

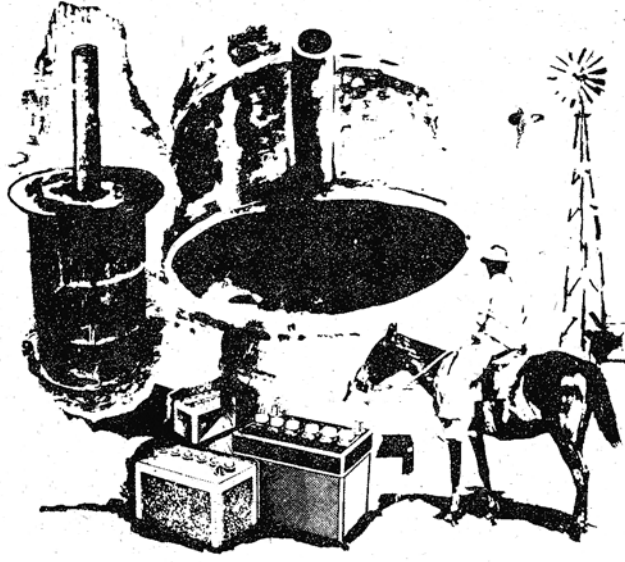
# Chain reaction

INTERVIEW WITH ERNESTO OROZA  
BY BAPTISTE MENU (www.echo-system.fr)

**Baptiste Menu:** What you call "technological disobedience" is questioning the life cycle of western products, by multiplying the industrial objects' length of use up to the limit of their possibilities of use. This system is now possible thanks to the reconsideration of the industrial object under the hand-craft aspect. Which forms of organization does this creative re-conquest of industrial objects take?

**Ernesto Oroza:** I think the fact of reconsidering the industrial product from a hand-craft perspective encourages shrewd practices in contrast with the artificial voracity and activates more human temporary relations, like the repair, can authorize questions about the obtuse nature of the contemporaneous industrial object. When you open an object to fix it, there is a crack in the authority system which is set up. We see the internal organs of an authoritarian logic that imposes itself not only through a product but also through a system sequence : the objects integrate authoritarian families, share an infinite succession of reinforced generations. And this domination even precedes the arrival of the object at home; indeed its first domination takes place in the mass media. That's why I used, in the *Rikimbili. Une étude sur la désobéissance technologique en quelques formes de réinvention* book, the image of Fidel Castro on the national television selling to Cubans a Chinese product used to boil water. The image couldn't be much redundant and excessive in terms of imposition. When I talk about authority, I want to link it with all the logics these products induct, starting with the imposition of their scheduled life cycle. Concerning your question about the forms of organization that qualify and diversify the hand-craft revision of the industrial in Cuba, I would comment one of them, which is fundamental to me: the accumulation. It seems to be a passive act, not creative, but it is literally the organizational starting point of the phenomenon. I grew up in a family where we kept everything and everything seems to have a potential. Each object accumulated by my mother can perfectly be useful in a situation of future shortage. The accumulation is in fact an emergency exit from an inopportune crisis, but it becomes a habit, because of distrust. The accumulation is regularly the first gesture in the production process and it has

an absolute manual nature. That is to say that from the accumulation yet, you begin from a hand-craft point of view to be disrespectful to the life cycle integrated in the western industrial object. You infinitely postpone the moment of its waste by separating it from its assigned route. I think that the fact of accumulating things inserts an alteration, a notion of time, in the Cuban



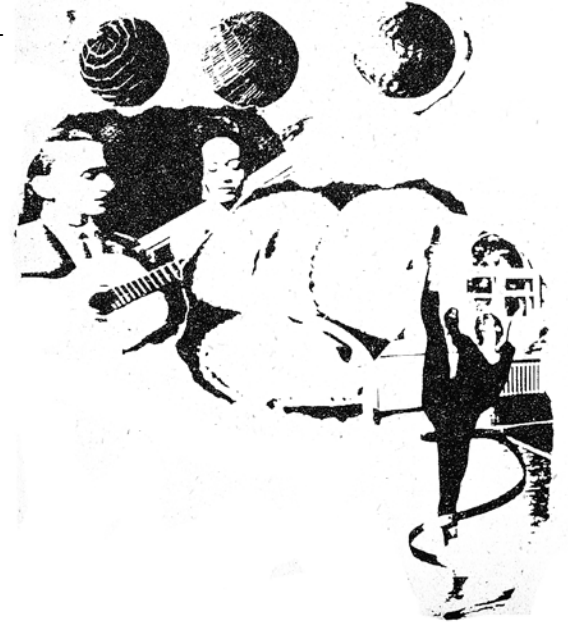
vernacular practices and this new own time organize them, give them the form of a parallel and productive phenomenon. I also said that the fact of accumulating is not only the suspicious fact of piling up objects. Well, when you do that you accumulate ideas of use, constructive solutions, technical systems and archetypes in general that can flourish when the situation gets worse.

**BM:** I have the sensation that an important concept runs through your work, the material-object notion. Can you develop this idea, please?

**EO:** I've been writing recently on the issue related the re-use of generic objects as buckets or milk crates in precarious contexts like in Little Haiti, in Miami. Even if the situations are different, Cuba is characterized by a profound shortage and the US by an excess of products. In each case, there are social groups living in bad conditions. I met in each territory similar patterns of behaviour. It seems that people in these circumstances generally perceive their material universe in a discriminative way. They are just interested in the physical qualities of the objects that surround them. It's a diary process, an appropriate activity. When we look at the object from the exterior, we can understand it as the potential and real re-conversion in raw material of all the elements that integrate the environment of the individual. This process begins by erasing the

