



Five years of an Atlantic Art Centre

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The first impression that comes to my mind when describing the past five years of the CAAM is that they have been both fluid and eventful, (like recent European history), and that they have been sufficiently important to suggest an analytical approach that has been the direct product of a modern Art Centre.

Initially the CAAM divulged the idea of “Tricontinentality”, that was probably propagated more as a result of the concept’s appeal than by a true theoretical intention. The recent artistic history of Europe has enabled us to apply far more rigorous analysis to this foundational thesis of tricontinentality. What attracts me especially about the

CAAM is the fact that it is a centre, an Atlantic centre, that it wants to be something more than just another conventional museum institution: it pretends to function as a forum for debate, exchange, theory and thesis. However the word “thesis” poses a question: “What thesis and in support of which tricontinentality?”. We have to define this clearly before running the risk of quoting well worn clichés that are then used to justify every act and event of the CAAM.

This leads us to consider a complex issue because the CAAM is foremostly a public institution, a reality that we must bear in mind constantly. It has a considerable

degree of autonomy that generates an essential chance of encounter between society and the professionals of the art world. To develop an interpretative model of the thought created by such an interaction is an arduous task and usually depends on the people who work for an institution. I accept the basic limitation imposed by the nature of a public institution, and I have no illusions about the CAAM having a *modus operandi* that can act independent of the social and political circumstances of the islands. It is almost unimaginable that the CAAM could escape such conditioning, even though it were a completely self-ruling body. In relation to such circumstances and

the complex character of the CAAM's status, my function has been to further and facilitate the development of the museum. At least I understand it that way. To make things as easy as possible for the work of the art professionals that have passed through the CAAM, for its director Martín Chirino, for all the department heads of the museum, and for certain specific expressions like *Atlántica de las Artes*. I am a kind of path finder that somehow assures the continuity of projects and ideas, that renders possible activity.

We have seen many people participating in the ideas and the processes that have been a consequence of the Centre's original tricontinental strategy. Many others have also rejected these premises, and I think it all adds up to a balanced development. During the past three years we have, to an extent, given official exhibition space to certain artistic expressions that for the moment lacked any possibility of a circuit and of an adequate communicative platform. Perhaps supporting a certain brand of marginalism is a risky affair,

evidently so. However we have really acted just like any established centre with its defined channels of expression and communication.

Finally we are neither a centre solely devoted to an establishment vision of art, nor a centre wholly devoted to marginalism. We have sought an alternative possibility of expression for those who were lacking such a fundamental reality. These tensions must be observed against the background of intellectual confusion that enveloped the world of art criticism during recent years.

Exhibitions of the quality of "Another Country", and at another level "Africa Today" have been very positive for the CAAM for they have shown that we are tapping extremely original sources that have transformed our approach to contemporary artistic reality.

Therefore we can genuinely say that outside the territory of great capital art centres there are voices that remain unheard and processes that aren't given the necessary attention.

This line of approach to artistic reality seems important to me, especially when traditional eurocentrism is starting to

disintegrate. Globalism is an ever more crucial aspiration, and progressively more compatible with localist singularity.

On the other hand, the CAAM takes part in the current debate of the crisis that affects our western european hemisphere, and so revises its idea of contemporaneity. We belong de facto to the West, despite our atlantic and insular setting. We must try and establish a kind of pendulum swing motion, an oscillation between the research into our own origins and the perception of other cultures, that may well lack the necessary platforms for projection.

Another theme of great importance to me is the CAAM and canarian society. The CAAM has become a fundamental part of our attitude to the outside world, of the canarian world view. This world view plays a crucial role as a balancing and compensating element in the struggle against the worst and most self-destructive aspects of our geographical isolation. The CAAM has also shown a growing sensibility to the art movement of the Canaries and to its artists.