

Happening de la Participación Total
Total Participation Happening

recortes de prensa / press clippings

The order of the photos presented below does not follow the order of the press
clippings, which were stored loose inside an envelope along with a detailed written
description of *Total Participation Happening* (that is now missing document).



Actor Rodolfo Relman and theater director Jaime Jaimes
simulating a fight for the anti-happening.
The Total Happening press clipping, 1966.
Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.





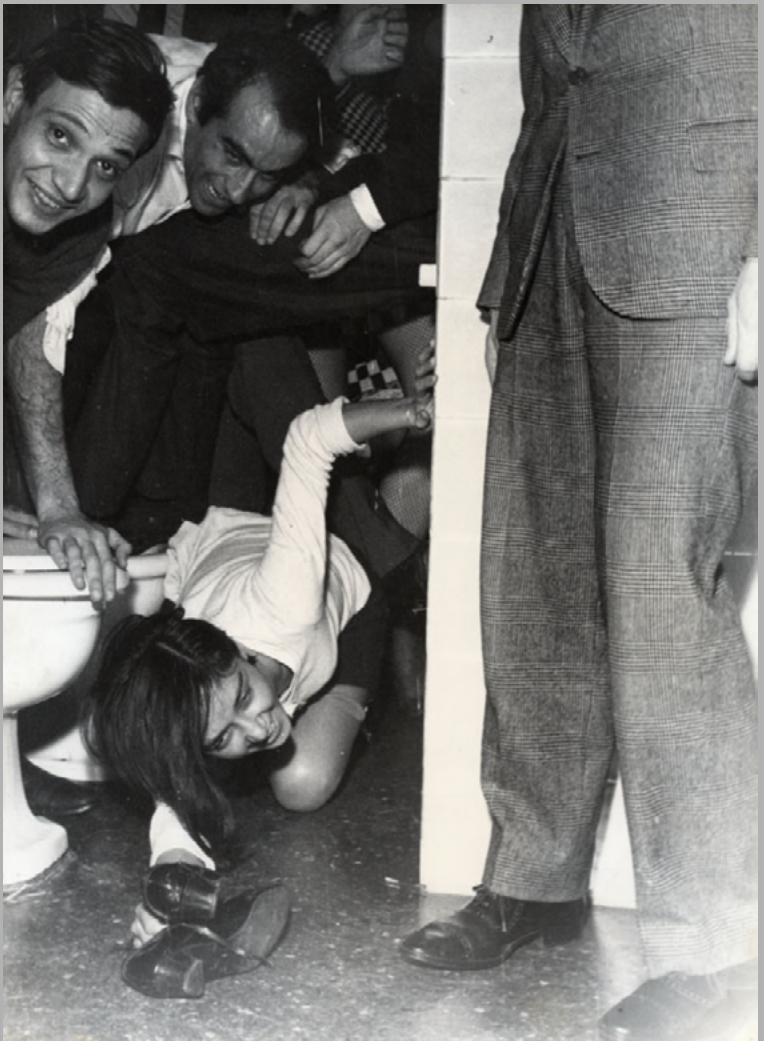
Dancer and showgirl Egle Martin being interviewed
by artist Marta Minujin.
The Total Happening press clipping, 1966.
Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.





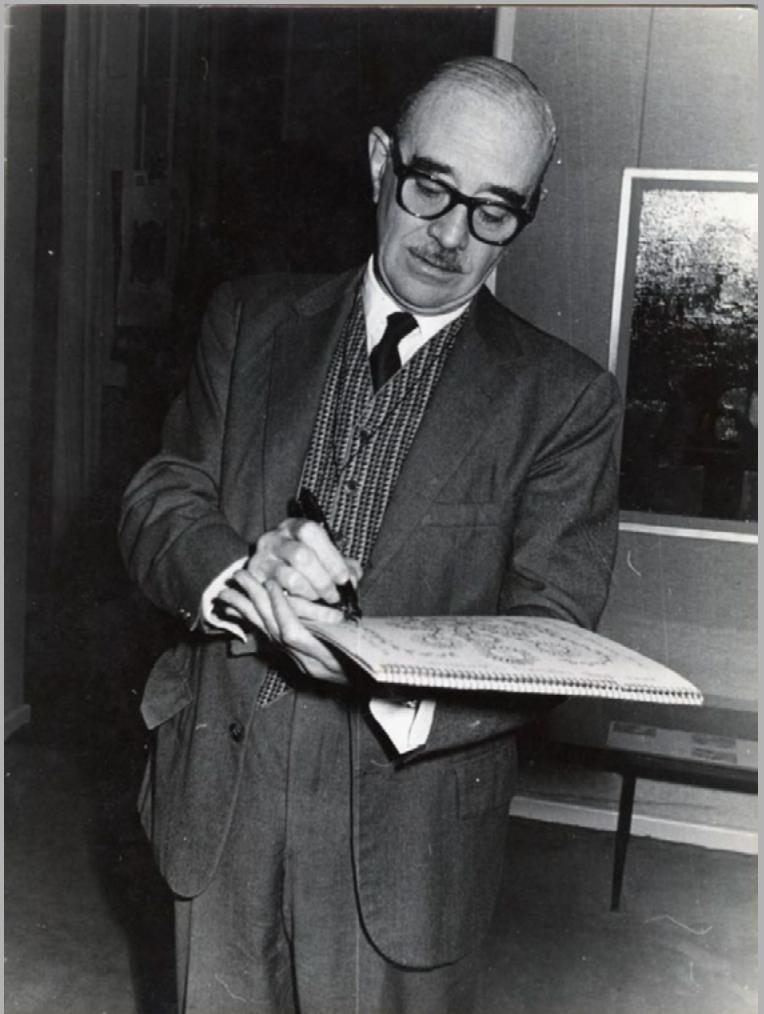
Spanish flamenco dancer Antonio Gadés presenting
flamenco choreography with Roma music.
The Total Happening press clipping, 1966.
Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.





Contemporary dancer Graciela Martínez, famous for
her dance in a bathtub, dancing outside a bathtub.
The Total Happening press clipping, 1966.
Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.





Writer and dandy Manuel "Manucho" Mujica Láinez
drawing a labyrinth.

The Total Happening press clipping, 1966.
Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.





Theorist and artist Oscar Masotta dictating a private “conference” in the ear of artist Lea Lublin. Behind them, Raúl Escari is visible.

The Total Happening press clipping, 1966.

Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.





Raúl Escari, Eduardo Costa, and Roberto Jacoby, the authors of the “Media Manifesto” receiving the public.
The Total Happening press clipping, 1966.
Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.





Actor Alberto Fernández de Rosa greeting artist
Roberto Jacoby.
The Total Happening press clipping, 1966.
Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.





Marilú Marini in the foreground doing contemporary dance together with comic actors Antonio Gasalla and Carlos Perciavalle, and hairdresser and socialite Beatriz Chomnalez.

The Total Happening press clipping, 1966.

Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.





Writer Dalmiro Sáenz, who reportedly hunted a wild boar in Patagonia, with the gallerist Susana Muzio de Sáenz Peña, the host of the anti-happening.

The Total Happening press clipping, 1966.

Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.





Choreographer Egle Martin dancing Afro-ballet with her
Afro-dance group.
The Total Happening press clipping, 1966.
Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.





Dancer Egle Martin and a member of her company
creating a choreography for the anti-happening.
The Total Happening press clipping, 1966.
Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



Reviews

Happening para un jabalí difunto

Happening for a Dead Boar

El Mundo, August 21, 1966



Edmundo E. Eichelbaum, "Happening para un Jabalí Difunto," El Mundo, August 21, 1966. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

Review. Published in *El Mundo* newspaper, Sunday, August 21, 1966. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

Dalmiro Saenz entered, this past July 30th, with an air of victory and carrying a boar he had hunted, a house on Melo Street in Vicente López. He was received by a forewarned Susana Muzzio de Sáenz, off that day from her work as an art gallery director. They had just taken the first concrete step in realizing the "happening." The stage would be that same house, the next day; the title would be *Total Participation* (conceived collectively, as dictated by the non-rules of the genre); the ringleaders, the writers Eduardo Costa and Raúl Escari, and the plastic artist Roberto Jacoby.

As is illogical, each participant in this type of show/game/communication did something on their own, independently from the others, though carried forth by the spontaneous reactions that, suddenly, made them approach what another was doing. The ringleaders pulled the subtle, invisible strings in pursuit of a study on "happenings" they are carrying out on behalf of the Di Tella Institute's Audiovisual Department.

The conclusion, "by the whole company" plus the spectators, was a meal with the boar as an unusual dish, complemented by excellent wine from its native Neuquén.

It's hard, not to mention useless, to judge a "happening". One can only try to make an approximation as to each person's participation, to try and establish to what measure they indeed participated and, following this, whether they had something to do there or not.

Manuel Mujica Láinez, for example, the art critic whose opinion has such weight in our medium, influential writer, and permanent spectator, chose ubiquitous corners to draw his known "labyrinths" in a notebook with an almost monstrous pen; he claimed that he does this in every social setting, which implies that his ability of noncommunication, of nonparticipation, is as significant in a happening as in a social gathering. Though the last depends, surely, on the type of gathering. Egle Martin, actress, dancer, and choreographer, danced African dances with her black *candombe* outfit, anticipating a show she's preparing. We can therefore say that her

acting was promotional and lacked the necessary transparency for its justification. We can make the same objection to painter and theater director Jaime Jaimes and to the actor and poet Rodolfo Relman, who performed scenes from *The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria*, a play by the Spanish Francisco Arrabal, not yet globally premiered. However, the nature of this play fits nicely into a “happening.” Marta Lynch took advantage of the night to give shape to a story inspired by what she was witnessing, which she later read; it’s a coherent endeavor for a professional writer like her, so this is also not in line with this type of performance. Antonio Gades, the talented flamenco dancer, made use of his technique to dance to songs by The Rolling Stones, The Beatles, and the occasional candombe, instructed on the spot by Egle Martin. Meanwhile, the actor Alberto Fernández de Rosa adopted the role of Adolf Hitler while strolling among the attendees, shouting orders in apocryphal German. Suddenly, he had to leave in a hurry because his daughter Valentina was about to be brought into the world. Both entered the game in goodwill and developed a burgeoning histrionic that is precisely proper of a “happening”. The notable modern dancer and choreographer Graciela Martínez, currently won over by the pop shows in which she puts her real talent on display, also participated in vital ways. She danced on top of many of the attendees: Martín Lasalle (the Uruguayan actor who starred in *Pickpocket*, by the French Robert Bresson); the dancers Marilú Marini (born for the “happening”) and Chela Barbosa; the hairstylist Christian; the politician Raúl Damonte Taborda, who, in turn, embodied his son, the famous cartoonist Copi (currently residing in Paris), and as such made a parody of his father that ended with a cartoon drawing of himself, made in public and in Copi’s fashion. The sociologist Juan José Sebrelli, also in attendance, formally repudiated the act: “This is entertainment for snobs; you are all frivolous,” he shouted. But he didn’t set off farther than the kitchen and reappeared to relish the boar. Oscar Masotta was giving three-minute conferences in each participant’s ear, conducting an individualization of the “happening”, thus turning it into a rumor. Marta Minujin (who coined the phrase “Art is «happening»; life is «happening»; «happening» is everything”) was one of the most brilliant participants: she recorded the attendees’ dialogues and photographed them, and shortly after gave them a copy of the picture, “To give each one his image back,” as she explained.

Arturo Sáez, the house owner, artistically grilled the boar, thus configuring the most vitally celebrated activity of the “happening.” Others (and we omit many

names for lack of space), like the model Mercedes Robirosa, the persistent humorist Divito, and the international painter Lea Lublin, acted as part of the others’ activities.

An eminent psychoanalyst, Pichon-Riviére, was invited as an observer and eventual performer. His findings have not been made public. We heard some loose phrases through which we learned that, according to him, Marta Minujín did not give back people’s images with their pictures; Oscar Masotta carried out a political conception of the “happening”; and Graciela Martínez had given loose rein to a tendency towards the dominance of others.

We think that this kind of show—to give it a name we are not at all convinced of—implies many complex things, in mixing public “performance” with “spontaneity” in subconscious expression and the simultaneous nature of actor and spectator with that of member of a random social group. It would be quite premature to gather exact determinations. It’s evident that, next to those that give themselves and participate vitally—Minujín, Masotta, Graciela Martínez, Gades, Marilú Marini, Fernández de Rosa—are those who are attracted to the snobbish fashion of the genre and its service as a distraction for insiders—Mujica Láinez, Egle Martin, Jaime Jaimes, Relman, Lynch, among others. The most visible findings refer to that burgeoning histrionics we spoke of and its role in communication in the irrational plane between people accustomed to a somewhat more intellectual atmosphere. At times, an active poetry is generated, which reveals a spontaneous and diversified human being. That is the highest value of these artistic-sociological-psychanalytic experiences.

Edmundo E. Eichelbaum



¿QUÉ ES ESO DE HAPPENING? WHAT'S THAT ABOUT A HAPPENING?

Buenos Aires, 1966

Review. *Gente Magazine*, Buenos Aires, 1966. Roberto Jacoby Archive.



"¿Qué es Eso de Happening?", *Gente*, August 25, 1966. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

THE WAVE OF HAPPENINGS IS GROWING IN BUENOS AIRES. IT'S A NEW WAY OF MAKING AVANT-GARDE THEATER, BUT THERE ARE STILL A LOT OF QUESTIONS AND A LOT OF MISGIVINGS.

At 9 o'clock in the evening of July 21st, Susana Muzio de Saenz Peña saw her house in the neighborhood of Vicente López slowly go mad, filling with picturesque people, "holy monsters" that faced each other with almost shocking naturality. There stood the tropical Egle Martin, a dancer obsessed with Black dances; the refined writer Manuel "Manucho" Mujica Lainez; the dancer Antonio Gadés; the essayist Juan José Sebreli; the disconcerting Marta Minujín; the premature actor Alberto Fernández de Rosa; the writer Dalmiro Sáenz (indispensable); the concise Graciela Martinez; the thinker Oscar Masotta; the painter Lea Lublin; the actor Martín Lasalle; the model Mercedes Robirosa; the stiff economist Oscar Cornblitt; Marta Lynch; the humorist Divito; Jaime Jaimes, theater director; the hairstylist, Christian; and Raúl Damonte Taborda. Also, there were many subordinates; many ladies wanting of new experiences; many curious and impressionable onlookers.

It had all been prepared weeks before by Roberto Jacoby, a twenty-two-year-old painter with a developed sense of humor; Raúl Escari, twenty-one years old, philosophy student; and Eduardo Costa, twenty-five, language and literature student.

They visited their future guests and proposed them to choose a role to play. The character of the performance (or happening) consisted of bringing together these mythical personalities from different cultural environment; breaking the actor-spectator divorce by making each guest a leading actor and, essentially, allowing each one to choose the role he or she was going to play.



Counter-clockwise from top left:

Dalmiro Sáenz together with the owner of the house, Susana Muzio de Sáenz Peña, contemplates the exciting outcome of the event. It seems that the writer was extremely impressed.

Manuel Mujica Láinez, novelist, draws labyrinths. He does so at every meeting. A psychoanalyst diagnosed him with a certain aggressiveness. Manucho was undeterred and continued drawing.

The "fire" of Buenos Aires. Egle Martín and Marta Minujin. But nothing wrong happened. Egle danced and Marta recorded. The author of *La Menesunda* has her hair dyed ochre.

The ecstasy: the exquisite Graciela Martínez completes a dance and falls into the arms of Oscar Palacios and Pipo Peralta Ramos (playboy). Some witnesses of the rite laugh loudly.

Raúl Escari, Eduardo Costa, and Roberto Jacoby: three authors in search of a happening. The average age of the people in charge: twenty-two years old and they will work on new experiences.

When everything started around 11 p.m., Jacoby, Scary, and Costa were hopeful that it would all go well.

Each one would play a role independently of the other, but this did not exclude the possibility that some would take over the roles of others, or that certain groups would visit their neighbors.

While Egle Martín was frantically engaged in an African dance along with a company of black candomberos, Jaime Jaimes -with Rodolfo Relman- was anticipating the premiere of "The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria," a play performed by Laurence Olivier in England.

Away from the noisy ensemble, Mujica Láinez was drawing his traditional labyrinths. Enrique Pichón Rivière, a psychoanalyst who was complacently following all that was going on, quickly analyzed the writer: "He has a problem of intestinal origin ..."

Unexpectedly, the voracious Marta Minujin was peaceful: with a tiny tape recorder, she captured the voices of the "happiners," while with her Polaroid camera she snapped pictures left and right. Later she confessed that her role was to return the image of each one. Pichón Rivière was again implacable: she is a very possessive woman who took on this role to convince herself of the opposite, but, paradoxically, she never gives anything back, she keeps everything...

Antonio Gades did not dance flamenco all night: he preferred to shake with the Rolling Stones or The Beatles; he even danced candombe with Egle Martín. There was a curious fact: Alberto Fernández de Rosa (he was disguised as Hitler) had to go home. His wife, Cristina Banegas, had just given birth.

There was no lack of ideological protest: "I'm leaving, you are a bunch of snobs and pseudointellectuals. I am not interested in this kind of frivolous experience ..." loudly declared Juan José Sebreli, an individual who produced the best-seller *Buenos Aires: Daily Life and Alienation*. He seemed to be leaving, but he wasn't: an hour and a half later he was found in the kitchen in conversation with the maid. "She is less snobbish than all of you," he rebuked the onlookers.

Around 2 a.m., Graciela Martínez danced with Martín Lasalle, Marilú Marini, Chela Barbosa, Christian, Taborda, and others in the bathroom of the house. The only music used to consummate the rite were the noises and exclamations that the people, squeezed into the room, produced by the fact of being almost on top of each other.

Masotta, a former aspiring philosopher, claimed to be fulfilling an old aspiration: to lecture in the ear of his listeners. Taborda, with a certain masochism, parodied his son, the talented humorist Copi, but he was caricaturing himself. When it was all over, Arturo Sáenz, owner of the house, roasted a wild boar hunted by Dalmiro Sáenz in Neuquén. The meal was topped off with red wine from Río Negro.

At dawn, Pichón Rivière left with the promise of delivering a psychoanalytic report on the event in a few days. Surely there would be a detailed interpretation of the motives of each role and the behavior of the protagonists. That would certainly be the balance of more than four hours of meticulous observation. And that was the end of the happening, which gave way to more direct forms of communication. So was the chronicle of *Gente*.

This is the starting point of the “pop” wave in Buenos Aires, an artistic fashion imported from Europe, which threatens to sweep away the various trendy “-isms” in vogue in recent years. London and New York are the pop centers from which an amazing world is born, spilling over into painting, and now into the very new avant-garde theater.

It should be clarified that this type of experience is carried out, in principle, with an accentuated spirit of research. There is a kind of “seriousness” to prevent a happening from degenerating into other kinds of issues... but the limits are not clearly defined: happenings are still in the testing stage. Its few promoters in Buenos Aires consider themselves apostles of the new truth.

J. R. E





"Happening," *El Escarabajo de Oro* no. 31–32, 1966. Courtesy: CeDInCI (Centro de Documentación e Investigación de la Cultura de Izquierdas en Argentina), Buenos Aires, Argentina, Roberto Jacoby.

The caption to the left of the bottom right photo reads, "Massota and Lea Lublin; above them, Escari"

Happening

El escarabajo de oro, no. 31–32, 1966

Review. Published in *El Escarabajo de Oro*, no. 31–32, 1966. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

Using the slogan “In mass society, the audience is not in direct contact with social events, and even less in a society without masses, like the Ruins of Pompeii,” the writers Raúl Escari, Eduardo Costa, and the plastic artist Roberto Jacoby have invented an experimental happening, commemorating independence, in the house of Susana Muzio de Sáenz Peña (gallerist), sited at 1139 Melo, Vicente Lopez. As we have lost the little paper that detailed the occurrence, we are forced to remember the events, which is not so bad indeed, because as Escari himself argues, “creation consists of leaving its constitution up to its transmission” (Escari, R. et.al., “An Art of Mass Media”, p. 2). Perhaps the wrong memory of something that was not seen but that we heard from someone who also did not remember the paper in its entirety is an addition worthy of being taken into account by Pichón-Riviere, who participated in the aforementioned experience, as did Dalmiro Sáenz, who killed Lolo Palacios for some reason regarding a boar. Other attendees were Mujica Láinez and the small sociologist Juan José Sebrelli; the former drew labyrinths, and the latter drew a stupid smile on his face because, honestly, he thought the event was not only for snobs but also very crowded, given that there were participants of several social strata and ideologies, and (as is explained in *Daily Life and Alienation*) each class has a neighborhood it belongs in and it would not do to go around mixing schemas. Also present were Yehudi Menuhin and his sister Marta, painter, who played the Kreutzer sonata until Pozdnyshov opened the door and they had to suddenly and guiltily stop, although we believe this is from Tolstoy’s novella and not the little paper. This is how interdependent culture is. I understand culture (said Jacoby) to be a process that starts with the realization of a piece (traditional) and continues until said work becomes material transmitted by mass media (*ibid.*, p. 2). Something like what happens to fresh lettuce when, not without first becoming a food bolus, ends up as material transmitted to the treatment plant. *Id est caca*, Cicerón would say. This magazine’s godmother, Egle Martin, my queen—a godmother we won

in a hard-fought card game joust to the satirical *Opium*—danced an Argentinian version (that is, without a dance of the veils, imaginative reader who still needs to be mentioned a lot) of *Salomé* by Oscar Wilde, a version whose actual text surprisingly belongs to a writer linked to our magazine and wherein Salomé is a mulatto, Zulema, descendant of African tribal kings, and Juan (who in that opportunity was played by Antonio Gadés) is a tendentious and lucid *candombero* whose head she, for love, cuts off (more or less as it happens among the scorpions) without having understood that what the brother wanted was revolution; all this percussed and with a second-act ending that is abjection, madness, and death. Oscar Massota, who liked the idea very much, commented into the attendees' ears his admiration for the author in an eighty-page essay and not without having had seven frustrated attempts to bite Lea Lublin's ear.