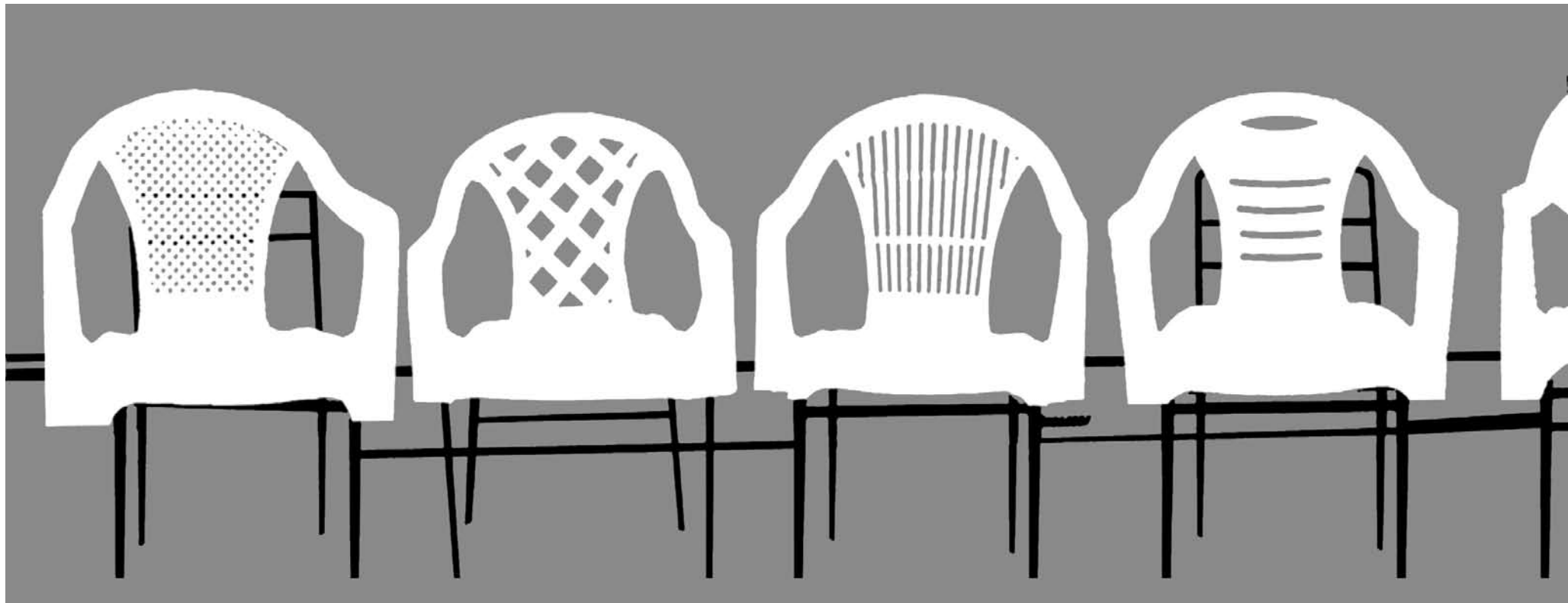
objects' and parts' meanings present in our culture. That is to say that an individual recognizes in a bucket a kind of cultural profundity. But, when he is in a situation of need, he will just perceive it like an abstract compilation of materials with forms, edges, weight, structures. We can make a very familiar parallel with the relation of use we have with the natural world. It is normal to take a stone to hold a door or a branch to reach a fruit. The rhetorical or historical value of the stone won't be important when you need to let the door open, only its weight. A bucket full of water can only be used to block a door. The relation we maintain with things in both universes (natural and generic) comes from a unique condition: the two objects, the branch and the milk crate, suffer from identity. They seem to be foreign to the system of sense production, foreign to the culture. A plastic box to distribute milk is an abstract and autistic object, dumped through a circle of very specific requirements and that's why an object is accessible thanks to its excessive production. I wonder if the description fits with the branch or the stones' one. For sure, the box has a social function, but its conception has been so much optimized that the human aspect has just become a value, a dimensional data within the plastic surface of the object, as it is for the weight of a litre of milk or the storage capacity of the truck that supplies it. The milk crate is a field sown with physical qualities, potentialities that will become more visible as far as we will have more needs, and it is also a field empty of sense. Its figure is so quiet in terms of image that its indifference and the indifference of the system producing it overwhelm us. Everyday the box travels full and comes back empty. It takes parts in a loop that could remain active for the eternity. If a box goes out the loop, lost or damaged, another one will replace it. If the world suddenly halts, the circle made by the boxes of milk in the city would continue to flow. We would be frightened by its social indifference, its pensiveness, the silence its centripetal move produces. But, around this circle or in a tangential scheme, there are circles of human activities eroding the perfection of the rational system where the milk crate subsists, splintering. The surrounding zones of the markets where milk is distributed are full of milk crates used like urban seats or used for other activities like car washing or water selling. In order to explain you how this occurs in Havana, we can use the example of the fan repaired thanks to a telephone. A quick glance to the object will carry us away from the art field of senses, from the readymade and from the index of associative resources of the Dada where the humour articulated with the image takes our look and our understandings. Nevertheless,

for the repairman, the telephone is the unique form, similar to the original prismatic base, he could access to. When the telephone broke, he didn't throw it, the necessity had been made in the ex-German Democratic Republic as it seems it stayed ten years under the bed or in a wardrobe. When the body of the fan broke, perhaps because of a fall, the family should be worried. A temperature of forty five degrees centigrade is a very difficult situation, the impossibility of replacing the object, because of the excessive disparity of wage, closes the debate. He has to assume the repair ; the accumulation he continued for years has a parallel existence in his memory. He remembers the old telephone. He only takes into account the physical attributes of the object. The angles and the internal plastic nerves that shape this prism with rectangular base assure the stability of the fan. The symbolic association that could appear after the repair are invisible for him. The pragmatism makes the reconstructed body of the object avoid any kind of symbolic construction intent. In Cuba, the process looks more severe as it begins with the flattening of the object's identity. In the US, the generic object seems to hide its identity, it yet comes flattened. From this, for the people of the Havana and from Little Haiti, a new field to pick physical virtues is open. Finally, I recently begin to associate this phenomenon to the ideas of Oswald de Andrade,

