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## The Entanglement Between Public and Private in the Work of Félix González-Torres

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**Abstract.** This paper discusses through the prism of psychoanalysis some specific peculiarities of the poetics of the American artist Félix González-Torres. In particular, the text seeks to highlight how the concept of “burial work”, taken here from the work of the French psychoanalyst Pierre Fédida, is central to understanding the ways in which González-Torres has been able to hold together public and private, autobiographical experience and the involvement of the spectator in order to construct a shared memory that develops along the lines of dynamism and imprecision, renouncing common expectations of the representation of a memory.

**Keywords:** Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Psychoanalysis, Public/Private, Memory.

In 1991, the Cuban-born artist Félix González-Torres placed some huge bills in the city of New York. *Untitled (billboard of an empty bed)* – this is, like all the artist’s works, the title of the piece – is a rough black-and-white photograph depicting an empty and unmade bed. The hollow in the middle of the pillows suggests a recent presence and confers a profound sense of intimacy upon the image, an intimate setting that is nevertheless in mismatched conflict to its public arrangement by a billboard. Exhibited for the first time on the streets of Manhattan, this recollection of absent bodies defined almost all of Félix González-Torres’ work until his death, occurred in 1996 and due to AIDS-related causes. The artist is best known for his ephemeral installations: a pile-up of candies lying in a corner, a geometric and monumental pile of bills on the floor or a string of lights dangling from a ceiling that recall the visual and formal language of conceptual and minimalist art of the sixties and seventies.

However, González-Torres did not merely fit into the genealogy of minimalist artists such as Donald Judd or Dan Flavin but introduced a truly contemporary annotation into his work. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, artists began to focus on the construction of

identity, including gay identity. In his work, the strings of lights recall a disco environment, and the candies on the floor are a perverse reference to the prescription of AZT, used to fight HIV. The photograph of the bed – reminiscent of another famous work by González-Torres, *Untitled (Perfect Lovers)*, where two paired wall clocks marched slightly out of step with one another (one is a few seconds off) until they are completely asynchronous and their respective batteries run out – recalls the censored image of homosexual love slowly leaving its trace.

Towards the end of the eighties, a new season of gay activism began: the *AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP)* was formed and suddenly the old questions about the relationship between art and politics took on a new meaning for gay artists. Artists' collectives – such as *Gran Fury* – began to use images and texts to instill explicit political messages about the US government's controversial policies towards AIDS patients.<sup>1</sup> However González-Torres did not follow this path. Doomed to disappearance but at the same time perpetually reproducible – viewers could remove a bill or take a piece of candy, but at the moment in which the basic elements of the piece are finished, the installation can be restored to its original state to begin its journey of erasure anew – his pieces took a different, more elegiac path, where any straight representation of homosexuality and biographical experience are rarely evident.

In this way, his works enact the construction of an abstract and at the same time concrete memory of loss and mourning – *in primis* the death of his companion Ross Laycock, which occurred in the same year as the creation of *Untitled (billboard of an empty bed)* – but without the clear display of an autobiographical memory; the trace of heads pressed on cushions in the *Untitled* billboard thus becomes a simultaneous declara-

tion and disavowal of homosexual love within the urban landscape and public space. According to the typical dual register of González-Torres' poetics, the series of *Untitled* unfold at the same time the *public* and the *private*, political themes and autobiographical drifts on the same formal and material surface.

Born in 1957 in Cuba, González-Torres grew up as an artist in the eighties. At that time, post-modern artists often worked with existing images and texts, appropriating and examining an increasingly media-saturated world. His first piece placed itself exactly in this background: following the example of Jenny Holzer – who in the late seventies reproduced found slogans or random feelings on affixed bills on the streets of Lower Manhattan – in 1988 González-Torres presents a framed photostat (a early version of a photocopy) of a sentence. It is a muddle of words, white letters on a black background reading out: «supreme 1986 court crash stock market crash 1929 sodomy stock market crash supreme 1987». In this way, he offers a poetic commentary on the erasure of gay history, inserting a reference to the 1986 Supreme Court ruling – upholding laws against sodomy in the state of Georgia and indeed criminalizing homosexuality – between two significant dates in economic history.