El Sindicato de Happenings

The Syndicate of Happenings

Confirmado, September 19, 1966

Review. Published in *Confirmado* magazine, September 19, 1966, 38. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

Barely a week goes by in Buenos Aires without there being two or three happenings: painters, former politicians, writers, economists, dancers, young bohemians, psychoanalysts, diplomats, actresses, philosophers, industrialists, models, and sociologists all gather in someone's house and embark on a ride of spontaneity. They are trying to find some new way of communicating, and some also pretend to create spectacles of artistic value.

Currently, anything can be called a happening, and many people use the word as a noun to denote situations and objects that they can't better specify. Fifteen days ago, during a meeting of friends, the painter and architect Oscar Palacios humorously narrated an idea that he plans to put into action together with his wife, the dancer Marilú Marini: the establishment of a syndicate of happenings.

The false union would charge monthly dues to its members and establish a pension plan: "The member must simply pronounce the word happening one time and he automatically retires," explains the proponent. Several slogans will preside over the activities: *For a happener there is nothing better than another happener; For every happener that dies, ten painters will die too; Yes to the happening, no to the stigmatized paintbrush!*

To install the union's base, Palacios and Marini say they are looking for a suitable place in the center of Buenos Aires. Once obtained, within the space a *happening supermarket* would operate, divided into two sections that would carry every element needed by the members. In one of the sections, designed for vintage happenings, they will be able to buy paints, balloons, chickens, shaving cream, noodles, and streamers; in the section for modern happenings, instead, there would be electronic computers and various means of mass communication.

A large library of happenings would be set up on the same premises, which would contain all happenings made to this day. Each time a member sets out to make a

new happening, he will have to place a card with its characteristics into an electronic computer that will compare them against the archive: if a green light turns on, the happening can be held because it has not been previously made; a red light would indicate that that happening has already taken place, but that the coincidence is a casual one; the yellow light would mean that the member is setting out to plagiarize a previous happening, and he will be immediately expelled from the union.

The syndicate will also have a great room surrounded by pipelines so that when a happening ends, a series of faucets will open and wash the floor and the walls with soapy water. Furthermore, Palacios is studying the possibility of having several small rooms for private happenings. "If a gentleman wishes to hold his happening privately, with a few friends or even by himself, he will be able to use one of those little rooms, locked by key. Once the happening ends, he will come out, return the key, and leave."

The project also includes having workshops to teach others how to prepare a happening: "Someone wanted to have a happening with chickens dressed as Spanish women, but he could not get the costumes right. Either they were too big for the chickens and fell off, or too small and choked them. That's the kind of thing that must be taught," explained Marilú Marini. Of course, the authors of the project do not actually plan to carry it out.



COMUNICACION DE MASAS

Hace unas semanas, publicamos en este suplemento la nota de Edmundo E. Eichelbaum: "Happening para un happening". Ahora podemos decir que ese "happening" (idea central: hechizo) nunca existió. Escribimos sobre una invención para permitir que una experiencia que solo tiene sentido en el mundo de las organizaciones de prensa y suministrada bajo la forma de una nota periodística.

Sin embargo, entendemos que el análisis incluido en la nota periodística es válido y que el "happening" para un happening hubiese tenido lugar. Porque, precisamente, no solo un artículo sobre una creación, sino parte de una experiencia. Y en cuanto al aspecto informativo, se trata de una información que no existe, pero que ha sido comentada en su lugar. La literatura, por otra parte, abunda en fantasías de naturaleza semejante: libros sobre libros que no se escribieron, novelas biográficas de heroes que no existieron, etc. Pero en este caso, parece que el autor de la paródica producción de un hecho, pasando por la invención de una información sobre lo que no ocurrió, logró su efecto.

El sociólogo argentino Eliseo Verón, preocupado por los problemas surgió en la literatura semejantes fantasías de naturaleza semejante:

...este es un tipo de happening que no existe, pero que existe en el mundo de las organizaciones de prensa y suministrada bajo la forma de una nota periodística.

Este artículo contribuye a redondear esta revelación, y la proyección termina por incluirnos en un proceso social del arte contemporáneo al cual de ningún modo podríamos renunciar.



Eliseo Verón

La comunicación de masas es el campo en que se generan, difunden y se perciben los grupos, procesos, ritos y conflictos. En la sociedad contemporánea no hay problema que sea tanto existente a nivel de la sociedad global, sin pasar por los niveles de la cultura, como la "comunicación social". La "comunicación social" incluye aquí la *disposición* que los procesos sociales tienen hacia las observaciones exteriores, y el modo en que la información sobre ese proceso difunde la información entre los miembros de la sociedad. Si tomamos un hecho social cualquiera y analizamos su respuesta a la información social que lo rodea, encontraremos una enorme magnitud en funcionamiento, en la que operan tanto las fuerzas que lo impulsaron como el hecho es incorporado para su consumo posterior. Lo importante es que el proceso social continúa su desarrollo, independientemente del consumo masivo, si bien para sus propias protagonistas. La vinculación entre el hecho social y la información social es muy activa, ya que lo difusos es particularmente efectiva en el caso de los medios dominantes en la cultura, y tan completamente al hecho, que tiende a confundirlos entre sí. Los medios de comunicación existen para la mayoría de los integrantes de la sociedad a partir del momento en que comienzan a circular. Los medios hermanos son participantes –al, por ejemplo, han formado parte activa en una gran cantidad de ellos– en la elaboración social sobre ella completa, más veces, completamente otras, tal vez deformada sustancialmente en muchos casos nuestra propia memoria. Lo que es seguro es que la modifica.

Conviene tener presente la complejidad de la estructura de lenguaje que se alta cada vez más en el desarrollo que sigue en el contexto general de la sociedad. Más allá de la experiencia directa de los sentidos, existe una dimensión simbólica que podemos llamar un primer "grupo de transformaciones". Así mismo, directamente con los hechos, la radio y la televisión, la prensa escrita y los diarios horas después, los diarios hacen esto también. Después de esta primera oleada de información, los seminarios ge-

nigan nuevas transformaciones, un poco más distantes en el tiempo, la relación entre el mundo de la información masiva y el mundo de las comunicaciones masivas es muy compleja, porque los seminarios encuentran un hecho ya comentado, y el mundo de la información masiva comienza a vivir un primer momento de existencia a nivel de la información social. La "comunicación social" no es una actividad que responde a la necesidad de una información constitutiva, pues, un metalingüístico que añade un nuevo planeta a la órbita de la cultura. Si el hecho es lo bastante importante (en términos de los efectos que genera), se transforma en los grupos (que controlan los medios), probablemente nuevos metalingüajes serían producidos, y así sucesivamente, en los libros, etcétera. El interés que toda esta superestructura informativa tiene esencialmente es que sea social, es decir, porque no es otro el campo en que se genera el sentido de los procesos sociales, que el que se genera en el mundo de los integrantes de la sociedad, y el hecho se extiende deformando lo que ocurrió², pero tal circunstancia constituye un importante problema para la información masiva, porque como comenta cada persona. En una abrumadora mayoría de los casos, es la hora de la información que se pretende transmitir del medio. Y en los demás casos en que el contenido es algo más que una simple reseña crítica respecto de lo que se informa a través de un medio, es porque tiene problemas de interpretación, de significado, que se ha proporcionado otro medio masivo, con lo cual se mantiene intacta la información que se transmite, y ganan especialistas en la ciencia de la comunicación humana lo han estudiado y resuelto. La "comunicación social" es, en sí misma, imposible sin una actitud de confianza por parte del receptor en la veracidad de algunas de las noticias que recibe.

Peligro

En el caso de Costa, Escayola y Jacoby, lo que nos hace pensar que reside en la posibilidad de que el lector, el sujeto consumidor de la experiencia, entre en la trampa de la información, mediante el uso de los mecanismos interiores de esa estructura. En efecto, el lector, al leer la nota periodística sobre el "happening", tiene la sensación de que no existe ninguna información y por extensión, la imagen insólita de que no existe nada. La interpretación del "engaño" puede extenderse a la medida en que el lector tenga una actitud de confianza en la información periodística (la información oficial) y su rectificación. Pero el lector, al leer la nota periodística, no será incluido ni recordará que los medios masivos, cuando están en juego verdaderas engañadas, suelen ser más jarras.

Está enteramente fuera del espacio evaluar esta experiencia desde el punto de vista estético, a fin de poder clasificarla como una obra o arte. De todas maneras, me permito aventurar que la perspectiva sociológica, la perspectiva de que el arte social es el arte industrial del futuro será más convincente al final de la historia. Pensemos, por ejemplo, que a una tela de Picasso: un arte de objetos que tal vez no entiendes todavía en su totalidad, pero que en su esencia, su materia no sea fílica, sino social, y cuya forma sea construida por transformaciones sencillas, procedentes de la comunicación. Objeto, en suma, que será difícil conservar en museos para las generaciones posteriores.

Eliseo Verón

Comunicación de masas

Mass Communication

Eliseo Verón, *El Mundo*, October 30, 1966

Review. Published in *El Mundo* newspaper, Buenos Aires, October 30, 1966. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

A few weeks ago, we published in this supplement a report by Edmundo E. Eichelbaum, "Happening for a Dead Boar." We can now say that this "happening" (central idea: event) never existed. We wrote about a fictionalization to allow an experience that only made sense through press organizations and if supplied in the form of a press release.

Nonetheless, we understand that the analysis, including its supposed critics, is as real and authentic as if the "happening" had occurred. Because it is, precisely, not only an article about the creation of something but also part of an experience. And with respect to the informative aspect, it is now complete, with the revelation that the event in question did not occur. Furthermore, in literature, we find several fantasies of similar nature: books about books that were never written; biographies about heroes that did not exist. But, in this case, the fantasy also implies the paradoxical production of an event, involving the formulation of information about what did not occur. In charge of the theoretical explanation of the scope and the possible importance of the experience is Argentine sociologist Eliseo Verón, who is concerned about the issues linked to mass media in the contemporary world. In this regard, the concern reaches a different problematic universe: the one that arises, still chaotic, from the search for art insofar as it involves the inclusion of all the elements of the society in which it is produced. Among these elements is, precisely, this supplement, given the magnitude of its involvement in the current cultural events of the country. Verón is currently returning from Europe, where his research has taken him. His article contributes to a rounding-up of this revelation, and the projection ends up including us in a social process of contemporary art that we can in no way renounce.

Mass media is the field in which images of society, its groups, processes, rites, and conflicts are generated, distributed, and transformed. In the urban-industrial

community, there exists no collective process with social existence on a global scale without it having passed through mass media. “Social existence” includes here the *significance* that social processes have for their participants and their external observers and how information about these processes influences the subsequent conduct of the members of this society. If we take a random social event and analyze its “representation” in mass communication, we will find an enormous machine in operation, where interpretative schemes are put in place, into which the event is fed for later use. The important thing is that the social process in question is not independent of its mass consumption, not even for its protagonists. The link between the event and its passage into mass media is particularly slim in the case of newspapers, where its mass consumption is so temporarily near to its occurrence that they tend to be confused: countless social events start existing for the broader part of the community only from the point at which they read about them in the newspapers. Even if we have been participants—if, for example, we have taken an active role in a demonstration—the subsequent reading of the news sometimes completes, other times complements, and perhaps in many cases substantially distorts our own immediate experience. What is sure is that it *modifies* it.

It’s convenient to bear in mind the complexity of the language structure that rises over any significant event produced in the general context of society. Beyond the participant actors’ direct experience, there is the immediate formation of what can be called a “transformative group.” Almost simultaneously to it taking place, radio and television refer to the event; a few hours later, newspapers do so as well. After this first informational wave, weekly newspapers cause new transformations, a little more distant timewise. The link between this second informational wave and the first is highly complex, given that the weeklies find an event already commented on by other media types, already having lived a first moment of existence on the scale of social communication. The second informational wave constitutes, thus, a metalanguage that adds a new plane of ideological structure to the social perception of what’s occurred. If the event is important enough (in terms of the criteria of importance applied by the groups that control the media), monthly magazines, books, etc., will likely produce new metalanguages. The interest that this whole informative superstructure has for the study of society is central because the plane in which the participant actors construe the *sense* of

the social processes is not another, and this plane contaminates every meaning that holds social influence.

EXPERIENCE

Costa, Escari, and Jacoby’s experience—on which we report later in this same section—has much to do with the functioning of this superstructure. A few weeks ago, some media outlets circulated information on an event (a “happening” in a particular house in the city). Today, the reader finds out that this event never took place and that both the previous information and the current elucidation were part of a carefully constructed plan aimed at creating a new event without any reality save its ghost-like existence within the informational flow of mass communication. What is the meaning of this experience?

First and foremost, one needs to take into account the structure of any “normal” situation of mass information consumption: there is a particular event on which reporting is done. But I have already suggested that mass media’s ideological influence finds grounds in a mechanism through which *the event itself and the information on the event* tend to get confused in the consumer’s mind when he categorizes the information as “real.” If I’ve had direct involvement in an event, I could then say, “this newspaper is distorting what happened,” but such a circumstance constitutes quite a small percentage of the sum of mass information that a person consumes. In an overwhelming majority of cases, the event only reaches my experience *through the media*. And in other cases, in which the consumer adopts an attitude of critical apprehension regarding what is informed through one media outlet, it’s because he has in his mind an (ideologically different) image that *another* media outlet gave him. Thus the system’s circularity is preserved. As some specialists in the science of human communication have recently studied, the actual communicative process is impossible without an attitude of *trust*, on the part of the receiver, in *some* of the messages he receives.

The main characteristic of Costa, Escari, and Jacoby’s experience is that it generates a break in the information structure, through the use of that structure’s own internal mechanisms. Indeed, *the reader is informed that he has been informed about something that never took place*, which implies a *reductio ad absurdum* of the very notion of information, and, by extension, the unusual image of media outlets operating in the void. Mass media systems have as a requirement for their existence

the socially institutionalized confidence in their being true *reflections* of a reality, while they remain useful for the broadcasting of ideologies insofar as they *do not actually fulfill* that function, i.e., insofar as the information they transmit is not a reflection but a selective interpretation. In the present experience, on the contrary, these systems are shown as a closed universe that neither describes nor distorts, given that it appears as a language that *creates* its own objects.

Nevertheless, several of the latest aesthetic trends that have recently been circulated among us tend to take mass media as a topic of their artistic creation, or at least to take into account its mechanisms, its images. Marta Minujín's latest "happening" at the Di Tella Institute is an excellent example, as is also this experience that we are analyzing. But it's useful to bear in mind that many central aspects of society are in play in the inner workings of the systems of social communication, and that their dominance is related to the basic interests of the groups that control the power. Their handling encompasses thus many dangers to the artist, and to the correct comprehension of his activity on the part of his audience. I would even venture to say that these systems are complicated enough as to make it exceptionally hard to escape their ideological traps, even as one believes himself to be denouncing them.

DANGER

In Costa, Escari, and Jacoby's experience, I think one danger lies in the possibility that the reader, who is the experience's consumer, interprets it as vulgar deceit: a betrayal of his trust. This possibility would, in my view, seriously compromise the accomplishment of the objective set by the authors: namely, to show this confidence as an implicit assumption, via an induced rupture. The interpretation of this "deceit" can be avoided as long as the reader is aware that both pieces of the experience (the initial information and its subsequent elucidation) are inseparable. On the other hand, it would not be in vain to remember that in the media, when actual deceit is at play, it will never be self-rectified.

An evaluation of this experience from an aesthetic point of view is entirely outside my capacity, and I do not know if it can even be classified as an artistic object or not. Either way, I venture, as a sociological prediction, the suspicion that art of the postindustrial society of the future will be more alike to this experience by Costa, Escari, and Jacoby than to a canvas by Picasso: an art of objects that we

may not yet be able to imagine, but whose matter will not be physical but social, and whose form will be shaped by a systematic transformation of the structures of communication. Objects, in short, that it will be difficult to keep in museums for later generations.

Eliseo Verón





EGLE MARTIN:
RENOVARSE ES VIVIR

Fue un acontecimiento único. Los vecinos de una tranquila calle de Vicente López vieron de repente desfilar frente a sus ca-

VISTO y OIDO

sas un nutrido conjunto de celebridades: el bailarín español Antonio Gadés, el director Jaime Jaimes, el actor Martín Lasalle, la modelo Mercedes Robirosa, el dibujante Divito, los escritores Dalmoiro Sáenz y Manuel Mujica Lainez, la bailarina Graciela Martínez y muchas otras personali-

dades conocidas. Del grupo que se reunió en casa de la conocida "marchand" Susana Muzio Sáenz Peña se destacaba la belleza morena de una concorrente; no era otra que Egle Martín.

El motivo de la reunión fue un "happening"—una nueva forma de arte-espctáculo que se basa en la improvisación y en la participación del público—organizado por los escritores Eduardo Costa y Raúl Escary y el plástico Roberto Jacoby. Allí Egle Martín tuvo oportunidad de anticipar algunas de las nuevas danzas africanas que presentará en un próximo espectáculo, acompañada de un conjunto de bailarines negros. Tanto la elección de nuevos ritmos para incorporarlos a su repertorio como su participación en una forma de arte experimental como este "happening" indican claramente que Egle persiste en su voluntad de permanente renovación. Una voluntad que señaló todas sus actuaciones desde el comienzo de su carrera. Además de Egle, cada uno de los presentes actuó de acuerdo con su especialidad, unos de manera más extravagante que otros. El fin de fiesta fue un jabalí, cobrado en Neuquén por Dalmoiro Sáenz y sabiamente asado por el dueño de casa, que fue muy apreciado por los concurrentes.

Egle Martin: Renovarse es vivir Egle Martin, To Renew Oneself Is to Live

1966

Review. "Egle Martin," *Renovarse es Vivir*, 1966. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

SEEN AND HEARD

Egle Martin: Renovarse es vivir

Egle Martin: To Renew Oneself is to Live

It was a unique experience. Neighbors of a quiet street in Vicente López saw the sudden parade of a wide range of celebrities: Spanish dancer Antonio Gadés, film director Jaime Jaimes, actor Martín Lasalle, model Mercedes Robirosa, humorist Divito, writers Dalmoiro Sáenz and Manuel Mujica Lainez, dancer Graciela Martínez, and many other well-known characters. From the group that gathered at the house of the well-known *marchand* Susana Muzzio Sáenz Peña, the brown-haired beauty of one attendee stood out: it was none other than Egle Martin.

The reason for the gathering was a "happening"—a new form of performance art based on improvisation and the audience's participation—organized by the writers Eduardo Costa and Raúl Escari, and the plastic artist Roberto Jacoby. There, Egle Martin had the chance to anticipate some of the new African dances that she will be presenting at a new show, accompanied by a cast of Black dancers. Both the choice of new rhythms to incorporate into her repertoire and her participation in an experimental art form such as this "happening" clearly indicate that Egle persists in her desire for constant renovation. A desire that has marked all her performances since the beginning of her career. Aside from Egle, each attendee acted in accordance with their specialty, some in a more extravagant fashion than others. The party's ending featured a boar, caught in Neuquén by Dalmoiro Sáenz and wisely roasted by the house's owner, which was very much appreciated by all present.

"Egle Martin, "Renovarse es Vivir," 1966. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.



El Fin de los “Happenings”

The End of “Happenings”

Inédito, 1966

Review. Published in *Inédito* magazine, 1966, page 26, Roberto Jacoby Archive.

