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Das grösste Kunstwerk, das es je gegeben hat.

"The Exhibition of Atrocities. When he goes in the exhibition, Travis watches the atrocities of Vietnam and Congo as mimicry of Elisabeth Taylor's alternate death; he pays attention to the dying cinema star, eroticising the perforated bronchus on the too ventilated terraces of the London Hilton; he dreams about Max Ernst, lord of the birds: "Europe after the rain"; human race: Caliban slept on a vomit spotted mirror"¹

The texts disposed on the walls, with a considerable big typography, underline that José Carlos Casado's exhibition is a kind of *archive*, sediment of versions about crucial subjects such as communication, sexuality and technology. "His works – interactive and digital video-installations, visual sculptures and photographs –, have focussed so far on three thematic axis, "flesh", "fears" and "realities", that allow us to go deeply into the critical and poetic view of a future that is already present. We see and feel in the exhibition how the human body is more and more an artificial product, how biological reproduction dissociates from sexual desire, or how the powers build a tight and authoritarian view of experience. In short, how we are sold as "real" the height of the maximum unreality"². An obsessive and radical plastic meditation over the spectralization of the *effect of reality*, in a suffering society, precisely, *archive disease*, that's it, substitutes the historic illness, that idea of considering ourselves as "posthumous human beings", because of the absolute availability that establishes a dematerialization process that implies, correlatively, the reterritorialization of the methods of power. The archive, nucleus of our economy and epistemological configuration, is located or housed in the faintness of the memory scene, "there is no archive without a place for allocation, without a repetition technique and without a certain outward appearance. No archive without outside"³. Casado organizes his *aesthetic discourse* from an extremely subtle textualization in which he raises possible links, connections with an absolutely controversial present, avoiding any formalist drift in the appreciation of his works. His will of criticism is, to a certain extent, *untimely* with regard to many of the contemporary artistic examples that fluctuate between the hyper-technologic narcissism and the reactionary claim for the decorative art without, of course, any political connotation. Baudrillard has pointed out that the present art is devoted to a surprising task of *dissuasion* (a duel between image and what it is imaginary) in which we reach what it is known as *fossil irony*, extreme example of the resentment in the presence of culture itself: "it is a parody, as well as a recantation of art and art history, a parody of the culture that takes revenge on itself, characteristic of the radical disillusion. It is as if art, like history, created its own

¹ James G. Ballard: *La exhibición de atrocidades*, Ed. Minotauro, Barcelona, 2001, p. 22.

² José Jiménez: "José Carlos Casado. Lo real es irreal" in *Descubrir el arte*, number 46, Madrid, December, 2002, p. 126.

³ Jacques Derrida: *Mal de archivo. Una impresión freudiana*, Ed. Trotta, Madrid, 1997, p. 19.

rubbish and was looking for its redemption in its waste"⁴. Contemporary art reinvents nullity, insignificance, and nonsense, pretends nullity when, maybe, it is already null: "But nullity is a quality that not anyone can demand. Insignificance – the real one, to defy sense triumphantly, to forsake sense, the art of sense disappearance – is an outstanding quality of some rare works and never aspire to it"⁵. And, nevertheless, art consists, in a radical meaning, in leaving the way of sense always opened or perhaps a bit undecided, escaping from dogmatism as well as insignificance. The diagnosis is that the end of the representation has been reached and, therefore, the closure of what it is aesthetic in a manneristic fold, more than baroque, in the superficiality of the electronic screen: "but – and we find a perverse and paradoxical effect, maybe positive – it seems that at the same time that illusion and utopia have been expelled by force of technology from what is real, because of the virtues of the technologies themselves, *irony has become part of things*"⁶.

We are going, in present art, into what I denominate a full *literality* where *we are not exempted from anything*. I mean this kind of fiction in which if an accident is narrated it is necessary to go, immediately, to the entrails phenomenology, to come closer until we feel the extreme repugnance, if it is a question of dandruff⁷ we will have to stand the urgency of cleaning the one we accumulate on our jackets and, of course, if desire (in broad art "sexualization") appears, it will be necessary to take *obscenity* into account as corresponds. "To undress our view, this is the effect of literality"⁸. When counterculture is merely testimonial (or bad digestion, vandalic sarcasm in hackerism) and the museumistic refrigerator has frozen everything that, apparently, opposed it⁹, it seems as if it was necessary to slip into a *problematic realism* (where sociology and the formulations almost hegemonic of what is wretched are mixed), more than into the guidelines of the subverted rococo established by "installations"; nowadays raw material of the *aesthetic routine*, in an unknown display of the *recycling* tactics. It would be tedious to reiterate that *scatology is our destiny*, exactly when political hygienization, sexual prophylaxis and the lobotomization of the critic have turned *minimalism* into the framework of canonization. The *Gestell* is the chassis, the frame or, in the description that fits our sensitivity, the *shop window* where we will be able to "locate" again our tendency to fetish even what it is dematerialised, turning, as José Carlos Casado has ludicly underlined, even murdering in a show that encourages *the addiction to the cruel reality of telepolis*. "Like the mass media that, to satisfy the measurement of the audience, are only interested in obscenity or horror, the contemporaneous nihilism revels the drama of an aesthetics of disappearance that not only concerns to the dominion of representation (political, artistic...), but to the unit of our view of the world"¹⁰. We could study art from *proxemia* (that studies the proximity between strangers in public or semi-public places) and therefore explain the reason why catharsis has been overcome in an *aesthetization* of repugnance along with a mediation of ridicule and what it is soupy that has turned the term decency into something essentially obsolete. We exalt the so called "entertainment TV programs" or talk shows in which confession is a *pathetic* display, a neutralized morbidity and the arguments have been suffocated by yells, insults without indulgence and the horizon of justice assumes only threatening. We are

⁴ Jean Baudrillard: "Ilusión y desilusión estética" in *Letra Internacional*, n° 39, Madrid, 1996, p. 16.

⁵ Jean Baudrillard: "El complot del arte" in *Pantalla total*, Ed. Anagrama, Barcelona, 2000, pp. 211-212.

⁶ Jean Baudrillard: "Ilusión y desilusión estética" in *Letra Internacional*, number 39, Madrid, 1996, p. 19.

