and Andrea Serrano, in addition to the public debate about the Internet and freedom of speech in the public domain.⁴³

The initial physical installation consisted of a gallery filled with 138 black metal file cabinets, holding 522 drawers. Seven computer monitors were installed in the file cabinets and in the center of the room was a desk



with another computer where visitors could view the site and add censorship cases. All the terminals were linked to *The File Room* web site, which is now at www.thefileroom.org/. A significant aspect of the initial installation was the visitors' access to the Internet at a time when a relatively small percentage of the U.S. population was on line. The gallery, with black-metal-file-cabinet walls and lit by the light of computer monitors, can be seen to evoke associations with oppressive institutional memory and authority. Muntadas's interest in censorship is related to an essential aspect of his work. Censorship is a crude, blatant realization of social restraints. Such repression when public, forced, and obvious is censorship, when internal, automatic, and unconscious, it is ideology. And as the artist also commented, censorship is a "negative form of translation."⁴⁴

Although arranged according to four categories – dates, locations, grounds for censorship, and medium – not all the listings in the categories are alphabetized. Entering the web site, there is a statement that "the project does not presume the role of a library, an encyclopedia, or even a copy editor, in the traditional sense...but instead proposes alternative methods for information collection, processing and distribution, to stimulate dialogue and debate around issues of censorship and archiving." This type of database for *The File Room's* is apt, for it mirrors the simultaneously organized yet chaotic, public yet personal character of the Internet. This is one of the elements that makes *The File Room* such an effective piece. That its theme is censorship is appropriate considering the mythologies and realities of the Net, which has

been seen both as a vehicle for individual freedom of expression and an instrument for commercial and governmental control. *The File Room* serves as a lens, clarifying issues related to paradigms of the modern era, such as individual liberty, freedom of speech, internationalism, the mass media, and information and communication technologies.

The Translator

The peripheral or invisible element, which has characterizes so much of Muntadas's work, took human form in 1994. At a month-long workshop proposed by Muntadas in San Sebastian, twenty-five artists, writers, activists, art historians, anthropologists, and sociologists from different countries gathered to investigate urban interventions.⁴⁵ Muntadas followed the discussion in the three languages of the workshop: Spanish, French and English. Many of the participants were, on the other hand, not fluent in all three languages and used headphones to hear translations. During the discussions Muntadas began to notice that the participants were smiling at odd moments and there seemed to be "some misunderstanding."⁴⁶ When he put on the headphones, he realized that the translator, Juan Mari Mendizabal, "was doing an interpretation," adding commentary to aid in his work. This small moment – when Muntadas saw the potential power of this marginalized activity – was what lead him to begin to directly and self-consciously investigate an issue that had been implicit in all of his work. And with this description of the origins of *On Translation*, this essay will end.

HIRI-INTERBENTZIOAK tailerra bukatzeaz, interesgarria iruditu zitzaidan hilabete osan zehar interpretari lanetan jardun zuen Juan Mari Mendizabali bere lankidetzaz eskatzea orrialde hauek moldatzeko, hizkuntzak/ek saio guztietan sortutako hausnarketa eta eztabaidetan garrantzia handia izan baitzuen.

Hona hemen saio haietan zehar idatzi genituen hitzak, edo egun haietatik gogoratzen ditugunak.

Al finalizar **INTERVENCIONES URBANAS** me pareció interesante pedirle a Juan Mari Mendizabal, traductor a lo largo de todo el mes, la colaboración para decidir estas páginas, dada la importancia del lenguaje (s) a nivel de reflexión y discusión durante todas las sesiones.

Estas son las palabras que anotamos o recordamos, a lo largo de esas sesiones.

Having finished the **URBAN INTERVENTIONS** workshop, I thought it interesting to ask Juan Mari Mendizabal, who had been working as a translator throughout that month, to cooperate in laying out these pages, since language (s) had played a major role during the process of reflection and discussions that took place all through the sessions.

These are the words that we wrote down at the time, or remember from the sessions.