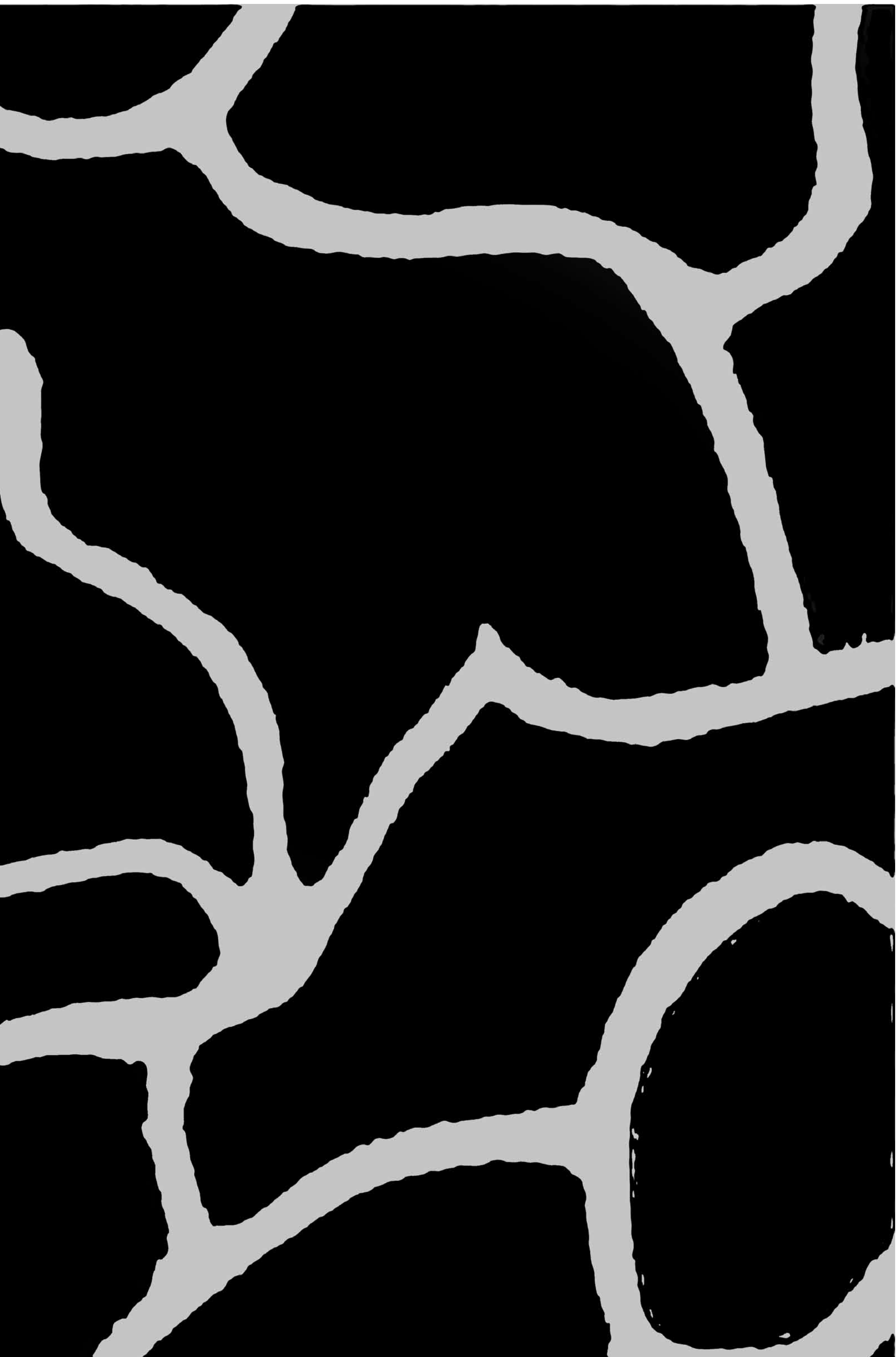


specifically to his Cannibalistic Manifest (one thousand, nine hundred twenty eight). Helio Oiticica uses it to elaborate the "Super-cannibalism" concept considering an "immediate reduction of all the influences exterior to the national model". By focusing the process on the productive universe and on the Cuban material culture, I can't stop seeing it, literally like a super chewing, a super riding. It's a violent action, in cultural terms, against the colonial material universe that surrounds us and which seems to be unable to solve the people

(continued on page 11)



Reverse: pattern by Ernesto Oroza (stone pattern collected in Havana, 1997-2007)



Me Not Me by Jeanne Dunning

"Shirley: It took a vacation without telling me it was going. It didn't ask. It just went.
Feinberg: What did?
Shirley: My Pet Rock. [She lifted her useless left arm to indicate what she was talking about.]
Feinberg: You call that your Pet Rock?
Shirley: Yeah.
Feinberg: Why do you call it your Pet Rock?
Shirley: Because it doesn't do anything. It just sits there.
Feinberg: When did you come up with that name?
Shirley: Right after it went plop. I thought I'd give it a nice name even though it was something terrible.
Feinberg: Do you have any other names for it?
Shirley: Her. She belongs to me, so she's a her. She's mine but I don't like her very well. She let me down.
Feinberg: In what way?
Shirley: Plop, plop, rock, rock, nothing. I was on my way home, out the door, and then she went and did this [Shirley pointed to her left arm.] She didn't ask me if she could [she was shaking her head back and forth]. I have to be the boss, not her.
Feinberg: Is that its actual name? Would you say that is its real name?
Shirley: For now. It doesn't deserve any better. I could paint it is I wanted to.
Feinberg: Is it a real Pet Rock though?
Shirley: No, it's my hand.
Feinberg: So why do you refer to it as a Pet Rock? What do you mean by that?
Shirley: It lays there like a lump. It doesn't do anything. It just lays there. It's like when you're Jewish and you go to a Jewish cemetery and put a rock on the tomb and it just lays there. It's supposed to say "I was here." [Pointing to her left arm.] It's saying I'm here. But I'm not. I'm only sort of here. I'm not really here.
Feinberg: [I touched her left hand] Is this part of you?
Shirley: Un-huh. Not a part I like a lot.
Feinberg: Do you dislike it?
Shirley: Yeah.
Feinberg: How do you feel about the real Pet Rocks?
Shirley: Stupid. . . .

. . . She grabbed her left hand with her right, shook the limp arm, and began to sing to it:

Shirley: Wake up! Time to go home. What are we gonna tell your mama? What are we gonna tell your pa? What are we gonna tell your friends when they say ooo-la-la? Wake up little Susie. It's time to go home. [Then she held her left hand to her cheek and hugged it, kissed it, and petted it.] She's a good girl.
Feinberg: What was that?
Shirley: "Wake Up Little Susie." Remember the Everly Brothers? [Point to her left arm] That's her. That's little Susie. She's been out all night long and she has to go home. That's it. She's done. She's gotta go home or they're gonna think she's the town whore [laughing].
Feinberg: Why would you say that?
Shirley: Because she's not behaving. [She wiggled her arm again, pulling her fingers as if to rouse it. . . .] Wake up little Susie! . . . I thought I could bring her back with some loving kindness. So I sang it, "Wake Up Little Susie," which is one of my favorite songs from the Everly Brothers.

Feinberg: What is the theme of that song?
Shirley: A girl and boyfriend were out too late at night. And the entire town is going to be talking about them. That she's being a slut. So it's a way of avoiding getting in trouble. And then he says, What are we gonna tell your friends when they say ooo-la-la? Wake up little Susie, it's time to go home. [Then she lifts up her left arm.] And I want to go home!"

This is an excerpt from Altered Egos: How the Mind Creates the Self by neurologist and psychiatrist Todd E. Feinberg. In this book, Feinberg recounts his interactions with patients who have suffered damage to their brains' parietal lobes due to small strokes. Parietal lobe damage leads to a wide array of bizarre and unsettling symptoms, many of which involve patients literally being unable to recognize parts of themselves as themselves. Feinberg's patient Rosamund panics whenever she looks in a mirror because she identifies her own face as a stalker who won't leave her alone. Mirna believes her paralyzed left hand belongs to her dead husband and Jack thinks his paralyzed hand is his mother-in-law's. I have long been interested in these kinds of cases because they seem to bring home the deeply fragile and precarious nature of our sense of self. For me, Feinberg's extended transcriptions of his conversations with patients set his book apart from the numerous accounts of such patients in medical literature. Reading these conversations, it is clear that the absurd experiences that the patients describe are as much a product of their minds' desperate attempt to make sense of an incomprehensible situation as they are the product of the physical disability itself. The self, and its loss, seem to depend on the body and the mind combined.
My work always seems to circle back to situations where aspects of the physical body become metaphors for psychological states. I was drawn to the

concrete, even literal form of the partial loss of self that these patients experience, and to the way in which, in these situations, the body and mind are inextricably intertwined. In the video Me Not Me I attempted to reenact, as accurately and realistically as possible, the experiences of the many people who have undergone a partial loss of their sense of self due to this particular physical trauma. My hope was that this would allow the viewer to feel the fragility of the self in a way that reading medical texts does not.

