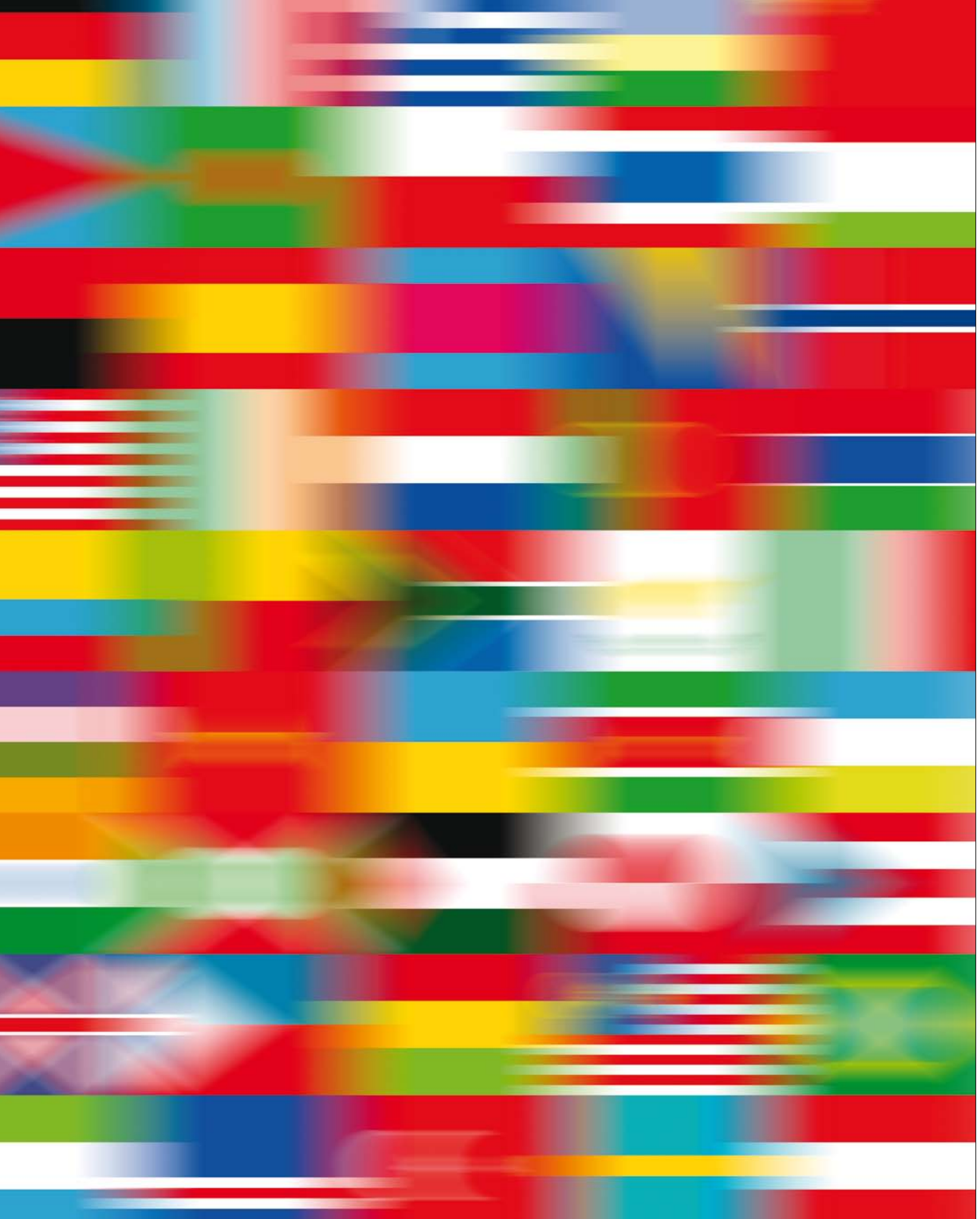

LUCY + JORGE ORTA

FOOD WATER LIFE

Princeton Architectural Press · New York

INTERVIEW

in Conversation with Lucy + Jorge Orta

Hou Hanru

HHR: *Lucy, I remember seeing your work for the first time in Paris. It was in Galerie Anne de Villepoix in 1993, in a group show with other artists, including Peter Fend. I was impressed by your shelter clothes. Since then, your work has made two progressions. First, you shifted from your background in fashion design to working with architectural forms and the merging of human clothing and habitat environments. Second, you opened up your personal designs/creations to allow community participation. Can you describe how this decision has been implemented and how this change manifests itself? Also what are the experiences and conclusions you can draw from such a shift, especially from the process of communicating within the community context?*