MUNTADAS. New York, november 1994.

monumento	site
antimonumento	construcción
intervención	city planning
indoors	device
outdoors	neighborhood
permanente	community
efimero	nomad
utilidad	homeless
specific	portugués
función	alemán
institución	japonés
sponsor	change
commanditaire	état d'urgence
alternativa	racismo
interference	utopía
turismo	media
activismo	network
terrorismo	frame
surveillance	proyecto
control	materiales
private space	escala
suburbia	imagen
espacio protegido	colaboración
appropriation	público
gentrification	populismo
misérabilisme	realización
deplacement	mass media
quartiers desafectés	manipulación
deal with	concern
crítica	permisos
nuance	euskara
espacio público	ras-le-bol
projection	traducción

Notes

1. To give one obvious example, this is one way to interpret Guy Debord's assessment of post-WW II culture, see *Society of the Spectacle*. Detroit: Black and Red, 1983. A book I know only in an English translation of the original French: Guy Debord, *La Société du spectacle*. Paris, Buchet/Chastel, 1967.
2. See Manuel Castells', *The Rise of the Network Society*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, 1996. Uncannily, as I was writing this essay and making reference to Castells' work in relation to Muntadas', the two were having a public discussion in Spain on issues of translation, globalization and the Internet. I was informed of the following discussion after I had written this text: Antoni Muntadas and Manuel Castells, "Cultura i societat del coneixement: present i perspectives de futur," which took place in the context of *Cultura XXI: Nova Economia? Nova Societat?*, Institut de Cultura: Debats Culturals Palau de La Virreina, Barcelona, April 10, 2002.
3. Author interview with the artist, February 23, 2002.
4. Examining the etymology of "translation" reveals its earliest documented meanings from the 14th century include: "transference; removal, or conveyance from one person, place or condition to another," and "to change in form, appearance or substance, to transmute," as well as the meaning "...turning from one language into another." See *The Oxford English Dictionary*, second edition, prepared by J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, vol. 18. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989, 109-110. Such etymological origins evoke the historical, interactive, transformational, and broad cultural associations that are in keeping with Muntadas' project.
5. Fredric Jameson's *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a socially symbolic art*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1981, influenced my concept of this term. When reviewing Jameson's description of "political unconscious" for these notes, I discovered that he not only defines this in terms of "the repressed" and "the ideological" (which is what I chose to remember) but he also states on the first page that "texts come before us as the always-already-read; we apprehend them through sedimented layers of previous interpretations," see pages 20, 12, and 9 respectively. I had forgotten that Jameson's definition of "political unconscious" also includes an emphasis on interpretation, or what Muntadas would describe as translation.
6. I also define this term in the "Introduction" of my forthcoming book, *The Lens of Culture: Art, Money, Politics, Activism, The Internet, and Everyday Life*. In my first book, *Believing of Seeing: Creating the Culture of Art* (New York: Penguin, USA, 1995), which was written primarily in the late 1980s, I used the term "artist producer," but in the 1990s found I had changed the term to the more broad-based cultural producer. "Cultural producer" is the term I choose to use to describe an engaged contributor to society, which is similar to many other such terms, such as cultural worker. Cornel West refers to "cultural worker" in his essay "The New Cultural Politics of Difference" in *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Culture*, ed. Russell Ferguson, Martha Gever, Tinh T. Mihn-ha, and Cornel West. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press and the New Museum, 1990, 19-36.
7. By modernity, I am referring to the past two hundred years, and the period when the modern, liberal, democratic, capitalist state consolidated. Other configurations of the modern era include art for art sake and the museum.
8. The original phrase in French is "Les mots et les choses." See Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses; une archéologie des sciences humaines*. Paris: Gallimard, 1966, and Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences, The order of things: an archaeology of the human sciences*, translated from the French, *Mots et les choses*. London: Tavistock Publications, 1970 (first US publication, New York: Pantheon Books, 1971).
9. Jill Lepore, for example, discussed the way a single French dialect came to be favored by printers and that became the national standard in France in her lecture based on her book *A is for American* on February 26, 2002 at the US Library of Congress, which was broadcast on the US television channel, C-span 2. See Jill Lepore, *A is for American: Letters and other Characters in the Newly United States*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002.
10. After the revolution, many desired the development of a US language. Among such proponents was Noah Webster who was supported by such figures as Benjamin Franklin. Webster became a proponent of a US version of English, with spellings different from the mother tongue. Such an attempt failed and only a small number of Webster's US spellings survive, such as "favor" instead of the British "favour." Despite this failure he did leave a linguistic legacy, Webster's, the standard US dictionary. See Lepore lecture (note 9).