Shirley, whose conversation with Feinberg is quoted at length above, has a paralyzed hand. She is clearly struggling to come to terms with her situation but she has not resorted to the same kind of convoluted and absurd explanations that some patients come to. While she does speak of her hand in the third person or as a "stupid" thing, she has not lost her ability to recognize her hand as her own. Thus, no patient quite like Shirley appears in Me Not Me. I introduce her here because she speaks so movingly about the conundrum of confronting a part of her body as an inanimate object. My work has often explored our ambivalent and conflicted feelings about our bodies. Here's how I've always thought of the problem: we don't seem to have too much trouble thinking of ourselves as consciousnesses; nor do we have much trouble understanding that we are physical objects; the problems stem from the difficulty we have understanding how we are both. The difficulties that arise for these patients when they experience a part of their bodies as an inanimate thing seem to highlight the nature of our selves as bodies and minds inextricably linked. ■

Jeanne Dunning's new work will be shown at Donald Young Gallery in Chicago in February and March.

Me Not Me, 2009 Color video, 24:00



CULTURAL CALENDAR

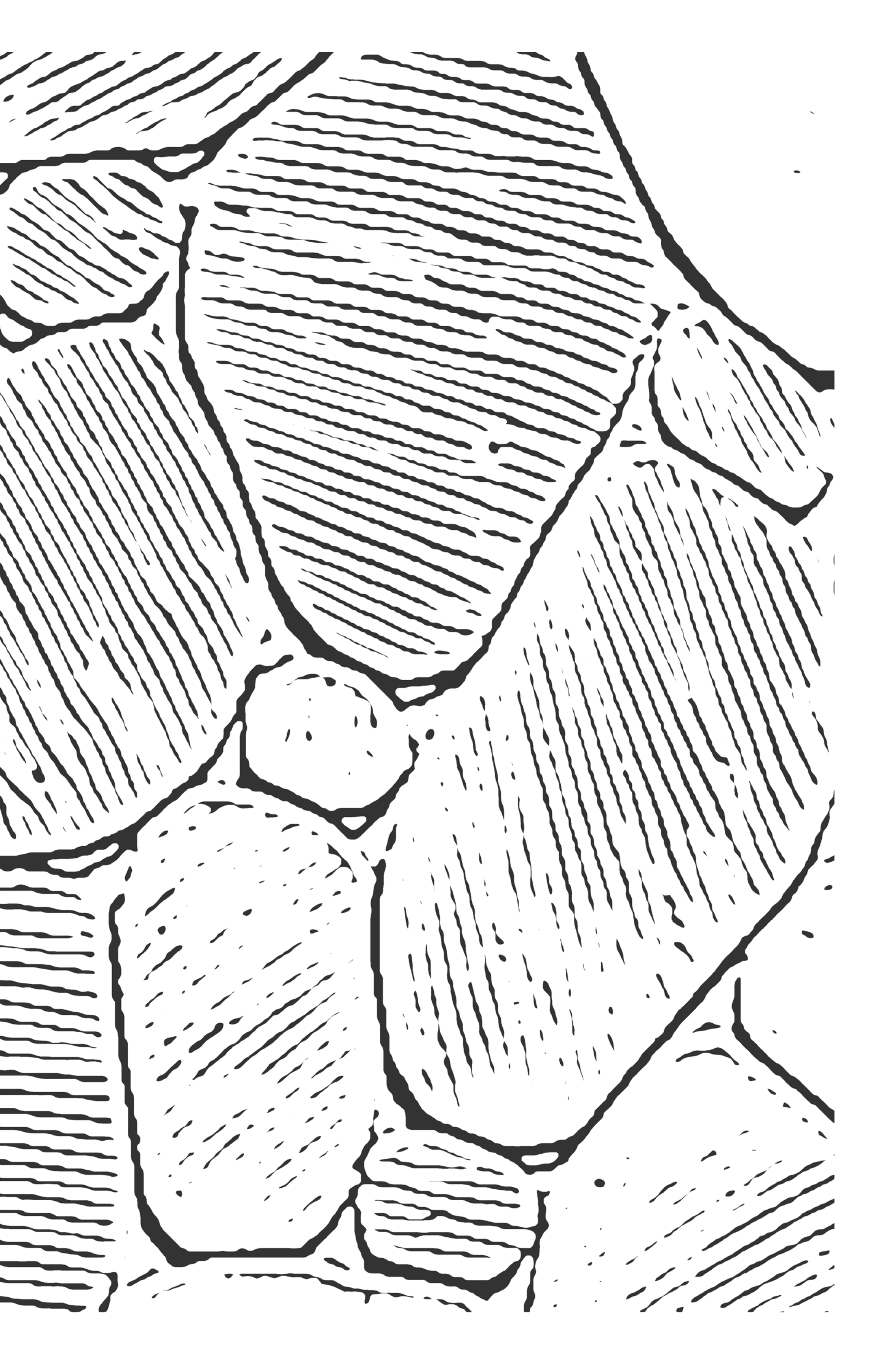
KITCHEN SINK
Paintings by Huey Crowley
Paintings and performances by Luis Galvez.
Curated by John Sobczak and Sean Heiser.
Opening Feb. 25th at 6-10 p.m. up till March 9th
Film screening of Shut the Mouth
Allen Keating Moore on March 5th
"This feature length silent film offers a fresh approach to filmmaking as a personal and philosophical discipline, rendering images as insights and music as an auditory fountain flowing with meaning. ShutThe Mouth is about a vow of silence, elusive philosophical realities, and the inner turmoil all of us will face as we find our way forward. It's also a contemplative film, drawing the viewer into its depths while refusing easy answers. This film deals with personal crisis and a persistent need to ponder the haunting nature of human existence, letting every new realization soak in slowly, moment by moment."