⁷ In Spanish, the word "dandruff" (*caspa*) is also used to define any grotty action. (Note of the translator)

⁸ Roland Barthes: "Sade-Pasolini" in *La Torre Eiffel. Textos sobre la imagen*, Ed. Paidós, Barcelona, 2001, p. 113.

⁹ "The criticism of institutions implicit in the best of the most recent works has become the serious question about if the works of art are inevitably prisoners of the museumization of the market process. (Brandon Taylor: *Arte Hoy*, Ed. Akal, Madrid, 2000, p. 141).

¹⁰ Paul Virilio: *El procedimiento silencio*, Ed. Paidós, Buenos Aires, 2001, p. 64.

experiencing the radical displaying of a strategy that tends to homogenize and impose banality, in a resolute combination of conformism and “depoliticization”, prevailing the intervention of a television narrativity that “talking properly, is not specifically destined to anyone and from which we have never tried to obtain such a goal”¹¹. The voyeurism cult is spreading more and more and the aesthetic of the populist spontaneity, those fragments of life, has come down to ridicule; we are surrounded by the imperialist desire of *watching everything*, the mediatic obligation of finding “startling evidences”, although they are *created*. There is a constant simulation of proximity, that’s it, we have completed the imposture of immediacy¹², but perhaps it allows us to be conscious of the fact that the passion for the real finally means to give in to entertainment¹³. It is obvious that the *vertebral* question of José Carlos Casado’s magnificent artistic proposal has to do with the questioning of “reality”, certainly written between comas¹⁴, something also developed in a text he wrote with Harkaitz Cano¹⁵.

Instead of talking about *representation closure*, it is necessary to understand that a *terminal art* prevails. Control is already part of the environment, the horizon has been replaced by a lot of *cathodic shop windows*¹⁶; that *police state* almost clinically analysed by Foucault has mutated. The fear of the Big Brother is plunged into the accumulation of infinite sequences, a paralysis that is the result of hyperactivity or, in fact, the result of remaining sleepy in front of the screens, listening all the phones, compiling all the fingerprints: “after the old resistances to control, we see how the new resistances come to the forced information, to the hyper codification of the relationships through information and communication”¹⁷. When the *despotism of expressivity* has been imposed in the communicative forms and the “optic theorem of existence” (what it is *it is*, what cannot be seen does not exist) seems to have been widely tested, it is time to activate what Debord named *twisting tactics* or, moving away from propaganda, to produce *interferences*. It would be convenient to take into account the dilemmas of the contemporaneous “political art” that would only be able to be destined for those who *share the secrets of art*, neutralising its critic’s capability, getting used to the accomplice recognition, as well as it also offers a retaining wall in that *contextualist* process that ends up reinscribing, in a morbid way, the “museum limits”, returning to solipsism, yielding baroquely on its own conditions (not questioning its legitimisation). Beyond absorption or theatricality it appears a place for contaminations in which art does not have to be afraid of the emergency of what it is heteronymous, but on the contrary, if it did not happen, it would be the proof of the absolute dissolution the creative capability would have reached and the critic disposition, that goes unquestionably together with the promise of emancipation in the bosom of modernity. Postmodernity is, in a way, the moment of the *return of the same*, an eclecticism

¹¹ Pierre Bourdieu: *Sobre la televisión*, Ed. Anagrama, Barcelona, 1997, p. 65.

¹² Cfr. Paul Virilio: *Ground Zero*, Ed. Verso, Londres, 2002, p. 41.

¹³ “[...] the fundamental paradocs of the “passion for the Real”: it culminates in its apparent opposite, in a *theatrical spectacle* –from the Stalinist show trials to spectacular terrorist acts” (Slavoj Zizek: *Welcome to the desert of the real!*, Ed. Verso, Londres, 2002, p. 9).

¹⁴ “Casado’s work reanalyses the concept of reality and opens a way full of questions: What makes us believe what we see? Which social norms and conventions are those that make us see and understand the world surrounding us the way we do it? How are new technologies mutating and breaking away from the tangible world surrounding us? The word reality in Casado’s work is analysed as a modelling concept and succumbed by new technologies” (Pep Arimany Piella: text in the exhibition flyer: *José Carlos Casado Mancha (carne.v01), (temores. v01) y (“realidades” v01)*, Museo Municipal de Málaga, 2002).

¹⁵ José Carlos Casado & Harkaitz Cano: “Reality”, *Artificial Reproduction, and Sexuality*, Leonardo magazine. Vol 33, nº 5, pp 381-385. Ed. MIT. EEUU. Prize: Leonardo Award of Excellence 2001.

¹⁶ Paul Virilio: “El último vehículo” en *Videoculturas de fin de siglo*, Ed. Cátedra, Madrid, 1999, p. 43.

¹⁷ Jean Baudrillard: “Videosfera y sujeto fractal” en *Videoculturas de fin de siglo*, Ed. Cátedra, Madrid, 1999, p.

that tends, more than anything, to the disguise game and the heavy *deja vu* feeling. According to Steiner we find ourselves in an *after-word* culture, *epilogic*, where the proliferation of the comments moves us away from the "real presences". It is obvious that the *ideological neo-decorativism*¹⁸ applauds this apotheosis of *art as an idle territory*. "We live in an almost children's world where any desire, any possibility, life styles, travels, sexual identities, can be satisfied at once"¹⁹. José Carlos Casado moves away from this *aesthetics of affectation and banal ludicity* to propose deep considerations about censure, the mutations of the sexual roles, the daily spectacle of violence or the increase in panic, trying to establish a *physical link* with the problems, as it happens in the photographs of some torsos linked by cables, an allegory about the difficult communication in the time of the *extreme posthumanism*.