Language may contribute to a sense of nationhood, but the US exemplifies the fact that there are, of course, other elements the engender cultural differences and defined cultural identities. This is the complex and potentially infinite terrain that Muntadas explores in *On Translation*.

11. "A Short History of Telecommunications," www.francetelecom.com/vanglais/apropos/grp-histt.htm (May 10, 2002).

12. Constituted in 1950, The European Union has gained prominence during the past decade, with such enhancements as the adoption to the Euro as the standard currency:

"The process of European integration was launched on 9 May 1950 when France officially proposed to create 'the first concrete foundation of a European federation.'" Six countries (Belgium, Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands) joined from the very beginning. Today, after four waves of accessions. 1973: Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom; 1981: Greece; 1986: Spain and Portugal; 1995: Austria, Finland and Sweden, the European Union has fifteen Member States and is preparing for the accession of thirteen eastern and southern European countries." See *Europa*, the official European Union web site, <http://europa.eu.int/abc-en.htm>. May 12, 2002.

Adoption of Euro was completed and national banknotes and coins were withdrawn from use on February 28, 2002; see <http://europa.eu.int/euro/html/rubrique-cadres.html?pag=calendriers.html|lang=5|chap=10>

13. The sites were as follows: Museum voor Sierkunst, Ghent, Belgium; Teatro Etairajas Makedonikon Spoudon, Thessaloniki, Greece; Kobenhavn Hovenbildiothek, Copenhagen, Denmark; Mairie de Calais, Calais, France; and Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Kunst, Frankfurt, Germany.

For a survey of the installations to 1999, see "Work" in *Muntadas: Media, Architecture, Installations*, a CD ROM, or *Interom* (CD with link to Internet) directed by Ann Marie Duguet and Muntadas, an archive series. Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, number 1, 1999 www.univ-paris.fr/aharchive.

14. Interview with the artist, May 11, 2002.

15. Interview with the artist, May 11, 2002.

16. Muntadas asked each of his "translators" to display their notes for their process next to Muntadas's original notes, so that the viewers to the exhibition could compare and better understand these interpretations.

17. The entire video archive will eventually be available for viewing at a public cultural institution.

18. Interview with the artist, April 29, 2002.

19. Josephine Bosma "A De-cafeinated Experience (of Net.Art): Interview with Antonio Muntadas," *Telepolis: Magazin der Netzkultur*, July 12, 1999, www.heise.de/tp/english/inhalt/sa/6552/1.html, April 27, 2002.

20. *Exposición* was installed at the Galería Fernando Vijande, Madrid, from September 23 to October 19, 1985. *Exhibition* was installed at Exit Art, New York, from May 1 to 31, 1987.

21. This is the argument of my book, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1998.

22. See the author's *The Power of Display* (note 20) for this history.

23. For texts that deal with this history see, for example, the author's *The Power of Display* (note 20), as well as Bruce Altshuler's *The Avant-garde in Exhibition: New Art in the 20th Century*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994, and Lewis Kacher's *Displaying the Marvelous: Marcel Duchamp, Salvador Dali, and Surrealist Exhibition Installations* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2001).

24. The exhibition was held from March 26 to April 27, 1969. See Harald Szeeman, *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form: Works-Concepts-Processes-Situations-Information; Wenn Attituden Form Werden: Werke-Konzepte-Prozesse-Situationen-Information; Quand les attitudes deviennent forme: Œuvres-concepts-processus-situations-information; Quando le attitudini diventano forma: opere-concetti-processi-situazioni-infomacione*, London: Kunsthalle, Berne, 1969.

25. *Information* was held from July 2 to September 10, 1970. See Kynaston L. McShine, *Information* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1970).

