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TO TRANSCEND AN ARTIFICIAL PARADISE

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DECLARAÇÃO DE AUTORIA

Eu, Carmen Bioque Zurita, declaro que a presente trabalho de projeto de mestrado intitulada “To transcend an artificial paradise”, é o resultado da minha investigação pessoal e independente. O conteúdo é original e todas as fontes consultadas estão devidamente mencionadas na bibliografia ou outras listagens de fontes documentais, tal como todas as citações diretas ou indiretas têm devida indicação ao longo do trabalho segundo as normas académicas.

O Candidato,

Carmen Bioque Zurita

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RESUMO

Transcender um paraíso artificial é uma combinação de trabalho de investigação e produção de um objecto artístico, com o qual pretendo construir uma reflexão teórica interseccional entre imagem em movimento, som electrónico, espectáculo transmídia e estética, cuja inspiração fundamental é a cultura ou subcultura rave como representação metafórica do conceito de 'paraíso artificial', retirado dos textos de Charles Baudelaire, com as suas contradições discursivas intrínsecas. Assim, para mim um paraíso artificial é uma sensação de plenitude induzida artificialmente; ou seja, a construção ou indução sintética, no sentido em que pretendo explorá-la, através de recursos artísticos, experiência estética, ou elementos extra-artísticos como o universo dos narcóticos ou psicodélicos a ambientes físicos, virtuais ou mentais, que induzem no sujeito sensações que vão desde: sinestesia, hiperestimulação, imersão e transe, qualquer alteração da consciência. Uma rave, ou uma instalação imersiva que ataca os sentidos. Os ambientes que são esquivos, funcionam no reino do efémero, e são também totalitários. Contudo, encontro nas raves o culminar deste conceito, uma vez que no facto de se abandonar através da dança num momento que põe em espera as práticas rotineiras, a experiência estética individual é prolongada e alimenta o colectivo. O prazer extático e o excesso como zona de resistência anti-política, uma Zona Temporariamente Autónoma como o escritor anarquista, ensaísta e poeta Hakim Bey a designaria; experiência estética e intersubjetividade, troca de experiências estéticas como ponto de coesão social, através dos mecanismos inconscientes de emoção e deleite que são inerentes ao ser humano. Mas também com a alusão mais brutal à escuridão da necessidade de empurrar o corpo aos seus extremos para tornar a vida mais habitável, que era aquilo de que Baudelaire falava em primeira instância.

Transcender um paraíso artificial é, em última análise, teórica e praticamente, uma exploração conceptual da capacidade sensorial humana e dos seus limites, e uma problematização da própria vontade de transcendê-los. É também uma reflexão sobre o processo artístico no acto de fusão dos meios artísticos (imagem, som, espectáculo transmedia) e o efeito estético que emerge durante e após o processo ou o objecto, tanto para o artista como para o espectador, partindo do prisma de que o próprio artista é espectador, e o espectador, portanto, o produtor da sua própria experiência artística, tal como articulada por vozes dentro do panorama crítico da arte contemporânea após o pós-modernismo, de Jacques Rancière a Nicholas Bourriaud.

O objecto artístico do projecto é a produção de uma peça transmédia em que vídeo e som, tratados em paralelo, são fundidos e depois montados através da técnica de amostragem de elementos pré-existentes, em referência à prática de DJ e extrapolada ao visual e que visa registar estas sensações estéticas e perceptivas. Por outras palavras, tenta induzir um paraíso artificial na sua experiência visual e, ao mesmo tempo, reflectir sobre esta linha nebulosa entre o prazer e a autodestruição, sem querer chegar a uma posição crítica absolutamente conclusiva.