LO: I studied fashion-textile design in an excellent design school in Nottingham in the north of England, and worked as a successful designer for various brands in Paris for a number of years, but throughout my practice as an artist, I have not designed fashion per se, even though I make reference to clothing in different bodies of work. The first objects I made were *Refuge Wear* in 1992, conceived as temporary mobile shelters that took the form of tents, bivouacs, and sleeping bags. These were both conceptual and semi-functional, mobile habitats and protective overcoats for nomadic situations. My knowledge as a designer led me to explore new characteristics of fabric membranes and the revolutionary developments that have taken place in synthetic fibers and textile manufacturing since the 1990s, and this opened up an infinite field of material research, far more advanced in applications than what is used in the commercial fashion industry. I was interested in the intelligent textiles revolution—which allowed for a more conceptual approach to design—and in discussions about the new socio-communicative role of clothing. *Body Architecture, Refuge Wear, Modular Architecture*, and *Nexus Architecture* were created as responses to growing problems within our society (loneliness, unemployment, homelessness, and survival in general). By presenting these works in the public sphere, my goals were to raise awareness of the state of these crises and to trigger debate, both within the cultural domain and beyond. I organized workshops, actions, interventions, and public presentations to foster exchange, confronting diverse publics. By bringing together interdisciplinary collaborations between young people, university students, teachers, social workers, architects, and philosophers, our aim was to stimulate discussion and different points of view. Two significant examples are *Nexus Architecture*, created for the second Johannesburg Biennial in 1997, and *Dwelling*, which was staged in numerous cities—from Gorbals, an underprivileged community in Glasgow, Scotland, to Musashino Art University in Tokyo—from 1997 to 2004. These collaborations confirmed that it was possible to team with migrant workers, foster children, design students, unemployed adults, educators, architects, and curators on creative projects that can trigger transformations in people's lives.

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HHR: *Your work has been presented in many different contexts. However, I often see them in museums and galleries, or "conventional" art contexts.*

LO: Right from the beginning, our work focused on social situations and issues that we thought needed attention in situ. When I met Jorge in 1991, he was in the process of rebuilding an archive of his work—created during the Argentinean dictatorship—that had been damaged in a recent studio fire. I assisted him, and we went on to create a series of political artworks and performances in reaction to the Gulf War, followed by the *Light Works* series—large-scale, ephemeral light projections. The first *Light Works* was a 1992 expedition along the Inca trail in Peru, *Imprints on the Andes,* that marked the five-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of the Americas. Around this time I began developing *Refuge Wear* as a response to the Kurd refugee crisis, and organized interventions in public spaces to be in contact with social reality and with communities dealing with the other issues I was investigating through this work. One of the *Refuge Wear* pieces, *Habitent*, was selected for the exhibition at Galerie Anne de Villepoix. I was aware that the work was dissociated from its original context, but it was extremely important, right from the beginning, to communicate to different audiences and create an interface between the two. In addition, by presenting the work within an art context, it received critical attention and media coverage, which in turn furthered the dialogue and broadened the reception of the work to an even wider public.

HHR: *You both are now closely collaborating. But, Jorge, can you talk about your experimental collective work during the dictatorial regime in Argentina? I have learned there was a very active avant-garde art scene in the country in the 1960s and 1970s. What was your relationship with it?*