opening 7-10pm
http://nabrgallery.wordpress.com
by appointment through Jan. 24
Contact: nabrgallery@gmail.com
JACKPOT GALLERY
825 E. Center St.
Gallery Hours-Thursday-Saturday 2-6 pm (may be subject to change)
New work by Ben Miller and Cody Frei
Opening: January 14, 2011, 6-10pm, performance at 8pm
SMALL SPACE
2676 N. Holton St.
Milwaukee WI, 53212
February 18, 2011 Gamma Hole by Oliver Sweet
March 11, 2011 Work by Autumn Clark
April 8, 2011 Video/film screening featuring work by Nick Edelberg, reading by Ralph Doeggie
April 15, 2011 We Need This Yesterday Video Screening
April 22, 2011 Do You Do This on Your Couch? Video Screening
WALKER'S POINT CENTER FOR THE ARTS
839 S 5th ST, Milwaukee, WI
www.wpca-milwaukee.org
414.672.2787
Contact: Mary Overman (PR/Marketing/Membership Coordinator)
maryo@wpca-milwaukee.org
-Slow Start, Long Beginnings
Recent Work by Cassandra Smith,

Jessica Steeber and Karin Haas
Feb 4 - March 19, 2011
Opening Reception: Fri, Feb 4th from 5 - 9 pm.
Group show by three Milwaukee area artists.
-Carlos Cortez and Allied Artists
April 1 - May 15, 2011
Opening Reception: Spring Gallery Night, Friday, April 15th
Exhibit of prints by Carlos Cortez, a former Milwaukee artist who moved to the Pilsen area of Chicago and produced prints that focused on human rights, immigration issues, celebrations, poetry and the plight of workers. Show will also incorporate artists influenced by Cortez including a handful from the WVIII Co-op as well as Just Seeds Co-op. Organized from private and public collections with the assistance of Susan Simensky Bietila.
Recent work by Colin Dickson and Shane Walsh
Recent Work
May 27 - July 16, 2011
-Osborne/Pabst
July 29 - Sept 3
Opening Reception: Summer Gallery Night, Friday, July 29th
Group exhibit organized and curated by Josie Osborne and Joseph Pabst.
-Annual Member's Show
Sept 9 - Oct 8, 2011
This exhibit provides current members of the WPCA the opportunity to exhibit

their work in our galleries.
-19th Annual Dia de los Muertos Exhibition
Oct 21 - Nov 19, 2011
Opening Reception: Fall Gallery Night, Friday, Oct 21st
-CoPA 5th Annual Midwest Juried Exhibition
Dec 2, 2011 - Jan 20, 2012
Opening Reception: Winter Gallery Night
Annual opportunity for members of this Milwaukee-based organization to exhibit their work.

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# Architecture of Necessity

Ernesto Oroza

Cuba is one of the countries in Latin America with the highest index of urban population. Havana holds a large percentage of this population and the number continues to grow. Paradoxically, it shows a low index of production of new homes in relation to its demographic growth. Where does this city house its two million inhabitants?

For over three decades, the inhabitants of Havana have intervened, using their own resources, on their houses and the adjoining public and private spaces in order to adapt them to the new needs faced by the individual and the family. The most common alterations include the creation of new floor plans, closing apertures, divisions, and added spaces; and the invasion and occupation of public, communal or otherwise empty areas. With these alterations, there appear new entryways, windows and balconies, new water and electrical systems, along with an infinite array of architectural modifications, such as the use of protection bars to mark the new limits of the property or the conversion of domestic spaces into cafeterias, parking for bicycles, or pens for animals.

Two foundational traits have radicalized this process. On the one hand, the house became the fount of resources for its own transformation. The architectural theorem: the raw-material-house turned the family into a productive unit at the core of a process that transformed the city. It is a transformation that begins at the home. The many interventions that characterize this process have extended considerably Havana's habitable space and this has occurred without the city extending beyond its borders. This allows us to speak of it as a city that has grown inwardly. Necessity and its central role in the generation and regulation of the transformations aids in establishing the second distinctive trait of this process. In previous texts, I have associated these vernacular constructions with natural productions known as stalactites and stalagmites, in which form is the result of the fluid movement of materials attracted by the force of gravity. In this architecture, the irrepressible movement of materials, too, forms a weaving of lines and voids, a grafting of layers and structures that, as in natural sedimentary processes, lean one on the other. This fluid movement responds to a force as strong and inevitable as gravity: the force of Necessity.

Le Corbusier synthesized in his "Modulor" the human traditions that have attempted to project the physical and spiritual dimensions of the universe through architectural forms. "The exterior is always and interior," Le Corbusier said, speaking of other things.

The modified architecture of Havana is driven by an unavoidable fate: Necessity. The city's inhabitants are aware of their real needs. Their prejudices stripped by the inevitable, they transform their city under a new order: The Moral Modulor.

Le Corbusier proposed: "By imposing the order of his foot or his arm, he has created a unit which regulates the whole work; and this work is on his own scale, to his own proportions, comfortable for him, to his measure. It is on a human scale. It is in harmony with him: that is the true main point."\* The Moral Modulor, unlike the "Corbusierean" Modulor, is a human being at the same time as a measuring tool. He embodies the human potential to understand urgency and inscribe it in space. He adds, to the order established by human dimensions, the moral dimension that necessity recovers.

Urgency provides for the individual

a foundational alibi. Every sexual or physiological impulse, every birth and even death, will provoke the appearance of new walls, columns, stairways, new windows or plumbing and electrical systems. Form follows Necessity. The modified houses of Havana express this relationship. It's an Architecture of Necessity.



## You Are Your House

"Esfuerzo Propio"<sup>1</sup> (an expression akin to "Personal Initiative") is the term used by Cuban officials to name the constructions and transformations undertaken by the citizenry to meet their growing needs. In the last decades these "initiatives" have produced a massive phenomenon with broad demographic, economic, social and expressive repercussions; repercussions as important for the present as the spilling of Havana beyond its walls, the urbanization of Vedado, or the creation of Alamar were for their time.

With the Microbrigades<sup>2</sup> program, the State transferred to the citizenry



the responsibility of creating its own habitat. But its participative model de-toured personal energies toward the benefit of the collective. It is for this reason that it failed in maintaining the effective continuity that characterizes a silent and slippery process that propels the individual and the family as they aim to enlarge their own benefits and that, toward this end, employ their own means and satisfy their own responsibilities.

## Potential House

"The idea is constant, in full sway from the beginning."\* The Potential House is a living state of awareness. In the face of a persistent urgency, the Potential House produces a constant way of looking at the world, a radical perspective and an architectural pragmatism: everything will be a house. And it isn't only a question of an architectural ideal, it's an almost uncontainable astuteness that allows you to imagine and collect possible

used bricks, small amounts of cement, windows and potential stairways throughout the city. It's the lucidity that allows you to understand when the optimal economic and legal moment to build a new floor in your house may be, even if you're sure its walls won't go up for another 2 years.

The house exists from the beginning as a potentiality. This is why there are entire houses currently accumulated as stacked bricks under a bed or behind a sofa. And there are

family, the city translates the collective movement of a society into a language of structures. In this sense, the Updating City rejects the figurative and alienated role of contemporary architecture. In its place, it promotes decentralized practices, disobedient and pragmatic practices, practices that are absolutely abstract in the same basic, pre-culturized sense that sleep and eating can be.