*Untitled (billboard of an empty bed)* marked an important threshold in the history of contemporary art. At the end of the eighties, the art world underwent significant changes. It seemed to many critics at the time that postmodern art could only exist only to illustrate complex philosophical concepts, while the affective character of experience, a basic condition for the renewed wave of identity politics, was almost systematically neglected. Emphasizing the sensual magnitude of experience, artists such as Robert Gober, Kiki Smith and Jane Alexander created sculptural pieces with a visceral impact; many artists began to rediscover long-discarded artistic strategies such as narrative, constructed forms rather than appropriated models, anything that refers to the nexus with the contemporary and the living aspect of everyday experience without mediation.

<sup>1</sup> González-Torres' work developed at a time when Ronald Reagan (US president from 1981 to 1989) famously never uttered the word "AIDS" because of its predominant association with homosexuality.

In some way, González-Torres' poetics keeps a foot in both fields: *Untitled (billboard of an empty bed)* certainly looks like the bills Barbara Kruger already made in the mid-eighties. Her *Surveillance is Your Busy Work* presented in Minneapolis displayed a characteristic use of advertising imagery reconfigured with text to fit into discussions of public space, gender and corporate culture. But the image of a bed in disarray was devoid of any textual or even didactic guideline. Significantly, the photograph represents the artist's own bed: *Untitled (billboard of an empty bed)* suggests – without *portraying* – a tangible presence within the process of disappearance.

If we appreciate the verb *to portray* it is for a very precise reason, which clearly shows the *diplopia (double vision)* and the double regime of memory of González-Torres' work: on one hand, the photograph of an empty bed – but also the pile of candies whose total weight is always equal to Ross's weight during his illness or to the sum of the weight of the two lovers, as in *Untitled (Portrait of Ross)* – does not depict anyone but shows what remains of the lovers' past presence; on the other, it establishes a kind of *negative portrait*, in the manner of the *imago* of ancient Rome, where the deceased is remembered through a mold of his own face. In this way the *memorable*, or the construction of an intimate and private memory, is not directly displayed and cannot be reconstructed by the public through material evidence. It can only be imagined *negatively*, hallucinatorially, through what *absence* imperceptibly suggests. From this point of view, if González-Torres remains in some ways a minimalist artist, it is not only because of the essentiality of forms and materials used but also, and above all, because of the small amount of information passing through his works. These *portraits*, which at the same time are not portraits at all, are not only diplopic from the point of view of the way they are exhibited but also from the point of view of the work of memory's construction that inextricably links the work of the artist and the experience of the spectator. It is a matter of giving physical materiality to an absence now present only into memory. This pro-

cess, defined as *letting go*, is constructed precisely from the *reductio ad minimum* of the available information in order to allow a polysemous and repeatable representation of the world, experience and memory. The *setting* of the work – here we use a psychoanalytic expression to differentiate it from the typical *display* of the exhibition spaces, an inappropriate term for González-Torres' work, which intrinsically requires the presence (but also the absence) of a spectator who interacts imaginatively or physically with the work – with its embodiment, entangles two intertwined and at the same time irreducible dimensions. The spectator who interacts with the work runs into an *outside*, into a dimension that is absolutely *foreign* to him or her and not at all familiar: the biographical intimacy of the artist of which the spectator knows nothing and of which the artist provides only *minimal clues*. According to an inverted dynamic, the artist – who stages his own private memory, through its remains – can only reconstruct this memory and keep it alive thanks to the participation of the public, through *insignificant gestures* such as taking a sweet and sucking it: it is a paradoxical situation, whereby one's own memory needs a fundamental *foreignness* (which in this case concerns public space) in order to be kept alive.

It is possible to trace a similar dialectic of the work in Roland Barthes' *Camera Lucida* – a text moved, according to a dynamic common to several of González-Torres' works, by the *experience of mourning*:

*History is hysterical: it is constituted only if we consider it, only if we look at it – and in order to look at it, we must be excluded from it. As a living soul, I am the very contrary of History, I am what belies it, destroys it for the sake of my own history (impossible for me to believe in “witnesses”; impossible, at least, to be one; Michelet was able to write virtually nothing about his own time). That is what the time when my mother was alive before me is – History (moreover, it is the period which interests me most, historically). No anamnesis could ever make me glimpse this time starting from myself (this is the definition of anamnesis) – whereas, contemplating a photograph in which*

*she is hugging me, a child, against her, I can waken in myself the rumpled softness of her crepe de Chine and the perfume of her rice powder. (Barthes [1980]: 65)*

Barthes' quotation highlights precisely the paradoxical diplopia of González-Torres' *Untitled* and their capacity to stage the hysteria of History: experiencing the piece means accessing the artist's history by looking at it *from the outside*, remaining in a certain sense always "excluded" from the individuality and specificity of his memory; at the same time it is the very presence of the artist's biography that "destroys" the possibility of a History. In this processuality the role of the public – and of the public space – becomes that of recomposing an inaccessible history through the appropriation of a symbolic fragment of a private history decomposed within the structure of the work.

