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[Dialectics of Value Representation and Biopolitics

at the Search of a Narration.]

A presentation by Jesús Palomino

RENCONTRES ET FORMES DE REPRÉSENTATION

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In collaboration with EHESS, Paris

I would like to start by expressing my gratitude to Giulia Battaglia and Jean-Bernard Ouedraogo, the organizers of these journeys *Rencontres et formes de représentation à l'ère de la mondialisation* in collaboration with l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales from Paris. It is a great honour to be here sharing my ideas and recent projects with all of you.

I should risk to state that globalization lacks of a concept. Saskia Sassen's essay "*Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy*" (2014), [1] which is a brave and brilliant intellectual attempt to define the elusive complex reality of a globalized world, agrees with that as well: the lack of a stable concept for globalization. In her essay Sassen considers that our current master categories of meaning when we discuss, for instance, rising inequality, injustice, poverty, growth, or economical profit, are not useful anymore to give an account, to narrate, or clearly represent the actual process of globalization. Instead, Sassen is urgently calling for the need to *de-theorize*, the need of going back empirically to ground level experiences where we could find the traces, the patterns, the phenomenic realities that could help us to understand critically how globalization has been historically structured, designed and performed. In fact, what Sassen is attempting to understand is "the making" of globalization.

The point of inquiry of her essay defines expulsion as the invisible key

feature of the global. The expulsion of millions of persons by war, structural poverty, famine, long-term unemployment, imprisonment or the destruction of natural environment. Sassen utilizes the term *expulsion* (being thrown out forcefully) to identify this factual radicalness along with the additional meanings of losers (a group is succeeding and others groups are not) and brutality (daily structural violence and cruelty towards the others; in this case, the others are counting in millions.) Sassen's expulsions are not fictional, nor speculative exercises on global understanding, her conclusions are based on accurate empirical research that point out where the system is falling apart for large groups of people. Sassen underlines her hypothesis exploring at global level several well documented cases at the *systemic edge*. [2] Those cases present four clear manifestations through: 1_The mass expulsion of persons towards economic and social margins by brutal economical practices all over the world. This process resulting in a sort of *economical cleansing* by invisibilization in the edges of the system; 2_ The trading and exploitation of vast territories by private corporations; [3] 3_ The financialization of almost every aspect of reality; [4] 4_ The environmental destruction and abusive misuse of natural resources including water, soil, air, human labor force, etc. Those expulsions could invite us to consider that globalization lacks as well of a minimum notion of alterity, or any humanist concept of the Other.

All those factual realities lead Sassen to question: How can we create vast material destruction that is not necessarily visible? How could it be possible that those massive realities remain invisible, blurred, erased, underrepresented? According to her, this invisibility, no matter the empirical materiality of their manifestations, is partly due to the lack of conceptual tools to represent those

expulsions. In fact, she emphasizes that the all-dominant motto about globalization by which *"everything is now connected"* is not true at all because the multifaceted reality of cases happening in different cultures, countries and social realities with their endless specificities remain still *unrelated* [5] without a narrative. In the mist all those cases, Sassen finds a *pattern* that goes transversally through diverse domains whose clearest output is expulsion, expulsion considered as a systemic condition whose detailed understanding could provide us with a workable *diagnosis of the episteme*. [6]

But, let me focus in one of those systemic manifestations that we called finances. Sassen conceptualize *"finances as marked by a logic of extraction"* [7] mediated through predatory formations. If we, with Sassen, consider global finances as *the engine of our epoch*, an economical practice which is not about banking or money, but a capability to generate rapid and intensively economical value, monetizing that value that not even exists as cash, (at the present the total amount operated by finances is a quadrillion -- namely, 1.000. 000. 000. 000. 000 of USD -- which is approximately fifteen times bigger the actual global GDP), but nonetheless, finances keep on selling their products successfully structuring sophisticated financial instruments designed by physicist with the help of complex systems of algorithms operated by corporations performing within their electronically mediated networks in collaboration with social agents, policy makers, lawyers, stock traders, and so on and so forth... Then, this capability shows off its creativity but, of course, its danger because finances, as Sassen recalls us, *"it needs to create bridge after bridge into everything, it needs to invade other sectors, and this invasion happens in a certain mode through complex instruments elaborated in financial forms"* that utilized, for instance,