Dos fenómenos se produjeron casi simultáneamente este año en Buenos Aires. En el campo político, el hecho militar del 28 de junio y en el artístico —hay que llamarlo de alguna manera—los llamados “happenings”. Ambos acontecimientos tienen mucho de comín, como se verá. Despertaron, si no el interés real, por lo menos mucha curiosidad y a poco que se les vio el esqueleto, cayeron en el desprecio total. Ya nadie los toma en serio, pero se los padece. Ambos movimientos presumen de revolucionarios y ambos exhiben esa triste senectud de las ancianas que se empeñan en coquetear pifarroneadas y ataviadas a la moda de cincuenta años atrás; imponían como las costumbres rancias. Además, ambos son importados extranjeros, irreconocibles para nuestras sensibilidades argentinas. Es sugestivo que se hayan incubado paralelamente y que hayan brotado casi juntos.

Pero vamos a ocuparnos de los “happenings”. En el N° 1, INÉDITO se ocupó de alertar sobre la falta de seriedad de esas cosas; entonces ciertos medios publicitarios se empeñaban en otorgar importancia a esas insípidas diversiones. Ya no se hace necesario intentar una profundización del fenómeno, porque ahora le interesa a muy pocos. Lo hacemos como rememoración de algo que pasó en Buenos Aires 1966. También es curioso observar la promoción de estos disparates —por lo menos su más importante mentor— que fue y es un instituto privado que gasta mucho dinero para cuestiones algunas veces relacionadas con el arte y la investigación, y al mismo tiempo preparaba todo un equipo de economistas para ofrecerlo como recambio.

EL FIN DE LOS “HAPPENINGS”

mente afincaron en el aliudido instituto de Florida al 900.

Lo de este año fue la culminación y creación que el principio del derrumbe final de todo eso. Los dos “happenings” más difundidos fueron, uno que no se realizó y otro que sí se realizó. El falso “happening”, según sus inventores, tuvo por objeto tomarles el pelo a los medios de comunicación de masas —en realidad algún diario y un par de revistas— para una confusa experimentación de tipo sociológico. No hicieron ni lograron nada original. Recordamos a ese gran talento gran fumista que tuvo nuestra “belle époque” porteña, Gregorio de Laferrere, que a principios del siglo, mediante gacetas enviadas a los diarios desde sus ojos del Círculo de Armas, inventó una personalidad de la nobleza europea que hasta daba grandes recepciones y se batía a duelo. Así logró engañar, no sólo a los diarios, sino a la pintípida sociedad porteña que se ofendía por no ser invitada a los fabulosos agapes existentes sólo en la imaginación del dramaturgo.

El “happening” que sí se hizo, fue prácticamente la sepultura del género. Con un gasto fabuloso, el aliudido instituto de Florida al 900 puso a disposición de la señora Marta Minujín, una gran cantidad de aparatos de televisión y espacios comerciales en un canal y dos radios (¡bas Radio Municipal Intervino, ¡lo sabía, coronel Scutini!). Todo fue un estupendo papelón. Únicos regocijados fueron los artistas plásticos que comprobaron que le pasaban la plétora a los stands de variedades; en adelante los dejarían en paz, ya sufrieron bastante con ese huésped. <

Two phenomena arose almost simultaneously this year in Buenos Aires. In the field of politics, the military event of July 28th, and in the arts—we have to give it a name—the so-called “happenings.” Both occurrences have much in common, as will be shown. They awoke, if not true interest, at least much curiosity, and, as their scaffolding began to show, they fell into complete disrepute. Nobody takes them seriously anymore, but they are still suffered. Both movements boast revolutionaries, and both exhibit that sad senescence of old women who insist on flirting, with heavy makeup on and dressed in the fashions of fifty years ago; they impress as much as stale foods do. Besides, they are both imported, foreign, and unrecognizable to our Argentine sensibilities. It is suggestive that they hatched in parallel and that they sprouted practically together.

But let us deal with “happenings.” In no. 1, *INÉDITO* aimed to call attention to their lack of seriousness; at the time, certain media outlets were determined to grant those forms of insipid entertainment some importance. An in-depth study of the phenomenon is no longer necessary, since very few care, nowadays. We do this as a remembrance of what happened in Buenos Aires in 1966. It's also interesting to look into the promotion of this nonsense, or at least into their most important mentor, which was and still is a private institute spending lots of money on things sometimes related to art and research, and that prepared at the same time a whole team of economists to offer as a replacement.

It all started taking shape—as many things did—around December 62, in the midst of José María Guido's rule, when, in the Lirolay gallery, a group of plastic artists held an exhibition of a purely surreal nature called “Destructive art.” By the way, the true artists—there were also some of the other kind—that intervened, with the sole intention of finishing the year off with something fun, did not suspect that they would take center stage in the attempt of an adventure of personal promotion

with characteristics never before seen. Some months earlier, in that same gallery on Esmeralda Street, two ladies had exhibited their paintings for the first time, with very little luck. They were Marta Minujín and Delia Puzzovio. What they showed wasn't bad, but they needed to mature and polish their techniques. Suddenly, the seemingly easy road opened up and goodbye brushes. Thereafter, we saw something titled "La Menesunda" that, despite Professor Romero Brest's efforts to find in it some transcendental explanation, was no more than a poor imitation of the much-remembered ghost train at the old fairgrounds in the Japonés Park. Later, adherents emerged from the less-endowed sectors of our schools of fine arts and the *menesundas* went on and on until finally settling in the aforementioned institute, at 900 Florida Street.

This year saw the culmination and what we think is the beginning of the end for all of that. The two most circulated "happenings" were one that never happened and one that did. The fake "happening," according to its inventors, intended to take mass media for a fool (in truth only one newspaper and a couple of magazines), through a confusing sociological sort of experiment. They didn't do or accomplish anything original. We remember that great talent, great jokester, of Buenos Aires's *belle époque*, Gregorio de Laferrere, who, at the beginning of the century, via press releases sent to newspapers, invented a character of European nobility that held large receptions and even fought in duels. Thus he managed to deceive not only newspapers but also the lofty Buenos Aires society that took offense over not having been invited to the fabulous feasts that existed only in the playwright's mind.

The "happening" that did take place was practically the burial of the genre. With exorbitant expenses, the aforementioned institute made available to Mrs. Marta Minujin a great number of television devices, advertising spaces on a channel, and two radios (even Municipal Radio intervened; did you know that, Colonel Schettini?). The whole thing was a great fiasco. The only ones who rejoiced were the plastic artists when they realized that they were passing the ball to the variety artists; from now on they would leave them be, they suffered enough with that guest.



DIVERSIONES

El escepticismo de la mamá de Masotta

“Para qué hacer obras de arte simplemente con elementos de la comunicación de masas, como los pops? Hagámoslas instalándolas en los medios de comunicación de masas”, se propusieron, hace unos meses, Roberto Jacoby, Raúl Escari y Eduardo Costa, 3 jóvenes trabajadores, serios y preocupados por crear nuevas tendencias artísticas, más acordes con el actual momento de la civilización.

Redondearon la idea: “Nos proponemos entregar a la prensa el informe escrito y fotográfico de un happening que no ha ocurrido. Este falso informe incluirá los nombres de los par-

ticipantes, una indicación del lugar y momento en que se realizó, y una descripción del espectáculo que se finge que ha ocurrido, con fotos tomadas a los supuestos participantes en otras circunstancias. Así, en el modo de transmitir la información, en el modo de realizar el acontecimiento inexistente, en las diferencias que surjan entre las diversas versiones que del mismo suceso haga

tituyó un happening en sí”, reconoció Masotta, 36 años, ensayista, filósofo, orientador del grupo promotor.

Los organizadores redactaron una gaceta sobre el inexistente happening que, acompañada de las fotos, se entregó a diarios y revistas. Varias publicaciones dieron cuenta del hecho, tomándolo por cierto. En una, pagaron 3 mil pesos por ellas. Y el 30 de octubre, el suplemento cultural de *El Mundo* publicó la desmentida, “la cual completa el happening”. Una nota de Eliseo Verón sociologizaba sobre el asunto, definiéndolo así: “El lector se informa de que fue informado sobre algo que nunca ocurrió, lo que implica una reducción al absurdo de la noción misma de la información y, por extensión, la imagen insólita de los medios de comunicación de masas funcionando en el vacío”. Los happening-makers se habían propuesto realizar un hecho estético; el canoso sociólogo Verón le confería valor moral.

En ese plano, al parecer, tampoco es algo nuevo. César Tiempo, por ejemplo, publicó en sus mocedades un libro de poemas encendidamente amorosos, y lo firmó con nombre de mujer. Recibió muchas opiniones literarias de los popes de la poesía argentina a quienes había enviado el libro; algunas misivas, además, se internaban en terrenos más íntimos. El frágido de algunos textos supuestamente inéditos de Rimbaud sumió a especialistas y entendidos, hace años, en Francia, en una aguda polémica sobre su autenticidad. Muchos votaron por el si y, afortunadamente para ellos, la desmentida vino en el invierno.

Pero a pesar de la interpretación de Verón, el teórico Masotta insistió: “Producir ese happening en los medios de comunicación es una idea estética y no moral”. Subrayó Masotta que no cree, como Romero Brest, en la posibilidad de desalienación de las élites a través del arte; tampoco, como algunos activos happening-makers, que los medios de comunicación son alienantes en sí mismos. Piensa, en cambio, que los happenings constituyen un arte que expresa positivamente la alienación de la sociedad actual en la medida en que critica la separación entre el hombre y lo que él representa. Considera que iguala a hombres y objetos y líquida el abismo entre actor y personaje, por ejemplo, que existe en el teatro: cada participante actúa como en la vida misma.

Pero dos objeciones, que Masotta aceptó como serias, contradicen esa apreciación: si bien el *Happening del jabalí muerto* no existió, para obtener las fotografías los organizadores realizaron varios happenings deliberados, cuyos protagonistas actuaron y posaron como personajes. Y su desmentida, al pretender ilustrar la posibilidad de deformación o

EL HAPPENING FALSO
Toda esta gente no existe

cada emisor, aparecerá el sentido de la obra”.

Este fue difundido, en un texto mimeografiado de 2 carillas y media, en julio de este año, entre amigos del medio plástico de Buenos Aires. El 21 de agosto, un mes después, el suplemento dominical del matutino *El Mundo* publicaba una nota firmada por Edmundo E. Eichelbaum sobre el inexistente *Happening para un jabalí difunto*, que se habría realizado el 30 de julio en la casa de Susana Muzzio de Sáenz, en Vicente López. Fotos de Marilú Marini, Marta Minujin, Egle Martín, Manuel Mujica Láinez, Dalmiro Sáenz, Graciela Martínez, la dueña de casa y otros, certificaban gráficamente el hecho.

Cuatro semanas llevó a los 3 conspiradores prepararlos. Las fotos se tomaron en distintas ocasiones. La de Dalmiro Sáenz y Susana Muzzio, en una zapatería vecina a la casa de la última. En la de Oscar Masotta se obtuvo la suya con Lea Lublin. En una fiesta *within* se fotografiaron escenas de conjunto: Marilú Marini, cabeza volteada atrás, contra brazos en alto, espaldas, rostros de perfil; o Graciela Martínez (baillarina, como Marini), con los zapatos en la mano y la cabeza a ras de un inodoro, entre otras cabezas, piernas, pantalones. Egle Martín fue captada en un ensayo. Varias decenas de complices se prestaron, con gusto, a la idea. “Cada fotografía, en realidad, cons-

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“Masotta’s Mom’s Skepticism,” *Confirmado*, November 10, 1966, 42–44. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.
The caption below the photo reads, “THE FAKE HAPPENING. All these people don’t exist”.

El escepticismo de la mamá de Masotta

Masotta’s Mom’s Skepticism

Confirmado, November 10, 1966

Review. Published in *Confirmado*, page 42, November 10, 1966, 42. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

ENTERTAINMENT

El escepticismo de la mamá de Masotta

Masotta’s Mom’s Skepticism

“Why make artworks simply with elements of mass media, like the *Pops*? Let’s make them by *installing ourselves into* the mass media outlets,” was what Roberto Jacoby, Raúl Escari, and Eduardo Costa set out to do a few months ago. These three young men, hard-working and serious, are concerned with the creation of new artistic trends that better suit the current period of our civilization.

They delineated the idea so: “we intend to give the press a written and photographic report of a happening that did not take place. This fake report will include the names of participants, an indication of the time and place of its realization, and a description of the production that is feigned to have happened, with photographs taken of the supposed participants in other circumstances. Thus, in the ways of relaying information, in the manner in which the nonexistent event is ‘realized,’ in the differences that arise from the various versions that each broadcaster creates from the same event, the meaning of the artwork will appear.”

This was circulated in a typewritten text two and a half sheets long, this past July, among friends of the Buenos Aires plastic scene. On August 21st, one month later, *El Mundo*’s Sunday issue published an article signed by Edmundo E. Eichelbaum about a nonexistent “Happening for a Dead Boar” that had supposedly taken place in Susana Muzzio de Sáenz’s house in Vicente López. Pictures of Marilú Marini, Marta Minujin, Egle Martín, Manuel Mujica Láinez, Dalmiro Sáenz, Graciela Martínez, and the mistress of the house, among others, graphically certified the occurrence.



"Masotta's Mom's Skepticism," *Confirmado*, November 10, 1967, 42–44. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.
The caption below the photo reads, "THE CO-CONSPIRATORS ESCARI, COSTA, AND JACOBY. These, on the other hand, do exist."

engaño de los medios de comunicación, convierte a un hecho que se deseó estético en un hecho moral. "En el fondo, se trata de una actitud estetizante —opinó el pintor Carlos Gorriarena, 40 años, buceador de nuevas expresiones plásticas—. No porque el artista no pueda hacer esas cosas. O política. O un hijo. Sino porque se le atribuye categoría estética a un hecho que no la tiene."

Pero tal vez la visión más vital del hecho sea la de Susana Muzzio, la aguda dueña de la casa donde el happening no se realizó. "Me siento frustrada. Todo el mundo cree que nos divertimos mucho, y no pasó nada; por eso propuse hacerlo, en serio, ahora." Algunos amigos se quejaron porque no habían sido invitados. Ciertas amigas le frunciieron el ceño: "Una muchacha que estuvo me contó que allí hubo de todo, mujeres desnudas y qué sé yo", le dijo una. Los vecinos, desde que apareció el primer

artículo en *El Mundo*, han manifestado un súbito e inesperado amor por la jardinería: recortan sus setos colindantes con la casa de Susana Muzzio, podan sus árboles, arreglan sus enredaderas, refaccionan sus techos y siempre consiguen alguna posición que les permite otear "la casa del happening".

La madre de Masotta no le creyó cuando éste le explicó que no había

habido fiesta. "¡Si salió en el diario!", se extrañó. Pero una crítica del happening, producida por el sociólogo Dario Cantón, señalaba la semana pasada que el tipo de información elegido "para mostrar las posibilidades de engaño que manejan los medios de comunicación de masas fue una información sin ninguna trascendencia en términos de su significación para la sociedad global" y no algo "sobre inexistentes movimientos de tropas o reunión de altos mandos, sobre la decisión del cardenal Caggiano de promover una Iglesia católica argentina que favoreciera la revolución social o cualquier cosa por el estilo que pudiera dar lugar a la rectificación de la información por los afectados por ella y que eventualmente hubiera ocasionado la represión o desplazamiento de los que se hubieran entregado a ese juego". Lo cual, para Cantón, invalida la experiencia también desde el punto de vista de su mor-

Four weeks was how long it took the conspirators to prepare this. The pictures were taken at different moments. The one of Dalmiro Sáenz and Susana Muzzio was taken in a shoe store that neighbors the latter's house. In Oscar Masotta's house, his picture with Lea Lublin was taken. Ensemble scenes were photographed at an *insider* party: Marilú Marini, head turned back, behind arms in the air, backs, faces in profile; or Graciela Martínez (dancer, like Marini), with shoes in hand and her head level with a toilet, among other heads, legs, pants. Egle Martin was pictured at a rehearsal. Several dozen accomplices lent themselves happily to the idea. "Each picture, in fact, constituted a happening in itself," acknowledged Masotta, thirty-six, essayist, philosopher, and adviser to the proponent group.

The organizers composed a press release on the nonexistent happening that, accompanied by the pictures, reached newspapers and magazines. Several publications reported on the event, assuming it to be true. One even paid three thousand pesos for it. And on October 30th, *El Mundo*'s cultural supplement published the clarifying disclaimer, "which completes the happening." A piece by Eliseo Verón sociologized the matter, defining it thus: "[T]he reader is informed that he has been informed about something that never took place, which implies a *reductio ad absurdum* of the very notion of information, and, by extension, the unusual image of media outlets operating in the void." The *happening-makers* had intended to develop an aesthetic experience; Verón, the greying sociologist, bestowed on it a moral value.

To this degree, apparently, it's also not something new. César Tiempo, for example, published in his youth a book of fiercely amorous poems, which he signed with a woman's name. He received many literary opinions from authorities in Argentinian poetry to whom he had sent the book; some missives even ventured into more intimate grounds. The forging of some texts supposedly unpublished by Rimbaud had specialists and connoisseurs, some years ago in France, in the middle of a heated dispute on their authenticity. Many voted in favor, and, fortunately for them, the elucidation came in the winter.

But, despite Verón's interpretation, the theorist, Masotta, insisted: "To produce that happening within mass media is an aesthetic idea, not a moral one." Masotta stressed that he does not believe, like Romero Brest, in the possibility of the elite's de-alienation through art nor, like some active *happening-makers*, that mass media is alienating in itself. He thinks, instead, that happenings constitute art that expresses in a positive way the alienation of current society to the extent that it criticizes the

lidad. Curiosamente, el mismo Jacoby repartía ejemplares mimeografiados de esa crítica frente a las vidrieras del Instituto Di Tella. ■

separation between man and that which he represents. He considers that it makes men and objects equal and that it breaches the divide between actor and character that exists, for example, in theater: each participant acts as in life itself.

But two objections, which Masotta accepted as serious, contradict this appreciation: although the *Happening for a Dead Boar* did not take place, to get the pictures, the organizers made several deliberate happenings, whose protagonists acted and posed as characters. And its elucidation, by pretending to illustrate the possibility of deformation or deceit by the media, turns an aesthetically designed experience into a moral one. “At a base level, it’s about an aestheticizing attitude,” said the painter Carlos Gorriarena, forty years old, a diver for new plastic expressions. “Not because the artist cannot do such things. Or politics. Or a child. But because it attributes an aesthetic category to a phenomenon that does not have it.”

But perhaps the most vital perspective is that of Susana Muzzio, the sharp-witted mistress of the house in which the happening did not take place. “I feel frustrated. Everybody thinks we had a lot of fun, but nothing happened; that’s why I proposed we do it, for real this time.” Some friends complained because they had not been invited. Certain friends frowned at her: “A girl that attended told me she saw all kinds of things there, naked women and whatnot,” one said. The neighbors, since the first appearance of the article in *El Mundo*, have manifested a sudden and unexpected love for gardening: they trim the hedges adjoining Susana Muzzio’s house, prune their trees, arrange their vines, and always adopt a position that allows them to peep on “the house of the happening.”

Masotta’s mother did not believe him when he explained that no such party had happened. “But it was in the paper!” she remarked. But one critique of the happening, by sociologist Dario Cantón, pointed out last week that the type of information chosen “to portray the possibilities of *deceit* that the media outlets hold was information with no implication in terms of its meaning for global society” and not something “about a nonexistent movement of troops or high-rank meeting, about the decision of cardinal Caggiano to promote an Argentine Catholic Church that favors social revolution, or any other event along these lines, which could warrant a clarification of the information and maybe the eventual reprimand or dismissal of those who had lent themselves to this game.” Which, for Cantón, invalidates the experience also from the point of view of its morality. Curiously, Jacoby himself handed out mimeographed copies of this review in front of the windows of the Di Tella Institute.



Antipop

Augusto Trucco, La Plata, 1966

ANTIPOP

Desde hace muchos años el señor Wells demostró lo que se puede hacer al inventar una noticia y transmitirla masivamente: la invasión de los marcianos que se irradió en varios países provocó escenas de pánico y hasta suicidios. Frente a este antecedente, lo que hicieron los señores "pops" al inventar un happening y hacer publicar la noticia, no pasa de una burda falsificación, carente de ingenio y de inteligencia, y los periodistas que se prestaron a la maniobra tampoco merecen ningún elogio. Que el happening haya existido o no al público le importa un rábano: leyó la información como una curiosidad más, lo mismo que se leen esos recuadritos de algunos diarios sobre el nacimiento de un cordero de cinco patas o que el alcalde de algún pueblito perdido en el mundo prohibió que los gallos canten al amanecer. Son noticias que se leen por entretenimiento, para descargarse de las tensiones del día, y a nadie le importa que sean verdaderas o no.