A dual awareness that you need water today and that you will need it for the rest of your life, determines two solutions with different temporal characters: the first one immediate, maybe provisional; the second progressive, probably permanent. The two lines of thinking, immediate/provisional and progressive/permanent, mix, leaving behind parallel electrical, water and gas systems; installations that are finished and unfinished, visible and invisible, legal and illegal, cheap and expensive.

The city's inhabitants convert their houses into a systematic means of expression and survival. The pragmatism, the astuteness to avoid poverty and the legal cleverness with which they deal with spaces and materials, converts each home into a manifesto: a Statement of Necessity.

## The House is Limit and Possibility

He lived with his mother in a space that was so small that it couldn't legally be considered a house. He expanded into the hallway, built a kitchen and refurbished the bathroom. He changed the status of the property and acquired a title for it.

He got his hands on a permit to build on the roof, as he thought about moving out on his own. In order to do this he had to build an exterior stairway. He set to work on the structure indoors and started the paperwork to divide the property. The appearance of an exterior stairway before the process of dividing the house was finished could be considered a violation, and he could be fined or even lose all property rights to the house he had built.

He understood that the description of the house and its parts depends on the cultural understanding that we have of it, that laws depend on this understanding.

Then, what is a stairway? How does one describe it? Could he build a structure in front of his doorway that looks nothing like a stairway but serves the same function? Maybe just objects stacked in such a way that one can climb and descend them? Or an object by Ettore Sottsass, a stack that includes all of Feijóo's books, a Franz West sculpture, anything? He decided on a conceptual shortcut: he built the stairway and waited to be fined. In this way, he gained time. The Law demanded that he cease building the stairway until the paperwork needed to divide the property was finalized.

Years went by. He used the unfinished stairway.

What's a finished stairway?

The house is limit and possibility. It's a prison and, at the same time, an asset.

Havana's transformed houses are the result of our capacity to face, negotiate with, or simply elude the legal, economic, physical and cultural limits. These very limits enunciate/articulate the city's architecture. Architecture is limit and possibility. ■

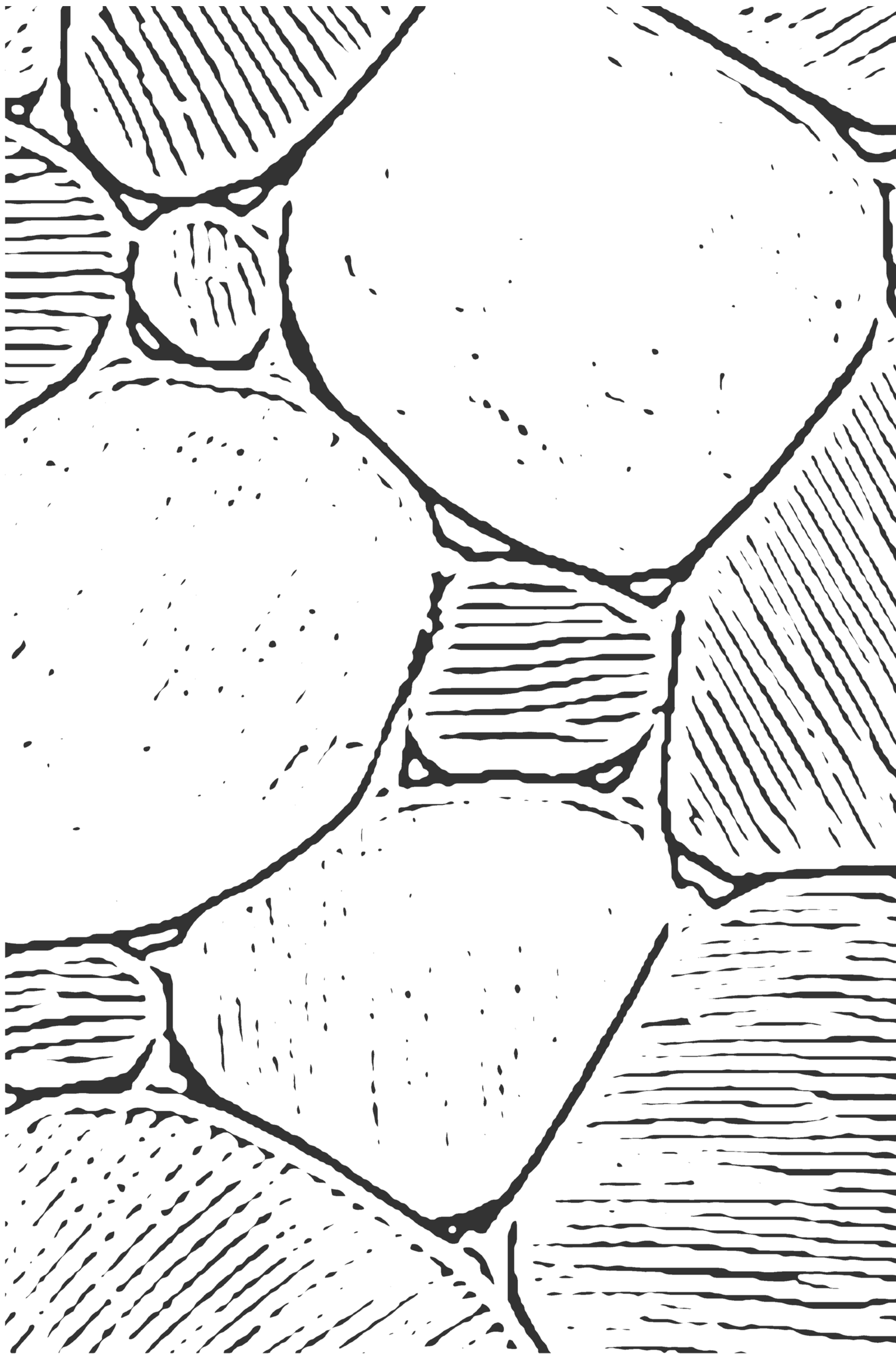
\* Le Corbusier quotes from *Towards a New Architecture* (translated by Frederick Etchells)

<sup>1</sup> Law No. 65. General Housing Law. Chapter II, Article 6, f).

<sup>2</sup> Law No. 65. General Housing Law. Chapter II, Article 6, h): Micro brigade: volunteer organization with the objective of building, maintaining, rebuilding and remodeling houses and other structures.



Project: Moral Modulor's Drawings 2010. When anthropometric dimensions become a metaphor for moral dimensions.





# Is my Vision Failing or Is My Failing Vision?

Notes on studio practice.  
By Matthew Girson

## Boredom

Boredom is critical. If the scales of boredom and interest tip on a fulcrum then what is furthest away from the fulcrum on the boring side is the most boring, but the most interesting is that which sits right on either side of the fulcrum. The sweet spot between boredom and interest is very provocative. Boredom is never and always. Patricia Meyer Spacks asserts that we read and we write to dispel boredom and the same may be true of making and viewing art. Adam Philips refers to boredom as a poverty of curiosity. Often times I begin new work to dispel boredom or satisfy curiosity. I cease working on most of my paintings when my curiosity is satisfied and I grow bored of working on them.