The life of the artist is thus present as a *ghost* within the creative, productive and reproductive circuits of the artworks; it is present as an *absence*, as a space to be deciphered or as material to be incorporated, but never in a direct and explicit way. This is also the trap that González-Torres' work sets for aesthetics, art criticism and even for any psychoanalysis of the art. The biographical element – always presented according to *ghostly* trajectories – never describes an explicative path, in the causal sense that in order to understand the work it is necessary to understand the artist's biography, to reconstruct his experience. In spite of this, it is easy to read his artwork in a reductive manner, as a pure and simple thematisation of personal suffering or as a critique of homophobic policies and the ghettoisation of AIDS sufferers.

For Gonzalez-Torres, the scarcity of biographical or didactic information is the element – always in *trompe-l'œil* – that prevents the activity of memory construction from being reduced to an *après-coup* re-construction of meaning through the artist's personal history or through a banal visual transposition of a critical position. If the *corpus* of the Cuban artist's works is also evidently constructed starting from critical positions towards the political and social context of America in the 1980s, the presence of an enigmatic inti-

mate and private element is precisely what makes it something different than a pure work of social criticism. We could perhaps hazard a guess that González-Torres' formal and poetic strategies, rather than being part of a critique, are part of a process that could instead be described as *clinical*.

This is an attitude that is both poetic and epistemological: a *clinic* beyond any *critical* horizon that proceeds from the mutual isolation of a subject and an object. Here we borrow the notion of *clinic* from psychoanalysis but declining it in the light of a more extended and non-psychoanalytic sense: a *clinic* is the possibility of thought and action at the point of collapse of criticism, where the subject encounters *the Real* according to a path that assigns the subject itself to the contingency of the event. In order to better clarify the choice and the philosophical function of the term *clinic*, we would like to take up a remark by the psychoanalyst who, more than anyone else after Freud, has questioned the problem of psychic causality: Jacques Lacan. In the fifth chapter of *Seminar XI. The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Lacan poses a fundamental question: «Where do we meet this real? For what we have in the discovery of psychoanalysis is an encounter, an essential encounter – an appointment to which we are always called with a real that eludes us» (Lacan [1973]: 53). This question, a central theme in French psychoanalyst's thought, reveals a double requirement of psychoanalysis: that of being a metapsychological theory that cannot avoid thinking about encounter with the real. Questioning the "place of the real" means trying to think of «those radical points in the real that I call encounters, and which enable us to conceive reality as *unterlegt, untertragen*» (Lacan [1973]: 54), a German term that Lacan translates with the French *en souffrance*: «Reality is in abeyance [*en souffrance*] there, awaiting attention» (Lacan [1973]: 56). The relation between place and encounter is so intimate that, in *Seminar VI*, Lacan differentiates analysis from a simple reconstruction of the past, in order to compare it to:

*Psychoanalysis is not a simple reconstruction of the past, nor is it a reduction to pre-established norms; analysis is neither an epos nor an ethos. If I had to compare it to something, it would be to a narrative that would itself be the locus of the encounter at stake in the narrative. (Lacan [2013]: 572)*

Until now we have used various terms from psychoanalytic and metapsychological fields: clinic, ghost, memory, mourning; this is not a recovery in order to explain the art piece, according to which the *Untitled* could somehow be psychoanalyzed together with the artist's biography. Our attempt is rather to define structural and procedural homologies with the metapsychological construction – an attempt already inaugurated by Sigmund Freud when he tried to construct a psychoanalytical discourse around artists and works of art (Freud [1906], [1910]).