This artist's critic conscience is that the mediatic goal has an absolute power, articulated from the *reality effect*: the image is abolished as manufactured image and the pseudonatural presence is denied as representation. While what is arbitrary is presented as necessary, the artifice acquires the characteristic of *nature*: "our current geophysics is a microphysics, and to reduce a line of civil vehicles or a bombed city to the size of a video screen is not the best way to "visualize" the human remains of a bombardment. Like current affairs without a story turns time into an immense accumulation of diverse facts - constituting the wonders of the video era -, the ubiquity without geography establishes a deceptive state of weightlessness and no-thought, because thinking has always been thinking"²⁰. Debray asks if it is possible to perceive in a defined and not admitted horizon "invisible things", even in the *cyberspace* culture, how is it possible to have a *here* without a *there*, a *now* without a *yesterday* and a *tomorrow*, an *always* without a *never*? Virilio is meanwhile speculating about the arrival of a *portable or cellular art*, the last sign of the *no-places* logic: disappearance threshold of the aesthetic experience in what is virtual or, better, in the instantaneous exchange²¹. We know that conjuring can be obligatory found in the origin of the retinian hallucination of the cinematic engine (pretence is situated in the centre of the representation): "Pretence is an art completely devoted to take advantage of the witness' visual limits, attacking his innate capability to distinguish between what is real and what he thinks to be real and true, and makes him believe in what never existed, *to believe in the void*"²². With all the hopes in the rubbish dump, a new archaeology of the fossil memory acquires the characteristic of nature, anything, that is *all* we have to compile in archives, classified, with a numerical processing, separated from any kind of thoughts: buried with all the honours (with label and bar code if it is possible). For some critics, cyberculture would be no more than a mutant phase of the spectacle society, using the same neutralization techniques of what is opposed to it, producing at the same time a fetish drift: the concept "virtual", so often used, is not only the result of the triumph of what is "spectacular" (false true or true false), but the growing of a precarious word, parasite, delegitimated above all, determined to turn itself into a rhetoric of conformism, servant of the opinion,

¹⁸ Cfr. Gillo Dorfles: "La cultura de la fachada" en *Imágenes interpuestas. De las costumbres al arte*, Ed. Espasa-Calpe, Madrid, 1989, pp. 118-119.

¹⁹ James G. Ballard: *Crash*, Ed. Minotauro, Barcelona, 1996, p. 11.

²⁰ Régis Debray: *Vida y muerte de la imagen. Historia de la mirada en Occidente*, Ed. Paidós, Barcelona, 1994, p. 297.

²¹ "When the unit of the being breaks, the fractional dimensions of the cybernetic space permit to transfer to an impalpable DOUBLE the contents of our sensations, eliminating, together with the differentiation inside/outside, the *hic et nunc* of the immediate action" (Paul Virilio: *El arte del motor. Aceleración y realidad virtual*, Ed. Manantial, Buenos Aires, 1996, p. 159).

²² Paul Virilio: *El arte del motor. Aceleración y realidad virtual*, Ed. Manantial, Buenos Aires, 1996, p. 76.

whose cynicism lacks even the persuasion capability invented by sophistic to "cure"²³. Ours is a culture domesticated or amazed by the technical devices, supporting a clearly naïf discourse, in which any sceptical perspective is segregated as merely "old-fashioned". Casado's attitude in this respect is extremely sophisticated, assuming the cybernetic resources he skilfully uses, but not giving in to an *acritic* position regarding the socio-political implications of the contemporaneous technique. "For the artist, technology produces changes in our relationship with the world, reality, body and sex. Casado becomes immersed in an investigation about the artificial reproduction, cloning, and communication processes. His analysis, sometimes futuristic and prophetic, raises the advantages and disadvantages of technology in different social spheres, for example in national and international political matters"²⁴.

José Carlos Casado dismantles the narcissism that, according to some critics, is inscribed in the videographic device²⁵, establishing critical-political positionings to face a culture settled in *simulating*. We will have to admit that the *video phase* has replaced the mirror phase, although according to Baudrillard it is not an imaginary narcissist the one developed around the video or the stereo-sculpture "it is an effect of desolated self reference, it is a shortcut that immediately inserts the identical in the identical and therefore underlines, at the same time, its superficial intensity and its profound insignificance"²⁶. At the same time, the television programs, imposing a repressive system in which the *zapping*²⁷ practically does not make sense, clone their programming around a *gesticulating* and (pseudo) transgression *aesthetics*, in this *tombola of the vomitive vanities*²⁸. The disciplinarian panoptism has ended up giving us a rare desire of being watched over, that's it, an *escopic logic*²⁹ (for individuals devoted to home sedentarism) in which, as I have mentioned from the beginning, prevails the high definition of *transbanality*. It is curious that the moment arts radically assume the *philosophical task*³⁰ is also the moment of the planetary introduction of the popular chorus, intellectual humming and, in metaphoric terms, a *karaoke culture*. One of the dilemmas of contemporary art emerges from the desire of covering images and values that talk to a lot of people "in a sensually rich and formally expert way; on the other hand, the necessity of intensifying the conceptual style, resorting to techniques of evasion, mystification, and removal of the normative expectations of culture that have

²³ Remo Guidieri: "Pidgin. Anotaciones sobre el escenario contemporáneo de la estética" in *El nuevo espectador*, Ed. Argenteria, Madrid, 1998, p. 55.

²⁴ Pep Arimany Piella: text in the exhibition flyer: *José Carlos Casado Mancha (carne.v01), (temores.v01) y ("realidades" v01)*, Museo Municipal de Málaga, 2002).

²⁵ Cfr. Rosalind Krauss: "El video: la estética del narcisismo" in *Colisiones*, Arteleku, San Sebastián, 1995, p. 94.

²⁶ Jean Baudrillard: "Videosfera y sujeto fractal" en *Videoculturas de fin de siglo*, Ed. Cátedra, Madrid, 1990, p. 31.

²⁷ Spanish expression meaning "channel-hopping". (Translator's note)

²⁸ Cfr. Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio: "Hacia una nueva estética" in *La hija de la guerra y la madre de la patria*, Ed. Destino, Barcelona, 2002, pp. 71-75.

²⁹ Gérard Imbert: "La intimidad como espectáculo: de la televerdad a la telebasura. (Hacia una estética de lo hipervisible)" in *Revista de Occidente*, n° 201, Madrid, Febrero de 1998, p. 89.

³⁰ "When writing in 1969 about Robert Morris, Annette Michelson said that his works "demand the recognition of the singular resolution with the philosophical task an sculptor has assumed that, in a culture not fully involved in the speculative thought, falls strictly on its artists". Thomas Crow has considered that this assertion "is among the most precise justifications of the exact requirements the best minimalist and conceptualist works impose on its audience. We can add that it is a culture in which philosophy has been for a long time absorbed in its technical exchanges with the academicians, the artistic expression in the duchampianian tradition has offered the most important places to allow the demanded philosophical questions to publicize for a substantially profane audience" (Brandon Taylor: *Arte Hoy*, Ed. Akal, Madrid, 2000, p. 168).

not been formulated yet"³¹. But we also find, of course, not only that reflexive fold but also an exigency of localization and a defence of *physicality*, what we will call "the other's law"³². It is a question of *providing with the contact* against the situation of surprising *disconnection*, of being corporally involved, as Casado does when forces the spectator to go into a kind of chrysalis to contemplate a video in which a digitalized body makes a choreography that also unfolds to make another piece in which a series of naked bodies penetrate each other and are cut up in a loop that produces a mix of pleasure and anguish.