Por eso no estoy de acuerdo con la carta del señor Juan Carlos Ongaro (Nº 6). Con estos señores "pops" no hay que ser blando. Estos no son tiempos en la Argentina para andar perdiendo las horas y los días en entretenimientos intrascendentes. Ayuden ustedes a fomentar el verdadero arte, de cualquier tendencia, pero verdadero; difundan la cultura y no malgasten su espacio. Ya hay otras revistas y un millonario Instituto di Tella que fomentan esos escapismos; allá ellos . . .

AUGUSTO TRUCCO
La Plata

Reader's letter to *Inédito* magazine. Written by Augusto Trucco, La Plata, 1966. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

Many years ago already, Mr. Wells proved what can be done by inventing a piece of news and widely transmitting it: the Martian invasion, broadcast in several countries, caused panic fits and even suicides. Against this precursor, what "pop" gentlemen did by fabricating a happening and publishing it as news is no more than a mere falsification, lacking any ingenuity or intelligence, and the reporters that lent themselves to the gimmick are also undeserving of any praise. The public could not care less whether the happening existed or not: they read the information as a trifling curiosity, in the same way in which one reads those little columns in certain newspapers on the birth of a five-legged lamb, or that the mayor of some town in the middle of nowhere forbid its roosters to crow at sunrise. They are news one reads for entertainment, to let go of the day's tensions, and nobody cares whether they are true or not.

This is why I am not in agreement with Juan Carlos Ongaro's letter (no. 6). One must not be soft with these "pop" gentlemen. These are not times, in Argentina, to go about spending days and hours on inconsequential entertainment. Help to foster true art, of any trend, but true; spread culture and don't waste its space. There are other magazines and a millionaire

Di Tella Institute that cultivate those escapisms; to each their own . . .

AUGUSTO TRUCCO

La Plata



plagio, porque su energía es superior a la estructura que los contiene.

Urondo lo sabe, sin duda, y lo sintetiza en "La pura verdad", esa admirable arte poética que cierra su libro: "...siempre viví desilumbrado / por el puro alcohol, el libro bien escrito, la carne perfecta...". Difícil para algunos comprenderlo. Sin jactancia puedo decir / que la vida es lo mejor que conozco". La vida, claro, que ocupa cada página de esta pila bautismal donde la poesía del país confirma su nombre y apellido. *

Ese contemporáneo

Descartes: Obras escogidas — Fue durante el invierno de 1619 que René Descartes, encontrándose en Alemania, se detuvo ocasionalmente en una aldea cercana a Ulm. Y ocurrió que "no encontrando conversación alguna que me divirtiera —cuenta en el *Discurso del Método*— y no teniendo tampoco, por suerte, cuidados ni pasiones que me turbaran, permaneció todo el día encerrado solo junto a una estufa, con todo el ocio necesario para entregarme a mis pensamientos". Fue en aquella aldea y en aquel periodo de ocio pensativo que el joven filósofo francés contaba de su "alucinación a descubrir los fundamentos de una 'ciencia admirable' que pondría en serio aprieto a la ciencia tradicional. Fue entonces que Descartes, pensador solitario, frívolo, temeroso de su seguridad personal, viajero incansable y que vivió gran parte de su vida fuera de su patria, inició la revolución intelectual más grande de los tiempos modernos.

Fundador del idealismo y del racionalismo, trazó los caminos que transitaron, luego, todo el pensamiento filosófico y científico del Occidente, incluso el de los que se levantarán contra él. En adelante, el valor de su obra no tendrá eclipse; cualquier innovación filosófica deberá "peregrinar" hacia sus fuentes para encontrar allí un auténtico punto de partida. Y esto porque hay en Descartes un ascetismo de la razón, un ejercicio purificado de lo superfluo, una vocación por lo concreto y una medida cautelosa metodológica, aliada con la mayor audacia especulativa, que se impone como una lección necesaria toda vez que la filosofía aspira a un nuevo comienzo. Basta recordar el ejemplo de Husserl: la obra principal del fundador de la fenomenología —acaso el más importante movimiento filosófico en lo que va del siglo— lleva el nombre de *Meditaciones Cartesianas*.

Todo ello indica que el interés actual por la obra de Descartes no responde a una actitud histórica evocadora del pasado, sino a una estricta necesidad filosófica. Esta necesidad llevó a dos estudiosos argentinos a acometer la empresa de traducir las principales obras del filósofo del siglo XVII. Ellos son Ezequiel de Olaso, 35, becario del Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y técnicas, y Tomás Zwanck, 38, profesor de lenguas clásicas y miembro del Centro de Investigaciones Filosóficas.

Los antecedentes de traducciones argentinas del opus cartesiano no son

abundantes; basta mencionar la que efectuó Gregorio Halperin de los Principios de la Filosofía, Losada, 1951, y la que realizó Risieri Frondizi del *Discurso del Método*, edición de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1954. La obra que Ezequiel de Olaso y Tomás Zwanck llevaron a cabo con estas *Obras Escogidas* es notable en más de un aspecto. Esta vez no se trata de una traducción parcial sino de la de un conjunto extenso que comprende los principales textos filosóficos de Descartes. En consecuencia, diversos fragmentos y cartas conocen la luz por vez primera en nuestra lengua. Olaso y Zwanck trabajaron durante más de tres años, alternando en un contrapunto de exigencias que pasaban de la severidad conceptual del primero a la obsesiva precisión filológica del segundo. Las Reglas para la dirección del Espíritu requirieron tres redacciones sucesivas hasta alcanzar un nivel de rigurosos ajustes que, según algunos, lindaba con el maquismo. Pero el resultado está a la vista: el lector de


Louvre
Descartes, según Hals: Viviendo.

lengua española cuenta ya con una de las versiones directas más acabadas de la obra del gran filósofo moderno.

El prólogo, la selección y notas también pertenecen a Olaso, quien examina las traducciones anteriores y efectúa atinadas observaciones. Sus notas no son recargadas y sostienen, con elegancia, la pesadez de la exhibición erudita. La selección es apropiada y no incluye ningún texto destinado a los estudios de la filosofía cartesianiana. Olaso ya mostró su talento en el virtuosismo, un tanto "mundano", del ensayo (*Los nombres de Unamuno*, Sudamericana, 1963). Ahora, al acometer el "retiro" monacal de la traducción y las notas escuetas, asume el ascetismo de la pesquisa insistente y sin brillo. Pero aquí nuevamente sale airoso y da pruebas de una vocación filosófica severa e inteligente.

Es posible observar que el año que terminó fue, para nuestro país, fértil en la versión de grandes textos. Hace pocos meses apareció una memorable traducción directa del pali, con introducción y traducción del súmptuoso Buda, realizadas por la orientalista Carmen Dragonetti (30).

A esta obra sumamos ahora los es-

fuerzos de Olaso y de Zwanck. El trabajo de estos tres jóvenes argentinos, y el de otros similares que se hallan en marcha (Eduardo García Belsunce traduce los textos precríticos de Kant, Francisco Olivieri a los clásicos, y Margaret Costa a Hunedo) poseen una significación especial. No es un hecho promotor que la joven filosofía argentina haya decidido comentar por un acto de fidelidad honesta, escrupulosa y atenta a la palabra de los grandes maestros? (Sudamericana, 1967, 525 páginas, 1.260 pesos). *

Las malas artes

The bad arts

Primera Plana, no. 280, December 19, 1967

Review. Published in the magazine *Primera Plana*, no. 280, December 19, 1967, 89–90. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

Oscar Masotta et al.: Happening. — Happening? Esta palabra, cargada aún de infinitos malentendidos, víctima de la moda, que parece nombrar desde un escándalo en la Casa de Gobierno hasta un sofisticado party, seña, sin embargo, a uno de los borbones más ricos y pestilentes por donde el arte contemporáneo supura su crisis, vuelca sobre sí mismo para comprender sus límites y emprender de nuevo. A lo largo de diez años, desde que se produjo por vez primera en los Estados Unidos, nunes el happening adquirió la estructura de un movimiento o un sistema. La efímera condición de todos esos experimentos colaboró a su agotamiento, al cabo de una década, y hasta hizo sospechar a algunos lúcidos críticos que el happening nunca gozó de una sólida existencia. En un reciente artículo sobre el Marqués de Sade, por ejemplo, Roland Barthes desliza la siguiente definición: el happening es "un arte, no de lo que está pasando, sino de lo que va a pasar".

Salvo algunos meritorios ejemplos, Buenos Aires nunca asistió a verdaderas, originales happenings. Los que aquí fueron repeticiones, más o menos desdichadas, de otros que acontecieron en Nueva York o en París, y se ejecutaron en el Instituto Di Tella y sus cercanías por las siguientes personas: Oscar Masotta (40 años, autor de un ensayo sobre Roberto Arlt), Alicia Páez, Roberto Jacoby, Eduardo Costa, Raúl Escari, Mandela Ezcurra, casi todos estudiantes de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras y Marta Minujín.

Resulta aventurado un balance del happening, pensado en Buenos Aires, en tales condiciones. Es el mejor de los intentos, sin embargo, la característica de una reflexión sobre otras reflexiones, o sobre lo que se sabe del fenómeno, gestado en otra parte. A este privilegiado rubro pertenece la monografía de Alicia Páez incluida en el volumen (que fue leída por la autora en octubre de 1966, en el Instituto Di Tella): "El concepto de happening y las teorías" es un cuidado resumen de toda la biografía existente (publicada en su mayoría en los Estados Unidos) y puede servir, si no como comprensión exhaustiva del happening, al menos como punto de partida para una posible revolución en el lenguaje de los espectáculos.

El happening y otras experiencias cercanas, aunque no hayan surgido en Buenos Aires, y en su mayoría en Estados Unidos, sus mismos fundamentos parecen haber producido una materia teatral efectivamente distinta, y de ahí que resulten realizadas,

An assessment of the happening might be adventurous, if we consider it in Buenos Aires, under such conditions. In the best-case scenario, the attempt would be a reflection on other reflections, or on what is known of the genre, developed elsewhere. To this privileged category belongs Alicia Páez's monograph, included in the volume (and read by the author in October 1966 at the Di Tella Institute) *The Concept of Happening and All Theories*, which is a careful summary of all existing

BEST-SELLERS

FICCIÓN

- 1) Cambio de piel, por Carlos Fuentes (Sudamericana).
- 2) El Señor Presidente, por Miguel Angel Asturias (Losada), 1º la semana pasada.
- 3) Cien años de soledad, por Gabriel García Márquez (Sudamericana), 3º.
- 4) La ciudad y los perros, por Mario Vargas Llosa (Sudamericana; reedición).
- 5) Una rosa para Morrison, por Christiane de Rochefort (Losada), 4º.

ENSAYO, POESÍA, FICCIÓN

- 1) El recuerdo y las cárceles, por Rodolfo Aráoz Alfaro (Ediciones de la Flor), 2º.
- 2) Naturalezas del peronismo, por Carlos Fayt y otros (Viracocha).
- 3) El humor negro, por Lewis Carroll y otros (Brújula), 1º.
- 4) Sindicatos y poder en la Argentina, por Roberto Carri (Sudamericana).
- 5) El país que quedó atrás, por Roberto Röth (Emecé).

* Librerías consultadas: Attilánida, Buenos Aires, Casanueva, Clásica & Moderna, El Ateneo, Fausto, Galatea, Huemul, Lea, Norte, Premier, Rivero y Santa Fe. *

JULIO CORTAZAR COMIENZA SU VUELTA AL DIA EN 80 MUNDOS

En vísperas de Nochebuena, Cortázar inquietará a la gente de Buenos Aires, iniciando en las librerías de todos los barrios su primera gran vuelta al día en la Argentina. Ya lo está haciendo en México. Lo acompaña el pintor argentino Julio Silva, que diagramó e ilustró en París las 224 páginas del que será uno de los libros más hermosos y originales de Cortázar.

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PRIMERA PLANA - Página 89

El falso happening.

Primera Plana

19 de diciembre de 1967 - N° 288

se podría decir, concretadas, las prescripciones formales de Artaud." Esta conclusión de Alicia Páez (quien no olvidó revisar las inagotables propuestas de Antonin Artaud) descuida peligrosamente el hecho de que el happening ha muerto de muerte natural, de puro estímulo, y que esa materia teatral, para existir de verdad, debe ser recuperada por procedimientos ajenos a los raptos de inspiración.

El compilador de este libro, líder del grupo de happenistas locales que figuran como coautores, incluye el texto de otra conferencia leída también en el Di Tella el año pasado: "Los medios de información enmarcan la estética contemporánea". Masotta vuela en redondo, allí sobre los tres pivotes básicos para comprender el sentido del arte del siglo, y postula, desde la crítica, una base para un nuevo arte de los medios de comunicación masiva. Pese a la oscuridad del discurso, se pueden encontrar esos pivotes cuando, desconfiado de su propia jerga, Masotta cita difusos fragmentos de autores como Roland Barthes, Lee Baxandall, Umberto Eco o MacLuhan.

Así se comprende el "viraje de la intención artística", cuando Baxandall dice: "El teatro siempre ha enseñado perspectivas sobre el pasado... Hoy retrocede para ayudarnos a ganar perspectivas acerca de cómo se forman las perspectivas". En ese dirección se entiende, entonces, el cambio de estructura de las manifestaciones artísticas (a partir de Dada en el campo de la poesía y la plástica, de Brecht en el teatro), cuando Roland Barthes advierte que la obra de arte perdió su sentido de continuum para acentuar los signos que la transmiten, la armazón estructural, "la tematización de los medios como medios".

Esa conceptualización de la obra trajo aparejada una invencible desconfianza por los signos, y se renovó el concepto Dada de la obra de arte, con un cambio sutil que consiste en adjudicar una categoría estética a la obra tematizadora, la misma que antes pretendía revisar los propios fundamentos de la obra de arte. De todos modos, la concepción de la obra abierta, y ahora para tener un valor todo aquello que el ejercicio señala como obra de arte: apenas una diferencia de actitud con el suicidio estético de Marcel Duchamp y sus *ready-made*.

Las fantásticas profecías de Marshall McLuhan dieron lugar en Buenos Aires a algunos experimentos de Marta Minujín y, por intermedio de Masotta, embajador del "filósofo" canadiense en el Bar Moderno, a un "happening de los medios de comunicación", organizado por Eduardo Costa, Roberto Jacoby y Raúl Escari, y otra obra de este último, llamada "Entre en discontinuidad". El happening del trio mencionado consistió en suministrar a la prensa fotografías y descripciones de un supuesto happening, y, tras la publicación de la "noticia", un desempeño que se aprehendió a "tematizar" los medios (tan sólo Primera Plana soltó la trama, aunque en el libro se dejó suponer, ambigüamente, que también cayó en ella).

El grupo de happenistas reúne aquí sus divagaciones predilectas sobre el

literature (published mainly in the United States) and can be useful, if not as an exhaustive comprehension of the happening, at least as a possible revolution in the language of exhibitions.

"The happening and other proximate experiences, even despite having arisen not at all adhered to the same foundations, seem to have produced an effectively different theater matter, and thus Artaud's formal prescriptions are realized or, one could say, concretized." Alicia Páez's (who did not forget to revise Antonin Artaud's endless proposals) conclusion dangerously neglects the fact that the happening has died a natural death, by sheer ephemerality, and that theater matter, in order to truly exist, has to be recovered by proceedings outside of inspirational bursts.

The editor of this book, leader of the local *happeners* group, includes the transcript of another lecture, also given at the Di Tella, last year: "Mass Media and the 'Discontinuous' Category in Contemporary Aesthetics." Masotta circles, therein, the three basic pillars for understanding the sense of this century's art, and he proposes, from a critical viewpoint, the basis for a new art of mass media. Despite the address's obscurity, those pillars can be found when, wary of his own jargon, Masotta quotes diaphanous fragments of authors such as Roland Barthes, Lee Baxandall, Umberto Eco, or MacLuhan.

Thus, the "shift in artistic intent" is understood when Baxandall says, "Theater has always taught perspectives on the past ... It now goes back to help us gain perspectives about how perspectives are formed." In that way, one understands, then, the shift in the structure of artistic manifestation (starting with Dada in the field of poetry and plastics, and Brecht in theater), when Roland Barthes warns that the artwork has lost its sense of *continuum* to highlight the signs that it transmits, the structural makeup, "the thematization of the media as media."

This conceptualization brought about an invincible mistrust in the signs, and Dada's concept of the artwork was renewed, with a subtle change that consists in giving the thematizing work an aesthetic category, the same one that earlier pretended to revise the very fundaments of the artwork. Anyhow, the concept of artwork has grown bigger, and now anything that the performer signals as artwork may have value: a mere difference in attitude away from Marcel Duchamp's aesthetic suicide and his *ready-mades*.

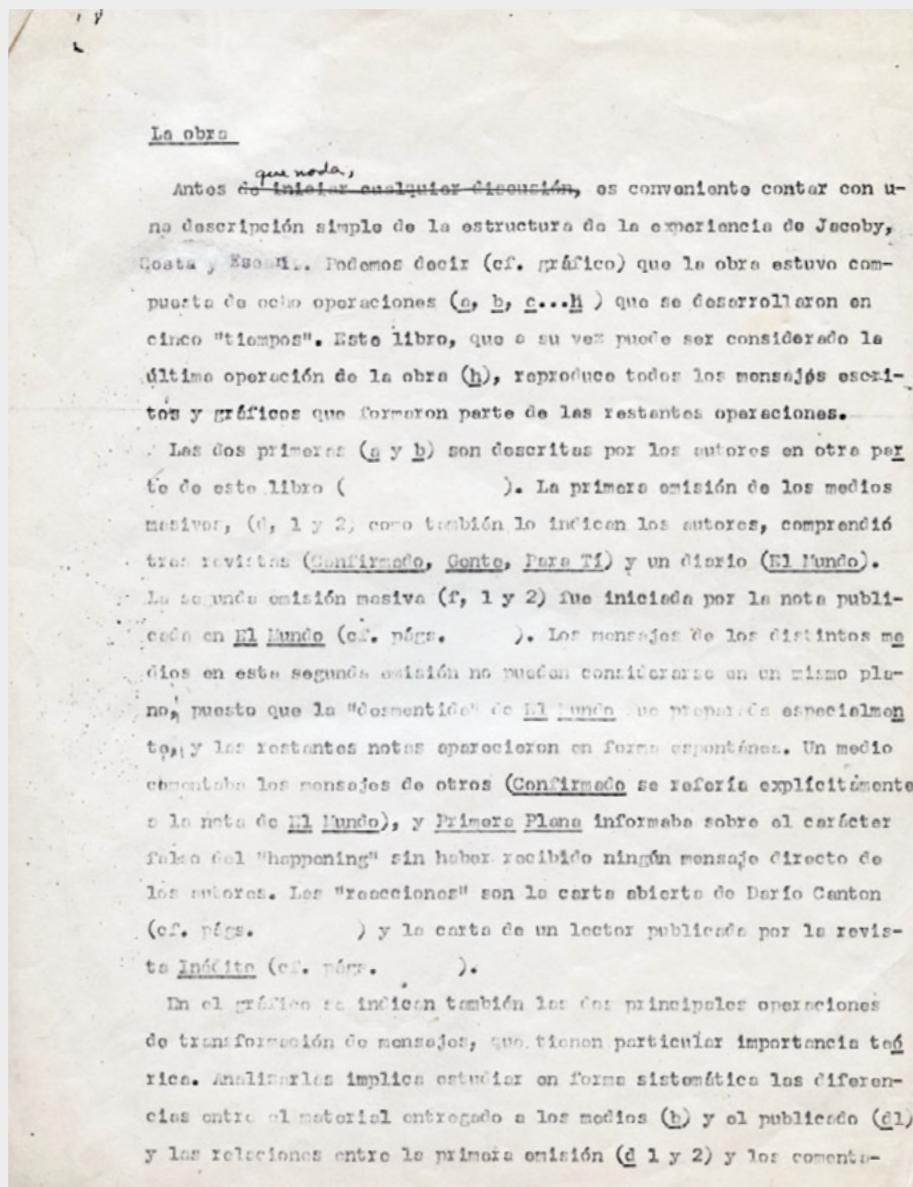
Marshall McLuhan's fantastic prophecies resulted, in Buenos Aires, in some experiments by Marta Minujín and, with Masotta as an intermediary—ambassador

for the Canadian “philosopher” in the Moderno bar—to a “Happening of Mass Media”, organized by Eduardo Costa, Roberto Jacoby, and Raúl Escari, and another work by the latter called “Enter Into Discontinuity”. The aforementioned trio’s happening consisted in administering to the press the photographs and descriptions of a supposed happening and, after the publication of the “news,” a disclaimer that aspired to “thematize” the media (only *Primera Plana* circumvented the trap, although in the book, one is left to believe that we also fell into it).