JO: I was too young in the 1960s, and this was happening in Buenos Aires, far from my hometown of Rosario. The years of my practice were from 1973 to 1983, a decade of deathly silence and general inactivity. It was this inertia that motivated me to take risks and combat the dominant passivity. My artistic passions and engagement were a prolongation of youth movement ideologies, in particular the obsession with building a more equitable world. Convinced that contemporary art had an important role to play in this process, we felt we should look for new audiences beyond the closed and very conservative traditional art circuits. We explored and experimented with all kinds of new approaches to making and diffusing art to the public at large, inserting the poetic aspects of art into people's daily lives and removing art and the artist from their pedestals. Youth movements were dying out in Europe, but gaining in strength in Latin America as a result of Che Guevara's utopia and new liberation theology. It was a period of revolutionary ideas, involving the universities and elitist intellectuals. As a consequence, dictators General Augusto Pinochet in Chile and General Jorge Rafael Videla in Argentina took power between 1976 and 1983. This state of siege banned the organization or holding of private or public meetings. To counteract this, we went underground and employed codified communication strategies to develop new audiences—alternative circuits for long-distance communication. For example, we randomly chose five hundred names in the phone book and contacted them one-by-one, through foot messenger service or coded postal mailings, to make and diffuse artworks—a mini home exhibition. Sometimes we telephoned people and conducted a *Crónica Gráfica, concierto por teléfono*—a concert poem. You could say that the relationships we wove together in this process prefigured the work that is conducted on the internet today. Our work was done collectively, with the complicity of young artists, musicians, friends, and our students. We invented our own ways of existing, as artists faced with silence and repression. Of course, the museums were not interested in these art forms; we were too far removed from the traditional aesthetic preoccupations of that period. There were no commercial galleries, and we had nothing to sell, so most of our work was given away for free. Despite this, some of the work I made was codified and adapted for museum exhibitions, so that it could be seen both "inside" and "outside."

HHR: *What made you come to Paris? How did your work develop when you arrived in 1984?*

JO: There was nothing more I could do in Argentina. It was becoming increasingly difficult to share my ideas with the new university governors of the arts faculty where I was teaching, so I decided to resign, never to return. I arrived in France thanks to a scholarship artist residency from the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. It was a

complete shock, and took me several years to overcome. In Argentina there was no economic goal for our artwork—we worked exclusively to participate in the transformation of society. I had two jobs to finance my work, often deprived myself of a family life, and worked nights and weekends to create art.

In Paris, I encountered a commercial art world with no social goal or interest. The FIAC art fair was the pinnacle of professional achievement. I couldn't believe that art could be motivated by commerce. This revolted me, and I decided to revert to fringe activities. Enrolled for a PhD at the Sorbonne, I attempted to reproduce some of the actions and performances from Argentina, to no avail, as my colleagues were not interested in collective activities. The Gulf War broke out in 1990, the stock market crashed, the art system disintegrated and imploded, and finally there was a reason to platform the issues I had left in Argentina. Not only did the recession affect me, but I also lost all of my work in a devastating studio fire, giving me further challenges to overcome. My solo exhibition *Poussière* at the Galerie Bastille in Paris, and Lucy's *Refuge Wear*, were immediate responses to this dire situation.

HHR: *Both your practices have arisen from social situations, and in the case of Jorge, from a traumatic life experience. What are the challenges of working within the context of the art institution in Europe today?*

LO+JO: In the beginning there was a division between our extramural actions and intramural exhibitions. We were working in the public sphere, and the gallery exhibited the results. We were aware of the separation between the living experience and its frozen institutionalization, but felt that the museum public would be able to reconstruct the original context. Wherever possible we would attempt to include the institution into the larger research process right from the beginning, and as a result our projects became more intra-collaborative as curatorial practices changed in the mid-1990s. Artists and curators began working more closely together, conducting community outreach work prior to public presentation, spending time with local groups, understanding the context, elaborating on the artifacts together, and reflecting on how to exhibit the stages of this collaborative process.

One pertinent example of this would be *Commune Communicate,* commissioned in 1996 by the FRAC Lorraine in the city of Metz, France, a collaboration that enabled us to work with inmates of the local detention center, CP Metz. The curators organized a series of workshops inside the prison, and we invited the inmates to talk about their experiences of incarceration. You can imagine how difficult this was to put into place! During the discussions we decided that the artworks would take the form of audio recordings from a selection of our conversations, so that the inmates' voices could resonate beyond the prison walls. We fabricated a communication tool in the form of *Peripheral Communication Units,* small wooden suitcases containing

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Walkmans, personal photographs, and a selection of purpose-made postcards. [412] These were presented to the public of Metz in a busy shopping street on our handmade tables. Passersby could listen to the inmates' personal statements about their past lives and future aspirations, then respond on the postcards, which were in turn posted back to the detention center. This presentation was shown at Casino, a contemporary art gallery in Luxembourg, and then we staged a final exhibition inside the CP Metz for the entire prison community. This type of flux and diversity of public engagement/commissioning agency/non-art institution/street/museum/community can be established at a project's outset when artists and institutions work closely together.