modest neighborhoods of the United States as part of global finances. This unhappy event happened as the result of the *subprime* crisis [8] that expelled millions of citizens from their homes after the collapse of 2007. We should not doubt to consider those financial practices as predatory intermediations based on “*taking without giving anything back*”, since millions of citizens were tragically affected first in the United States and lately in Europe. In the United States by the year 2000, there was still a sector left to be financialized; finances was applied to american modest households that didn't own a house. Finances engineering got to *de-link* the market value of those modest real states to operate in high level global finances generating a massive movement of economical surplus around them. As the bubble exploded, 9 million of owners (over 30 to 35 millions of citizens between the period 2006 and 2010) were expelled from their homes; by that time it was clear that financial instruments were not designed to help citizens but utilizing them in order to generate disproportionate profit. This unbalanced performance brought an enormous benefit to financial agents along with a huge increasing of poverty and emdebtment among American middle and lower class families. Even though this huge collapse was recorded by data, statistics and cold accounting, all those citizens thrown out of their homes, became invisible, erased, and economically cleansed. Those expelled by finances performativity to the systemic edges remained without a voice, no narrative was attached to that expulsion because there was not any conceptual framewok to structure a workable narration of it, no representation or counternarrative to communicate that social disaster from the point of view of the losers. Hence, the dominant value representation of finances brutally won, not only economically talking, but taking over the whole social space through the erasure of citizens voices. Of course, I find with Sassen, this expulsion extremely troublesome for the life of democracy;

or, should I say for life itself?

If the negative essence of biopolitics could be formulated as the choice between those who are going to live and those who are going to perish, (including in this group: persons, animals, plants, environments, etc.), and this decision on life structured as domination by a group on power, then, I should risk to say that the predatory practices of finances are nowadays potentially imbedded with this negativity as a real threat to life. Indeed, this threat reversing Hannah Arendt's idea of *life as the highest good*. [9] We could recall plenty of actual cases in relation to this potential brutality "*from the top to the bottom*" as announced by the Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe in his essay *Necropolitics*, (2003); [10] a most recent account on warfare advanced technology by Grégoire Chamayou in his essay *Drone Theory*, (2015); [11] and the essay by Lucy R. Lippard *Undermining: A Wild Ride through Land Use, Politics, and Art in the Changing West*, [12] a marvellous visionary account *exploring new ways of understanding the relationship between art and place in a rapidly shifting society*.

It seems to be a frequent phenomenon that wherever capital concentrates without proportion, ideology does it too. While the negative dialectics of financial performativity keep on swinging between the high sophistication of knowledge and social structures applied to unbalanced profit and the plain brutal outputs provoked on factual reality by that blind market logic, our actual zeitgeist seems to lay on the motto: *Life for the few, harshness for the rest...* Where the rest is silence, urgently struggling for a positive narration of contemporary expulsions.

A PERSONAL STATEMENT

Therefore, according to Sassen's assessments, to structure concepts linked to alternative representations reterritorializing reality should be a central activity of criticism; this activity should involve as well a clear determination to define actual contemporary threats, namely: wild financialization, environmental assassination, global expulsions, etc. For several decades now, many artists utilizing their idiosyncratic strategies and practices have been dwelling on that same critical activity of "reterritorializing" to attach reality to some sort of story, History or meaning. For several years now, I have been concerned with *site-responsive* [13] art projects (in a way, involved in the task of structuring narrations through visual means). Since my aesthetics interests have been related to places, sites, locations and communities where I have been invited to work, inevitably my practice has become oriented towards *participatory art*, [14] *relational* [15] concerns and the *politics of the context*. [16] Each of those installations and site-specific proposals were designed to provide an *aesthetical* comment on issues such as Human Rights, ecology, cultural dialogue and democratic criticism. Nevertheless, as a visual artist the main interest of my practice is focused in *aesthetics*; *aesthetics* understood as this "*autonomous regime of the experience that is not reducible to logic, reason, or morality*", specially suitable to deal with paradox and contradiction. (I am quoting here the French philosopher Jacques Rancière.) [17] I have conceived those projects as *aesthetical* tools to imagine compensatory ways of dealing with suffering, oblivion and conflict solving. Some of my art projects emerge as creative actions in the face of real current situations that demand urgent reflection, resolution, and hopefully, transformation.