From this point of view the reference to Barthes can help us to make some considerations in this regard. The French semiotician published *Camera Lucida* in 1980, two years after the death of his mother and shortly before he was hit by a van on his way out of the Collège de France, an event that was to lead to his death on 26 March of the same year. The text on photography abruptly interrupts a drift, so to speak intimist, of his thought that developed particularly in the years between the seminar on *Lover's Discourse* (1974-1976) and the death of his mother in 1977 (cf. Barthes [1977]). *Camera Lucida* was inspired by a photograph of his mother, and thus by a certain rethinking of the experience of mourning. This is an element common to a large part of González-Torres' artistic production, in particular the artworks produced during the end stage of Ross Laycock's illness and after his premature death. On this point, too, the trap we have highlighted above reappears, because if we read his work as a melancholic testimony of love for Ross, brutally interrupted by his death, everything seems to work. González-Torres' operation is much more subtle and could be defined – taking up the words of the French psychoanalyst Pierre Fédida – as an “œuvre de sépulture” [*burial work*]:

*Comment doit être faite la mémoire des hommes, si elle veut accorder à ses morts une sépulture qui protégé les vivants et permet à ceux-ci de continuer à s'entretenir avec eux? Serait-ce seulement le rêve qui disposerait de la juste nature propre à accorder aux morts la sépulture dont ils sont dignes et qui – mémoire masquée – les garderait à l'abri de l'oubliuse conscience des souvenirs? C'est cela que j'ai avancé. Mais il reste à comprendre comment le rêve convient à la survivance et ainsi à la substance des morts. (Fédida [2001]: 108)*

According to Fédida, it is the dream, and its hallucinatory capacity to make person appear and disappear, that constitutes the model of a burial of deceased loved ones. Fédida's reference is to Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (Freud [2010]), when he refers to «à ces rêves indistincts où les formes humaines sont semblables à des ombres qui absorbent toute l'attention du rêveur dans son rêve et qui se soustraient à toute reconnaissance» (Fédida [2001]: 107). In such dreams, these shadows would be “morts sans sépulture”, wandering souls waiting for a burial that the dreamer would like to grant them through the dream itself. Dreaming would thus be a way of thinking about our dead, since «les apparences humaines qui viennent en rêve et qui sont tissées de notre propre personne portent la marque de la disparition. Le rêve, ai-je dit, est un approfondissement de la dépressivité du deuil» (Fédida [2001]: 107). Fédida's attention is focused here on the fact that “rêves indistincts [*blurred dreams*]” appear in the analysis as an expression of absence, of an absence produced by disappearance: «La disparition n'a-t-elle pas ceci de particulier, qu'elle empêche toute localization du corps et qu'elle tourmente alors l'attente du vivant? Est-il bien mort, ce disparu? C'est la question du supplice du survivant» (Fédida [2001]: 109). This situation of the subject defines what Fédida calls the “état dépressif”, «L'être déprime est un état d'affect que l'on caractériserait donc comme cet état affecté ignorant qu'il est ainsi par *oubli des morts*» (Fédida [2001]: 109): it is an oblivion which in turn corresponds to “l'étouffement assourdissant” and to “l'extermination” which ends up involving the people who are still alive.

In this sense, the *depressive state* arises as a pathological equivalent of an impossible mourning, in respect of which psychotherapy will somehow have to find ways of releasing the dead from their imprisonment by granting a space to host and protect them. It is common for pathological mourning to make the dream itself impossible, when the influence exerted on the dreamer by these faceless shadows is resolved into enchantment and fascination:

*On serait aussitôt tenté d'ajouter: ce que les rêves indistincts rendent impossible, c'est l'hallucination négative. Il ne serait plus dans le pouvoir du rêveur de faire apparaître/disparaître les personnes. La vengeance des morts serait-elle à ce point violente que le rêveur resterait immobilisé et ainsi contraint – tel dans L'Enfer de Dante – à se laisser emmurer par celui ou celle auquel il refuse sépulture? La condamnation infligée au survivant par le mort sans sépulture équivaut à celle de devenir mort-vivant enterré dans le sommeil. (Fédida [2001]: 110)*

In the depressive state, the disappearance prevents the “localization du corps [*location or boundary of the body*]” and for this very reason torments “l’attente du vivant”; this is fundamental because the problem of *location and boundaries* is decisive in many of Félix González-Torres’ artworks. Consider, for example, the series of *Untitled* in which he uses sweets – either lying on the ground in a rectangular shape or piled up in a corner – whose weight corresponds to the weight of Ross’ sick body: the physical space of the piece becomes the psychic space of memory, the space of physical deconstruction – the number of sweets gradually decreasing – becomes the space for a memory’s construction shared with the public. Fédida itself explores the problem of localisation, asking himself where the end of life begins:

*Mais où commence la fin de la vie? Non pas quand, mais où? La question est nietzschéenne plutôt que freudienne. Elle appelle cet accroissement de l’étendue de la pensée – sans doute son désert –, lorsque le corps commence à se raréfier et à devenir trop étroit, en quelque sorte. Si la question appelait une réponse*

*dans la durée du temps, elle entraînerait sûrement cette capitulation lyrique – sorte de lâcheté de l’âme – par laquelle les humains se font passifs sous le temps. [...] Le rétrécissement du corps, sa raréfaction qui, depuis l’intérieur, offre cette générosité inattendue de porter un corps à se simplifier dans une sorte de formule, cette raréfaction abandonne au regard des autres la rapidité de voir disparaître. Ainsi peut-on savoir chez un individu quand a commencé la fin de sa vie. Parfois depuis très longtemps. Ou encore, parfois, depuis peu, mais de façon accélérée. Mais qui veut dire où a commencé la fin d’une vie? (Fédida [2001]: 111-112)*

This is a key question not only for psychoanalysis but also for González-Torres’ poetics. A superficial reading would invite us to *interpret* the work according to “*quand*” [*when*], to the chronological temporality of the artist’s mourning; but in that case an artwork such as *Untitled (Portrait of Ross)* would take on the didactic function of a monument to memory – a procedure that in Fédida’s perspective would entail a risk: «les humains sont plutôt menacés de se servir de la mort pour survivre en un sommeil sans rêve» (Fédida [2001]: 112). But if, in the other hand, we try to think about this work according to the “*où*” [*where*], then all its creative possibilities open up and *Untitled (Portrait of Ross)* can then be thought of as a *space of transference* where the artist and public, although *foreign*, contribute to the constitution-reconstitution of a memorable. The insistence on the “*où*” rather than the “*quand*” does not imply, however, a crushing of temporality on the spatial dimension: in fact, the Freudian conception of the “*work of mourning*” *cannot be separated from a reference to duration*. As Fédida points out, «*le problème du deuil est le problème de l’encombrement du survivant par le cadavre!* Et, de ce point de vue, il ne serait peut-être pas abusif de prétendre que le travail du deuil équivaut à une protection que s’accordent les humains, afin d’intérioriser le temps de la mémoire et de l’oubli ou encore (ce qui revient au même) payer une dette symboliquement et imaginativement exigée pour rester en vie» (Fédida [2001]: 113). This quotation almost seems to refer to the precise

modalities of “staging” in many of González-Torres’ artworks where the theme of “encombrement [*encumbrance, size*]” and its *exactness* is poetically carved through the reference to the weight of Ross’ body: an encumbrance subject to progressive lightening thanks to the interaction of the public. *Untitled (Portrait of Ross)* thus *does not stage* a work of mourning or a work of passing away, but rather an “œuvre de sépulture” that «concerne l’acte d’ensevelissement du mort, mais aussi cette préparation, après la mort, du lieu qui rendra possible la communication entre les vivants et les morts» (Fédida [2001]: 113). And such a “preparation” – a term unintentionally used by Fédida in the museum-like sense of “setting up”, “arrangement”, “display” or “staging” and which finds in the reference to González-Torres’ work a new and different exactness – accords «une très grande importance aux aspects du corps que l’on veut conserver au-delà du cadavre» (Fédida [2001]: 113). However, it is not a facet, a familiar gesture, the intonation of the voice or a simple movement of the body that will embody the stylistic modalities of Ross’s survival, but rather the paradoxically, objective and impersonal appearance of the body: its weight, which becomes the locus of burial, «cette mémoire réminiscente de l’intimité d’un corps» (Fédida [2001]: 113).

This locus which, according to Fédida, “*est le lieu d’une mémoire du nom*” – Ross Laycock’s name is never present in the titles of the works except for some parenthetical occurrence – «*c’est aussi le lieu dont les parents et amis ont besoin pour continuer à communiquer avec les morts*» (Fédida [2001]: 113). In this sense, “la construction d’une sépulture” is, in the life of each one of us, our task towards our loved ones: in González-Torres’ unique poetics it is provocatively entrusted to the public since, as Fédida himself shows with great clarity: «Une théorie de l’affect ne saurait sous-estimer cette pensée qu’à chaque instant, une rencontre humaine rendra ou non possible cette sépulture dont dépend la vie» (Fédida [2001]: 114). Starting from this assumption it is possible to understand the exceptional attention the Cuban artist took in explaining to the room attendants

the dynamics of interaction between the works and the public.