Bataille considers that the transgression and prohibition dialectic is the condition and essence of eroticism. Violence field, what occurs in eroticism is dissolution, destruction of the closed human being that is the normal condition of the game's participants. One of the ways of extreme violence is *nakedness* (something found in a lot of José Carlos Casado's works) that is a paradoxical state of communication or, better, a ripping of the soul, a pathetic ceremony where the transit from humanity to animality takes place³³. In the presence of nakedness, Bataille experiences a sacred feeling where fascination and dread are mixed, the equivalence with the act of killing emerges from it or, to be more precise, the imminence of sacrifice. José Carlos Casado's amazing video-installation called *La caja de Pandora (revisitada).v03*³⁴ (2001) is mainly articulated around nakedness and the metamorphosis of desire. Starting from the primitive myth of *beautiful wickedness*³⁵, this artist unfolds a double narrative, in which the masculine and feminine universes are connected, making elements and, fluids above all, circulate from one screen to the other. From a mechanism that has a kind of sketching of an insect's body, engine or optic prosthesis, emerges a world of fluxes, sign language, choreographical sketches, nakedness and, above all, *metamorphosis*. Progressively appear the heart, the man wearing a skirt, the chrysalis, the bees, the woman, the neuronal trees that have a bit of rhizome, the allegories of painting, the transformation of the man into woman, who compresses her body on the transparent surface of the screen (reminding Ana Mendieta's photographic series *Glass on body*, 1972), the hearing and visual prosthesis, the breasts feeding (in a comic way) the man placed in the other domain and, later, the hose penis that suffocates the woman, the access to what it is foetal in a rare amniotic liquid, the copulation with the bee and, again, the man woman metamorphosis, to get to the cyborg-chrysalis, pregnancy and conversion of the house into architecture of the virtual, where the axis is the remote control unit, the female genitals that explode and the woman that lays. The end presents a boy as a kind of mutant and the destiny of the frightful and unavoidable cloning of the bodies, a return to the beginning in which the machine of the beginning, maybe the *cybernetic box* of the mystic misfortunes swallows, literally, such a complex (almost surrealist) story. José Carlos Casado expresses, in this

³¹ Brandon Taylor: *Arte Hoy*, Ed. Akal, Madrid, 2000, p. 169.

³² "The telepresence question delocates the position, the body's location. The whole problem of virtual reality is, essentially, to deny the *hic et nunc*, to deny the "here" in the benefit of the "now". (Paul Virilio: *El cibermundo, la política de lo peor*, Ed. Cátedra, Madrid, 1997, p. 46.

³³ "The decisive action is to get naked. Nakedness opposes to the closed state, that's it, to the discontinuous existence state. It is a state of communication that reveals the search for a possible continuity of the soul beyond a self-withdrawing. Pictures are opened to continuity through these secret conduits that give us the obscenity feeling. Obscenity is the disruption that spoils a state of the bodies according to the self-position, to the lasting and reinforced individuality possession" (Georges Bataille: *El erotismo*, Ed. Tusquets, Barcelona, 1985, p. 31).

³⁴ Pandora's box (revisited). V03 (Translator's note)

³⁵ No myth is more familiar for us than Pandora, but maybe any of them has been so wrongly understood. Pandora is the first woman, the beautiful wickedness; she opens the forbidden box from which all the evils of the flesh emerge. We only have hope. Pandora's box is proverbial, and this is the most important aspect". "This statement, expressed by Jane Harrison more than fifty years ago, is as valid as in the past" (Dora y Erwin Panofsky: *La caja de Pandora. Aspectos cambiantes de un símbolo mítico*, Ed. Barral, Barcelona, 1975, p. 15).

and other works, the necessity of being resituated *in relation to the body*, of taking into account the question of alterity. It is important to remember, in the middle of the virtual systems' proliferation, that the freeing between body and individual, as well as certain effects of the "metaphysical presence" ending, have a strong political characteristic, and respond, in a non-homogenic way, to different *plans*, that is way to *remember the body*³⁶ can help to stop the virtual systems from ending up unknowingly contributing to apply new methods of social control³⁷.

We confirm that intimacy has disappeared, maybe because the community and complicity that allowed it to exist are also dissolved and it is difficult to recognize, although this is what it is artistic, our nullity: "Intimacy is the instinct that allows us to find among the masks, those who, like us, are a nobody. Those who are penniless. Like us. Different from us. We would like them to be marked, it would be easier and it would be impossible to make a mistake. But they are not marked. They have never been. That is why we can make a mistake, that is why we cannot be sure. That is why they belong to our community. That is why we cannot share with them our *intimacy*, that's it, to build our own intimacy (that is just a tatter or a rubbish without the others). This is a way of art. A cultivation. A culture. To look after one's self. This is one's own art. This is the yes art"³⁸. But this rigorous art of the self-care from a particular *strangeness of the body*, something similar to what Lacan called *extimité* (extimity), a complex process in which we are related to the Thing³⁹. In *Vigilar y castigar*⁴⁰, Foucault explains that the human being we are invited to be freed from is the effect of a lot deeper subjection (*assujettissement*) than himself. By means of the biopower mechanism, this theoretician that summarized his work as a history of the different ways of the human being's subjection in our culture, explains the way the disciplinarian mechanisms of the power can directly build the individuals (penetrating the individual body and eluding the subjection level). That process of subjection can be related to the idea of ideological interpellation developed by Althusser⁴¹, which, at the same time, is linked (by means of the imaginary) to the moment of *ignorance*⁴². Let's remember that *assujettissement*

³⁶ "Although it is a hypertechnologic clue, cfr. Juan Guardiola: "Sangre, sudor y... software. Una cuestión de (piel) y agallas" in *Kalías. Revista de Arte*, nos. 15-16, Instituto Valenciano de Arte Moderno, 1996, pp. 70-78.

³⁷ Allucquère Roseanne Stone: "Sistemas virtuales" in Jonathan Crary y Sanford Kwinter (eds.): *incorporaciones*, Ed. Cátedra, Madrid, 1996, p. 531.