HHR: *This process of public engagement is similar to the approach of HortiRecycling Enterprise, which you presented at the Wiener Secession in Vienna, Austria, in 1999. You connected, in a continuous flow, the interior museum space with the general public of the Naschmarkt open-air market. Can you talk about the food projects as examples of your methodology and approach?*

LO+JO: We don't see museums as static white cubes, but as spaces of intervention, and we work with curators as part of a team enterprise. We tease out a process together to facilitate the participation of a wider audience within and beyond the museum. The physical gallery space allows us to reconstruct projects that have happened elsewhere, and is often a quiet place to reflect on the results of a project, which might still be happening elsewhere simultaneously. At the Secession we experienced an incredible progression in curatorial practice, as initiatives were being instigated in Vienna far beyond the traditional parameters of the job. For example, the curators visited the Naschmarkt vendors daily, invented jam recipes, and discussed health issues with the Viennese chef Han Staud. From our studio in Paris, we mediated between the initiatives so that the enterprise could be carried through from idea to realization.

Instead of discarding their overripe fruit and vegetables, market vendors were given *Collect Units*—brightly colored, silkscreen-printed bags—to fill with rejected produce throughout the day. Another team manning the *Processing Units*—mobile kitchens with integrated

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shopping carts, sinks, hotplates, and freezers—collected the produce-filled bags. The ripe produce was cleaned, chopped, and cooked by chef Staud on location in the market. We distributed the fresh delicacies to encourage the public to take up these kinds of sustainable initiatives. In the Wiener Secession's first-floor gallery, we set up a second working kitchen complete with a *Collect Unit Pulley*, a wooden winch reminiscent of the medieval pulley systems used to haul groceries in baskets to the upper floors of tall buildings. Using this device, market produce was delivered to the gallery, cleaned, cooked, and then bottled or frozen in dainty portions ready for distribution. This pilot action took place in both the market and the gallery, illustrating the multiple possibilities of a recycling enterprise and at the same time bringing together an art institution, the street, and the different communities involved.

HHR: *In these works, your role is both artist and project manager: you mobilize the institution (taking it beyond its established limit and out of the art context), involve the community, communicate the project, and encourage wide participation. To what extent do you consider your work to be an artistic project versus a sociological one? How do you define your work?*

LO+JO: For us they are one of the same, both creative and sociological, linked and inseparable. For the last decade we have been looking for formats for our work that enable interaction and foster responses to the real challenges and needs of local communities. After *All in One Basket* (1997) and *HortiRecycling Enterprise* (1999), *70 x 7 The Meal* (2000) was the natural next step in our research—from food collecting and recycling, to the fabrication of culinary objects and artifacts, to the actual ritual of dining.

For the *70 x 7 The Meal* series, we invite a small number of guests to become part of an endless banquet, and in turn ask them to invite other people, so the act of creating the event happens through the chain of human interaction. We are merely triggers in that process, or enablers. The artwork becomes almost invisible, taking the form of our most cherished rituals; it mimics the essential human needs to eat and to unite. For each meal we try and create a set of bespoke artifacts, such as a hand-printed tablecloth or Royal Limoges porcelain

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plates, designed in our studio. These become the binding elements of each meal, leaving a trace that something unusual has brought these guests together. However, we ensure that these clues remain discreet, so as not to incite a "fear of art"; instead, they act as catalysts, stimulating encounters to blossom naturally. By setting the meals in an urban space, we return to the need for spontaneous general assemblies around specific subjects, bringing people together to converse, reconcile, and reflect, with the potentiality of an artwork that is active in the heart of a community. By blurring the boundaries between an art project and a real-life situation, our goal is to incorporate people as active participants, giving them a sense of belonging and empowering communities with a sense of civic responsibility. Each meal changes the world, if only in a small way.

HHR: *This type of project reminds us of past experimental art, in particular Joseph Beuys's concept of "social sculpture." His work is based on a personal belief that creativity is essential and part of human nature. Beuys argued that everyone was an artist. However, his way of communicating this message resembled a priest preaching the truth to people. Your practice is perhaps more open and participatory. How do you initiate this process artistically, and to what extent can you still call this artistic or creative?*

LO+JO: We pursue the idea of art as a catalyst for social change, building on Beuys's legacy. We believe that the individual creative potential of people no longer needs to be proved—it needs to be fully recognized and channeled into initiatives that will mobilize an even wider range of members of the community, be they street vendors, passersby, museum curators, or visitors. These individual initiatives—in the form of art actions, performances, or whatever—are the ingredients to catalyze social change. Throughout our practice we have been moved by various problems our society is facing—solitude, hunger, homelessness, water shortages, climate change, migration—and we create poetic schemas to attempt to tackle these problems. By developing long-term research strategies over a minimum ten-year life span that unfold in a series of "acts," we can actually begin to understand and find solutions for ecological, political, and humanitarian issues. By activating debate and discussion, we aim to change people's attitudes or habits, and thus get closer to the seeds of real change, which can even lead to the modification of legislation. It's not the work of art, but a process—through a chain reaction of events with the participation of people—that can actually make this happen.