A CREATIVE INQUIRY AND A VISUAL RESEARCH IN RELATION TO CONTEXT

Since I focused my aesthetical intentions in the reading of the context, I have developed my interest for the local stories that were in a way forgotten, put aside or silenced by the noise of the actuality. From the beginning of my career as an artist, the context (the place, the site, the location, etc.) got an essential role on my understanding of visual production. Finally, I have ended up embracing what is a critical category that actually exists as an autonomous field for itself, namely: Contextual Art.

During the last decades, the relevance of context in relation to contemporary visual culture and practices has been gradually more evident once we pay attention to art institutions agendas, university curricula and museums programmes. Those projects in context are, in fact, good means to articulate new possibilities of contemporary representation, creating useful aesthetical forms applied to a vast variety of different expressions, formats and performativities, structuring new social narratives in relation to sites, communities, human stories, the specificity of a landmark, etc. Contextual art is synonymous with Participatory Art, Social Engaged Art, Public Space Art projects, Dialogic Art, Social Practice, etc. All those critical labels could be used to name a practice which seeks to place the audience in the center of its aesthetical concern, whether proposing interactive or relational events, whether inviting the public to perform actively in the process of production. I should insist that probably that increasing social interest for the context has to be with the pivotal role that Contextual Art gives to the audience; an active and aesthetically educated audience considered as an *acting force*.

Contextual art emerged in America and Europe as a parallel phenomena along with the social movements that struggled for democratic improvements during the 60s and 70s. in the last century. We should not forget that many artists were at the front line of those movements using their aesthetical ideas to balance the lack of democracy in their societies. Those movements included claims on ecology, colonialism, lesbian and gay rights, peace, feminism, civil rights of afroamerican, latinos, and native cultures, etc. At that time, many of those artists (or, should I call them activiststs?) were focused on contemporary art as a tool of social intervention and transformation. Nowadays, even though many Contextual Art projects present an active understanding towards collaboration, participation and social performativity, we could not consider them just mere activism. They are aesthetical practices proposed by artists operating beyond any labelling of the already exhausted couples: outdoors/indoors, private/social, autonomy of the artwork/political engagement of the artwork, emancipatory/institutional, etc. Contextual Art has resisted any conceptual shortage proposing their own forms and visibility, and tackling artistically a vast range of issues in a complete and urgent way of newness. In fact, proposing innovative ways of representation and social interaction inviting the audience, why not, to participate in experiments of collective empowerment and democratic sharing.

NOMADISM, PERFORMATIVITY AND DEMOCRATIC CRITICISM

In order to get a clearer view on my site-specific art projects, I should say that most of them were ephemeral; that means that only 10% of those interventions remain actually as objects. That means as well that actually if you want to know about them, we must do it through documentation, pictures, texts, critical reviews, essays, through oral communication, etc. As an artist, I have

moved from one place to another, travelling and acting, and step by step, I was able to orientate my aesthetical proposals towards what is called *participatory, contextual, or Public Art as a practice of social intervention*. It habitually happens with this kind of practice that one picture is not enough; it requires a longer explanation in order to grasp its reality in terms of meaning intentions and aesthetical achievements. In many cases, we have problems to recognize, and even to acknowledge, such projects as art. Therefore, extra information is needed and some new critical inputs too. It should be useful to recall once more that even when some of those projects are clearly social oriented and some of them based on explicit political contents, I am not a politician; I do not politics. I am not either an activist. My interest is focused on the production of visual signs in relation to situations that only can be produced in the field of contemporary art. I really do care for aesthetical practices and ideas. In order to set up a critical framework for those projects, let me introduce the three ideas that I consider essential for a better understanding of them. Those three concepts are Nomadism, Performativity and Democratic Criticism.

1_ Nomadism

The idea of nomads or the nomadic culture is, in fact, a quite present idea at the Western utopia imagery, Literature and Western History of Ideas. But, what nomads are we talking about? The Gypsies, the Bedouins, the wandering Jews, the shepherds at the steppes of Mongolia, etc.? Are we talking about those ethnical groups of people who travel to improve their economic conditions of survival, always having an intense interchange with the natural and social environments they go through, and treasuring a particular heritage as the result of a secular cultural interchange? Well, the nomadic attitudes that I mean are not

those studied by ethnology or cultural anthropology; neither has anything to do with the proposal of a new ethnicity, neither the recuperation of a contemporary tribal society. No, we are talking about something closer to us and really less exotic. The nomadic attitudes that I mean are more related to a sociological reality that could be considered as a *Critical Travelling* involving a whole range of social agents including scholars, university professors, journalists, doctors, ONG's staff, scientists, architects, artists, diplomats, and even, politicians... Simply explained, this contemporary nomadism has to do with *geographical mobility* concerned with *agency* and *cultural criticism* linked to the idea of a *subject* that challenges and resists the unbalanced forces of capital, domination, violence and destruction. This nomadism that I relate to is concerned with the idea of *subjectivity as an acting force in History*.