³⁸ José Luis Pardo: *La intimidación*, Ed. Pre-textos, Valencia, 1996, p. 291.

³⁹ "The problem consists in the fact that, when "circulating around oneself" like its own sun, this autonomous individual finds in himself something that is "more than mine", a strange body that is in its own centre. The *extimité* lacanian neologism points out this fact, the designation of a strange that is in the middle of intimacy. Because of going around himself, the individual circulates around something that is, "in himself more than himself", the traumatic nucleus of the pleasure that Lacan expresses with the German words *Das Ding* (The Thing)" (Slavoj Zizek: *Mirando al sesgo. Una introducción a Jacques Lacan a través de la cultura popular*, Ed. Paidós, Buenos Aires, 2000, p. 276).

⁴⁰ To look after and to punish (Translator's note)

⁴¹ Cfr. Slavoj Zizek: *El espinoso sujeto. El centro ausente de la ontología política*, Ed. Paidós, Buenos Aires, 2001, p. 267.

⁴² "Let's consider the power of this dynamics of the interpellation and ignorance when the name is not a proper noun but a social status, and therefore a significant liable to be interpreted in divergent and conflictive ways. To be interpellated as "woman" or "Jew" or "queer" or "black" or "Chicano" can be heard or interpreted as an affirmation or an insult, depending on the context the interpellation takes place (where the context is the effective historicity or spatiality of the sign.) When one of these words are said, it generally exists a certain wavering when we consider how to answer them or if we should answer them, because it is necessary to determine if the temporal totalization made by the noun politically empowers or is politically paralysing, if the enclosure, and even the violence of the totalizing reduction of the identity carried out by this concrete interpellation is politically

denotes the subject's flux as well as the subjection process⁴³: subjugation and reinforcement⁴⁴. "Nowadays, the fight against the ways of subjection – against the subjectivity submission – is becoming more and more important, although the fights against the ways of domination and exploitation have not disappeared, but the opposite"⁴⁵. José Carlos Casado parodies and, simultaneously, dismantles the *masculine subjection* (conventional) when he mounts the photographic scene of an almost naked man (camouflaged) who is painting other man's big toe, revealing at the same time, with tremendous radicality, a mixture of fears and wickednesses, for example, in the woman's video, where she is wearing sadomasochists clothes, tying an individual up (*El huevo y la gallina*⁴⁶, 2002) in a loop that is a rewind, a coming back to the origin of the conflict that is a crossing out. There is an almost paranoid circularity, with the fish eating the fish and the man destroying the man, the morbid torture and the altered pleasure, in a *necessary invention of perversity*, in an era of neutralization of the passions⁴⁷.

Butler is maybe right when points out that the body is not the place where a destruction takes place, but it is a destruction in which course a subject is created. His creation is simultaneously the body's framing, subordination and regulation, as well as the method under which destruction is preserved (in the sense of supported and embalmed) *in* the normalization⁴⁸. "It seems to be clear that the possibilities of what is "masculine" and "feminine" defined as effects of the laborious and uncertain achievement by Freud in *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), are established partly thanks to the prohibitions that *demand the loss* of certain sexual ties and also demand this losses *not* to be recognized and *not* cried for"⁴⁹. The sexual genre happens as a ritualised repetition of conventions, in this sense femininity is an ideal that is always just imitated, but also as that melancholic ambivalence (a conflict straining what we usually denominate I to take it to the self-abomination), that return of the livid to its starting point (*zurückziehung*), but above all the situation in which we *lose* an originally external object or an ideal, at the same time, that seems to be a refusal to break the binding. I think about the amazing strip-tease of the burka series where a man appears wearing this

strategic or repressive, or if it, although it is paralysing and repressive, can also empower" (Judith Butler: *Mecanismos psíquicos del poder. Teorías sobre la sujeción*, Ed. Cátedra, Madrid, 2001, p. 109).

⁴³ "Subjection is, literally, to *become* part of the subject, the principle of regulation according to which the subject is formulated or produced" (Judith Butler: *Mecanismos psíquicos del poder. Teorías sobre la sujeción*, Ed. Cátedra, Madrid, 2001, p. 96).

⁴⁴ "There are two meanings of the word subject: to surrender to others through control and dependence, and the subject tied to his own identity through conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a kind of power that subjugates and subdues. (Michel Foucault: "Por qué estudiar el poder: la cuestión del sujeto" in Hubert L. Dreyfus y Paul Rabinow: *Michel Foucault: más allá del estructuralismo y la hermeneútica*, Ed. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, México, 1988, p. 231).

⁴⁵ Michel Foucault: "Por qué estudiar el poder: la cuestión del sujeto" in Hubert L. Dreyfus y Paul Rabinow: *Michel Foucault: más allá del estructuralismo y la hermeneútica*, Ed. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, México, 1988, p. 231.

⁴⁶ The egg and the hen" (Translator's note)

⁴⁷ "**Imaginary perversions.** He poured the warm liquid from the glass on the ashen sand -... it is an interesting question: under which aspect is the vaginal coitus more stimulating than with an ashtray, for example, or with the angles between two walls? Nowadays sex is a conceptual art, and maybe only with the perversions we will be able to establish a contact between us. Perversities are absolutely neutral, without any sign of psychopathology; in fact, most of those I have tried are old fashioned. We need to invent a number of imaginary sexual perversions, just to keep ourselves active" (James G. Ballard: *La exhibición de atrocidades*, Ed. Minotauro, Barcelona, 2001, p. 95).

⁴⁸ Cfr. Judith Butler: *Mecanismos psíquicos del poder. Teorías sobre la sujeción*, Ed. Cátedra, Madrid, 2001, p. 105.

⁴⁹ Judith Butler: *Mecanismos psíquicos del poder. Teorías sobre la sujeción*, Ed. Cátedra, Madrid, 2001, p. 150.

garment we associate the brutal repression of the afghan woman with, but also regarding the necessity of overcoming a cataloguing (sexual or generic) that almost is mere zoology⁵⁰ is the work *Beesexuality*, photographs of bees copulating with jellyfishes or butterflies, in a parody of the images from the nature, but provided with a peculiar atmosphere of "violence". These anomalous erotic rituals (from the act of undressing that reveals what is "masculine" to the copulations in an altered zoology) reveal that the sexual difference functions as an antagonism where we cannot find a *legitimated or immovable position*⁵¹. Let's remember that the lacanian idea *there is no sexual relation* was based on the fact that the identity of every sex is obstructed from inside by the antagonistic relation with the other sex that impedes its own actualisation. "*There is no sexual relation*, not because the other sex is too far and is absolutely strange for me, but because *it is too close*, is the foreign intruder in the heart of my identity (impossible)"⁵². As a last resort, it is not only that women are in this infernal "position" of impossible-traumatic-psychotic, we all are those who are *outside*.

