

Juan Castillo

*Campo de luz*

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Juan Castillo's piece *Campo de luz* forms part of the production and research that this artist has been developing for a number of years both in Chile and beyond. This work reflects from the perspective of contemporary art on the ways people build their daily existence, in which inherited habits intersect with the narratives that constitute their imaginaries.

*Campo de luz* revolves around a documentary in which a close-up of the face of an emigrant betrays his feeling of not belonging to the place where he lives. That foreignness is key to the concept of *dislocación*, and thus the documentary suggests the sense of *out of placeness* referred to by the name of the overall project of which it forms part. The piece itself consists essentially of two actions. First, a truck on whose rear section the documentary is projected drives around the city of Santiago. The footage shot of that first action is then aired on Señal 3 La Victoria, the television station produced by the community of La Victoria, thus inviting viewers to witness the debates around the *Dislocación* project. Second, a "light field" intervention is carried out on the offices of Señal 3, allowing local residents to write their ideas.

What is the nature of the relationship between the people who live in La Victoria and Señal 3, which has, for the term of one month, become a site of "contemporary art"? Is it, perhaps, a fortuitous crossing of contemporary art and a neighborhood whose inhabitants—as is demonstrated by the research Juan Castillo did for his work *Geometría y misterio del barrio* exhibited at Metropolitana gallery in 2001—are largely moved by the desire to "get out"? In

that earlier piece, Castillo lived amid the local inhabitants for several months, asking them about their dreams. The result challenges, among other things, the notion that people often “find themselves” in the simplicity of daily life. Is art a false exit for locals who aspire to enter into the contemporary or, rather, a false entrance for curious visitors who hope to cross the border into a supposed “periphery” where things are different?

Castillo interviews the inhabitants of La Victoria, asking them to share their vision of the *Dislocación* project. These conversations reveal that older people associate the word with the 1973 military coup—they read it in terms of violence and the memory of an involuntary “eviction.” Young people and teenagers, on the other hand, have a positive response to the word. It seems to them that this project is “dislocated” in relation to the organizations in existence in their neighborhoods.

Projects like this one entail not only producing or recovering an “alternative space” for the making and exhibiting of art, but also an attempt to critically reconstitute the relationship with exclusion itself. Campo de Luz formulates an alteration in the established codes or schemes for legitimation in art. In a certain way, the critical component of its proposal depends on a supposed “outside” in relation to which the reflexive recovery of a certain “border” is attempted.

In contemporary art practices, the concept of *circulation* has begun to displace the notion of *inscription* (just as the coordination efforts of the curator have gradually displaced the work of the historian). “Independent” exhibition spaces and circuits help to demonstrate the phenomenon of art circulation, and in that sense they dialogue with contemporary aesthetics and its problems. In times of globalization when dislocation would seem to be the rule, it is harder and harder to find art that attempts to be *critical*. This is due not only to the resounding emergence of the circulation of cultural goods, but also to consumerism, with which it is closely associated. How to resist the “democratic” availability of consumerism that puts

everything “out of place”? How to critically reflect the margins without falling into a *representation* of the periphery by which the “other side” is offered up for the symbolic consumption of a Center eager for “experiences”? What we propose is shifting emphasis from the content of art—inherent to the work of art as such and its relationship to the viewer—to the daily reality of relationships between people. This is what has been called “relational art,” a concept that, in its short history, has had more than one meaning.

Relational art attempts to recover the contingent nature of all relationships and the temporariness that is part and parcel of the empirical encounter between individuals. It is a question of artistic projects that produce relations through a set of activities and procedures and to which, therefore, temporality is implicit. In *Campo de luz*, artists and local residents who have been invited to discuss the question of *dislocación* do so by addressing the issues that concern them rather than by engaging in a pre-established form of dialogue. In this context, a young artist from La Victoria presented an art project that dialogued with Castillo’s work. On another occasion, a group of neighbors asked for permission to celebrate a birthday at Castillo’s installation in Señal 3. “The initiative taken by the locals,” the artist states, “was one of the most striking things that happened in the entire project.”