

## The Parasystem: Let's Play in the Woods While the Wolf Is Away

Overflows between art and politics, or how to channel indignation from the sensible.



We wanted to do a cycle of workshops but the traditional forms of education did not convince us, we lacked the other, the space to go around the bush, the field to experiment, the meeting later to drink and invent. We spent months in this trial together with Provea (Venezuelan Program of

Education and Action in Human Rights).

At that time, at the beginning of 2019, we called it Festivalito because we wanted it to be like a party to exchange knowledge. The Nelson Garrido Organization was going to lend us the house but between one thing and another it was postponed, and then the pandemic arrived and well, you know, everything went to.... on-line. However, the NGO, without knowing it, gave us something better than the house: the tumbao that we were missing, the notion of that space where there is room to be irreverent, to make mistakes, to do the other thing, where it is worth copying (because in each copy is your language) and where they challenge you to get out of your little box. And we came up with the name: The Parasystem, that place of bad fame, that marginal, peripheral space, where different people end up.

This is how El Parasistema was born, an invention of Labo Ciudadano and Provea, a cycle of practical workshops for the elaboration of creative artifacts, a space for training, experimentation and tripping between different people to make catharsis and express discomfort from plastic languages, a interstitial space between art and politics.

In July 2020 we launched the first edition of this experiment (here is a video that summarizes it). The cycle began with a class in which we elaborated on the central theme, a session that sought to stir, inspire and encourage those who participated to create. For that first edition we had Blanca Haddad, plastic artist, art therapist, anarcho-feminist, poet, a restless people with long

experience in art therapy with refugees. Blanca opened the cycle of workshops with a talk entitled Catharsis, creativity and other allies in times of crisis. With that notion of catharsis, which is not eternal complaining but transformation of horror from the sensitive, we went to invent with a template of practical workshops that included poetry, lyric, rhymed octosyllables, performance, video, stencil, pamphlet and memes.

Since at Labo we defend joy and partying, and we don't miss out on a few beers after any meeting -this is not only because of the party but because good ideas and connections usually come up in those beers- we include within the cycle some spaces that we call The campfire, we met there after class, to meet, exchange, go off the rails and enjoy. In the midst of the pandemic and the radicalization of the quarantine, there was a real and human exchange despite the Zoom.

Although we miss meeting in person, the online format opened other doors for us: people from all over had the chance to meet in the cloud, there were connections between people and projects, threads that were woven from Maracaibo, San Carlos, Barquisimeto, Caracas, Barcelona. , Valencia, Maracay, Los Teques, San Felipe, Mérida, Guatire, Puerto Ordaz, Lima, Bogotá, Buenos Aires, Seville, Miami, Chiapas, Medellín, Cuernavaca, Quito, Madrid, Panama City and many other places.

From this first edition a community remained, which we affectionately call Los Chinos (because of the beers we would have had at the nearest Chinese restaurant after each workshop), where we continue to exchange and where collaborations and joint inventions have come from. An example: the collaboration made by the poet and cloak-and-dagger defender of the tenth, Carlos Calderón, for the Let's Break the Silence articulation: transform the manifesto with which we accompanied the protest of January 23, 2021 into tenths.

With this experiment we verified that sensitivity is a terrain in which we can find ourselves in diversity and delve into complex issues, something that becomes more difficult from activism that is more frontal. We think that The Parasystem, as a meeting and training strategy, is an ideal

device to explore resilience in an innovative, different and disruptive way. It is also a virtual connection prototype that generates online-offline interactions that alternate according to the needs of those who participate.

In the first edition, we saw the potential of this device to catalyze exchange processes that connect territories, diasporas, artists and activists. We expand the contact surface, we connect with people who are moved but perhaps not yet mobilized, we share tools to trigger conversations, creative processes and other types of mobilization and advance in our constant search: that art "contaminates" the spaces of activism, and vice versa.

On April 13, 2021 we began a second cycle, this time lasting a whole month, which was called Mecha viva: aesthetic experiments to confront violence. The central theme of this edition was structural violence, we began with a stirring talk on art and politics, entitled It is not what it seems: Artistic experimentations in a political key by Renato Bermúdez Dini, researcher and university professor on issues related to art, contemporary, artistic activism and visual culture in Latin America. Renato is a member of the editorial committee of the magazine Klastos, Cultural Research and Criticism. In this edition we got rid of the idea of generating products in a short time and rather we seek to trigger processes, like someone who drops some seeds in fertile soil and then lets nature do its thing. And thus, several activation processes have arisen, which we will tell you about in more detail later: the (rather situationist) Frisbee games in our university mired in apathy, the emergence of the cardboard book publisher Mecha Viva Cartonera, the Kuir group with K, artistic activism taking life and showing solidarity with the movement in Cuba.

We are already planning future editions with essential topics to imagine other possible futures, from other places. Because El Parasistema, as its name suggests, is a space to explore the B side of things, the other side, a place to express oneself from alternative and sensitive languages (performance, graffiti, lyricism...). It is also a space from which we can speak to each other from the cracks, from the nuances between the poles.

Seymar Liscano. Activist and connector of people and ideas at Labo Ciudadano since May 2017. She co-designs and co-produces the regular activities of the Laboratory and its development as a space for reflection, training and implementation of different forms of protest and citizen proposals. A fan of Gego's work and a radical fundamentalist only when it comes to chocolate.