

immigrants were calmly shut in the hold, a little stifled by the heat, but they had fresh water, playing cards, and sold each other watches. But the guilty complex that Spanish society has for the way we are treating our Moroccan neighbors, this diabolical machinery and the desire to throw out these immigrants all this was concentrated in Santiago Sierra's piece. So you see that I exploit artists and make them work very very hard. Santiago Sierra participated at the same time in another exhibition. *Trans Sexual Express Barcelona 2001*. This show dealt with sex, which is to say power, because sexual relations have much to do with love, but also with one person's power over another. Santiago did an action here in which he kept a woman locked up for three hours a day for 15 000 pesetas. The woman had her ankle tied with ropes that crossed the exhibition space and yoked her to the institutional architecture. *Trans Sexual Express* explored relations of power distribution, something that is also part of curatorial practice. The curator sees herself as someone with authority, with decision-making power, but is also subjected to the powers who often want to use her not as an autonomous professional with her own principles, but as a puppet to carry out their own political designs. Faithfulness to her own convictions, love towards the public that is going to see the exhibition, and respect for and critical questioning of political goals must go hand in hand with the curator's theoretical, intellectual and artistic goals to create an event which will be satisfactory for all parties concerned, though never entirely so. I do not judge the biennials I have done in terms their success but rather in terms of what I have learned. In each of them there is a temporary, questioned definition of the role that a curator and specifically a female curator can and must play in the global contemporary art scene. Thank you.

HELL IS ELSEWHERE

Anda Rottenberg

There is no much space for intimacy left in the contemporary world. Different media intrude constantly into personal affairs of people. They examine their private life including sexual behaviors and preferences; intrude into their most secret habits and register their emotions. While sipping whisky on comfortable sofas we can witness any kind of sexual perversion, observe the process of giving birth in details, watch people dying till the moment of their last sigh. All these are available on request by pushing but regular peep show, for the latter became too obvious as soon as we could see naked human bodies everywhere- from ordinary newspapers to posted commercials and glossy magazines.

One could say no taboo exists in this field anymore. Especially in art. There is, however, a noticeable difference between the two-dimensional message produced by the media and considered as "artificial" and the three-dimensional, fleshy reality identified with life and

known as “live”. The “live” transmission, when done from a real place and showing a real activity, albeit attracting big number of viewers, is still not easily comprehended. The strong division between fiction and reality mark the borderline of the taboo values. There is a constant public objection against revealing the part of social life which is usually left behind the closed door- be it the process of slaughtering animals, cleaning the body in public baths or exposing any kind of human disability or sickness. The notion of esthetics, however large nowadays, is still closed for uncompleted, exploited, old human bodies or to the brutal procedures of slaughter while thousands of people are very keen to watch the procedure of the death sentence execution provided by the USA penalty authorities.

There is another common concern, or-to put it better- a superstition that regards the terms of gender identity, the most obvious recognition of the difference between masculine and feminine is given by a brief look at the nude body. The so-called second-and third-rate distinguishing gender features (like breasts, penis, beard, and vagina) give immediate evidence of a person’s sex. Therefore, it becomes very easy to put on artificial sex features, to intrude and examine that part of the world which used to be inaccessible to the opposite sex. Thus, it occurs that even the naked body may serve as a costume in the same way as, in the past, masks and different dresses used to do. Katarzyna Kozyra proved it by entering freely the man’s Turkish bath in Budapest. She transformed her female body into the male’s by applying additional hair onto her chest and the average size artificial penis.

The procedure of performing someone of the opposite sex (as well as someone else in general) is neither new nor extraordinary. The human kind deals with it as long as civilization exists. Almost any shamanistic practice used to include acts of “incorporation” with the purpose of performing fetish –animals, gods, spirits or different “animals”. And that meant becoming those performed characters for the period of acting. What was forbidden- and impossible- in the course of a current life, became possible during special ceremonies. Here in Mexico everybody knows the terrifying history of the chief of Culhuacan- Coxcox’s daughter given to the Aztecs to be transformed into a goddess and being afterwards presented to her father as a goddess’s character by a dancer wearing the royal girl’s skin taken off in the process of sacrifice. The Culhuacan tribe did not understand the role of sacrifice in the process of transforming people into gods in the Aztec’s culture. The event ended up with the slaughter of Aztecs done by the furious Coxcox tribe. Much bigger slaughters were done afterwards by Cortes’ troops during the process of Christianization in Mexico. In the name of God, a lot of blood has been poured out in the course of the human history and we still expect it floating down in the future. There are many “if”-s and “why”-s about all of that. For example - there might not have been any conflict between Aztecs and Culhuacan tribes if the process of transfiguration into goddess had been explained clearly- before the action.

There might not have been the religious war if the respect for another kind of belief had existed in the world. Here we come to utopias. For behind the feature of the belief, many different human sins are hidden.