26. This statement did not have a title, and Muntadas refers to it as a "declaration of intention." The following is an excerpt: "Situation on April 1st, 1971, The painting itself achieves its end. Particular and general reasons make me firmly believe so... The passiveness of the painting as object – the necessity of participation on the part of the

public... Painting as a consumption element (after the ice box, TV set, car...) Necessity of art to accomplish education labor – active....” *Muntadas*, Galería Vandres, 1971, n.p.

27. These “Experiencias Subsensoriales” took place primarily in Galería Vandres, Madrid in 1971. *Muntadas* also began working in the United States in 1971 as well and commented in regard to his producing actions and documenting them in super-8 film and video: “When I arrived in New York, I was surprised to see so many people working in the same direction.” Interview with the artist, May 11, 2002.
28. Interview with the artist, May 20, 2002.
29. *Muntadas: Media, Architecture, Installations* (note 13).
30. A forty-minute video was produced, *Experiencia colectiva nº 3 (olfato, gusto, tacto)*, 1971.
31. The statements by the artist cited in this paragraph are taken from a May 20, 2002 interview. Francisco Franco ruled Spain from 1939 until his death in 1975.
32. For a clip of this, see *Muntadas: Media, Architecture, Installations* (note 13).
33. The statements by the artist cited in this paragraph are taken from May 11 and May 20, 2002 interviews. For some documentation of this group’s activities, see *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin, 1950s-1980s*, project directors, Luis Camnitzer, Jane Farver, and Rachael Weiss (New York: Queens Museum of Art, 1999), 174 and 248.
34. Most of the members continued creating individual work in addition to the Grup de Treball projects, as was the case with *Muntadas*. Interview with the artist, May 11, 2002.
35. *HOY: Proyecto a través de Latinoamérica* – the artist always publishes this title in Spanish, it should not be translated into other languages – was presented at the following sites: CAYC Centro de Arte y Comunicación, Buenos Aires, Argentina, November 14, 1975; Museu de Arte Contemporânea da Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil, December 13, 1975; Museo de arte Contemporáneo, Caracas, Venezuela, January 25, 1976; and Museo de Artes y Ciencias de la Universidad, México City, Mexico, February 27, 1976. *Muntadas* consciously tries to use titles that are in different languages to contextualize the work, interview with the artist, May 20, 2002.
36. The statements by the artist cited in this paragraph are taken from a May 11, 2002 interview.
37. “Time-specific” is *Muntadas*’ term, which he described as work produced as “a time-specific reaction,” often related to “activist and political work,” where there is an “urgency” in terms of issues that people need to address. He considers the Grup de Treball projects time-specific work. Interview with the artist, May 20, 2002.
38. Although this autobiographical aspect has been present throughout *Muntadas*’s work, it was only in 1996 with his video installation *The Nap/La Siesta/Dutje* produced for the Filmuseum in Amsterdam that he addressed this issue directly. In the tape the subtitles state: “all works of art are always autobiographical.” The work which is discussed in this section and is “autobiographically” referenced in *The File Room, TVE: Primo Intento*, foreshadows *Muntadas*’ explicit acknowledgement of the autobiographical element of his working process in 1996.
39. Interview with the artist. February 23, 2002.
40. The Installation at the Randolph Street Gallery in Chicago ran from May 21 to September 4, 1994. The gallery was in Chicago’s Cultural Center, which was the city’s public library before it became a municipal exhibition facility. *The File Room* has since been installed in other venues.
41. See www.thefileroom.org/
42. The case of *TVE: Primer Intento* can be found in the following areas of *The File Room*: Date: 1985 - 1995; Location: Europe; Subject: Political/Economic/Social Opinion; Medium: Television, Film/Video, see *The File Room* (note 40).
43. Interview with artist, May 20, 2002.
44. Confirmation of previous discussion, email to author, May 13, 2002.
45. The workshop was titled “Urban Interventions” and was held at Arteleku: Forum de las Artes, San Sebastián in July 1994, see *Hiri-Interbentzioak: Projektuak eta Hitzaldiak; Intervenciones urbanas: proyectos y Comunicaciones; Urban Interventions: Projects and Lectures*, Arteleku, San Sebastián, 1994.
46. The statements by the artist cited in this paragraph are from April 29, 2002 interview.