A tese a defender é que a obra de arte com o sensorial como material a ser manipulado, justificável a partir de preceitos fenomenológicos e estéticos, torna possível aos artistas exteriorizar e comunicar, de forma profundamente subjectiva e subliminar, certas sensações que definem estados de consciência alterados -trance, êxtase, catarse-, e simultaneamente induzi-la no contexto operacional da obra para a experiência do espectador. A principal reflexão filosófica que apoia conceptualmente este propósito dita que a vontade de explorar estados de consciência exaltados, diferentes dos comuns, é uma necessidade intemporal e transcultural da experiência humana, que tem uma nuance problemática dualizada: por um lado, exprime um descontentamento com o presente e pode assinalar dinâmicas escapistas e autodestrutivas mas, ao mesmo tempo, manifesta que explorar o capital sensorial do indivíduo pode ser uma experiência transcendental para o sujeito e libertadora no que diz respeito às constricções e rotinas sociais tornadas insulares e alienantes pela estruturação da vida pelas elites de poder, uma questão que, embora tenha sempre ocorrido desta forma, é agora colocada pela dinâmica produtiva de um capitalismo transbordante que o colonizou completamente.

Para mergulhar no estado alterado de consciência como alteridade e veículo para investigar a capacidade sensorial humana e as possibilidades que ela prevê, e para explorar tentativas de descrever e registar essa experiência através do texto e da arte, a teoria da fenomenologia de Edmund Husserl será dissecada para explicar como a consciência e a experiência estética funcionam e quais são as possibilidades da arte para mostrar essas operações. Certas sensações estéticas serão exploradas como constituintes da experiência do estado alterado de consciência: transe, êxtase e dança extasiante, e como eles influenciaram ou inspiraram a arte, avaliando como o êxtase é a sensação final a ser perseguida.

Retomo a vasta discussão filosófica das contradições que fazem parte da busca do êxtase, começando pelo pensamento de Nietzsche sobre esta tensão entre o apolónio e o dionisiaco como metáfora para a progressão da história e a própria condição da arte, e continuar com a reflexão sobre se a práxis extática é uma tendência humana que leva à autodestruição ou é, em vez disso, uma forma de dissidência social, e depois propor uma possível conciliação entre a necessidade do extático e o seu inverso autodestrutivo na fórmula da catarse. Discuto a cultura rave, que é o reino mais explicitamente referenciado na minha prática artística, analisando as suas qualidades estéticas, o seu potencial emancipatório, a sua construção de comunidades efémeras e momentos de coesão e plenitude, e como a valorizo como o culminar do conceito de paraíso artificial, desde o lugar onde se experimenta o transe, a catarse e o êxtase, até à encarnação mais explícita do reino da contradição.

Analiso o capital sensorial da imagem em movimento, numa tentativa de transmitir, em vez de representar, um estado de consciência alterado. Expandido a outras formas e centrado no objectivo de activar todos os sentidos, torna-se um evento governado por uma condição de transmedialidade que permite concentrar todos os recursos para produzir um ambiente hipersensorial capaz de transmitir ou gerar in situ um 'paraíso artificial'.

Palavras-Chave:

Estados alterados de consciência; espectáculo transmédia, imagen en movimiento, cultura rave, intersubjetividade estética

ABSTRACT

The object of investigation of this theoretical and practical work is the nexus between art and altered states of consciousness as an echo of a transcultural human problem: the need for an experience of 'going out of oneself', to make the present more habitable and, also, through the exploration of the organism's sensorial stimulation capacities, to explore how art can try to induce the spectator to that exalted and visceral sensoriality of the altered state of consciousness.

From an intersectional discourse, with phenomenological, philosophical, aesthetic and anthropological theses, the duality between pleasure and self-destruction affects the whole research and especially the practical part, through the production of a video with a transmedia approach, to be expanded into an immersive installation, entitled *To transcend an artificial paradise*, which takes rave culture as a reference and tries to be the extrapolation to the visual of the DJ's practice. Thus, it has been found that the condition of transmediality, where audiovisual and spatial resources are used to generate an environment of hyperstimulation and immersion, could be the closest way to produce in the operational context of the work an 'artificial paradise': an enveloping, pleasurable, ephemeral, synthetic environment.