2_ Performativity

Performativity is the English word coming from performance. The verb to perform means to act, to do an action or to participate in a task alone or with the others. It is as well to celebrate a ceremony, to play a piece of music or to participate in a dance or a theater play, etc. Basically, to perform has to do with the generation of meaning through a conscious participatory action in relation to an audience or public. The concept of *performativity* was coined by the English philosopher John L. Austin in his essay *How To Do Things With Words*, 1962. In his book, Austin proposed a challenging unpredictable new theory called *Act Speech Theory*. Austin considered *Speech itself as a Form of Action*, and language not just a mere passive tool but, rather, a singular practice with the peculiar potentiality of inventing and transforming reality. Hence, Austin suggested that the will of the speaker (actor, player, dancer, etc.) using spoken

words, texts, actions or any other médium, could generate in itself potentially new meanings. In fact, he was stressing the figure of the speaker (actor, player, dancer, etc.) and his/her will to push further or to redefine meanings, signifiers or any conventional limit in communication. This simple and sophisticated idea was appropriated at the beginning of the 60's (in the USA, Europe, South America and some countries in Africa) by some grass-roots democratic movements that at that time emerged as emancipatory forces struggling for Civil Rights. All those performative social forces rooted in genuine democratic claims announced a new role for the individual subject and new role for the collective subjectivity. They were in fact, using Hannah Arendt words: *struggling for their right to have Rights*. It is worthy to recall that artists were at the front line of that urgent production of newness. It could not be exaggerated to consider *performativity* as the main conceptual tool that gave pace to an unprecedented development of visual arts, music, dance, theater, etc., during the last decades, and still does.

3_Democratic Criticism

I became an artist that travelled acting for several audiences, presenting and communicating my aesthetical proposal with the aim of generating a positive feedback. I walked my path stepping on really indiscernible areas, and on the go, I had the chance of collecting and conforming all those meanings that I found essential and substantial for my art practice. Curiously, many things in my aesthetical research led me to an expanded sense of Democratic Criticism pointing towards the figure of a creative *subject* that resists and challenges the impersonal forces of interest, power and violence. But, what do I mean about Democratic Criticism? How does Democratic Criticism fit into contemporary art practices? And, last but not less important, how does Democratic Criticism relate

to my work? In this point, I should quote Edward W. Said, [18] Professor of Comparative Literature at Columbia University in New York, because he used to say that *critical thinking* is just a *continuous search of alternatives*. And, while we keep on searching for new alternatives, I would like to explain how this historical figure of the *subject* (individually or collectively expressed by aesthetics through critical discourse, fiction, action, or any other mean) interact with democratic consciousness. In his essay *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, 2004, Edward W. Said proposes something called *Return to Philology*. Philology literally means: *love for words*. Said maintains that words are not mere passive figures but, rather essential agents in the political and historical configuration of reality (at this point Said's ideas are quite close to those of language performativity by John L. Austin). Hence, Said considers that the reading of texts, as critical knowledge experience, should help us to conform a vision on the nature of human progress; human progress according to him, is based on a multifaceted complex dialectic process of *questioning, analysis and transformation*. He keeps on saying that nowadays, both activities (the production and the reading of texts) in the reality of a globalized world should rely on an expanded democratic consciousness critically oriented towards any form of domination and destruction. This critical task should be fulfilled through Enlightenment and self-knowledge applied through a globalized concept of democracy respectful to Human Rights and Cultural Rights. Some Said's critics should consider those ideas as just-pure-utopic-humanism; just a plain old fashioned manner to deal with art, culture, politics and History, completely unuseful for the present times. In fact, that is how Said was considered among his many critics. Even though most of my projects and installations have been produced under the inspiration and conceptual power of those three ideas, the projects are not a simple illustration of those critical categories of nomadism,

performativity and democratic criticism; I propose these three aesthetic ingredients used by contemporary art theory and cultural criticism with the wish of setting up an useful critical framework for a better understanding of current alternative contemporary art practices. This has been the aim of this text that I hope could bring some light to our discussion.