That barred subject Lacan talked about⁵³ (present, as I understand it, in the dismantling of the identities undertaken by José Carlos Casado) brings us near the desire that could result from indecisiveness, from undecidability, or even from *destinerrancy*. "Therefore – Derrida writes –, I think that undecidability, like death, what I also call "destinerrancy", the possibility a gesture has not to reach its destination, it is the condition of the desire's movement that, if it was not like this, would die in advance"⁵⁴. Desire is a blending of enjoyment and dissatisfaction that cannot be resolved in the way of an "essential absence"; perhaps the abandoning of the *different suffering* has something to do with our self-renunciation and, of course, with the difficulty of establishing the encounter with the other. Lyotard talked about the postmodern formula, in a conflictive imaginary, like leaving the answer in stand by, not excluding the idea of Other, "a bit of lack and a bit of desire"⁵⁵. Although some artistic practices have *recovered the body*, they have not necessarily done this to demand a "phiscity" but to allegorize, from it, multiple dispossessions, as it can be observed in the common practice of *post-performance*⁵⁶, in which some of José Carlos Casado's videos can be inscribed.

⁵⁰ "All the medical, zoological, grammatical and literary meanings have been answered by the modern feminisms" (Donna Haraway: "*Género para un diccionario marxista: la política sexual de una palabra*" in *Ciencia, cyborgs y mujeres. La reinención de la naturaleza*, Ed. Cátedra, Madrid, 1995, p. 220).

⁵¹ "The sexual difference is the real of an antagonism, and not the symbolic of a differential opposition: the sexual difference is not the opposition assigning each of the two sexes their positive identity, defined in relation to the other (so women are what men are not, and vice versa), but a common loss, according to which women are never fully women, nor men are never fully men. The "masculine" and "feminine" position is no more than two different ways of handling intrinsic obstacle/loss" (Slavoj Zizek: *El espinoso sujeto. El centro ausente de la ontología política*, Ed. Paidós, Buenos Aires, 2001, p. 290).

⁵² Slavoj Zizek: *El espinoso sujeto. El centro ausente de la ontología política*, Ed. Paidós, Buenos Aires, 2001, p. 291.

⁵³ "The lacanian barred subject is not "empty" in the sense of a psychological-existential "experience of emptiness", but in the sense of a dimension of self reference negativity that a priori alludes to the dominion of the *vécu* of the experimented experience" (Slavoj Zizek: *El espinoso sujeto. El centro ausente de la ontología política*, Ed. Paidós, Buenos Aires, 2001, p. 276).

⁵⁴ Jacques Derrida: *¡Palabra! Instantáneas filosóficas*, Ed. Trotta, Madrid, 2001, p. 42.

⁵⁵ Jean-Francois Lyotard: "El imaginario postmoderno y la cuestión el otro en el pensamiento y la arquitectura" en *Pensar-Componer/Construir-Habitar*, Ed. Arteleku, San Sebastián, 1994, p. 38.

⁵⁶ Cfr. Douglas Davis: "Post- Performacism" in Richard Hertz (ed.): *Theories of Contemporary Art*, Prentice-Hall Inc., New Jersey, 1985, pp. 271-285. Claudia Giannetti has put the term *metaperformance* into circulation: "Metaperformance. Proceso troposomático en la performance multimedia" in *Media Culture*, Ed. L'Angelot, Barcelona, 1995, p. 50. I have analysed this question of pos-performance in Fernando Castro Flórez: "Cosas que

Dismembering also affects this corporality we consider to be the stronghold of "certainty": "what I call the body - Jacques Derrida says - it is not a presence. The body is, how could I explain? , an experience in the sense of the most mobile word (*voyageur*). It is an experience of context, dissociation, dismemberings"⁵⁷. As Michaux said, the artist is the one who resists himself to the pulsion of not leaving trace, leaving the materials in a territorial situation similar to the scene of a crime⁵⁸; the trace is what marks and cannot be erased, what is never present in a final way. In an time in which *destinerrancy* has maybe been too calmly assumed by us, against the virtualization of the "world" ideology, numerous veiled situations appear, traces of what is different, indications that push us into a creative drift: "we leave traces all over - virus, lapses, germs, catastrophes -, signs of imperfection that are like the human being's signature in the heart of the artificial world"⁵⁹. Art can be not only an obsession, but also a *viral* process, something that disarticulates the pretended "normal" communication⁶⁰. If desire always leads to the impossibility of its own satisfaction, pulsion finds its own satisfaction by means of the movement dedicated to repress that satisfaction: "whereas the subject of desire is based on the constitutive *lack* (it exists because it is searching for the lacking object-cause) the subject of the pulsion has its basis in a constitutive *excedent*: in the excessive presence of a Thing intrinsically "impossible" that should not be there, in our present reality: the Thing that, of course, it is as a last resort *the subject itself*"⁶¹.

One of the ways of *naked reality* we are confronted by José Carlos Casado is the *violence* that responds, in many occasions, to determinations, conjectures, and explicit organizations and not merely to the sudden anger, nor to a curse only assimilated by necromancers; it has even been noticed a kind of violence precession in what it is simulacric or, better, in a *monitoring* process⁶². Some people think that the worst, in this *explosive society*, is the uncertainty or feeling that everything could happen: "There is violence when the expectations are uncertain, when anything can happen, when the rules that make the behaviours foreseeable and found the reciprocity expectations in the interactions reach crisis point"⁶³. I am not talking about a drift towards paranoia, but about the suspicion that *the attack affects us all*, the same way no one is safe from violence: the slap is around the corner. Only the fear of an increase in aggressiveness keeps, precariously, the destructive impulses stabilized and also this ease to get out from the labyrinth of the conflicts with apocalyptic gestures. "Violence has not disappeared in societies with an advanced capitalism where cruelty is thought to be eradicated. The cero

pasan. (Lapsus y gérmenes del arte contemporáneo)" en *(Post)performanca i altres esdeveniments paradoxals*, Fundació Espais d'Art Contemporani, Girona, 2002.