The happener group compiles then their favorite ramblings on the subject; they define themselves as “creators” and “precursors,” and they abruptly lower the book’s already low level of rigorousness. Among the articles that may prompt one to consult it is, without a doubt, the complex structural analysis of a happening by Marta Minujín, written by sociologist Eliseo Verón, and the article by the same author that was published in *El Mundo*, with the pretense of clarifying Costa, Escari, and Jacoby’s happening. He writes: “An evaluation of this experience from an aesthetic point of view is entirely outside my capacity, and I do not know if it can even be classified as an artistic object or not. Either way, I venture, as a sociological prediction, the suspicion that art of the post-industrial society of the future will be more alike to this experience (...) : an art of objects that we may not yet be able to imagine, but whose matter will not be physical but social, and whose form will be shaped by a systematic transformation of the structures of communication. Objects, in short, that will be difficult to keep in museums for later generations.”

In this same chapter in *Happening*, a rare pearl of lucidity and clarity pops up, a letter in which the Mexican poet Octavio Paz criticizes from afar, based on the information he received from the same interested party, the possibility of such experiences: “Your experiment’s aesthetic novelty does not lie in what you call *triple creation*, but in that you opposed the traditional idea of artwork made by the author to artwork created at the moment of transmission and reception. That is to say, you set the notion of *open artwork* against that of *closed artwork*,” writes Paz; and he adds, after expressing his agreement with Eliseo Verón’s predictions and x-raying the theoretical and hypothetical possibilities of an artwork, that “done with is aesthetic contemplation, because aesthetics dissolves into social life. Nevertheless, I also state that without working, without a starting point, there is neither transmission nor reception, and, consequently, there is neither art nor life” (*Jorge Alvarez, 1967; 206 pages, 680 pesos*). ♦ [A.G.]





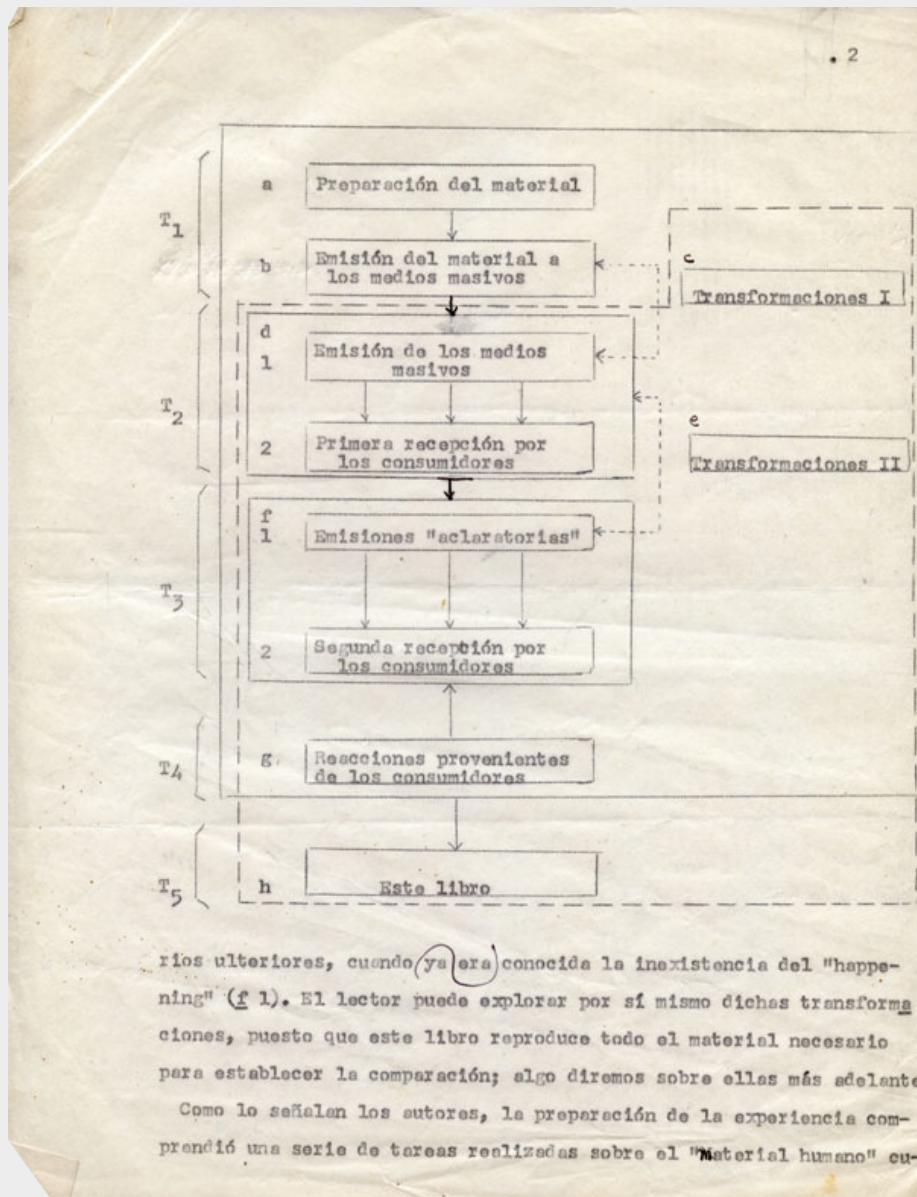
La obra The Artwork

Eliseo Verón, 1967

This article, written in May 1967, was going to be part of a book on the “art of mass media,” compiled by Roberto Jacoby, which in the end did not come into being. Sadly, a final page of notes has been lost. The article was later published in *Ramona* magazine, no. 9–10, December/March 2000. Roberto Jacoby Archive.

First and foremost, it's convenient to give a simple description of the structure of Jacoby, Costa, and Escari's experience. We can say (cf. graph) that the work was composed of eight operations (a, b, c, ..., h) that were developed at five “times.” This book, which can be considered the artwork's last operation (h), reproduces all written and graphic messages that were part of the remaining operations.

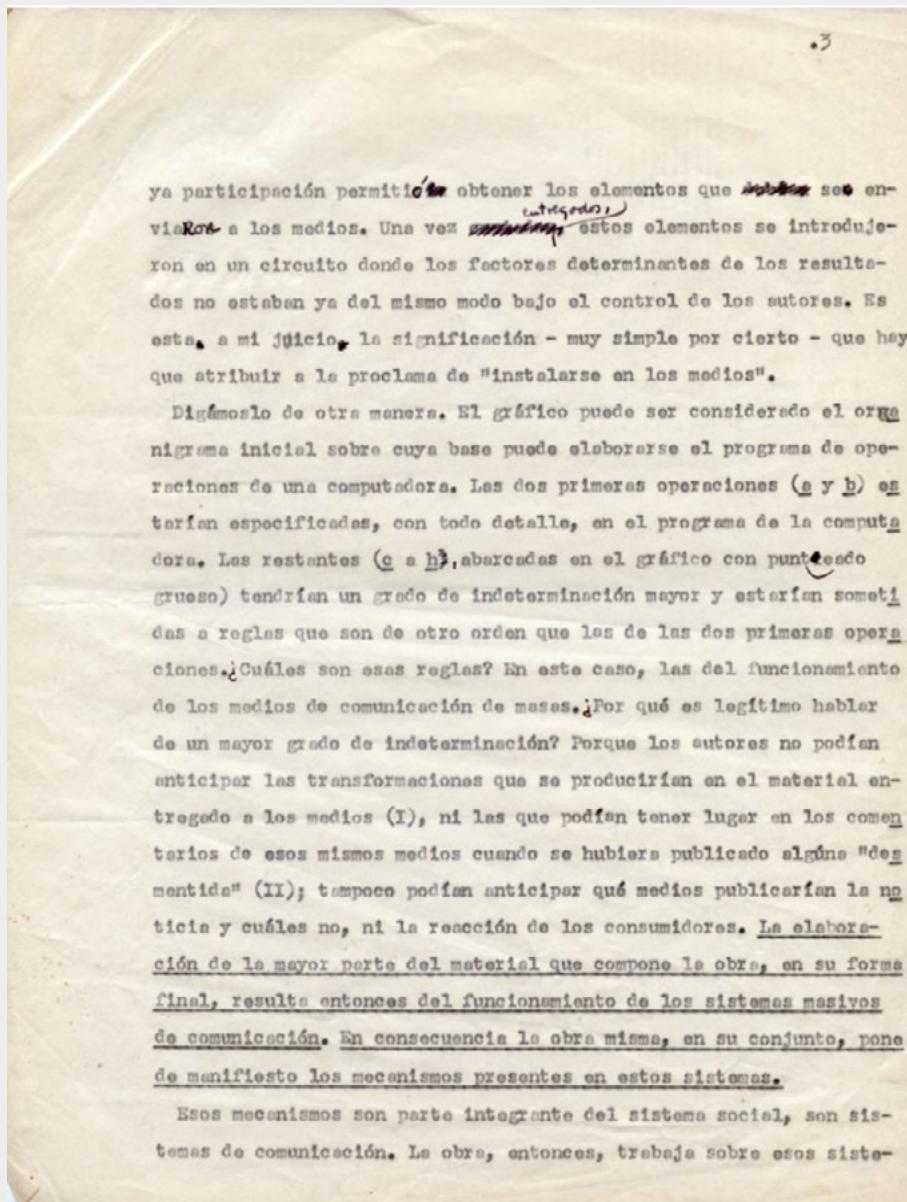
The first two (a and b) are described by the authors in a different section of this book. The media's first circulation (d, 1 and 2), as also explained by the authors, comprised three magazines (*Confirmado*, *Gente*, and *Para ti*) and a newspaper (*El Mundo*). The second mass emission (f, 1 and 2) was begun by the note published in *El Mundo*. The different messages given by each media outlet in this second emission cannot be considered to be on the same plane, given that the “disclaimer” given to *El Mundo* was specially composed, and the others appeared spontaneously. One outlet commented on the others' messages (*Confirmado* referred particularly to the note on *El Mundo*), and *Primera Plana* reported on the fake character of the *happening* without having received any direct messages from the authors. The “reactions” are Dario Canton's open letter and a reader's letter published by the magazine *Inédito*.



- T1 **a** Preparation of the material
b Emission of the material to the media
- c** Transformations 1
- T2 **d** 1. Mass media emission
2. First reception by consumers
- e** Transformations 2
- T3 **f** 1."Clarifying emissions
2. Second reception by consumers
- T4 **g** Reactions from consumers
- T5 **h** This book

Figure 1

Showed also in the graph are the two main operations of message transformation, with particular theoretical relevance. Their analysis implies the systematic study of the differences between the material delivered to the media (b) and published (d1), and the relationships between the first emission (d, 1 and 2) and the subsequent comments, when the nonexistence of the happening was already public knowledge (f1). The reader can explore these transformations by himself, given that this book reproduces all the material necessary to establish the comparison. We will say something about them later on.



ya participación permitió obtener los elementos que ~~debían~~ se en-
viaron a los medios. Una vez ~~introducidos~~ estos elementos se introdujeron en un circuito donde los factores determinantes de los resultados no estaban ya del mismo modo bajo el control de los autores. Es esta, a mi juicio, la significación - muy simple por cierto - que hay que atribuir a la proclama de "instalarse en los medios".

Digámoslo de otra manera. El gráfico puede ser considerado el organigrama inicial sobre cuya base puede elaborarse el programa de operaciones de una computadora. Las dos primeras operaciones (a y b) estarían especificadas, con todo detalle, en el programa de la computadora. Las restantes (c a h), abarcadas en el gráfico con punto grueso) tendrían un grado de indeterminación mayor y estarían sometidas a reglas que son de otro orden que las de las dos primeras operaciones. ¿Cuáles son esas reglas? En este caso, las del funcionamiento de los medios de comunicación de masas. Por qué es legítimo hablar de un mayor grado de indeterminación? Porque los autores no podían anticipar las transformaciones que se producirían en el material entregado a los medios (I), ni las que podían tener lugar en los comentarios de esos mismos medios cuando se hubiera publicado alguna "desmentida" (II); tampoco podían anticipar qué medios publicarían la noticia y cuáles no, ni la reacción de los consumidores. La elaboración de la mayor parte del material que compone la obra, en su forma final, resulta entonces del funcionamiento de los sistemas masivos de comunicación. En consecuencia la obra misma, en su conjunto, pone de manifiesto los mecanismos presentes en estos sistemas.

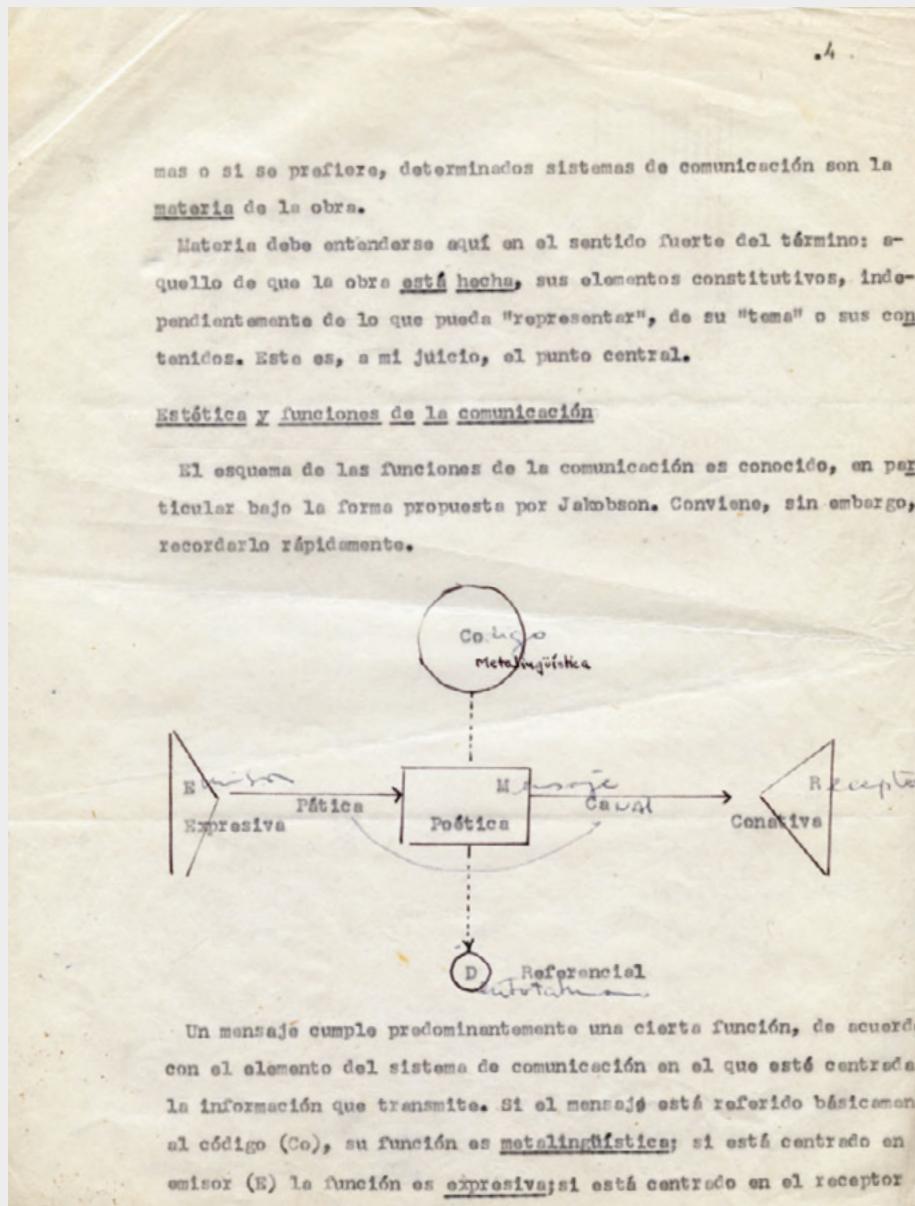
Eos mecanismos son parte integrante del sistema social, son sistemas de comunicación. La obra, entonces, trabaja sobre esos sistemas.

As the authors point out, the preparation of the experience comprised a series of tasks carried out by the *human material*, by which it was possible to obtain the elements that were sent to the media. Once delivered, these elements were introduced in a circuit where determined performance factors were no longer under the authors' control. This is, in my opinion, the —very simple indeed— significance that should be given to the proclamation “to install oneself in the media.”

Let us say it differently. The graph can be considered to be the initial organizational chart based on which a computer's operating system can be developed. The first two operations (a and b) would be specified in detail in the computer's system. The others (from c to h) would have a higher degree of indetermination and would be subjected to rules of a different caliber than those from the first two operations. Which are these rules? In this case, those of the workings of mass media. Why is it legitimate to talk about a higher degree of indetermination? Because the authors could not anticipate the transformations that would be produced in the material delivered to the media (I) nor those that could arise in the media's comments when a disclaimer was published (II); they also could not anticipate which media outlets would publish the news and which wouldn't, nor the consumers' reactions. The making of the larger part of the material that comprises the artwork, in its final shape, derives thus from the very operation of the systems of mass communication. Consequently, the work itself, in its totality, brings to light the mechanisms present in these systems.

These mechanisms are an integral part of the social system, they are systems of communication. The work, then, focuses on said systems or, rather; determined systems of communication are the artwork's substance.

Substance should be interpreted here in the strongest sense of the term: that which the work is made of, its constitutive elements, independently of what it can represent, of its *subject* or its contents. This is, in my view, the central issue.



ESTHETIC AND FUNCTIONS OF COMMUNICATION

The scheme of the functions of communication is well known, particularly as proposed by Jakobson. It's useful, nonetheless, to quickly review it.