Once again, we're exploring the extreme limits of art, the periphery, even if it means leaving the artistic sphere altogether, without worrying about whether our activities fit into actual artistic categories or criteria or not. Our aim is to explore and open up new ways of moving forward.

HHR: *Can you give a few examples of these acts?*

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LO+JO: Each act is part of an evolving process that becomes more complex, participative, and embedded with the possibilities that each locale allows. For the first act of the food project *All in One Basket*, we hosted an open-air buffet in one of the busiest central shopping district of Les Halles, Paris, made with discarded fruit salvaged from Parisian fruit and vegetable markets. A former farmers' market, Les Halles was delocalized in the 1970s, and its site was handed over to real-estate developers, who built a horrific underground shopping mall. *All in One Basket* points a finger at local consumer waste and the inequalities of global food distribution. Using the fruit and vegetable market as an example of a growing urban phenomenon, we were able to generate debate around the broader subject. With more than three hundred kilograms of ripe produce that we had gleaned from the local markets, our professional partner, the famous Parisian pâtissier Stohrer, arduously cooked a variety of sweet dishes. Samples of jams, jellies, and puddings were available to taste for free, and visitors could buy souvenir editions of our bottled and labeled preserves. During the course of the day, thousands of people stopped by, including members of the art community, shoppers, children, tramps, students, and immigrants. In the adjacent gallery of Saint Eustache, we set up an installation of artifacts constructed from wooden fruit crates, and displayed our homemade preserves with photographs of mounds of discarded market produce. The installation also included *Storage Units*, a series of trolleys with baskets symbolizing the collecting of the produce, which were outfitted with a sound system playing the audio recordings of interviews with the community of gleaners at the weekly markets.

Two years later, we were able to stage the second act, *HortiRecycling Enterprise*, thanks to the historical context of the construction of the Wiener Secession, founded in 1897 by artists Gustav Klimt, Koloman Moser, Josef Hoffmann, Joseph Maria Olbrich, Max Kurzweil, Otto Wagner, and others. These artists objected to the conservatism of the Vienna Künstlerhaus, with its orientation toward historicism, and were concerned with exploring the possibilities of art outside the confines of academic tradition. The Secession building could be considered the icon of the movement, and above its entrance is the phrase "To every age its art and to art its freedom." We took advantage of this history, the proximity of the Naschmarkt opposite the gallery, and the energetic curators who carry on the legacy of the Viennese manifesto.

HHR: *How do you shift your practice to specific contexts?*

LO: Sometimes the meal settings are small, so we can focus on specific issues in intimate settings. The larger events for thousands of people allow for greater public participation. The venues range from galleries to restaurants, historic buildings, streets, and open-air parks. For example, *Act XXIII* took place in the Barbican in London, on the occasion of my survey exhibition in The Curve gallery in 2005. The Curve was the ideal setting for piloting *Lunch with Lucy*, a live panel

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discussion and gastronomic encounter for seven food specialists, developed with the education team at the Barbican and broadcast via media channels such as YouTube. The panelists were Harriet Lamb, director of the Fairtrade Foundation, which develops products, licenses brands, and raises awareness of issues surrounding fair trade; Tim Lang, a professor of food policy at City University London who advises food and public health sectors both nationally and internationally; Lucy Stockton-Smith, an artist who designs and builds geodesic ecology domes in schools to promote an educational approach to biodiversity; Wendy Fogarty, the international councilor for Slow Food UK, an association that promotes food and wine culture and also defends food and agricultural biodiversity worldwide; Dr. Peter Barham, a reader in physics at Bristol University, the author of *The Science of Cooking*, and a collaborator with chef Heston Blumenthal in the development of molecular gastronomy; and Allegra McEvedy, the chef and founder of Leon, the United Kingdom's first fast-food chain to feature fresh, organic, and seasonal produce. The seventh guest and chair of the session was John Slyce, a London-based art critic and historian. *Lunch with Lucy* was designed to function as a platform to raise awareness, provoke insight, question practices in the food industry, and bridge the gap between the arts and society.