JESÚS PALOMINO

Seville, June 2017

NOTES_

[1] Sassen, Saskia. 2014. *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy*. Harvard University Press. Saskia Sassen is the Robert S. Lynd Professor of Sociology at Columbia University and a Member of its Committee on Global Thought, which she chaired till 2015. She is a student of cities, immigration, and states in the world economy, with inequality, gendering and digitization three key variables running through her work. Born in the Netherlands in 1949, she grew up in Argentina and Italy, studied in France, was raised in five languages, and began her professional life in the United States. She is the author of eight books and the editor or co-editor of three books. Together, her authored books are translated in over twenty languages. She has received many awards and honors, among them multiple doctor honoris causa, the 2013 Principe de Asturias Prize in the Social Sciences, election to the Royal Academy of the Sciences of the Netherlands, and made a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et Lettres by the French government. [Source: www.saskiasassen.com]

[2] Sassen pays attention to this failure within the system in her text *At the systemic edge: an autor and her critics*. A review by Saskia Sassen. Trajectories Book Symposium, Spring 2016. Vol 27, N° 3. Pag. 77. Sassen states that: “*The point of inquiry of this book is the systemic edge. The key dynamic at this edge is expulsion from the diverse systems in play – economic, social, biospheric. I conceptualize the systemic edge as the point where a condition takes a format so extreme that it cannot be easily captured by the standard measures of governments and experts and thereby becomes conceptually and anallatically invisible, ungraspable. Each major domain has its own distinctive systemic edge – thus the edge is constituted differently for the economy than it is for the biosphere or the social realm. This edge is foundationally different from the geographic borders in the interstate system. The core hypothesis is that we are seeing a proliferation of systemic edges originating partly in the decaying western-style political economy of the 20th century, the escalation of environmental destruction, and the rise of complex forms of knowledge that far too often produce elementary brutalities.*”

[3] Those land grabs occurring mainly in Africa where, according to Sassen, in 2006 Chinese corporations bought 2.8 millions of hectares in Zambia to plant palm trees for biofuel production.

[4] Financialization describes an economic process by which exchange is facilitated through the intermediation of financial instruments. Financialization may permit real goods, services, and risks to be readily exchangeable for currency, and thus make it easier for people to rationalize their assets and income flows. [Source: Wikipedia.]

[5] We should not forget the double meaning of the word unrelated. To relate means: 1_To link, to create a relation between two or more elements advancing in its understanding of the whole; 2_To relate means as well to tell a story, to communicate a reality through the means of natarativeness. Therefore, if we add the prefix un- to the verb to relate, we finally get a negative sense of the word, namely: no relation and no story, “*no possible mediation of some sort of story rectorizing the reality.*” – as stated by Saskia Sassen in her lecture *Brutality and Complexity in Global Economy*. May 7 th. 2015. [Source: www.youtube.com]

[6] Quoting Sassen's own words "The project I pursue in this book includes the work of tracking conceptually subterranean processes in order to detect the extent to which what has been categorized as very diverse and distinct conditions -- often for good reasons -- may actually share key features that take on special importance in the current period. For instance, those who are confined to camps for the internally displaced, on the one hand, and those in long-term imprisonment, on the other, can also be seen as different instantiations of a similar basic fact: they are both expelled." A fragment from the text *At the systemic edge: an autor and her critics*. A review by Saskia Sassen. Trajectories Book Symposium, Spring 2016. Vol 27, N° 3. Pag. 80.:

[7] From the text *At the systemic edge: an autor and her critics*. A review by Saskia Sassen. Trajectories Book Symposium, Spring 2016. Vol 27, N° 3. Pag. 81.

[8] The United States subprime mortgage crisis was a nationwide banking emergency which contributed to the U.S. recession between 2007 and 2009. It was triggered by a large decline in home prices after the collapse of a housing bubble, leading to mortgage delinquencies and foreclosures and the devaluation of housing-related securities. [Source: Wikipedia.] Sassen presents an accurate analysis of this crisis in her book.

[9] Arendt, Hannah. 1958. *The Human Condition*. The University of Chicago Press. VI. The Vita Activa and the Modern Age. 44. Life as the Highest Good. Pag. 313.