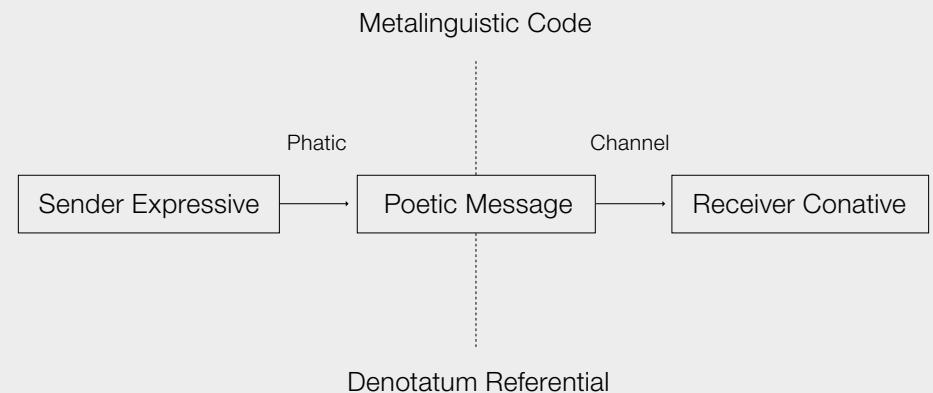
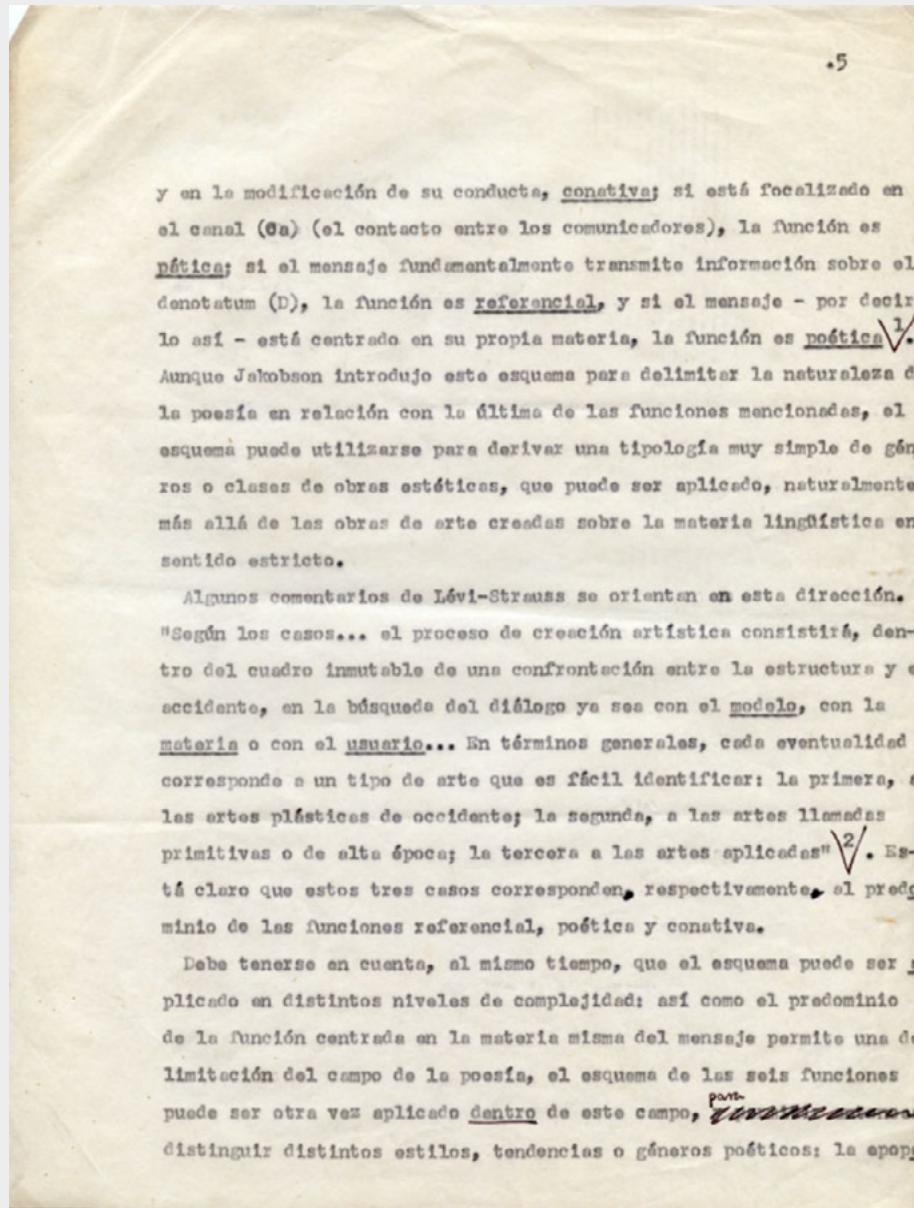


Figure 2

A message fulfills a particular function, depending on which element within the system of communication is the information it transmits focused on. If the message refers to the code (Co) its function is metalinguistic; if it does the sender (S), the function is emotive; if it is centered in the receiver and the modification of his behavior, conative; if it's focused on the channel (Ch) (the link between communicators) the function is phatic; if the message fundamentally transmits information on the denotatum (D), the function is referential; lastly, if the message is centered—so to speak—in its own material, the function is poetic. /1 Although Jakobson introduced this scheme to delimit the nature of poetry in relation to the last-mentioned function, it can be used to derive a very simple genre or class typology for esthetic works that can be naturally applied to more than those artworks created on linguistic matter strictly speaking.



y en la modificación de su conducta, conativa; si está focalizado en el canal (Ca) (el contacto entre los comunicadores), la función es pática; si el mensaje fundamentalmente transmite información sobre el denotatum (D), la función es referencial, y si el mensaje - por decirlo así - está centrado en su propia materia, la función es poética¹. Aunque Jakobson introdujo este esquema para delimitar la naturaleza de la poesía en relación con las últimas de las funciones mencionadas, el esquema puede utilizarse para derivar una tipología muy simple de géneros o clases de obras estéticas, que puede ser aplicado, naturalmente más allá de las obras de arte creadas sobre la materia lingüística en sentido estricto.

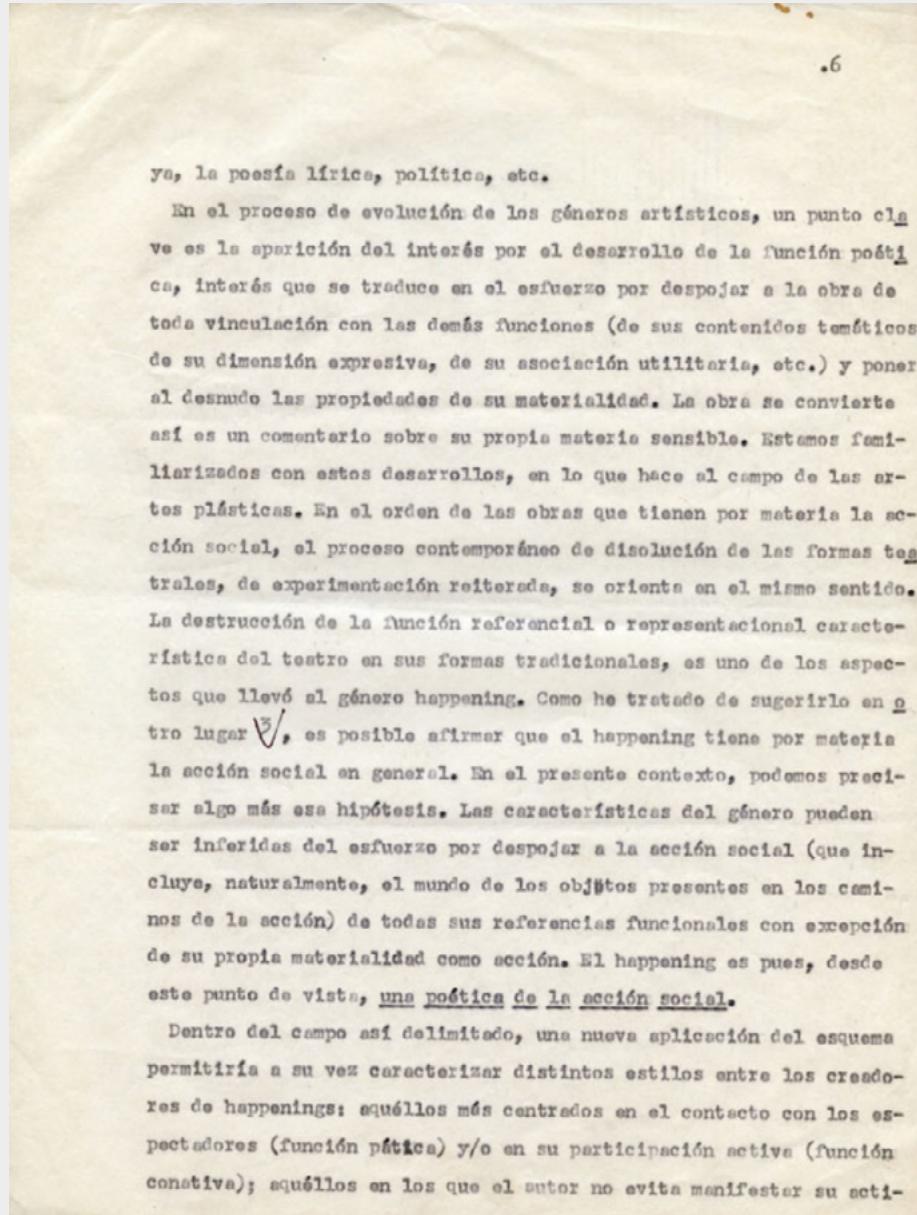
Algunos comentarios de Lévi-Strauss se orientan en esta dirección. "Según los casos... el proceso de creación artística consistirá, dentro del cuadro inmutable de una confrontación entre la estructura y el accidente, en la búsqueda del diálogo ya sea con el modelo, con la materia o con el usuario... En términos generales, cada eventualidad corresponde a un tipo de arte que es fácil identificar: la primera, a las artes plásticas de occidente; la segunda, a las artes llamadas primitivas o de alta época; la tercera a las artes aplicadas"². Está claro que estos tres casos corresponden, respectivamente, al predominio de las funciones referencial, poética y conativa.

Debe tenerse en cuenta, al mismo tiempo, que el esquema puede ser aplicado en distintos niveles de complejidad: así como el predominio de la función centrada en la materia misma del mensaje permite una delimitación del campo de la poesía, el esquema de las seis funciones puede ser otra vez aplicado dentro de este campo, ^{parte} ~~para~~ distinguir distintos estilos, tendencias o géneros poéticos; la epopeya

Some comments Lévi-Strauss made go about this direction. "The process of artistic creation, therefore, consists in trying to communicate (within the immutable framework of a mutual confrontation of structure and accident) either with the *model* or with the *materials* or with the future *user* ... Each case roughly corresponds to a readily identifiable form of art: the first to the plastic arts of the West, the second to so-called primitive or early art and the third to the applied arts"¹². It's clear that these three cases correspond respectively to the predominance of the referential, poetic, and conative functions.

It also must be taken into account that the scheme can be applied at different complexity levels. Such as the predominance of the function centered in the very material of the message allows for a delimitation of the field of poetry, so can the six-function scheme be once again applied within this field, to distinguish certain poetic styles, tendencies, or genres: the epic, lyric poetry, political poetry, etc.

In the evolutionary process of artistic genres, a key point is the appearance of an interest in the development of the poetic function, interest that is translated into an effort to strip the artwork of any link to the remaining functions (its thematic content, its expressive dimension, its utilitarian association, etc.) and to lay bare the properties of its materiality. The artwork is thus turned into a comment on its own sensible matter. We are familiar with these developments in the field of plastic arts. In the order of the works that have social action as their subject matter, the contemporary process of dissolution of theatrical forms, of repeated experimentation, is oriented similarly. The destruction of the referential or representational function characteristic of theater in its traditional forms is one of the elements that led to the happening genre. As I've tried to suggest elsewhere¹³, it's possible to affirm that the happening has as a subject social action in general. In the present context, we can specify that hypothesis further. The genre's characteristics can be inferred from the effort to strip social action (that naturally includes the world of objects present in the paths of action) of all its functional references besides its own materiality as action. The happening is thus, from this point of view, a poetics of social action.



ya, la poesía lírica, política, etc.

En el proceso de evolución de los géneros artísticos, un punto clave es la aparición del interés por el desarrollo de la función poética, interés que se traduce en el esfuerzo por despojar a la obra de toda vinculación con las demás funciones (de sus contenidos temáticos de su dimensión expresiva, de su asociación utilitaria, etc.) y poner al desnudo las propiedades de su materialidad. La obra se convierte así en un comentario sobre su propia materia sensible. Estamos familiarizados con estos desarrollos, en lo que hace al campo de las artes plásticas. En el orden de las obras que tienen por materia la acción social, el proceso contemporáneo de disolución de las formas teatrales, de experimentación reiterada, se orienta en el mismo sentido. La destrucción de la función referencial o representacional características del teatro en sus formas tradicionales, es uno de los aspectos que llevó al género happening. Como he tratado de sugerirlo en otro lugar ^{V/}, es posible afirmar que el happening tiene por materia la acción social en general. En el presente contexto, podemos precisar algo más esa hipótesis. Las características del género pueden ser inferidas del esfuerzo por despojar a la acción social (que incluye, naturalmente, el mundo de los objetos presentes en los caminos de la acción) de todas sus referencias funcionales con excepción de su propia materialidad como acción. El happening es pues, desde este punto de vista, una poética de la acción social.

Dentro del campo así delimitado, una nueva aplicación del esquema permitiría a su vez caracterizar distintos estilos entre los creadores de happenings: aquellos más centrados en el contacto con los espectadores (función pática) y/o en su participación activa (función conativa); aquellos en los que el autor no evita manifestar su acti-

Within the so-delimited field, a new application of the scheme would allow in turn the characterization of different styles among the creators of happenings: those centered in the connection to the spectators (phatic function) and/or in their active participation (conative function); those in which the author does not avoid manifesting his attitude about certain ideological complexes, transmitted then in terms rather more emotive than referential, as is maybe the case of Lebel's happenings and even those where an unfolding of the action into presence and image aims to thematize the code (metalinguistic function), like the happening titled *Prune Flat*, presented in Buenos Aires by Marta Minujin.

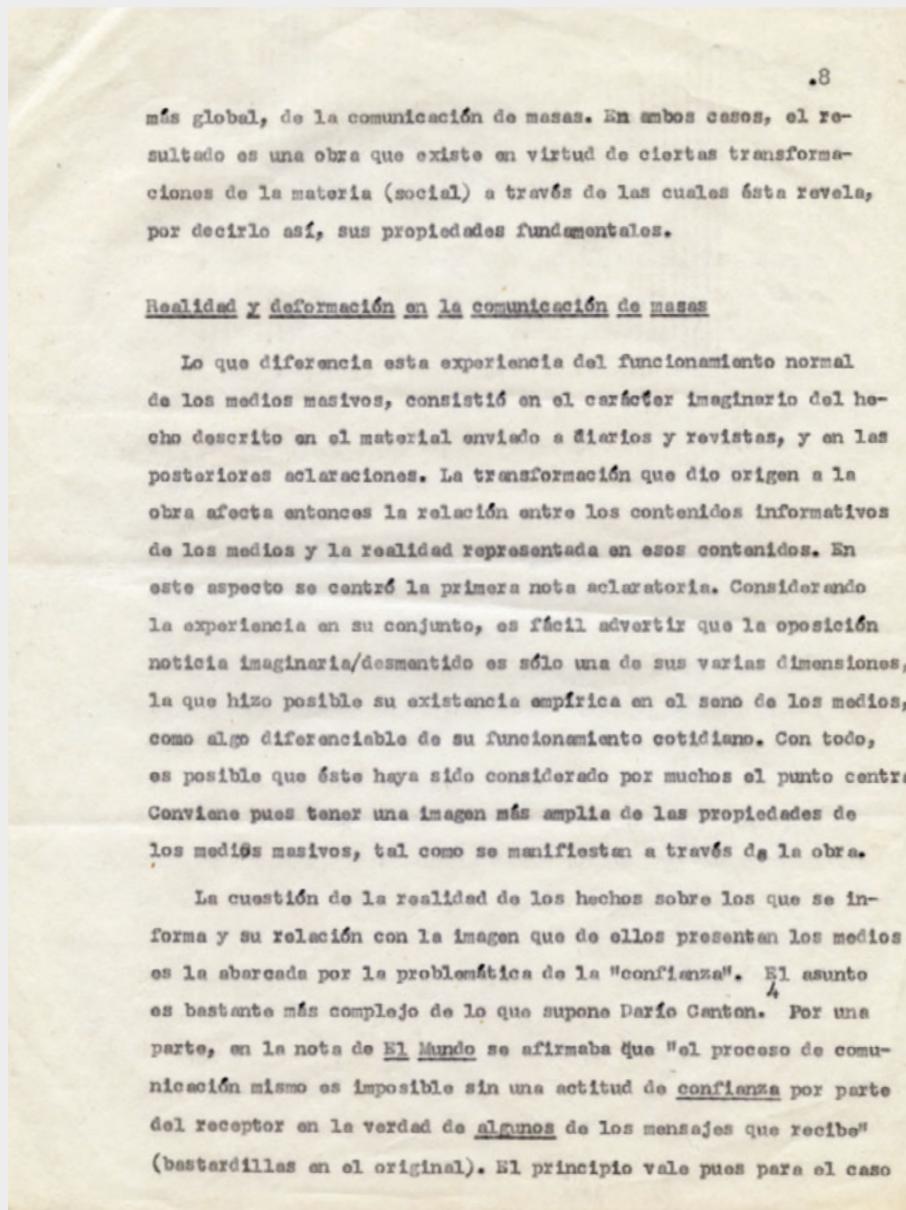
An awareness of the properties of messages is occurring similarly in the field of mass communication. When the power of the mass media to express, represent and modify the behavior of the receivers has been amply demonstrated and accepted as a fact of everyday life, the problem arises of their own materiality and the possibility of creating on them, no longer by taking them as languages to disseminate certain contents in society, but by thematizing their properties as languages. This opens up the possibility of having works aimed at manifesting the organizational forms of mass communication; of the poetics of mass media.

tud respecto de ciertos complejos ideológicos, transmitidos entonces en términos más bien expresivos que referenciales, como es tal vez el caso de los happenings de Lebel, e incluso aquellos donde un desdoblamiento de la acción en presencia e imagen apunta a tematizar el código (función metalingüística), como en el happening de , presentado en Buenos Aires por Marta Minujín.

Una toma de conciencia ~~de~~ ^{audítorio} de las propiedades de los mensajes se produce en el campo de la comunicación de masas. Cuando ya el poder de los medios masivos ~~ya no~~ para expresar, representar y modificar la conducta de los receptores ha sido sobradamente demostrado, ^{aceptado como un} ~~incorporados a los~~ hecho de la vida cotidiana, surge la problemática acerca de su propia materialidad y la posibilidad de crear sobre ellos no ya tomándolos como lenguajes para difundir ciertos contenidos en la sociedad, sino tematizando sus propiedades como lenguajes. Se abre pues la posibilidad de obras orientadas a manifestar las formas de organización de la comunicación de masas, la posibilidad de una poética de los medios masivos.

No hay pues, a mi juicio, una oposición radical entre el género happening y esta primera incursión en el campo de la poética de la comunicación de masas, como parecen creerlo los autores (cf.). Claro está que si bien no hay oposición, la diferencia no es por eso menos importante: radica en el nivel de organización de los sistemas sociales cuya materialidad sirve de base a las obras. El happening toma su materia de la acción social en su nivel más microscópico: aplica transformaciones (fragmenta, introduce la discontinuidad) en el ámbito de la acción interpersonal y su campo de objetos. La obra que estamos comentando lo hace en el pleno, mucho

There is then, in my view, no radical opposition between the genre happening and this first foray into the field of a poetics of mass communication, as the authors seem to believe. It's clear that although there is no opposition, the difference is no less important: it lies in the level of organization of the social systems whose materiality serves as the basis for the works. The happening takes its matter from social action at its most microscopic level: it applies transformations (it fragments; it introduces discontinuity) in the plane of interpersonal action and its field of objects. The work we are commenting on does so in the much more global domain of mass communication. In both cases, the result is a work that exists by virtue of certain transformations of the (social) material through which it reveals, so to speak, its fundamental properties.

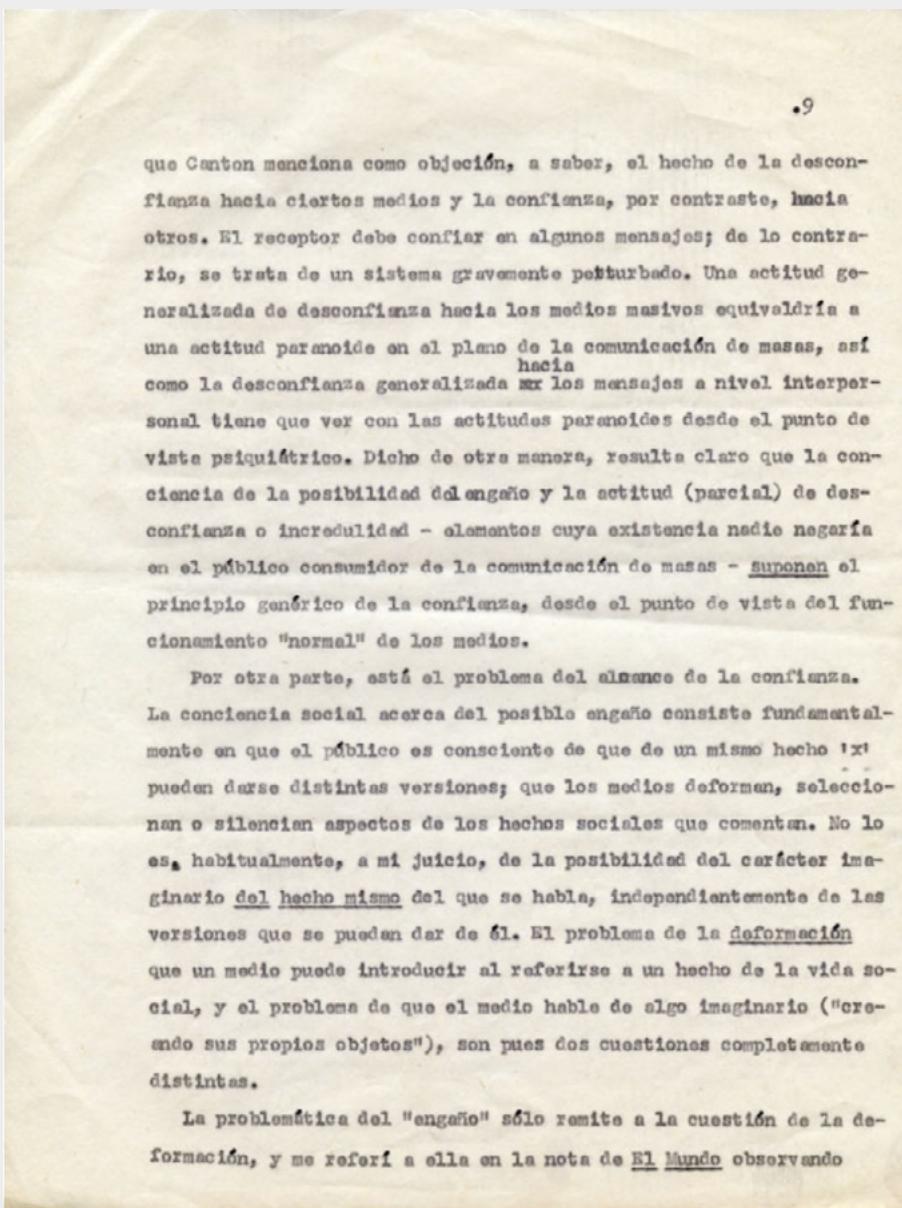


Eliseo Verón, "La obra," May 1967. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

REALITY AND DISTORTION OF MASS COMMUNICATION

What separates this experience from the normal functioning of mass media is the imaginary nature of the event described in the report sent to magazines and newspapers, and in the later disclaimers. The transformation that gave rise to the work affects then the connection between the media's informative content and the reality represented in said content. On this aspect is the first elucidatory note focused. Considering the experience as a whole, it's easy to notice that the opposition of imaginary report/disclaimer is only one of its many dimensions; that which made possible its empirical existence in the center of the media, as something distinguishable from its daily functioning. In all, it's possible that this was considered by many the central idea. It's useful, then, to have a broader image of the properties of mass media, as they are manifested by means of the artwork.