The twenty-ninth dining experience was held in the historical Savoy palace of Venaria Reale, outside the city of Turin in Italy. It was our first collaboration with the Fondazione Slow Food per la Biodiversità Onlus, with the aim to support the project Cooperativa Cauqueva in Argentina and to protect the production of the Andean potato, a fundamental foodstuff and financial resource for the rural Argentinean population. We invited 147 guests to dine on the most basic of dishes: soup. Together with chef Alfredo Russo from the restaurant Dolce Stil Novo, we chose soup as a symbol and common denominator, and it was served throughout the meal, from the main course to the dessert.

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This sustainable dish brings together populations and cultures of every continents, and can have spectacular colors: green vegetables, black beans, red tomatoes, orange pumpkins, white garlic and onions. In contrast with the ornate setting of the palace, we created a huge vegetable kitchen for a live performance at the head of the dining table, where we cleaned and chopped mountains of organic vegetables for each of the guests to take home in a hand-printed calico bag. A Royal Limoges porcelain plate edition designed especially for the occasion celebrated the theme by depicting delicately drawn vegetables and a recipe for potato soup, to be cooked using the vegetables we prepared.

Our fiftieth act—which covers several miles of streets starting from the Tate Modern and running across the Millennium Bridge to Guildhall, the historical center of London—hasn't yet been realized, but from past experience, and with our 70 x 7 multiplication strategy, we know that it is possible to unite several thousand people. All we need now is a good pretext to gather the crowds, but the right occasion hasn't quite arisen yet!

HHR: *It seems that the key to the success of these events is their partnerships and collaborations, so how do you go about determining the occasion for an event?*

LO+JO: There are events that need quick, urgent attention, and then there are issues that may need to be repeated and drawn out over several meals, to sustain the subject in depth.

As a reaction to the invasion of Iraq in 2003, we decided to stage *Act XX* at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris. We invited 490 people—diplomats, representatives from the cultural sector, artists, and media representatives—to dine on bowls of rice (*Un Bol de Riz pour la Paix*) at an immense table. Our choice of the UNESCO headquarters as a setting for the meal was not anodyne. Human rights and fundamental freedoms were being violated, and we needed a venue to carry the

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weight of our discussions, as well as a place we knew would be frequented by decision-makers in the process of promoting peace and security.

In 2007, the Albion gallery in London hosted our first charity dinner—*70 x 7 The Meal act XXVII*, also on the subject of the Iraq conflict—to close the exhibition The Politics of Fear. Here we addressed the themes of forced migration and torture, and the proceeds of the event were donated to the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture. We also highlighted the work of charities, including Forward Thinking, Asylum Aid, Information Centre about Asylum and Refugees, and Bail for Immigration Detainees. In keeping with the concept of *70 x 7 The Meal*, the guest list was composed of seven groups of seven people: artists, media representatives, charities, collectors, curators, philanthropists, and political and legal figures. We invited an additional fifty people, for a total of ninety-nine—the Chinese symbol for infinity. This act was also the first time the limited-edition Royal Limoges porcelain plates were designed by collaborating artists: Reza Aramesh, Xu Bing, Shilpa Gupta, Kendell Geers, Rashid Rana, and Avishek Sen.

70 x 7 The Meal act XXVIII at the Ephrussi de Rothschild Villa in Monaco was a small private dinner in the presence of His Serene Highness The Sovereign Prince of Monaco. For this occasion, forty-nine guests—avid supporters of the arts, the environment, and education, with a specific interest in climate change—were invited to inaugurate the Art for the Environment initiative, a partnership formed between the Natural World Museum and the United Nations Environment Programme in 2008. Our common goals were to utilize the universal language of art as a catalyst to unite people in action and thought and to empower individuals, communities, and leaders to focus on environmental values across social, economic, and political realms.

The next dining event will be *Act XXXIII*; this means at least one hundred thousand people will have had a meal at the same ever-extending table.

HHR: *You mentioned something very interesting earlier: legislation. How can art influence legislative change and be a more effective channel for inciting social responsibility?*

LO: It's the research process, followed by hundreds of collective actions and manifestations in the public sphere—through what has been called the "butterfly effect"—that will raise awareness and eventually lead to changes in legislation. *70 x 7 The Meal* is just one of the methods we utilize. Perhaps this is how Beuys's idea of social sculpture can take form and become an integrated part of daily life.

