

Mireia c. Saladrigues

Shifts #2 The Exit

03.07.13 > 27.09.13

Opening: Thursday, September 5th, 20 h.

A gallery, an art space, a white cube... has become a hotbed of contemporary production. Of images, jargon, lifestyles, and values. Of exhibition value, speculation value, and cult value. Of entertainment plus gravitas. Or of aura minus distance. A flagship store of Cultural Industries, staffed by eager interns who work for free.

A factory, so to speak, but a different one. It is still a space for production, still a space of exploitation and even of political screenings. It is a space of physical meeting and sometimes even common discussion. At the same time, it has changed almost beyond recognition. So what sort of factory is this?

Hito Steyerl. *Is a Museum a Factory?*

Published online in *e-flux journal* #7, June-August 2009. Available here: <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/is-a-museum-a-factory/>. This text also appears in Hito Steyerl (2012). *The Wretched of the Screen*. Berlin: Co-published by Sternberg Press and e-flux journal.

In 1985, the Lumière brothers recorded the first cinematographic images: workers leaving the factory in Lyon. The theme of these shots could have been, at that time, arbitrarily chosen. However, given the changes that have taken place over the last century—and in particular in the last four decades—these images now appear profoundly symbolic.

Today the factory is like a phenomenon from another time, something that took place in an earlier life. We are left only with its remains. Since those initial images were recorded, they have become a recurring theme for filmmakers, artists and intellectuals, from Fritz Lang, to Charlie Chaplin, to Harun Farocki.

The factory not only has become a theme in the poetic sense, but also carries social and political significance. Globalization has led to the displacement of production to other continents, and one of the most common uses for the factories that were left here has been their conversion into spaces for the art and culture industry. Today, the structures that used to house Fordist activities have been filled with new types of production, new working conditions, new social dynamics and new power relations.

Thus, symbolically, factories have become museums and museums have become factories, housing a new type of industry that doesn't produce physical material but rather values, relationships and ideologies. They are spaces for immaterial production, paradigms of structure and function of post-Fordist societies.

This exhibition by Mireia c Saladrigues invites us to reflect on these and other questions. *Shifts # 2 The Exit* is the third instalment of a series of three exhibitions that the artist has developed in àngels barcelona, beginning in September 2012. The first instalment, *Welcome. We're on the same time*, reflected on how the gallery public acts according to tacit rules, learned rituals instilled by museums that determine our gestures in art spaces. In *Shifts #1 Routes*, we moved through the gallery space covered in plastic bubble wrap, as the act of walking and the sound of exploding plastic bubbles, guided us to a subtle physical understanding of the space. Finally, in this third exhibition, the artist again focuses on the social choreography of the visitors, looking at how they are physically displaced by the presence of art spaces. The public is both a catalyst and a product of a pervasive and intangible factory, where the gaze is work and the routes and circulation through this space, the entrances and the exits, are the flow of commerce.

To this end, the artist begins with a proposal recorded at the Tate Modern in London, drawing a direct analogy between the museum and the factory while considering the relationships between contemporary forms of production and the organization and formation of the public.

If we begin with the back room, we can see a video that shows the movements of the visitors inside the museum-factory. Titled *Scalators Views*, this piece draws a connection between the physical displacement and the type of production that takes place in this institution.

A second piece, *Scalators in Loop*, documents the museum escalators as if they were a production line. The objects transported on them are, in this case, the visitors. This image allows us to think about the museum as an institution that serves to mould the individual while producing immaterial values, like social relationships, lifestyles or certain ideologies.

Finally, in the front room we find *Visitors Leaving the Museum*, a shot of the main exit of the Tate Modern Gallery (which is housed in what was originally the central power station in London). Alluding to *Workers Leaving the Factory* by the Lumière brothers, the artist captures visitors as they leave the museum. The choice of museum is not arbitrary; the Tate Modern is one of the pillars of cultural mass entertainment. In contrast to the workers who—as Farocki has demonstrated in his video *Workers Leaving the Factory*—leave quickly, here the visitors adopt a slower choreography, wandering, moving comfortably at a relaxed pace. At the same time, the building's façade, in this case, isn't austere and does in fact have a notable demonstration of power: a large sign announcing the current exhibition. Curiously it is the work of Roy Lichtenstein, one of the most widely known "pop" artists.

The parallels that the artist establishes between the workers and the visitors make us think not only of how factories have been repurposed for cultural industries, but about new forms of production. The way in which a piece is exhibited acts to incorporate visitors into the gallery. We also are part of this choreography, even while we are merely shadows projected onto the video. In the

pervasive factory it no longer matters if the time and space of art is the same, or if we are entering or leaving. We form part of the flow of circulation, production and consumerism, and therefore, we are also part of this public.

This exhibition, which forms part of the second edition of Art Nou (a proposal by the Association of Galleries of Barcelona), is also the first showing of a project that Mireia c Saladrígues is developing for her research as a student in the International Graduate Program at the University of Helsinki, under the supervision of Hito Steyerl.

Text by Cristina Garrido, independent curator and researcher, and Mireia c. Saladrígues

Mireia c. Saladrígues (Terrassa 1978) has focused her art practice on the study of the public, looking at how the spectator is received and the conditions in which s/he is exposed. Recently she has begun to study the institution as a space of social and economic production, and the reflection of societies of control found in the art sector. She has had individual exhibitions in Espai 13 – Miró Foundation, Espai Cultural Caja Madrid (Barcelona) and Espai Guinovart (Agramunt). Her work has been shown in ARTIUM, La Capella, Centre d'Art la Panera, Videonale.13, Loop, National Photography Museum of Copenhagen, DIA Art Foundation, Capella de Sant Roc, Homesession, EspaiDos de la Sala Muncunill, Sala d'Art Jove, Art Musuem of Pori and Kiasma, Contemporary Art Museum of Helsinki. She has participated in the project Creators in Residence, BaumannLab, including one of it's editorial projects. She is an artist in residence in Hangar.



**Art Nou
Primera Visió
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