The relationship between the reality of the events informed about and their image as presented by the media is within the scope of the problem of "trust". The topic is much more complex than Dario Canton assumes.¹⁴ On one hand, the record in *El Mundo* affirmed that "the actual communicative process is impossible without an attitude of *trust*, on the part of the receiver, in *some* of the messages he receives" (italics in the original). The principle applies thus for the case that Canton mentions as an objection, namely the presence of mistrust towards certain outlets and of trust, on the contrary, on some others. The receiver must trust some messages, otherwise, we would have in our hands a highly disturbed system. A generalized attitude of distrust towards the media would equal a paranoid attitude in the plane of mass communication, just as the generalized distrust of messages on an interpersonal level has to do with paranoid attitudes from a psychiatric point of view. In other words, it's clear that being aware of the possibility of deception and the (partial) attitude of distrust or disbelief—elements whose mass existence—suppose the generic principle of trust, from the point of view of the "normal" functioning of the media.



que Cantón menciona como objeción, a saber, el hecho de la desconfianza hacia ciertos medios y la confianza, por contraste, hacia otros. El receptor debe confiar en algunos mensajes; de lo contrario, se trata de un sistema gravemente perturbado. Una actitud generalizada de desconfianza hacia los medios masivos equivaldría a una actitud paranoide en el plano de la comunicación de masas, así como la desconfianza generalizada ^{hacia} los mensajes a nivel interpersonal tiene que ver con las actitudes paranoides desde el punto de vista psiquiátrico. Dicho de otra manera, resulta claro que la conciencia de la posibilidad del engaño y la actitud (parcial) de desconfianza o incredulidad - elementos cuya existencia nadie negaría en el público consumidor de la comunicación de masas - suponen el principio genérico de la confianza, desde el punto de vista del funcionamiento "normal" de los medios.

Por otra parte, está el problema del alcance de la confianza. La conciencia social acerca del posible engaño consiste fundamentalmente en que el público es consciente de que de un mismo hecho 'x' pueden darse distintas versiones; que los medios deforman, seleccionan o silencian aspectos de los hechos sociales que comentan. No lo es, habitualmente, a mi juicio, de la posibilidad del carácter imaginario del hecho mismo del que se habla, independientemente de las versiones que se puedan dar de él. El problema de la deformación que un medio puede introducir al referirse a un hecho de la vida social, y el problema de que el medio hable de algo imaginario ("creando sus propios objetos"), son pues dos cuestiones completamente distintas.

La problemática del "engaño" sólo remite a la cuestión de la deformación, y me referí a ella en la nota de El Mundo observando

On the other hand, we have the issue of the extent of trust. The social awareness of the possible deceit consists mainly of the fact that the audience knows that from a single event "X" many different versions can arise; the fact that the media distorts, selects, or silences aspects of the social events they comment on. This awareness is not usually, in my opinion, of the possibility of the reported event being imaginary in nature, independently of all the many versions that can come of it. The problem of distortion that an outlet can introduce when referring to an event in social life and the problem of the outlet speaking of something imaginary ("creating its own objects") are thus two completely different issues.

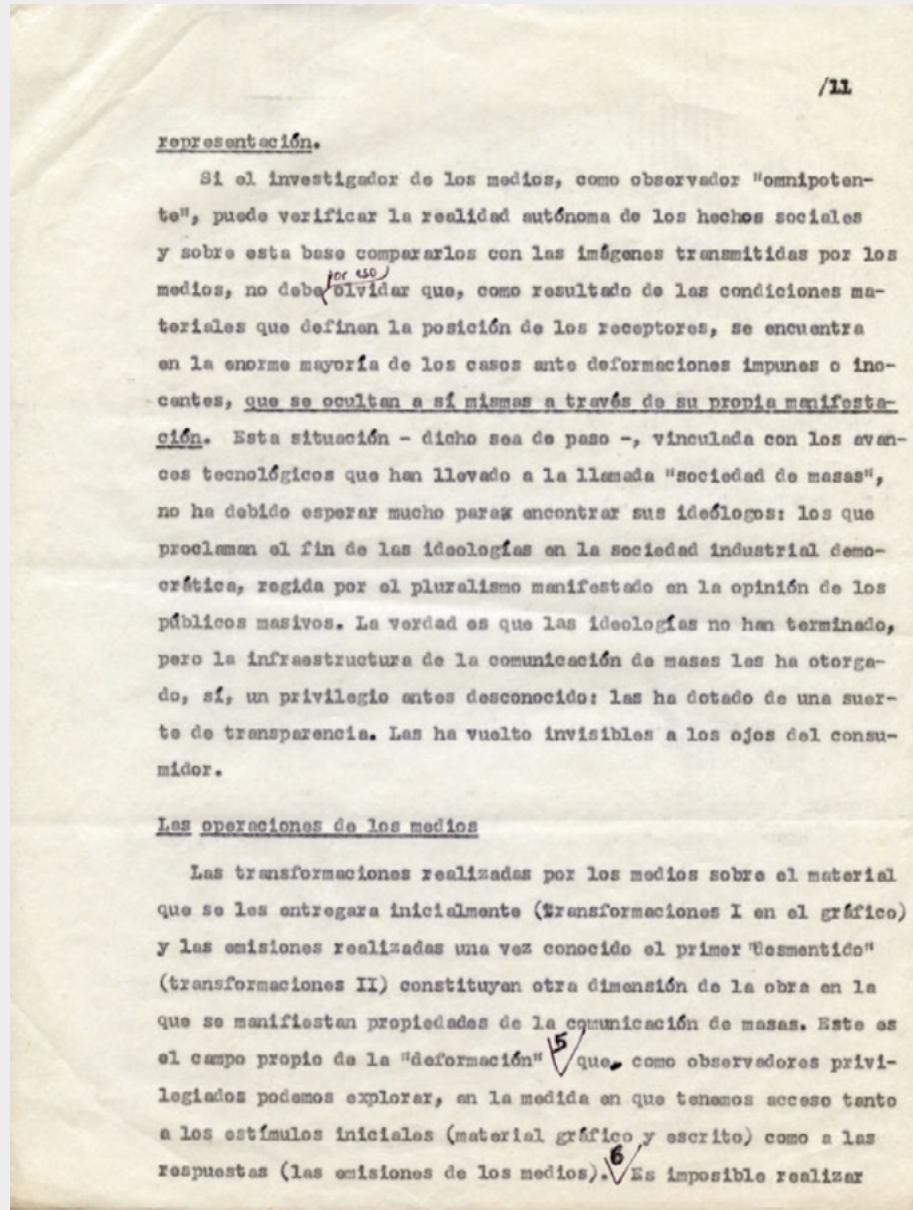
The question of "deceit" only goes as far as the issue of distortion, and I refer to it in the note in *El Mundo*, observing that the risk lay, precisely, in the consumer associating Jacoby, Costa, and Escari's experience with this problem, interpreting as "deceit" something that aimed at something else, at thematizing trust as a basic aspect of communication.

But the most important thing is to specify exactly how the thematization of trust is proposed in this work. This is linked to the second issue I just mentioned: that of the existence or reality of the event, and no longer that of its possible distortion. And here is where the thematization of trust leads to a basic aspect of mass communication. The reality of certain events, produced on the social stage and later commented on by mass media, is inconsequential, from the point of view of receivers, if there exist no channels of contact with those events that are independent of the information received through the media. The entire first part of my note in *El Mundo* tried to develop this matter. It was about showing that, on the one hand, the temporal difference between "x events" and their mass representation was minimal (and even null when TV transmits live); and, on the other hand, that for most of the consumers and regarding the larger part of events, the only contact with "x events" is gained through the media. The reality of the event tends thus to be confused, in mass communication, with its representation. This is the "truth" held in the transmission of an imaginary event. And this observation tends to void the issue of distortion for the habitual consumer of mass media, because the notion of distortion has no meaning if the event cannot be compared to its representation.

que el riesgo estaba, precisamente, en que el consumidor asociara la experiencia de Jacoby, Costa y Escari a este problema, interpretando como un caso de "engaño" algo que apuntaba a otra cosa: a tematizar la confianza como un hecho de base de la comunicación.

Pero lo más importante es precisar de qué modo está planteada la tematización de la confianza en esta obra. Esto se vincula con el segundo de los problemas que acabo de mencionar: el de la existencia o realidad del hecho, y no ya el de su posible deformación. Y es aquí donde la tematización de la confianza conduce a una propiedad básica de la comunicación de masas. La realidad ~~existencia~~ ~~de ciertos hechos que, producidos en el escenario social, son~~ comentados por los medios masivos es, desde el punto de vista de los receptores, una cuestión vacía si no existen canales de contacto con esos hechos, que sean independientes de la información recibida a través de los medios. Toda la primera parte de mi nota en El Mundo intentaba desarrollar este punto. Se trataba de mostrar que, por un lado, la diferencia temporal entre los "hechos x" y su representación masiva era mínima (cuando la televisión transmite in vivo se vuelve nula); y por otro lado, que para la mayor parte de los consumidores y respecto de la enorme mayoría de los hechos, el único contacto con los "hechos x" se da a través del medio masivo. La realidad del hecho tiende pues a confundirse, en la comunicación masiva, con su representación. Esta es la "verdad" contenida en la transmisión de un hecho imaginario. Y esta constatación tiende a anular el significado del problema de la deformación, para el consumidor habitual de los medios masivos, porque la noción de deformación no tiene sentido si no puede comparar el hecho con su

If the media's investigator, as an "omnipotent" observer, can verify the autonomous reality of the social events and upon this compare them with the images transmitted by the media, he should not forget that, as a result of the material conditions that define the position of receivers, he is in most cases in the presence of unpunished or innocent distortions that hide themselves through their own manifestation. This situation, incidentally, related to the technological advances that have led to a so-called "mass society", should not have had to wait long to find its ideologues: those who claim an end to ideologies in our democratic and industrial society, ruled by the pluralism manifested in the opinion of mass audiences. The truth is that ideologies are not done with, but the infrastructure of mass communication has allowed them to have a privilege previously unknown; has granted them a sort of transparency. It has turned them invisible in the eyes of the consumer.



representación.

Si el investigador de los medios, como observador "omnipotente", puede verificar la realidad autónoma de los hechos sociales y sobre esta base compararlos con las imágenes transmitidas por los medios, no debe ^{for 10} olvidar que, como resultado de las condiciones materiales que definen la posición de los receptores, se encuentra en la enorme mayoría de los casos ante deformaciones impunes o inocentes, que se ocultan a sí mismas a través de su propia manifestación. Esta situación - dicho sea de paso -, vinculada con los avances tecnológicos que han llevado a la llamada "sociedad de masas", no ha debido esperar mucho para encontrar sus ideólogos: los que proclaman el fin de las ideologías en la sociedad industrial democrática, regida por el pluralismo manifestado en la opinión de los públicos masivos. La verdad es que las ideologías no han terminado, pero la infraestructura de la comunicación de masas les ha otorgado, sí, un privilegio antes desconocido: las ha dotado de una suerte de transparencia. Las ha vuelto invisibles a los ojos del consumidor.

Las operaciones de los medios

Las transformaciones realizadas por los medios sobre el material que se les entregara inicialmente (transformaciones I en el gráfico) y las emisiones realizadas una vez conocido el primer "desmentido" (transformaciones II) constituyen otra dimensión de la obra en la que se manifiestan propiedades de la comunicación de masas. Este es el campo propio de la "deformación"⁵ que, como observadores privilegiados podemos explorar, en la medida en que tenemos acceso tanto a los estímulos iniciales (material gráfico y escrito) como a las respuestas (las emisiones de los medios).⁶ Es imposible realizar

THE MEDIA'S OPERATIONS

The transformations made by the media upon the material to them initially delivered (transformations I in the first graph) and the emissions made once the first "disclaimer" was known (transformations II) constitute an additional dimension of the work, wherein features of mass communication are manifested. This is the field of "distortion" /5 itself, that we as privileged observers can explore, insofar as we have access both to the initial stimuli (graphic and written material) and to the reactions (the media's emissions). /6 It's impossible here to carry out a more or less complete analysis; we can at least suggest some topics that, if developed, would allow for the characterization of some transformative rules used by the media.

We will consider that the press release prepared by the authors and accompanied by the graphic material builds an initial semantic field; the modifications undergone by this field are operations made by the media. The following list is presented only for illustrative purposes and is far from complete, even with regard to the material by the media included in the work.

aquí un análisis más o menos completo; podemos al menos sugerir algunos temas que, desarrollados, permitirían caracterizar algunas de las reglas de transformación utilizadas por los medios.

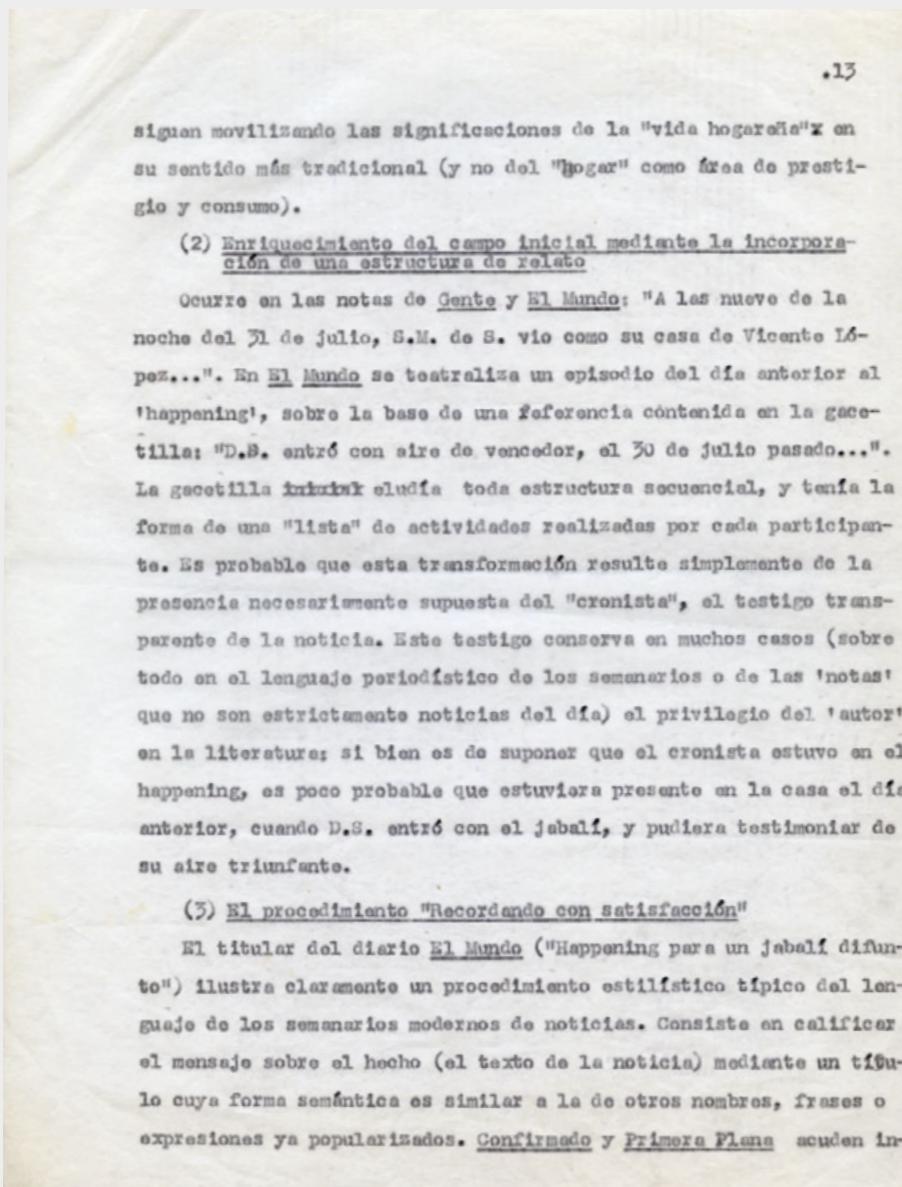
Consideraremos que la gacilla confeccionada por los autores y acompañada del material gráfico, crea un campo semántico inicial; las modificaciones sufridas por este campo son operaciones realizadas por los medios. La lista que sigue sólo tiene ~~el~~ propósito ilustrativo y dista de ser completa, ~~sin~~ con respecto al material de los medios incluidos en la obra.

(1) Empobrecimiento del campo inicial por personalización, y modificación del tema mítico.

Es el caso de la nota publicada en Para Ti. El campo inicial corresponde a un acontecimiento social, calificado de "happening". Aquí la significación central pasa a ser la figura de una actriz, procedimiento tributario de la mitología de la "estrella", que subsiste en su forma tradicional en muchas publicaciones de clase media ~~xxdxxdxxdxxd~~, no obstante los casos de modernización estilística como la ocurrida en Para Ti. El happening se transforma en una anécdota transmitida por ese informante privilegiado siempre presente en las secciones de "chismes" de las revistas femeninas más tradicionales, en un episodio que revela determinadas características o sucesos de la vida de la estrella. Muchas cosas hay, sin duda, detrás de esta personalización y mucho podría decirse de las propiedades de las secciones ~~que~~ dedicadas a transmitir la "petite histoire" de los personajes populares. Agregaré una hipótesis: tal vez el mito del happening y sus asociaciones con las liberalidades y el "snobismo" de ciertas élites, no constituya de por sí materia utilizable para publicaciones de clase media que fundamentalmente

(1) An impoverishment of the initial field by personalization, and a modification of the mythical subject.

This is the case of the article published in *Para Ti*. The initial field corresponds to a social occurrence, classified as a happening. Here the main significance establishes around the figure of an actress, a tributary procedure of the mythology of the "stars", that subsists in its traditional form in many middle-class articles, regardless of the instances of stylistic modernization like this that occurred in *Para Ti*. The happening is transformed into an anecdote transmitted by that privileged informant always present in gossip sections of the more traditional women's magazines, in an episode that reveals specific features or events of the lives of the stars. There is certainly a lot behind this personalization, and a lot could also be said of the characteristics of the sections dedicated to transmitting *la petite histoire* of famous and popular characters. I will venture a hypothesis: perhaps, the myth of the happening and its association with the liberalities and snobbery of certain elites does not constitute on its own useful matter for the middle-class publications that to this day remain essential for the significance of "home life" in its more traditional sense (and not of "home" as an area of prestige and consumption).



siguen movilizando las significaciones de la "vida hogareña" en su sentido más tradicional (y no del "hogar" como área de prestigio y consumo).

(2) Enriquecimiento del campo inicial mediante la incorporación de una estructura de relato

Ocurre en las notas de Gente y El Mundo: "A las nueve de la noche del 31 de julio, S.M. de S. vio como su casa de Vicente López...". En El Mundo se teatraliza un episodio del día anterior al 'happening', sobre la base de una referencia contenida en la gaceta: "D.B. entró con aire de vencedor, el 30 de julio pasado...". La gaceta incluye claramente toda estructura secuencial, y tenía la forma de una "lista" de actividades realizadas por cada participante. Es probable que esta transformación resulte simplemente de la presencia necesariamente supuesta del "cronista", el testigo transparente de la noticia. Este testigo conserva en muchos casos (sobre todo en el lenguaje periodístico de los semanarios o de las 'notas' que no son estrictamente noticias del día) el privilegio del 'autor' en la literatura; si bien es de suponer que el cronista estuvo en el happening, es poco probable que estuviera presente en la casa el día anterior, cuando D.S. entró con el jabalí, y pudiera testimoniar de su aire triunfante.