González-Torres’ work is then something else altogether melancholic, if we understand melancholy as «est le résultat de cette faute d’avoir négligé ses morts et de les avoir privés de la sépulture du rêve» (Fédida [2001]: 116): the tragic experience that the human being has to face is that his own life «dépend de la place qu’il donne, dans sa vie, à la mort, et à laquelle il accorde le pouvoir de son enracinement généalogique, ainsi que les potentialités créatives du temps» (Fédida [2001]: 119). The essential element that prevents González-Torres’ works from becoming *melancholically closed in a state of depression* is precisely the complex role that the public plays within the processuality of the work. The public, in fact, is not the recipient of the work, just as the work is not intended for the spectator’s enjoyment; in his art pieces, the *private* and *public* dimensions are marked by indiscernibility, and even the notion of a “public” that enjoys the artwork is confused with that of a *ghostly public*. On several circumstances González-Torres has defined the only true public of his work – and often the subject of them – as Ross Laycock: «When people ask me, “Who is your public?” I say honestly, without skipping a beat “Ross”. The public was Ross» (Félix González-Torres quoted in Storr [2014]: 241). The figure of Ross understood as “public” refers to a virtual space defined as a space of absence. As involuntary accomplice in the construction of the artwork’s meaning the public accepts, by its active participation, to collaborate in the separation of the artist from his work and at the same time in the destruction of the latter.

Therefore based on a dialogue and a relationship that are only physically interrupted, the process of *letting works go* by supporting the artist’s need to detach himself from the piece and, consequently, from the memory it carries. In other words, *letting go* means not being trapped in a melancholic and depressive affection but on the contrary being able to start from it, exploiting the “potentialités créatives du temps”.

*Freud said that we rehearse our fears in order to lessen them. In a way this “letting go” of the work, this refusal to make a static form, a monolithic sculpture, in favour of a disappearing, changing, unstable, and fragile form was an attempt on my part to rehearse my fears of having Ross disappear day by day right in front of my eyes. (Félix González-Torres quoted in Rosen [1997]: 44)*

Art of the precariousness and momentary, *letting go* assumes the intangible and fragmentary form of memory, opening up to sharing, to re-elaboration and to the assumption of new nuances and different directions of meaning. Similarly, González-Torres’ autobiographical memory develops along a path of dynamism and vagueness, renouncing the common expectations of representation of the memory. Memory, in a contemporary reinterpretation of Proust’s famous madeleine, now takes the form of piles of sweets, different in shape, colour and weight, which the public is invited to take away, eat or share. Set aside in the corner of a museum room, or scattered on the floor, the candies become sweet instruments through which the author’s autobiographical memory becomes the memory of the public, «a sharing experiences, one’s life» (Merewether [1994]: 64).

Memory, the artist seems to suggest, is not only psychic but also physical (Ferguson [1994]: 32): synthesized by the sweet taste of a coloured candy, it has a direct effect on our body, involving all five senses and restoring our being as a concrescence of time. As painful as the moment of *letting go* may be for the artist, it allows – for the artist who sees his work vanish and for those who contribute to its scattering – to materially visualize an imperfect and fragmentary memory in order to reshape the present and build a future (Ferguson [1994]: 25): in the fragmentary narrative of the past, kept alive through the interaction between the work and the public and its free circulation, it is then a question of opening a dialogue with the present time where the history of the artist – as well as that of the public – becomes part of the history of each individual spectator, in

a construction never given *a priori* and always to be constructed.

The *medium* – which perhaps we should here identify as memory<sup>2</sup> – is definitively embodied in the physical representation of a memory, in a Brechtian *mise-en-scène* projected into the psycho-physical dimension of the spectator and into the space of the exhibition: in this way, the ordinary objects at the core of his artworks – piles of paper, sweets, puzzles, luminous threads, billboards – become poetic vectors, distilled statements of political and cultural criticism impregnated with whispered autobiographical clues.

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<sup>2</sup> Regarding memory as a *medium* cf. Krauss [2011].



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