The experience of looking at art is filled with boredom. Most art bores me. If no interest is generated between myself and the work then I walk away. The best works of art tease me with a soft tug of their boredom and light push of their interest. Works that sustain my curiosity hover close to the edges of boredom without falling through.

## Paintings and drawings

The palette for these paintings includes many colors mixed through black. The darkened colors and narrow value range make the paintings difficult to see under perfect conditions but the processes involved in how the paint dries create other problems. Some colors dry to a matte finish while others maintain a gloss. Once the paint starts drying the subtle color shifts are lost as the varieties of sheen from color to color reflect different amounts of light. During this time the colors, edges, and forms in the image become impossible to see; the canvas appears to be an inconsistently painted black rectangle.

After a few days the surface stops changing and the paint is dry to the touch but the oils take months to completely oxidize and harden. Once they have completely oxidized - usually three months - the paintings can be varnished and the surface qualities become uniform

again, thus allowing the color shifts to be visible again.

After the final painted marks are applied I watch the surface change as the paint dries. Once it has stopped changing I cannot see the paintings. This period is akin to being in a dark room just after the lights have been turned off. Complete blindness gives way to the recognition of form. In the

case of these paintings the recognition of form does not occur for months.

This process that slips between looking and seeing/not seeing is very important.

Sustained viewing of the pre-varnished paintings reveals only paint. Sustained viewing of the varnished paintings may or may not reveal more than that. What you see may or may not be what you see.

In the paintings and the drawings touch is very important. Navigating nuance and boldness takes up a great deal of the time I spend while actually making my work. Often the gesture with the greatest boldness is rendered with the most tender delicacy. My favorite works assert their understatedness aggressively.

This is all true of my paintings but it is more immediately evident in the drawings. Many marks in the drawings are so delicate that I lose them while making them. My drawing process is a perpetual shifting between snowblindness and recovery. Throughout the work and in the process of making it, I grope forward slowly, as if moving forward in the darkness of an unfamiliar place.

## Craft

"Craft means handiwork, a matter of hands. And these hands must belong to one person, i.e. a unique, mortal soul searching for its way with its voice and its dumbness. Only truthful hands write true poems. I cannot see any basic difference between a handshake and a poem."

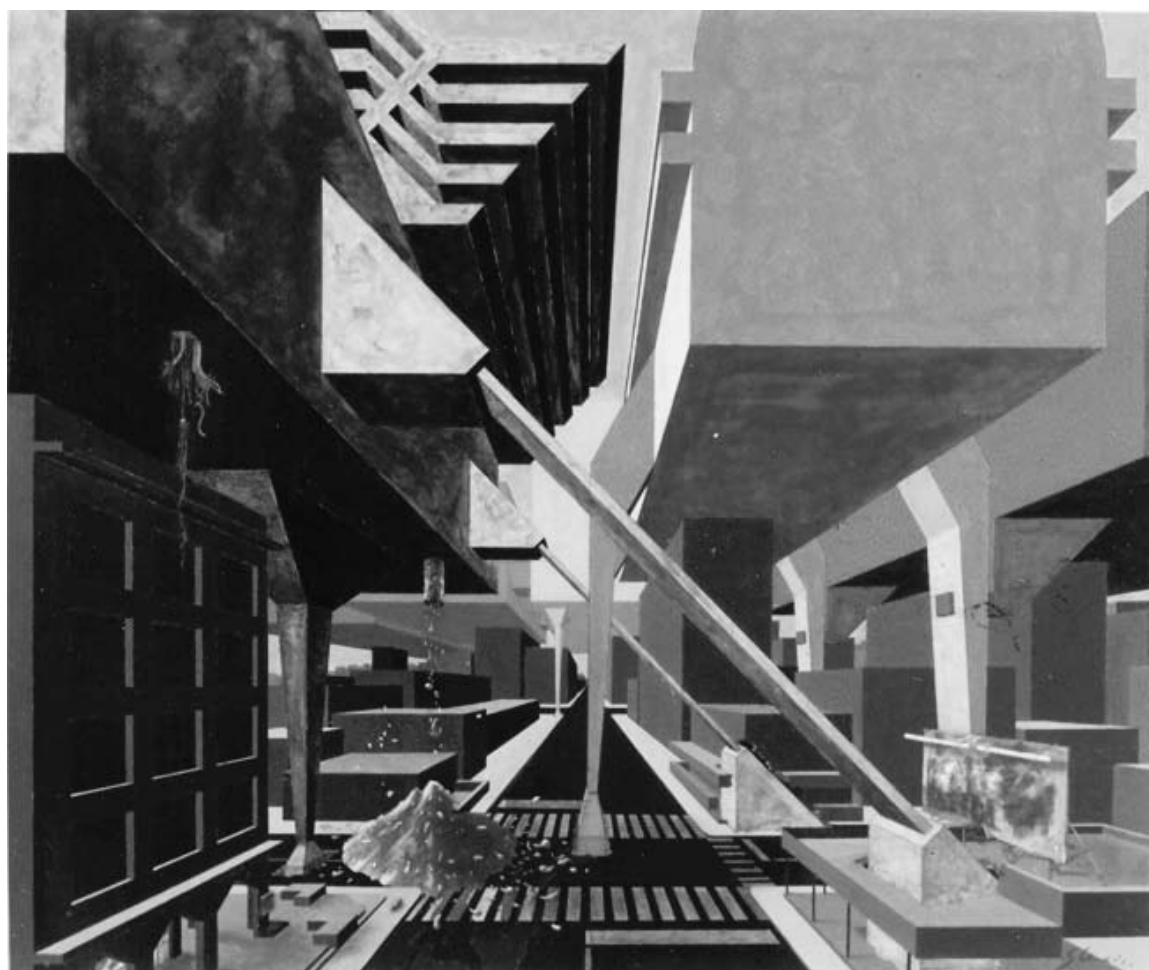
-excerpted from a letter by Paul Celan to Hans Bender from *Paul Celan: Selected Prose* [Translated by Rosemarie Waldrop, Sheep-on-Meadow Press, New York, 1986].



"Face Plant: The artist stumbles in the darkness while pursuing the void."



The Painter's Other Library is the Poet's Other Night Sky #16  
2010  
Oil on Canvas (20 x 15")



23Y 12 1994 graphite, acrylic & oil on canvas, 39 x 47" (Private collection, New York).

## Walker's Point Center for the Arts



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*Art. Community. Education.*

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Curated by Nicholas Frank.