Keywords:

Altered states of consciousness; transmedia spectacle, moving image, rave culture, aesthetic intersubjectivity

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1. INTRODUCTION. WHAT IS AN ARTIFICIAL PARADISE?

'Artificial paradise' is the term poet Charles Baudelaire used to refer to the experience of altered consciousness that he managed to inhabit by consuming narcotic substances.

'Paradise' is a state of fullness, of pleasure, of well-being. 'Artificial' means that it is not natural, but constructed, thought out, created, synthetic. An 'artificial paradise' is something ephemeral, which cannot be postponed in time. To 'transcend' is to go beyond, to overcome, to extract something from, to understand something that is hidden and, *in the Kantian system, to go beyond the limits of possible experience*¹. To 'transcend an artificial paradise' is to extract something from experience that endures beyond its ephemeral and elusive qualities of existence.

On this subjective line, this work aims to delve into the aesthetic fact located in certain effects or symptoms that arise from the vast and multiform aesthetic experience and that have to do in some way with the work of introspection of the subject in order to, from there, talk about how it might be possible to register them in the space - physical and mental - that art opens up, and with it, everything that surrounds it: how the artist pours an aesthetic sensation into the work, how the spectator experiences and receives it, who those potential spectators are (the artist himself is one) and how the experience (of the artistic event and not of the object) has been spoken of as linked to the altered state of consciousness, in the articulation of theories marked by the intersections between art, philosophy, anthropology and social constructions, art always being a particular case, and ungovernable in an absolute way by those very spheres.

Building on ideas that I have been developing for some time, and as an expansion, or exploration from another angle to arrive at other results, of my final dissertation in Art and Design History and Practice at Kingston University, entitled *Ecstatic catharsis. Rhythm, intersubjective social body and rave. A reconciliation with art and life?*² where I tried to argue that a 'rave' functions as the contemporary localisation of Aristotle's concept of catharsis, and can

¹ *Transcender* : *Definición* : *Diccionario de la lengua española* (n.d.). DLE RAE. Retrieved September 8, 2022, from <https://dle.rae.es/transcender>.

² Bioque, C. 'Ecstatic catharsis. Rhythm, intersubjective social body and rave culture'.

reconcile the individual with his or her life, but also with art, for the sceptics, and from the formula of relational aesthetics.

To this end, the first thing to suggest is that art, when analysed from the sphere of aesthetic experience, and from its relationship with mind and body, by any of the entities involved, is not the contemplation of an object but the activation of a sensorial process. In this sense, although not limited to it, art is an event.

The philosopher John Dewey (1859-1952) asserted that art is the transformation of the ordinary into aesthetic experience through the discovery of the aesthetic qualities of ordinary things. Art as an event, and not as an object resolved and completed in itself, is a situation with aesthetic qualities. For this reason, Dewey makes a distinction between artistic object and artistic process. Art induces experience, evokes it, re-produces it (produces it again) for the experiencing subject (the viewer-subject), it does not reproduce it³.

The artist and theorist Antoni Tàpies argues that introspection of the self is the material with which the artist works and that in doing so, he not only works for himself, but also becomes a social and total subject, for through this analysis he approaches the essence of art and shares it with the world in a way that feeds and affects the inner quests of other subjects. From this thesis of Tàpies, we can deduce that the artist "goes beyond the limits of the self - whose guidelines, let us not forget, are determined by historico-concrete categories - to appeal to instinctive forces, to a driving energy which is the source of life and which is prior to reason and which, for this reason, cannot be penetrated by a purely rational route"⁴.

It has yet to be demonstrated whether humanity has progressed more thanks to collective slogans or thanks to this cultivation of the inner perfection of each individual⁵. - Antoni Tàpies

Understanding the work of art as a sensorial situation with a finite temporality - event - that starts from the artist's work of introspection and attempts to affect that of the person experiencing the work - process - are the fundamental premises for all the questions to be analysed. In this work, 'artificial paradise' is a dialectical condition invented to be used as a

³ Dewey, J. 'Selected readings from Art as Experience' in Hofstadter, Albert, and Kuhns, Richard *Philosophies of Art and Beauty: Selected Readings in Aesthetics from Plato to Heidegger*, p. 586.

