

A LOVING FEEDBACK FOR "EL ENCUENTRO" AT THE END OF TRAMA,

A program of cooperation and confrontation among artists, created by Claudia Fontes.

Carlota Beltrame

First of all, I want to say that this small report-feedback will be imbued with affection and my general appreciation of TRAMA. I am sorry. Being objective is very difficult for me and, undoubtedly, in these circumstances, that would be a forced exercise. Nor will I cover the entirety of *EL ENCUENTRO*, but rather the aspects that impacted me and that my brain or my affectivity (who could ever tell the difference) rescued from the accumulation of information and events concentrated during those intense ten days in October-November 2005 in CABA.

First thing: I delayed presenting this report because I was busy with my doctoral thesis, which, fortunately, I have already finished and submitted. In it, the citations and references to TRAMA's activities are numerous, but the most important thing is having realized how much I was able to learn about current Argentine art during the five years of its development. In a milieu as small as mine, this has constituted an enormous professional advantage, and I am grateful for it.

Regarding *El Encuentro*, there is a phrase, a question, an image, a conclusion, and a concept that have remained in my head. They are all related to each other, and I believe I will give them priority in the development of this feedback. Let us see:

1. **The phrase:** "We are in a cultural desert," by Angelika Heckl.
2. **The question:** "Why do you say you are in a cultural desert?" by Claudia Fontes.
3. **The image:** Ramiro Garavito fearfully reading his paper while Justo Pastor Mellado read the encounter's program, downplaying with his attitude everything Ramiro might say.
4. **The conclusion:** If a community does not ask for the production and development of current art, there is no reason to strive for it.
5. **The concept:** That which Tulio expressed last Sunday at the *Hotel Colonial San Telmo* when he said that all our initiatives are carried out out of pure love.

I admit that the first phrase, just as we heard it, sounds quite unfortunate. However, my opinion is that Angelika was not referring to the non-existence of any other cultural phenomenon (all human activities are), least of all in countries like Bolivia where one of its main riches is its popular

culture, so much so that it must be considered a capital asset¹. What Angelika was referring to are the institutional obstacles faced by the processes of production, distribution, and consumption of contemporary works of art. Consequently, that assertion must be understood only in that context.

Claudia's question was, in any case, a wake-up call intended to clear things up, an objective that, I suppose, was not fully achieved. It doesn't matter; such a question is not far-fetched, but the image of Ramiro² reading next to Justo³, who was paying him no attention, made me think that there are realities that we not only cannot understand but that we do not want to understand. Therefore, issuing any kind of judgment from our own horizon would do nothing but muddle the matter.

This fact caught my attention and left me thinking because I believe I can approach the problem due to my own personal experience. I mean that having lived and continuing to live in a small environment that is adverse to the introduction of novelties, an attempt that is usually paid for with exclusion, I do not believe the effort to create a scene (a "little scene," if you will) of contemporary art is trivial. For me, Angelika Heckl's desert is the same as that of the teacher of *Shunko*, in which he planted trees every year to the surprise of his students, who watched without understanding as most of the little trees died under the scorching sun of Santiago del Estero. But there would be one that would prosper and grow lushly due to the careful loveliness of Washington Ábalos.

Indeed, here we touch upon the examples linked to love, "the power of love" to which Angelika made mention when she described her encounter with *El Matadero* and her concept of expanded art practices in whose motivation Eros was once again present. Seeing things this way, I do not believe that in Bolivia the crazy effort of trying to build an artistic scene arising from the love for one's own practice and the need to find accomplices is far-fetched. To suggest that if there are only about fifty artists in that country, the effort to increase that number will be a forced effort, seems a bit selfish to me because... do we not, in our contexts of origin and with our eccentric practices, respond to the same call? Furthermore: did not the artists in the Buenos Aires of the beginning of the last century begin this way, fighting to found an academy and a museum? Here in Tucumán, that struggle was led by the university itself (UNT), and they had to ask the State to lend part of its collection to exhibit it in our newly created Museo Provincial de Bellas Artes, because there were almost no artists here. In my view, it does not matter at which point of the circuit of production, distribution, and consumption the arduous process of inventing a scene for any type of artistic practice begins. It is only necessary to take the first step. Nor do I agree with the argument that in a

¹ While writing this, I have in mind my childhood in Tartagal (Argentina) and Yacuiba (Bolivia), but above all the inauguration ceremony of Evo Morales as president, in which Bolivian cultural richness was proudly displayed, perhaps for the first time in centuries.

² Ramiro Garavito, from Bolivia.

³ Justo Pastor Mellado, from Chile.

country as poor as Bolivia, the pretension of being a contemporary artist is absurd, for all processes of growth are complex, unequal, and combined. That is why the pretension of establishing priorities in the manner of a pyramid, at whose base would be health and education, for example, and higher up the productions of what we call “high” culture, including contemporary art with its sophisticated languages, is erroneous. People are a whole that needs cultural diversity, and that is also a right of the poor.

Although some artists are lucky enough to develop their work in the center, our provincial scenes are characterized by working on the fissures of the system that we visualize more clearly because they are constructed by their protagonists. Each of them possesses different nuances according to each context, but the love is the same, even if the object of desire is more elusive for some than for others.

Thank you very much.