



Average spectators

artist: Miranda Varo
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By: Gustavo Maldonado.

" there is still a considerable distance from the viewer to approach the work of art within the space of its exhibition."



It was by obligation that I met the most important museums in Mexico City: *Bellas Artes*, that of Modern Art, *the Tamayo*, Anthropology... Although the History teacher told us at the end of her class that visiting a museum was not a task, but a discovery of the art and history of Mexico, we knew- we were not naive- that it was the opposite; indeed, it was a task because it involved a grade. It was on the weekends when my mom would go with me to the museums, because I, on my own honestly, would not have gone. I did not understand why a piece of clay was art, or why the Aztec calendar was considered an important object by anthropologists, or why the relationship between Frida Khalo and Diego Rivera was so trascendental for the history of art in Mexico.

...For the second exhibition room of the Museum of Modern Art, the only thing that mattered to me was to have a photo I was in, with a reluctant smile, along with the work that I would have liked most and the museum ticket to be able to accredit the subject. After that martyrdom, the fun began, because as a reward for having endured walking through the corridors with works of dead painters, my mother used to take me to McDonalds: sliding down the slippery slide, passing through the tunnels, getting to the top to jump like a diver into a foam pool; eating nuggets with ketchup; drinking Coca Cola until my brain froze; and the surprise toy of the happy box, that was fun!



It was at the age of 18 that I intuitively understood the function of the museum, the artist and the spectator: the museum, a space where famous artists are exposed, especially dead artists; the spectator who has to read many books to be able to "understand the work", or in any case, that the "art mediator", a person who guides in the museum and explains a little of the work and the artist to be able to enter into context. So it was at first. I don't remember at what time, nor the motivations of my curiosity, but I understood all this was more complex. I discovered over time that there are different types of museums, that there are boring ones, and even more boring ones; other interesting ones, where you can interact, and museums where no one needs to explain the works of art, because the work itself already communicates something; I also discovered that there are curators, and that like all works, there are very sensitive ones and those who do not have a bit of sensitivity and use theory as a way to protect themselves. I also understood that money and human capital are links for the flow of the art market, and that there is also corruption and personal interests; that the idea of love of art is utopian; that there are also people who make donations to museums, either to maintain a good image, or to evade taxes, or to brag with their business friends that they have the work of a *Tarahumara* artist who *intervened* his pilot helmet and who took a year to realize it; I also discovered that being an artist in this country is like any other job in Mexico: you work too much, it pays poorly, and often you end up working on other things, in Call Centers, as taxi drivers, or seeking scholarships from the government or private companies and end up devoting to everything but artistic creation (there are artists who still idealize that you can live on art, and earn money; many times it does happen, but the most, it doesn't). The above is only an outline of what is happening in the art guilds and anti-guilds in some sectors of our country. Overall, it was clear to me that the museum and/or gallery and artist coexisted in a tense cohabitation.

The spectator, I almost forgot to mention it! paradoxically, the figure that does not yet arouse the interest at all in some art circles and even in museums (as a proof, it is important to remember the recent exhibition at the *Jumex* Museum, where the viewer was cordially invited to visit the museum from the third floor to the first floor to maintain a good flow, or "underground" galleries, of an art supposedly more accessible to the public, where a work of art ranged from 5'000 to 3'0000 pesos) What is the role of the viewer in current art? It is still difficult for me to glimpse it; what I can understand today from my own experience and from what I can observe when I go to a museum and a gallery, is that there is still a considerable distance from the viewer to approach the work of art within the space of its exhibition. This distance is fostered by museums and galleries-not all- especially those for whom the viewer has an economic function, where the important thing is that the spectator buys a ticket and shares a selfie on social networks and thus generate advertising Is it essential an "educated" spectator so he/she can understand the work of art? Here, then, the following question unfolds: does the artist consider the audience that his work of art is directed to? I have heard some artists say that the spectator needs to strive in intellectual terms to be able to dialogue with his piece; artists who did not even consider, consciously or unconsciously, the existence of a spectator; there are others who deliberately create works of art with a fashion discourse so that the spectator will *like* it in its dispositive, share it and the image goes viral on social networks. There are artists who, in my opinion, do consider the viewer as a function of dialogue through the piece, without the need of a museum, of a gallery, without the need of an art mediator and for him to tell the viewer : "look, in order for you to understand why the artist made this work, you have to know Duchamp, the conceptual art and the implications of Pop Art in the United States"; artists who, through their works of art, maintain the possibility that an average spectator becomes interested and

generates the question: what is this? What does that have to do with me? What does it try to communicate to me? *Miranda Varo* is one of them.