(3) El procedimiento "Recordando con satisfacción"

El titular del diario El Mundo ("Happening para un jabalí difunto") ilustra claramente un procedimiento estilístico típico del lenguaje de los semanarios modernos de noticias. Consiste en calificar el mensaje sobre el hecho (el texto de la noticia) mediante un tópico cuya forma semántica es similar a la de otros nombres, frases o expresiones ya popularizados. Confirmado y Primera Plana acuden in-

(2) An enrichment of the initial field through the incorporation of a narrative structure.

As occurred in the reports of both *Gente* and *El Mundo*: "At 9 P.M. on the night of July 21st, S. M. de S. P. saw her house in the neighborhood of Vicente Lopez...." *El Mundo* theatricalizes an episode that took place the day before the happening, based on a reference included in the press release: "D. B. entered, this past July 30th, with an air of victory...." The press release avoided any sequence structure and was shaped like a list of activities performed by every participant. It's likely that this transformation resulted simply from the supposedly necessary presence of a chronicler, the transparent witness and reporter of the news. This witness has, in many cases (especially in the journalistic language of weeklies or of articles that are not strictly that day's news) the privilege of being considered "author". Even though it can be assumed that the *chronicler* was present at the happening, it's unlikely that he was also present in the house the previous day, when D. S. entered with the boar, and that he could therefore give evidence on his triumphant air.

(3) The procedure of "recalling with satisfaction."

The title of the article on *El Mundo* ("Happening for a Dead Boar") clearly illustrates a stylistic procedure typical of the language of modern newsweeklies. It consists of qualifying the message about the event (the text of the news article) via a title whose semantic form is similar to those of other titles, phrases, or expressions already made popular. *Confirmado* and *Primera Plana* tirelessly resort to this resource, adapting titles of films, novels, plays, etc. We find thus "The 400 Blows", "The Way to Work", "The Pianist Wanted to Live", "A Swedish Woman In the Court of King Arthur", etc., etc. The sense of this meaning is not exhausted by saying that it attracts the reader's attention. Without going too far, it can be observed that it produces a very particular effect: it incorporates in advance what will be read (which is news, i.e. a message referring to some new event) into an interpretive structure that is already familiar to the reader if he in some way participates in cultural consumption; he recognizes a semantic form of his own culture in the title, something he has previously consumed. The title creates, before any transmission of information about the event actually happens, a cultural complicity with the reader: you surely recall a certain *pavane*; here's a happening... /7

cansablemente a este recurso, adaptando títulos de películas, novelas, obras teatrales, etc. Encontramos así "Los cuatrocientos golpes"; "El camino del trabajo"; "Los superhombres están entre nosotros"; "La pianista que quería vivir"; "Una sueca en la corte del Rey Arturo", etc., etc. El sentido de este mecanismo no se agota diciendo que atrae la atención del lector. Sin ir aquí demasiado lejos, se puede observar que produce un efecto muy particular: incorpora anticipadamente lo que se va a leer (que es noticia, es decir, un mensaje referido a un hecho nuevo) a una estructura de interpretación que es ya familiar para el lector que participa de cierto consumo cultural; este reconoce una forma semántica de su propia cultura en el título, algo que ya ha consumido. El título crea, antes de toda transmisión de información sobre el hecho, una complicidad cultural con el lector : usted recuerda ~~sacudir~~ sin duda una cierta pavana.. he aquí un happening...⁷

(4) Enriquecimiento del campo inicial por incorporación de un léxico evaluativo-subjetivo

Se advierte en la nota de Gente, que es la que en forma más manifiesta utiliza la mitología del happening derivándole al campo de lo sensacionalista. Egle Martín es "tropical"; Manuel Mujica Láinez "refinado"; Marta Minujin "inquietante"; Graciela Martínez "escueta"; el economista Oscar Cornblit "tieso"⁸. El psicoanalista presente observaba "complacido"; sus interpretaciones eran "agresivas" o "implacables"; D.S. estaba "sumamente impresionado".

(5) Mecanismos de ambigüedad⁹

El ~~muy~~ manejo preciso de la ambigüedad es un de los procedimientos centrales que contribuyen al efecto de sentido que podemos resumir en el término "objetividad" de los medios. ~~un~~

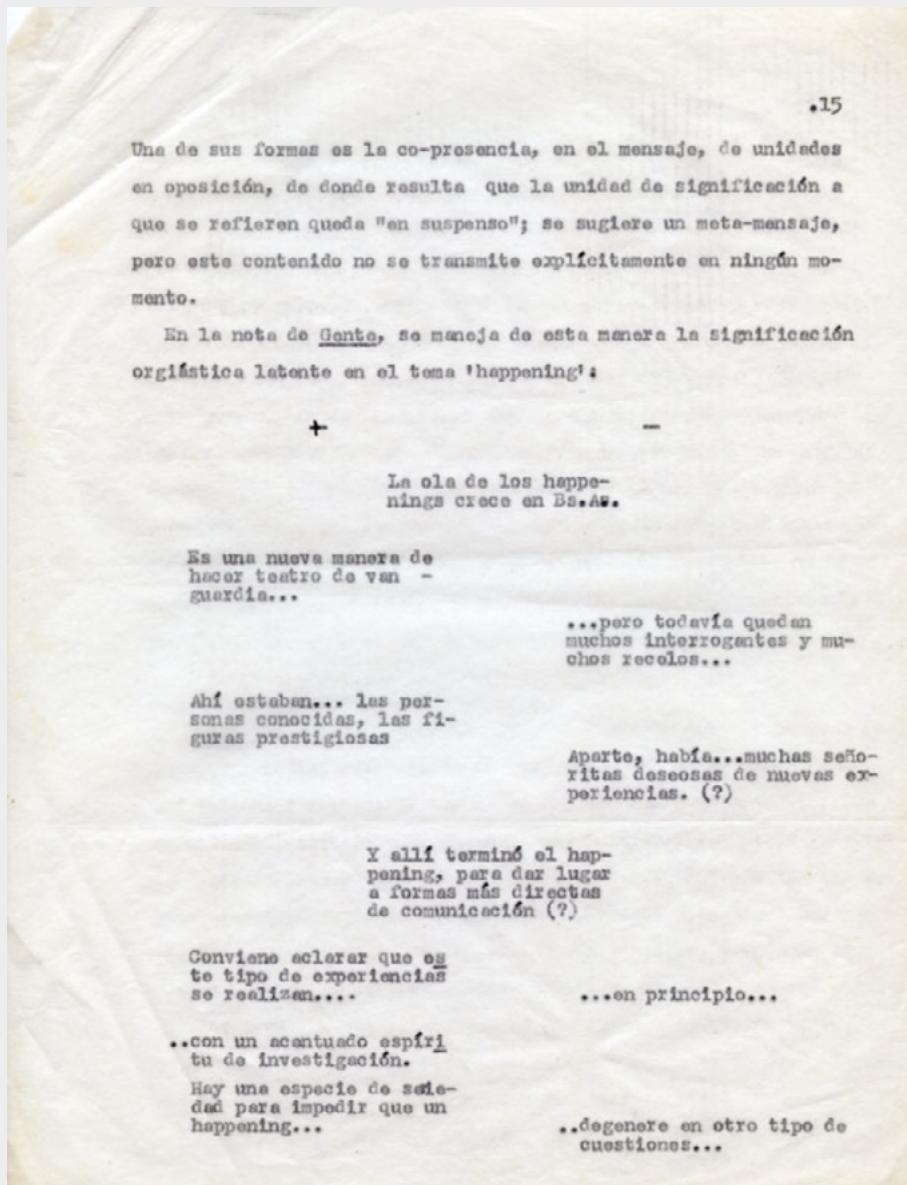
(4) An enrichment of the initial field through the incorporation of an evaluative-subjective lexicon.

This can be seen in the note made by *Gente*, the one outlet that most obviously uses the happening's mythology, taking it to the field of sensationalism. Egle Martin is "tropical"; Manuel Mujica Láinez, "refined"; Marta Minujin, "disconcerting"; Graciela Martinez, "concise"; Oscar Cornblit, the economist, "stiff" /8. The psychoanalyst attending observed "pleased"; his interpretations were "aggressive" or "relentless"; D. S. was "highly impressed."

(5) Mechanisms of "ambiguity".⁹

The precise handling of ambiguity is one of the main procedures that contribute to the effect of sense that we can summarize in the term "objectivity" of the media. One of its forms is the co-presence, in the message, of units of opposition, from which it follows that the unit of signification to which they refer remains "in suspense"; a meta-message is suggested, but this content is not explicitly conveyed at any time.

In the note in *Gente*, the orgiastic significance latent in the "happening" theme is handled thus:



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The wave of happenings is growing in Buenos Aires.

It's a new way of making avant-garde theater,...

...but there are still a lot of questions and a lot of misgivings.

There were ... well-known persons, prestigious figures ...

Also, there were ... many ladies wanting of new experiences. (?)

And the happening ended there, giving way to more direct forms of communication. (?)

It's convenient to explain that these types of experiences are carried out...

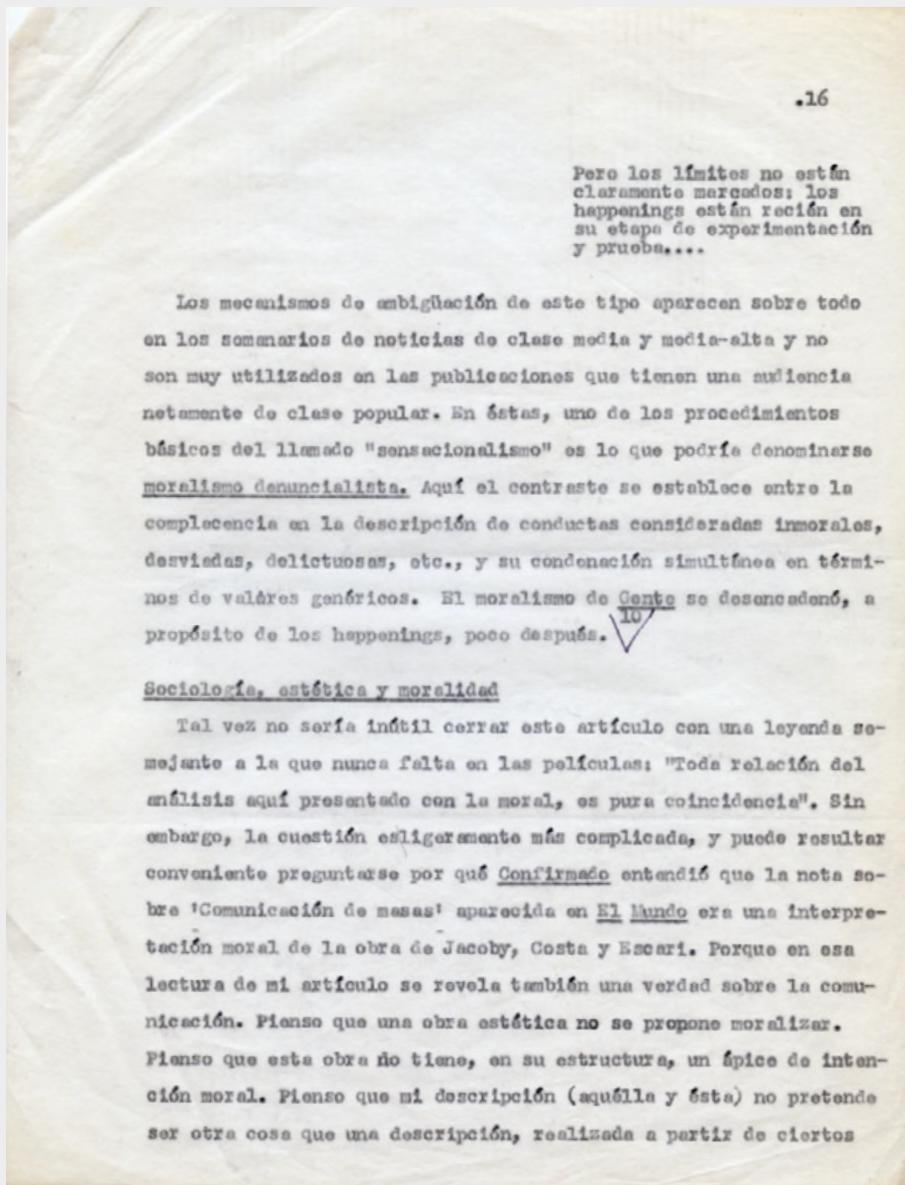
...initially...

...in the strong spirit of investigation. There's a sort of seriousness that helps stop the happening...

...from devolving into a different type of matter altogether...

But the limits are not clearly stated: happenings are still at the stage of...

...experimentation and trial ...



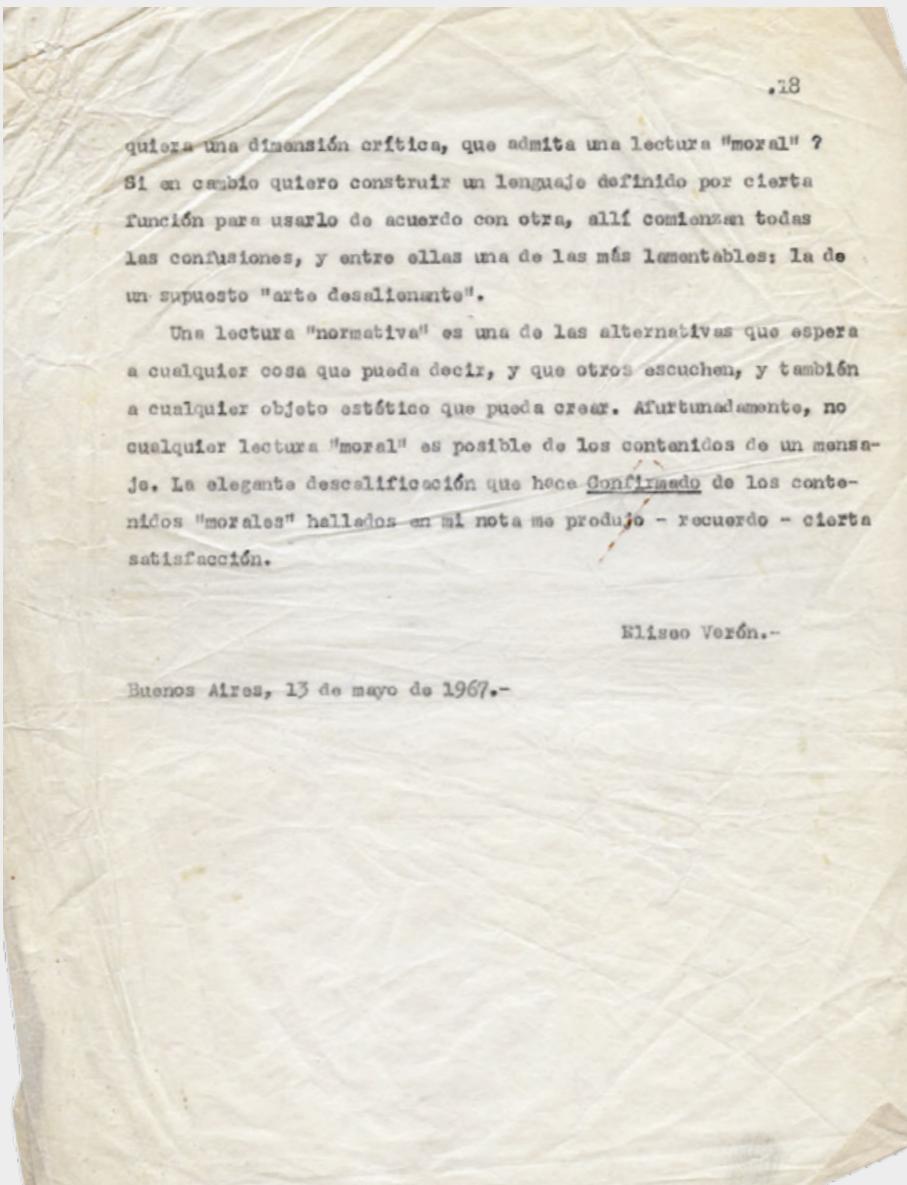
Mechanisms of ambiguation of this sort appear mostly on middle and high-class news weeklies, and are not widely used in publications with a purely working-class audience. In these, one basic procedure of the so-called "sensationalism" is that which could be defined as "denouncing moralism." Here, the contrast is established between complacency in the description of behaviors deemed immoral, deviated, criminal, etc., and their simultaneous condemnation in terms of general values. *Gente*'s moralism was developed, concerning happenings, shortly after. /10

SOCIOLOGY, ESTHETICS, AND MORALITY

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instrumentos analíticos, y trato de que no se deslicen conceptos normativos. (Hay algunos, como 'deformación', 'ideología', 'mito', 'sensacionalismo', que tienen una connotación peyorativa reconocible en el uso común: intento utilizarlos descriptivamente, cosa que se puede lograr en la medida en que se especifique, para cada uno, el fenómeno empírico o las propiedades de la comunicación que se denotan con ellos). Si la cuestión se plantea en el plano de sus pures propiedades immanentes (sin tomar en cuenta la situación de comunicación en que se transmiten), los lenguajes de la ciencia, el arte y la moral pueden ser claramente diferenciados; tienen propiedades distintas. Pero todo mensaje (es decir, todo fragmento de un lenguaje, efectivamente transmitido) admite una multiplicidad de lecturas posibles. Hay sin duda, en muchos casos, una lectura predominante que el mensaje propone al receptor, en virtud de ciertas propiedades de su estructura que derivan de la función sobre cuya base está construido. Yo pretendo que mi lenguaje sea, en lo posible, referencial. Pero todas las funciones están presentes en todos los mensajes, en distintos grados. Esto resulta del hecho de que un mensaje es una transacción entre personas, y que el sistema de comunicación no existe sin la presencia de todos sus componentes. Puedo, por ejemplo, analizar la estructura de clases de nuestra sociedad, y describir con precisión sus consecuencias en términos de desigualdades económicas, de oportunidades diferenciales de acceso a la cultura, el poder, al confort. Esto puede ser un lenguaje que se quiere puramente descriptivo, y puedo haber respetado, en su construcción, las reglas del método científico. Quién pudiera negarla la posibilidad de que ese discurso, difundido en la sociedad, ad-

It might not prove useless to end this article with a phrase similar to that which is never absent in movies: "Any connection of the present analysis with morals, is purely coincidental." However, the issue is slightly more complicated, and it can prove convenient to wonder why *Confirmado* inferred that the note on "Mass Communication" that appeared in *El Mundo* was a moral interpretation of the work by Jacoby, Costa, and Escari. Because in that reading of my article one truth of communication is also revealed. I think that an esthetic piece does not aim at moralizing. I think that this work does not have, in its structure, one iota of moral intention. I think my description (that one as well as this one) does not try to be anything other than a description, made on the basis of certain analytical tools, and I try not to let normative concepts slip in. (There are some, like "distortion", "ideology", "myth", "sensationalism", that have a pejorative connotation that is recognizable in common usage; I try to utilize them descriptively, something that can be achieved as long as one specifies, for each one, the empirical phenomenon or the communicative properties denoted by them.) If the issue is raised in the plane of their pure immanent properties (without taking into account the communicative situation in which they are transmitted), the languages of science, art, and morality can be clearly distinguished: they have different semantic properties. But every message (meaning, every fragment of a language, effectively transmitted) admits a multiplicity of possible interpretations. There is undoubtedly, in many cases, a predominant reading that the message proposes to the receiver, by virtue of certain properties of its structure that derive from the function on the basis of which it is constructed. I endeavor to make my language, as much as possible, referential. But all functions are present in all messages, to different degrees. This results from the fact that a message is a transaction between people, and that the system of communication does not exist without the presence of all its components. I can, for example, analyze the class structure of our society, and accurately describe its consequences in terms of economic disparities, of differential opportunities in the access to culture, power, comfort. This may be a language that is intended to be purely descriptive, and may have respected, in its construction, the rules of the scientific method. Who would deny the possibility that that discourse, circulated in society, acquires a critical dimension, which allows for a "moral" interpretation? If instead I want to build a language defined by a certain function to use it in accordance with another, therein appear all the confusions, and among them one of the most regrettable: that of a supposed "disalienating art."



Eliseo Verón, "La obra," May 1967. Courtesy Roberto Jacoby.

A “normative” reading is one of the alternatives that awaits anything I can say, and that others will listen to, and also any aesthetic object I can create. Fortunately, not just any “moral” reading is possible of the contents of a message. *Confirmado’s* elegant discrediting of the “moral” contents found in my note gave me—I remember—a certain satisfaction.

By Eliseo Verón

Buenos Aires, May 13, 1967

*The footnotes for this text have been lost.