[10] Necropolitics according to the Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe is the use of social and political power to dictate how some people may live and how some must die. Mbembe was the first scholar to explore the term in depth in his critical essay titled *Necropolitics*, first published in 2003 by Public Culture, pag. 11-40, Duke University Press, translated into English by Libby Meintjes. [Source: Wikipedia.]

[11] Chamayou, Grégoire, 2015. *Drone Theory*. Penguin. Born in 1976, Grégoire Chamayou is a philosopher at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique in Paris and the author of *Les corps vils* and *Manhunts: A Philosophical History*. Chamayou also lectures at Université de Paris Ouest, and has written for *Le Monde Diplomatique* among other publications.

[12] Lucy R. Lippard, born in 1937, is an internationally known writer, art critic, activist and curator from the United States. Lippard was among the first writers to recognize the "dematerialization" at work in conceptual art and was an early champion of feminist art. Lippard has authored more than twenty-two books on contemporary art practices and radical concepts; and she has curated more than fifty major exhibitions -- some of them of historical impact at the international contemporary art scene --. Lippard is recipient of numerous awards, including a Guggenheim fellowship and two National Endowment for the Arts grants. She has lived in a small village of New Mexico during the last three decades.

[13] *Site-responsive* art occurs when the artist's visual and aesthetical inquiry is oriented towards any specific site, place or location as a part of the creative process. *Site-responsive* art practices are in fact a response, a reaction to the context. This inquiry could pay attention to several different aspects including geographical specificity, topography, the life of any human community in relation to its past, its actual History or any current conflict, etc. All those art proposals could be understood as open invitations to public participation, interaction, and collective collaboration. In recent years the contents of those *site-responsive* art projects have been expanded to include all kind of issues (for instance, immigration, community violence or social struggles) showing in many cases an extraordinary capability to become a tool for social intervention and positive transformation.

[14] A quotation from Jacques Rancière's essay *Malaise dans l'esthétique*, (2004), Éditions Galilée, Paris.

[15] *Participatory art* considers the active participation of the audience as essential ingredient for the production of any art event, any project or any artwork. *Participatory art* projects are basically conceived to invite the audience to become part of the creative process (as authors, editors or active observers) through direct collaboration and interaction overcoming of all those practices that assign a passive role to the audience, proposing instead collective and group participation as its main aesthetical ingredients.

[16] *Relational aesthetics* is a critical label first coined by the French art critic Nicolas Bourriaud in his essay *Esthétique relationnelle*, (*Les presses du réel*, 2001). Bourriaud conceived that new category against the dominant standardization of social spaces inviting artists and other social agents to orientate themselves towards "social experimentation". Bourriaud's critical proposal is an attempt to *de-construct* social behaviours through those artistic practices whose central ingredient could be human interchange and human relations. As samples of seminal projects related to relational aesthetics Bourriaud proposes those works by the artists Félix González-Torres, Philippe Parreno, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Jeremy Deller and Vanessa Beecroft among others.

[17] The *politics of the context* respond to those strategies developed by artists to reveal formal, social and ideological conditions that intervene in the production of the art projects themselves within the human context of the art world. The institutional criticism, the feminist consciousness, and those critics concerned with globalization have helped to expand the scope of the *politics of the context* as a practice of social transformation. The critical label of *Context Art* was first introduced by the German curator Peter Weibel in his show *Kontext Kunst. The Art of the 90s* presented at the Neue Galerie in Graz, Austria, in 1993. Another early sample concerned with the *politics of the context* was the exhibition *Culture in Action* curated by Marie Jane Jacob in 1993 for the Program of Public Art at the city of Chicago.

[18] Said W. Said was born in Jerusalem as an American citizen in 1935, just 13 years before the State of Israel was founded in 1948. His father was an American-Egyptian and his mother Lebanese. Said considered himself first of all a

philologist; because of his personal engagement with politics, he became too the most authorized critical and active voice worldwide on the conflict at the Middle East between the State of Israel and the Palestinians. In fact, Said became a world class intellectual, and widely considered the founding figure of what we actually know as *Postcolonial Studies*. His essays on literature (*Beginnings: Intention and Method* (1975), *Orientalism* (1978), *The World, the text and the critic* (1983), *Culture and imperialism* (1993), *Representations of the Intellectual*, (1994), etc.) are a brilliant philological reasearch compromising an expanded sense of cultural criticism, aesthetics, and humanism.