HHR: *How do you think the legislative system, which is often too rigid and bureaucratic, will respond to this proposal?*

JO: It is solely through the collective dimension of these projects and with a transdisciplinary team that a coherent discourse could possibly be noticed by, or even convince, the system. The project *The*

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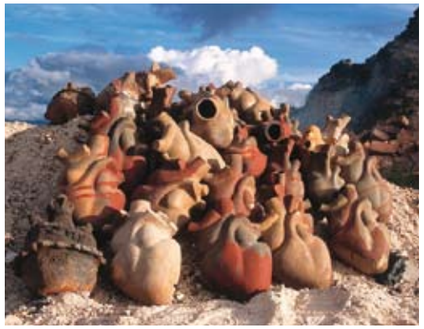

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Gift—Life Nexus, created from 1996 to 2006, has been one of the most effective artworks in terms of raising awareness. I began working with the symbol of the heart after a dear friend died while on a waiting list for a heart transplant. During our research on the subject of organ donation, we discovered that in France alone there are thousands of deaths per year due to a lack of organ donations, and there are more than 180 organ donor centers trying desperately to find more donors. We decided to tackle the issue, in part because of the lack of knowledge around the subject, and perhaps also because of the hesitancy of potential donors. My questions were: Would we discard a vital organ if our neighbor really needed one? Could we really refuse the gift of life if we knew the person? We are so caught up in a frenetic urban rhythm that it affects our relationships with others, contributing to a sense of isolation and indifference—literally, every man for himself! We have simply forgotten that our social connections nourish our personal development and help us grow for the benefit of the whole community.

We believed that the role of art in this sensitive subject area could be to awaken consciousness. We embarked on ten years of collective research, with the collaboration of more than forty cities around the world—staging interventions, actions, and workshops—leading to the production of artifacts, installations, and performances under the name *OPERA.tion Life Nexus*. The focus of these collaborations became the heart, a symbol of the gifts of generosity, life, and empathy, allowing an open-ended discussion on the meaning of heart in our lives.

I worked with remote potters in Zipaquirá and brick-making communities in Ráquira, both in Colombia, as well as thirty-five

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thousand high school students in the Meurthe-et-Moselle region in France. We fabricated several hundred heart-shaped artifacts and staged a series of large-scale public works in the *Light Works* series. The project coincided with the inauguration of the fourteenth World Transplant Games in the French city of Nancy, in 2003. Leading up to the event, we conducted workshops across the region and generated a charter for organ donation, entitled *The Gift*. This charter was subsequently adopted by organ donor organizations nationally, and an external audit recorded a 30 percent increase in the wish to donate an organ after death.

Today, it is obvious that the political system is failing and requires these types of initiatives to incite action and positive change.

HHR: *So, do you expect one day to get more directly involved in the political system?*

LO+JO: No, definitely not, and we have both been asked!

LO: I was invited to become a member of the new European Cultural Parliament—even there, there is too much discussion and not enough action.

JO: We are developing a new project, Les Moulins, that is situated along the river from our country studio in a rural region of exceptional beauty, Brie, in the Seine-et-Marne area of France. Here, a complex of historical industrial buildings—the Laiterie (Dairy); and two paper mills, the Moulin de Boissy and the Moulin Sainte-Marie—are being transformed into research laboratories dedicated to artistic research and production. Inspired by the historical and environmental context of the surrounding Grand Morin valley, and more specifically by the industrial heritage of the paper mills, this laboratory will host residencies for international artists and researchers from the domains of contemporary visual arts and ecological science to discuss, develop, create, and present artistic projects through a program of collaborative artistic and scientific activities.

LO+JO: Our artistic practice is our life's work. There is still too much ground to be covered and too many silent voices that need to be heard. The strength of art is its independence.