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rated by the gravity. With their gloves put on, they began to model in the air and to experiment forms that resulted ashtrays, centrepieces... I think that the workers had been waiting with joy and for a long time the forthcoming power cut. They had a legal protection to produce: they just had to save the machine from an obstruction and this liberation allowed them to produce something they could conserve, the expelled material was considered as a waste. One of them thought he could create such a machine at home; the device used to produce fritters was an analogous model. Since then, they did not need the State productive space anymore. They did not need either the Japanese machine that was ordered a power cut each three days. The access to the acrylic was the most complicated thing, but a black

market appeared for this product. There were warehouses with immobile raw materials. The State had remained paralyzed, shocked by the crisis impact and he didn't react. The individuals found very quickly the responsibility in them for the productive management. The implementation of a familial industry in the nineties, still active, is bound to the production of plastic and aluminium objects. The scale of the productions was so big and visible that they needed a patronage, a legal source of income and support. It is not the same thing to sell illegally ten lamps of kerosene made with beer tins and to sell three thousand plastic glasses. Indeed what was called "the local industries" came on stage. It was a State institution that gave job opportunities to some craftsmen and workers. It was unifying small workshops spread all over the city a long time before the revolution: printers of Linotype, workshops of sewing, of cobblers, workshops to produce craftworks. When the crisis appeared, the local industry was the unique skilled model the State had to regulate the vernacular productive torrent. It was used as a mediator to access to the raw materials, to distribute goods and later as a controller of the tax paying, to keep an eye on the illegal practices and appropriate the inventiveness and the popular effort. The workshops in houses turned into living systems in the centre of the city. They employed young people of the area. Sometimes you could see them enter stealthily behind a tree: it was the thin access to an improvised cellar where there were two or three machines of plastic injection. The mechanisms were incredible, they produced them by themselves. Also the moulds. The need for raw materials converts these places into very selective "black hollows". All the plastic objects from the surroundings were absorbed by the mechanism, a kind of industrial cannibalism. Hordes of plastic prospectors were collecting containers from everywhere to feed the monster that was expelling little heads of Batman at the other side. Sometimes families were living with the machines inside the house, not in a patio or a cellar. A room during the day can transform itself into a plant to produce electric switches, pipes or hoses. Photos of children on the wall of the house and a small bedside table now used as a toolbox reappraised the past of the space. I can't stop using these examples to answer you. In the order of the definitions, I think that the words "domestic or familial industrial production", allow determine a more complete form of production that holds an implicit increase of the series characteristic and of the volume of production, but that remains especially associated to the house and that mixes its activities with the domestic tasks of the family. Other vernacular and familiar features in these productions, responding to appropriation gestures, can be found in the elaboration of the designs and in the inspiration sources. In a certain way, the objects present in the house before the crisis supplied a guide to get some values by appropriating the form of a glass. They used its dimensions, decorations, ergonomic values. The family recycled the formal universe coming from the exchanges of Cuba with the communist Europe. It had a second life embodied in the multicolour or aluminium plastic.



life. But it is, over all, a foundation gesture to implement practices of disobedience from which it is impossible to evacuate ideological components around a culture of resistance.

**BM:** In this context, you study the way Cubans have been able to re-appropriate the means of production and to develop what you call "the vernacular industrial production". What is this?

**EO:** I consider it like an appropriation of the productive management, but not of the productive system. The State means have been idle for a long time. The industry paralyzed. There was no raw material and the government had lost its markets. The Cubans created a parallel productive space, constructed machines in their houses, workshops, tools. In some cases, they parasitized the State industry where they were working; creating productions on the sly, with illegal timetables, but it is not the most usual method. The lamp of extracted acrylic we showed in the book *«Objets réinventés»* connects the two variants: the appropriation of State productive means and the creation of parallel means of production. It was discovered by some workers during a power cut in the nineties. When the blackout occurred, the Japanese machine used to produce rods for artificial insemination remained full of acrylic in its pipes of extrusion. So, it was necessary to drain it manually and in emergency. The acrylic expelled drew in the room elliptic lines and came tough, forming a complete figure and deco-

remented. The house like a finished entity doesn't exist anymore. The house is like an organism that auto-constructs itself in time to the human rhythms living in it. What I call Potential House, or more recently Convergent House, is a way to live in the process (of living). I think there is no better diagram to explain the relations you ask me than the houses themselves, their surfaces, spaces and structures.

**BM:** In front of a perpetual emergency, these practices of reinvention extend themselves to all fields of the everyday life. You say that "the city takes place at the biological rhythm of the house", a strong image you employ is the potential house. Would you please tell us more about this thin link between the Human and its constructed environment?

**EO:** The crisis persistence and the hope loss in the socialist government productivity generated a mentality, a social being that I called, revisiting Le Corbusier: the Moral Modulator. I talk about an individual or a fam-

ily pushed in some circumstances under the poverty line (below zero would say Glauber Rocha). They can proceed to a moral reinvention. Their actions will occur in a threshold or a moral frequency where you can't see old historical and esthetical values, social status, urban standards and codes of citizen behavior in general. That is to say, all these conventions relative to an order now hostile and restrictive of the family survival will be questioned. The individual will register this freedom in his spaces and objects, next to the order of his foot; he will set up an unknown moral dimension. The house, and the city by extension, becomes a continuous diagram of the shrewd relations of the individual with his needs, the contextual limits and the available resources. I told in other occasions that the facades are like films displayed from the middle of the house to the exterior. They talk about the past and the recent life of the family. Indeed, they announce plans, threaten of invasions or inform on future metamorphosis and fusions: staircases which don't fit to any side, walls that figure expanding to all interstices, baths open to the public sight, terrace roofs invaded by materials and heterogeneous accumulations. The house like a finished entity doesn't exist anymore. The house is like an organism that auto-constructs itself in time to the human rhythms living in it. What I call Potential House, or more recently Convergent House, is a way to live in the process (of living). I think there is no better diagram to explain the relations you ask me than the houses themselves, their surfaces, spaces and structures.

Illustrations from: *Con nuestros propios esfuerzos*. Editorial Verde Olivo, 1992

Interview published in *Azimuts 35*, 2010 Saint Etienne, France

**OBJECTS OF NECESSITY** In certain contemporary urban areas the necessity produces objects that look more like the result of materials cornered by the wind into the shapes of the city than the result of a productive activity. Broken metal chairs discarded by schools and broken plastic chairs expelled from cafeterias ramble around the neighborhood until they tangentially affect the action of those around them: a security guard, a street vendor, a ruined bus stop, a mechanic

having his business on the sidewalk. It happens everywhere at the same time, as if a hypothetical grid formed by all the broken plastic seats in the city matched the gridded field of metal broken chairs spread years ago around Havana. The necessity generates a fatal equation that, under similar circumstances, produces the same results. The individual in need will focus exclusively on the repertoire of the usefulness, propitiating a conjunction, a harvest time. (E. Oroza, 2009)