⁵⁷ Jacques Derrida: "Dispersión de voces" in *No escribo nunca sin luz artificial*, Ed. Cuatro, Valladolid, 1999, p. 159.

⁵⁸ Cfr. Ralf Rugoff: "More than Meets the Eye" in *Scene of the Crime*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1997, p. 62.

⁵⁹ Jean Baudrillard: "La escritura automática del mundo" in *La ilusión y la desilusión estéticas*, Ed. Monte Ávila, Caracas, 1997, p. 85.

⁶⁰ "The virus is in a way a parasite that destroys and provokes disorder in communication. Even under the biological point of view, this is what happens with a virus; makes a communicative mechanism work in a wrong way, its coding and decoding" (Jacques Derrida: "Dispersión de voces" in *No escribo sin luz artificial*, Ed. Cuatro, Valladolid, 1999, p. 153).

⁶¹ Slavoj Zizek: *El espinoso sujeto. El centro ausente de la ontología política*, Ed. Paidós, Buenos Aires, 2001, p. 329.

⁶² "The events of violence cannot elude the continuous follow-up carried out by the commercial communication channels (television channels, press agencies, newspapers and, now, online information points) that need them to feed their happenings and their uninterrupted information offering" (Yves Michaud: *La violencia*, Ed. Acento, Madrid, 1998, pp. 30-31).

⁶³ Yves Michaud: *La violencia*, Ed. Acento, Madrid, 1998, p. 77.

degree of violence does not exist, it has just been transformed. Violence is intrinsic part of the reality forces, and human action continuously remembers it to us engendering physical and psychical violence⁶⁴. Maybe influenced by the homeopathic knowledge (the similar is cured with the similar: medication and poison involve something else than the etymological root) Ballard thinks we must submerge ourselves in *our most destructive element*: ourselves⁶⁵. Society tries, by all means, to change its course towards a relatively indifferent victim (liable to be part of sacrifice), a violence that is threatening to wound its own members or to arouse the never-ending revenge anxiety. Nevertheless, nowadays we notice a rise in *hatred* that goes further on than the atavistic violence, as if there was no ritual able to restrain the destructive impulses. "What we must be afraid of is not the psychological concatenation, but the technological concatenation of violence, of a transparent violence, the one that leads to the desincarnation of reality and referentiality. It is the Xerox degree of violence"⁶⁶. Baudrillard has been able to diagnose the *end of violence*, although it is surprising, in a society that forbids conflicts, negativity and even death. "Violence that in a way puts an end to violence itself, and therefore cannot be answered with a similar violence, but with hatred"⁶⁷. It is clear that the terrorism's violence and advertising logic have won the battle against the arguments that have ended up being a damaged horizon used by horror to earn *definition*⁶⁸.

It seems as if the narcotised individuals in the bosom of the contemporaneous culture were able to be *agitated* only with the teratologic. Virilio thinks that the people who are fond of art are being crushed by the mass media, especially by its *academization of horror* tendencies, provoking an *altered discernment*: "first stage of an accelerated disrealization, the contemporaneous art accepts the emulation of excess eagerness and, therefore, of insignificance, taking as an example the "heroic" nature of the official art from the past, the obscenity that overpasses all the limits, with the *snuff movies* and the TV live death..."⁶⁹. The homemade bomb and the terrorist attack end up being fascinating things for artists⁷⁰, situations transformed into "works of art", as it happens in Jose Carlos Casado's video installation entitled *Impotence* (2002) with the guy, dressed in camouflage, carrying through the city a box that maybe is the one containing the explosive generating the terrorist attacks we will see later on. The image of terror, inserted into the planity of everyday live, is juxtaposed in the foreground of an infinite and, of course, ineffective masturbation, generating anxiety. The photograph of the young hake biting its own tail and the traffic light always red mark the *aporetic characteristic of the situation*, contrasting with the chromatic brightness of the politician killing pictures, this sketch (made with felt-tip pens or lights) introducing the children's point of view where it is only possible to find pain and anger. The scene of the crime diagram summarizes Casado's *conflictive questions* taking art into an *abysmal outward appearance*. Virilio has shown how the police techniques of

⁶⁴ Juan Vicente Aliaga: "A sangre y fuego. Imágenes de la violencia en el arte contemporáneo" in *A sangre y fuego*, Espai d'Art Contemporani de Castelló, 1999, p. 55.

⁶⁵ Cfr. Linda S. Kauffman: "Las exposiciones atroces de J.G. Ballard" in *Malas y perversos. Fantasías en la cultura y el arte contemporáneos*, Ed. Cátedra, Madrid, 2000, pp. 199-252.

⁶⁶ Jean Baudrillard: "Violencia desencarnada: odio" in *Pantalla total*, Ed. Anagrama, Barcelona, 2000, p. 108.

⁶⁷ Jean Baudrillard: "Violencia desencarnada: el odio" en *Pantalla total*, Ed. Anagrama, Barcelona, 2000, p. 109.

⁶⁸ "Terrorism is not only a political phenomenon, it is also an artistic phenomenon. It also exists in advertising, the mass media, the reality shows, the mediatized pornography" (Paul Virilio interviewed by Catherine David: in *Colisiones*, Arteleku, San Sebastián, 1996, p. 50).

⁶⁹ Paul Virilio: *El procedimiento silencio*, Ed. Paidós, Buenos Aires, 2001, p. 75.

⁷⁰ "Slow news, no news! The artists of the twentieth century, like the anarchist with home-made bombs, the revolutionary suicide bomber or the mass killer celebrated by the mass-circulation press, would themselves become wielders of plastic explosives, visual mischief-makers, anarchist of colour, form and sound, before coming to occupy the gutter press's gallery of horrors" (Paul Virilio: *Ground Zero*, Ed. Verso, Londres, 2002, p. 48).

multidimensional rapprochement to reality have had a decisive influence in the instrumentalization of the public image, in the radicalisation of the propaganda instruments as well as in the vertigo of advertising, and have also taken part, secretly but decisively, in the birth of contemporary art. "To see and not be seen" – is one of the proverbs of the police no-communicability. (...) "It is better a fingerprint taken in the crime scene than the guilt's confession" – writes the judicial agent Goddefroy in his *Manual of police techniques*⁷¹. This means the end of the *testimony* and the report that goes through the traumatic happening or the personal development of the guilt. The "digital" technique, the photographic printing of the body reduces the *narration* to ashes, for the good of the judicial representation hyperrealism, anchoring in the microdetails, in the technological reading of the "scene of the crime". Once completed the *topographic amnesia*, we could say, like Marmontel did, that "arts require witnesses"⁷², but there is no doubt that the dimension of the testimony has become extremely problematic, maybe, because of saturation, because no one is able to talk in *first person* if it is not to exorcise in public all his fears.