At the moment that I am writing the text, I find myself alone in front of the piece: Choices, so through sensitivity, I will take a leap of faith: it is a work where it can be seen a representation of Donald Trump, sitting in a very kitsch pink chair, and in it, Trump, absent from facial expressions, holds a birthday cake with the candles still lit. In my immediate experience, comes to my mind the idea of the only child who wants to possess everything, all the cake for him. I must say that I was my parents' only child (at least as far as I know), and at children's parties I liked to eat cake twice, break the piñata twice, have twice as many candy, probably because of my fantasy of being the king of the party, I was definitely the prickly child who wanted everything at the right time; my tolerance for frustration was "short fuse"; I also resented other children turning off the lights on my cake even if it was from their birthday! Obviously on my birthday there was no chance that someone would help me to gently blow out the candles, my reaction would have been similar to the video that went viral in networks where a little girl pulls her sister's hair because she blew out the candles on her cake (whoever is free from guilt cast the first stone) With this, I make a bridge between my experience and what the work Choices and Donald Trump represent for the Mexican: it questions how this subject can be represented in an everyday context. would it be that on Donald Trump's birthday he also acted selfishly and with delusions of grandeur? I then enter into a dilemma: I no longer feel so distant from the representation of Donald Trump with the representation of myself on my childhood birthdays. Suddenly, and this is also due to the pastel colours of the work, I feel tenderness towards the current president of the United States about to be replaced by Joe Biden. I'd like to tell Donald Trump, right now: I feel you Bro...

The aesthetic exercise performed, is just an example of how a work of art can be approached from personal experience, supported by elements (the colors, the icon of Donald Trump, the cake, the body posture, the chair, the stroke, the background, the perspective...) that provides the work of Miranda Varo. I make a parenthesis: this is my way of approaching a work of art, it does not mean that it is the only, or the true, simply an example of how it is possible to approach a work of art without the need to know, in broad terms, the history of art in Mexico, nor asking the artist what the work means to her, nor did I have to search on the internet for a tutorial on how to perform an image analysis. With the senses, memory and a little attention is enough, then will come reflection. I must emphasize that Choices allows a more enjoyable dialogue with the spectator, it is not cryptic (maybe it refers to other works, other artists) and does not try to generate a barrier, a border with the spectator, but the work creates bridges, communication routes. What way to go? I don't know.

And if we talk about more pleasant works of art, I want to refer to Cesar Rios who, with the collaboration of Dea Lopez - who has a project called CO.MERR- sold fritangas in downtown Oaxaca at a street stall: for two days people came to ask for their "piece", in the form of Koons' puppy, or Duchamp's urinal, among other significant works of contemporary art. The interesting thing was how they used those elements and transformed them into food. At first, the people who approached the stall were their friends; then came people from outside, that is, the spectators who are not in the artistic context or in the circle of the art of those artists. As César Ríos told me, many did not know the artists, do they really need to know what the artist's motive was in relation to his exhibition? Do you need to know the profile of Dea Lopez as a curator? In the most risky of arguments, I consider that this type of "information" is usually an obstacle, a barrier between the spectator and the work of art. It is necessary to trust a little more in the sensibility of the spectator, that the artist trusts more in her/his work (during the years I have met artists who have the umbilical cord with their work, which makes them difficult to think that it is autonomous), and that the art critic has faith in the construction of the own criteria

Are more spaces really needed to spread art in Mexico? Is it required to build a museum of Gabriel Orozco and his friends in the forest of Chapultepec? Do we need to create more recognition for the work of 2020? Is there also a need for a critique based on the dialogue between the artist and the spectator? Is it necessary for the artist to charge \$100,000 for a

work of art? Will there be other alternatives, besides the creation of spaces, for the average spectators to approach art

through their aesthetic experience? These are questions for cultural management scholars, art critics, artists, patrons and all those involved in artistic practices. It is impossible for me to generate such research and give answers to such reflections. I'm just another spectator, an average spectator who doesn't see the difference between approaching a painting, a torta de chilaquiles, or a haircut.



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también checa

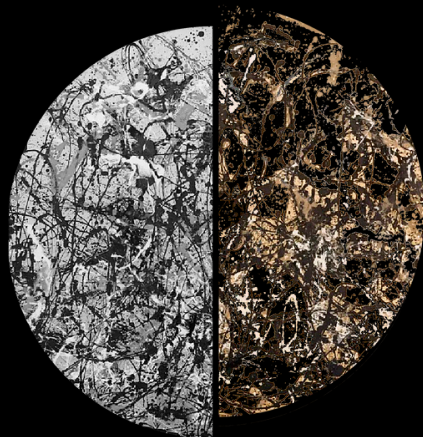
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