Love of power- as Ery Camara once stated- performs the main role. And love of gold, which goes together with the power, or at least supports it. Arrogance. Prejudice. Intolerance. Curiosity. And the everlasting temptation of crossing the forbidden line, tasting the forbidden fruit, touching the taboo.

We are not Gods, hélas. But still- what artists are doing by letting them follow their own curiosity for the common taboo is to be placed into brackets of quotation from the reality. *Ars longa vita brevis*. The Latin sentence is very cruel, but it reflects truth, which I do not need to develop in front of this audience. Let me show two examples of Christmas greetings that I received a few weeks ago. No one can prevent artists of reacting to the current reality. But they are innocent, they serve as witnesses and they not do any harm to the society –as well all know. Why, then, do they serve as target for acts of intolerance, and even a true hate, from the members of their own societies, including all sorts of officials and functionaries? Isn't it that they reveal the astonishing emptiness of customs, habits and beliefs – once full of notions and values that have been transformed into superficial rules of common behavior, hypostasis of virtues, and beliefs withdrawn off of their original religious substances.

And finally, indicate the unwrapped social hypocrisy. There are some domains – different countries, which are still covered by a special preservation, so to speak. The habits and superstitions are gathered there like wild animals in Zoos or human beings in reservations located aside of the areas once owned. Nobody is against the mass production of tribal or/and religious kitsch to supply the tourists' market. The cheap plaster figures of bleeding Christ, glittering faces of Madonnas in the *mandorlas* of plastic flowers (sometimes of great beauty), terribly executed portraits of the Pope "*benedicente*" as well as long gallery of ugly saints are welcomed in the Christian world as long as they're not placed in the museum, gallery, or in the Muslim world. What could easily serve for the public entertainment (like full size, two-dimensional figure of the Pope installed in Piazza San Marco, Venice Italy to be photographed with) – is unthinkable in the field of art without the accusation of acting against The Ten commandments. We remember the affair made by Rudi Giulliani against Chris Offili, and the almost inquisitional trial made in Poland about the Pope piece of Maurizio Cattelan. The Rosa Martinez's "Trans-sexual Express" exhibition was censored in Barcelona. Not many Years ago the art world witnessed the crusade against Robert Mapplethorp. Andres Serrano's Piss Christ was censored in the Polish art center, Warsaw. Zbigniew Libera's "Lego Auschwitz" was forbidden to be shown in the Polish Pavilion in Venice Biennial 1997. Another Polish artist's – Zofia Kulik's- exhibition was censored by the museum director (Poznan, Poland) for overexposing the male parts of some ancient sculptures in the photo works. No one can imagine some works of Shirin Neshat presented in her native Iran as well as some Chinese artist's performances done in China. Not long ago I happen to show the Chinese art catalogue to the Chinese embassy functionary. Looking at the female nude photo he said: "It must be Japanese woman". "Hell is elsewhere"- to transform J.P. Sartre sentence. In any case, the Chinese functionary did not show up at exhibition opening.

“Hell is elsewhere”. Everybody is conscious about the existence of slaughteries, but when Katarzyna Kozyra showed the video registration from the process of killing and stuffing of the horse, she was accused of cruelty against animals against animals by a group of ecologists. Everybody is conscious about the existence of disabled people, but it occurred cruel to show uncompleted naked bodies in cibachrome photos when done by artists (Kozyra, Althamer and others). We may quote many examples of similar cases. It slowly occurs that artists (and curators who work with them) are the biggest enemies of the humanity. The only ones to be punished for what they do. The rest is silence.

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THE

CURATORIAL

BURDEN

Olu Oguibe

In the second half of the 20th century, a new figure emerged in the ranks of influential culture brokers, who would effectively usurp the preeminent position of the critic and art historian in the discourse of contemporary art. The figure was the curator or exhibitions’ director or commissioner. Through the 1970s to the 1990s, as academics and critics became less influential in deciding the fate of art careers especially in the culture metropolis, the curator increasingly began to define the nature and direction of taste in contemporary art, so much so that at the turn of the 21st century the curator stands as the most feared, and possibly most loathed figure in contemporary art.

Prior to the period mentioned, the curator was principally a provincial power broker with a narrow, ethnocentric as well as eccentric, frame of reference that rested on the authority of the academic qualification and specialization. The curator of contemporary art was an art historian or someone with a qualification in art, art history, or aesthetics, some who in the course of his or her training and career took special interest in one aspect of the period that they attended to, devoted time to studying work produced in a specific form or technique, like painting, drawing, or print, and often had a geographical area specialization. This specialist knowledge also condemned the curator to institutional attachment and dependency, beyond which the only other recourse was a job in the academy. By the end of the 20th century, however, the authority of the curator of contemporary art had gradually shifted its foundation from academic qualification and scholarly specialization, to entrepreneurial skills that range from a wider but shallower knowledge of the field of interest, albeit still within geographical limits, to mastery of the hip and savvy idiosyncrasies of the global culture game. Today, the curator of contemporary art has a degree in the