Maybe the connection (the critical-corporal communication fragmentarily formulated by José Carlos Casado) is only possible if we risk to the identity *incoherence*, a political argument closed to Leo Bersani's intuition that only the disorientated subject is able to desire⁷³. After the *subject questioning* (even once its rhetoric structure has been dismantled and revealed) the importance of the *positioning* is kept. "The deconstruction of identity is not the deconstruction of politics; it establishes as political the terms identity is articulated with"⁷⁴. We are, of course, fully conscious of the crisis in the ontology experimented at the sexual and language levels, but it does not mean to be devoted to the extreme indecisiveness or a defence of anonymity and masking. The cyberspace has come up to the surface in the context of the late capitalism, "in the historical moment of "biosociety", term used by Paul Rabinow to describe the disappearance of the differences between the biological observation, elaboration and control (like happens with the human genome Project), or the "technosociety", a state in which technique and nature are the same, as it happens when one inhabits a network understood as a social environment"⁷⁵. Our society is something else than the networking "utopia", it is the metaphysically completed system of surveillance and control, the time in which the possibility of doing without the body, in an ingenuous and frightful way, gains a sense. The individual is no more than the residue of the community dissolution experience⁷⁶. José Carlos Casado's worry, the ontology of the present, leads us to a *difficult thought and practice*. "No doubt the most infallible philosophical problem is the one of the present time, of what we are right now. No doubt the main aim nowadays is not to discover what we are, but to reject what we are. We have to imagine and build what we could be to free ourselves from this kind of political "double tie" consisting in the simultaneous individualization and totalization of the modern power structures"⁷⁷. When politics is incarnated by what I call the *Berlusconi prototype* and the e-

⁷¹ Paul Virilio: *La máquina de visión*, Ed. Cátedra, Madrid, 1989, p. 58.

⁷² Cit. in Paul Virilio: *La máquina de visión*, Ed. Cátedra, Madrid, 1989, p. 9.

⁷³ Judith Butler: *Mecanismos psíquicos del poder. Teorías sobre la sujeción*, Ed. Cátedra, Madrid, 2001, p. 164.

⁷⁴ Judith Butler: *El género en disputa. El feminismo y la subversión de la identidad*, Ed. Paidós, México, 2001, p. 179.

⁷⁵ Allucquère Roseanne Stone: "Sistemas virtuales" in Jonathan Crary y Sanford Kwinter (eds.): *Incorporaciones*, Ed. Cátedra, Madrid, 1996, p. 513.

⁷⁶ "Individualism is an inconsequence atomism, forgetting that what we deal in the atom with is a world.

Therefore, the question of the community is the great absentee in the metaphysic of the subject, that's it – individual or total State – of the metaphysic of the absolute" (Jean-Luc Nancy: *La comunidad desobrada*, Ed. Arena, Madrid, 2001, p. 17).

⁷⁷ Michel Foucault: "Por qué estudiar el poder: la cuestión del sujeto" in Hubert L. Dreyfus y Paul Rabinow: *Michel Foucault: más allá del estructuralismo y la hermenéutica*, Ed. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, México, 1988, p. 234.

democracy, it favours the drift to the pathetic realism⁷⁸, we have to be able to make the aesthetics of disappearance characteristic of what Peter Weibel calls the era of absence (in which we *are transforming*, sailing new oceans, like the *double digital*, in the dissolution of the body or its mutations, observing the difficulty to endow time with plenitude)⁷⁹ be a *location to unfold the critical purpose from* and not the mere observance of the status quo. It will take us a long time not to be astonished facing the *demolition* and, of course, we will have to accompany *thought and hope in its falling in the dark hole*, in this naked plot, where foundations are already spectral. It was apparently easy to anathematise Stockhausen because he proclaimed that the destruction of the Twin Towers is the total work of art, the greatest event ever seen⁸⁰. When reality has become *appearance of itself*⁸¹, this *colossal terrorist attack* obliges us to go through (with the most strange pleasures and fears) the precariousness space, trying to *resist* the new glaciation with so an archaic and surprising body like the one we have.

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⁷⁸ Virilio talks about the berlusconian transpolitics as a mediatic Big Brother era: “No longer content with occupying the stage of daily life with its great (“Big Brother”-style) game-shows, *telereality* is now invading the sets of the *Res publica*” (Paul Virilio: *Ground Zero*, Ed. Verso, Londres, 2002, p. 30).

⁷⁹ Cfr. Peter Weibel: “La Era de la Ausencia” in Claudia Giannetti (ed.): *Arte en la era electrónica. Perspectivas de una nueva estética*, Ed. L’Angelot, Barcelona, 1997, pp. 101-121.

⁸⁰ “The world [is going] to ruin” warned Karl Kraus, and “man’s feeling of superiority triumphs in the expectation of an spectacle to which only contemporaries are admitted”. Like Stockhausen, the grand old master of electronic music, flying into raptures over the spectacle of the New York attacks which killed four thousand people in September 2001: “What we have witnessed is the greatest work of art there has ever been!” (Paul Virilio: *Ground Zero*, Ed. Verso, Londres, 2002, p. 45).

⁸¹ “And was not the attack on the World Trade Center with regard to Hollywood catastrophe movies like snuff pornography versus ordinary sado-masochistic porno movies? This is the element of truth in Karl-Heinz Stockhausen’s provocative statement that the planes hitting the WTC towers was the ultimate work of art: we can perceive the collapse of the WTC towers as the climactic conclusion of twentieth-century art’s “passion for the Real” –the “terrorists” themselves did not do it primarily to provoke real material damage but *for the spectacular effect of it*” (Slavoj Zizek: *Welcome to the desert of the real!*, Ed. Verso, Londres, 2002, p. 11).