

La ciudad radiante

Centre Cultural Bancaixa, Valencia
4 de junio – 31 de agosto 2003

The City as Interface of Art

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1000 Platitudes, 2003

Installation with 6 colour photographs / variable size / and a documentary DVD



Over the last century, the city has undergone a radical evolution, bringing great changes in its characteristics and its identity. A very similar process has taken place in art, for art has always been strongly attracted by the city. Described in its most modern details by the Impressionists, exalted and abstracted by the historical avant-garde, the city has slowly become an integral part not just of a whole aesthetics but also of an artistic practice, which in the system of the city and its insatiable evolution finds an element that is no longer simply to be represented, but to be reconstructed in an artistic dimension. Reinventing the city, rethinking it, redesigning it, reconstructing it, at least on an artistic plane, makes it possible to propose a more diversified identity than the one modified by the accelerated, homogenizing growth of the city. [...]

The city as grand theatre of action, as immense exhibition space, as an endless source of inspiration for the expression of new forms and new concepts. In opposition to the global city, therefore, we find the city as the stage for a new artistic scene independent of traditional structures, as museums or art centres that move in accordance with globalizing dynamics. The city becomes an alternative to the museum, it becomes the place of the site-specific work, where the artist feels free to utilize and bring to life parts of the city by contextualizing them as exhibition space. We have probably already gone beyond the need to follow the process of contextualization. The city is already in itself a suitable context for the creation and display of art.

[...] The city is a great web of lives and people. Exchanges, clashes and fusions are fundamental laws that govern the city at its various levels. And so the city is also the terrain of a series of relational attitudes. The possibility of remodelling and transforming the landscape of the city through the direct intervention of its people is beginning to emerge. In this connection it is worth looking at the work of Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, who

has coined the term 'relational architecture' for interactive interventions on a grand scale that transform large buildings through the help of technological interfaces. In his early works the Mexican-Canadian artist used elements that change the urban panorama radically, even if only temporarily. In *Vectorial Elevation*, realized in Mexico City, Lozano-Hemmer constructed a gigantic luminous sculpture visible from a distance of 15 kilometres and modifiable via Internet by anyone who logged on to a site specially created for the occasion. In his work there is also a harsh criticism of the structure of the city, whose skyscrapers introduce a strong vertical differentiation of the population. Such works as *Body Movies*, *Relational Architecture #6* in Rotterdam, take on a monumental scale, holding a direct dialogue with the city precisely because of their size. Interactivity is fundamental in the work of Lozano-Hemmer and this is also one of the characteristics of metropolitan art. An organizer of events and conferences, the artist also bases his work on a social and organizational platform in order to augment the exchange of communication within the city. [...] Many interventions by artists and architects in recent years have taken an approach that is aimed at devising better solutions for the city. In this way the alliance between art and society is also being turned into a search for a new space in which to create and see art.