Biographies

LUCY ORTA was born in 1966 in Sutton Coldfield, United Kingdom. After graduating with an honours degree in fashion-knitwear design from Nottingham Trent University in 1989, Lucy began practicing as a visual artist in Paris in 1991. Her sculptural work investigates the boundaries between the body and architecture, exploring their common social factors, such as communication and identity. Lucy uses the media of sculpture, public intervention, video, and photography to realize her work. Her most emblematic artworks include *Refuge Wear* and *Body Architecture* (1992–98), portable, lightweight, and autonomous structures representing issues of survival. *Nexus Architecture* (1994–2002) is a series of participative interventions in which a variable number of people wear suits connected to each other, shaping modular and collective structures. When recorded in photography and video, these interventions visualize the concept of social links. *Urban Life Guards* (2004–) are wearable objects that reflect on the body as a metaphorical supportive structure.

Lucy's work has been the focus of major survey exhibitions at the Weiner Secession, Austria (1999); the Contemporary Art Museum of the University of South Florida, for which she received the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts award (2001); and the Barbican Centre, London (2005). She is a professor of Art, Fashion and the Environment at London College of Fashion, University of the Arts London and was the inaugural Rootstein Hopkins Chair at London College of Fashion from 2002–7. From 2002–5 was the head of Man and Humanity, a pioneering master program that stimulates socially driven and sustainable design, which she cofounded with Li Edelkoort at the Design Academy in Eindhoven in 2002.

JORGE ORTA was born in 1953 in Rosario, Argentina. He studied simultaneously at the faculty of fine arts (1972–79) and the faculty of architecture (1973–80) of the Universidad Nacional de Rosario. Dedicated to transforming the methods and expressions of the dominant art academy, his artistic research explores alternative modes of expression and representation resulting from the specific social and political contexts of Argentina and South America. Jorge became convinced of the social role of art during a period of social injustice and revolutionary violence in Argentina, and his work explores the periphery in terms of expression and audience. Jorge was a pioneer of video art, mail art, and large-scale public performances in his hometown of Rosario, representing Argentina with *Crónica Gráfica* at the Biennale de Paris in 1982. Interested in interdisciplinary and collective art practices, he founded the research groups Huapi and Ceac to create a bridge between contemporary art and mass audiences, creating public works including *Transcurso Vital* (1978), *Testigos Blancos* (1982), *Madera y Trapo* (1983), *Arte Portable* (1983), and *Fusion de Sangre Latinoamericana* (1984). He has published several Manifestos, including: *Arte Constructor, Arte Catalizador, and Utopias Fundadoras*.

Jorge was a lecturer in the faculty of fine arts of the Universidad Nacional de Rosario and a member of CONICET, the Argentinean national council for scientific research, until 1984, when he received a scholarship from the Ministry of Foreign and European affairs to pursue a D.E.A. (Diplôme d'études approfondies) at the Sorbonne in Paris. In 1991, a fire tragically destroyed his entire archive of work conducted in Argentina. Parallel to a studio-based practice in Paris, Jorge Orta continued his 1978 light technology artworks and created the first ceramic glass plates for the PAE (Projector Art Effect) 2500, which would allow him to pursue large-scale image projections, called *Light Works*. From 1991, he created *Light Works* in mythical sites of architecture of cultural and significance across the world, including the Mount Aso volcano, Japan; Cappadocia, Turkey; the Zocòlo, Mexico City; the Gorges du Verdon, France; and the Venetian palaces along the Grand Canal, representing Argentina for the Venice Biennale in 1995.

Lucy+Jorge created **STUDIO ORTA**, an interdisciplinary structure for the development of their work, in Paris in 1992. More recently, they restored three historical sites along the Grand Morin river in Marne-la-Vallée, France: the Laiterie (the Dairy) in 2000, and the Moulin de Boissy and the Moulin Sainte-Marie, two former paper mills, in 2007 and 2009, respectively. They relocated their large-scale studios to these former industrial buildings for experimentation and production, as well as workshops, presentation spaces, artist residencies, and a laboratory for artistic and environmental research.

The Ortas' collaborative artwork, which often deals with issues of sustainability, has been the focus of major solo exhibitions, including OrtaWater, held at the Fondazione Bevilacqua La Masa in Venice (2005), the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam (2006), and the Galleria Continua in Beijing, San Gimignano, and Le Moulin (2007–8); Antarctica, held at the Biennial of the End of the World, Ushuaia, and the Antarctic Peninsula (2007), and the Hangar Bicocca spazio d'arte in Milan (2008); and Amazonia, held at the Natural History Museum, London (2010). In 2007, the artists received the Green Leaf Award for artistic excellence with an environmental message, presented by the United Nations Environment Programme in partnership with the Natural World Museum at the Nobel Peace Center in Oslo, Norway.