⁴ Tàpies, A. & Sempere, J. *Obras maestras del pensamiento contemporáneo. Antoni Tàpies. El arte contra la estética*, p. v.

⁵ Id. *Ibid.*, p.vi.

support. Although it has a specific historical genesis, and from there a meaning that has been repeated in other discourses, here it is a metaphorical term to speak of a state of plenitude, pleasure or well-being, which is not natural, but constructed, thought, created, induced. It exists in the ephemerality of aesthetic experience. One of the avenues of enquiry it provokes is to analyse its transcendence: whether it is possible to go beyond its elusive conditions of existence, to extract something from the similarly enveloping and totalitarian experience it provides, that endures. Or whether, on the contrary, it is a condemnation to futility or self-destruction.

We will explore here everything that concerns the construction or synthetic induction through artistic resources, aesthetic experience, or extra-artistic elements - such as the universe of narcotics - to physical, virtual, or mental environments, which induce in the subject sensations ranging from: synaesthesia, hyperstimulation, immersion and trance, any alteration of consciousness, and ecstasy. Also pointing out its negative reverse: abandonment or self-destruction through excess, as the axis of a contradiction that surrounds the whole discourse.

Having contextualised the approach I propose, the central question to be answered in this research work is how art and thought, both in a transdisciplinary perspective, have dialogued with states of altered consciousness and the accumulation of aesthetic sensations they generate in the individual (trance, ecstasy, catharsis). By what means and resources have artists explored ways of catalysing or externalising these sensations and/or inducing them for the viewer, what theoretical precepts justify both the efficacy of these practices and the cross-cultural human fascination with everything related to an 'outside oneself' or 'out of the ordinary' experience, and what is their problematic or contradictory scope? On this basis, linked to the practical part of the project, the question derives in how to produce a video piece in transmedia perspective that, centred on the symbiosis between sound and image, is capable of inducing for the spectator the aforementioned aesthetic sensations and the angle of contradiction inherent to them through the allusion to rave culture as a paradigmatic case of 'artificial paradise'.

I propose to analyse the aesthetic and phenomenological concepts that underlie the fascination and dialogue of art with altered states of consciousness in order to ultimately, in the practical part of the project, justify how I find its contemporary place in rave culture, and how I experiment with an artistic format in transmedia perspective that attempts to

transmit and induce for the viewer the aesthetic sensations that are encapsulated in that artificial paradise, which is, first and foremost, an altered state of consciousness.

The main objectives of this theoretical-practical research project are:

- a) To trace a theoretical journey on how to use artistic disciplines for conceptual reflection on a problem that is inherent to human existence and contemporary life, and thus demonstrate the intersectionality between the everyday, the artistic and the philosophical. It also explores the relationship between creation and thought. To this end, to find the points of union between disparate fields of thought in order to elaborate an intersectional discourse and to structure the theory in relation to common concepts that serve as links, rather than using a purely chronological or empirical perspective.
- b) To defend the aesthetic experience as an essential matter of art that permeates all disciplines, and generates relational experiences, social cohesion and intellectual emancipation of the subject, whether artist or spectator. We also value the artist's process of introspection as the original place of the creative process.
- c) Despite talking about the importance of thought and trying to place theory and practice on the same level, exploring the realm of the illogical, instinctive, unconscious, sensory and non-rational and non-narrative in art, the mechanisms of unconscious emotion.
- d) To find a way to demonstrate that an altered state of consciousness can be achieved through non-drug mediated pathways and, as a result, through art.
- e) To find some possible conciliation for the contradiction and nuance of the self-destructive, instances in which an altered state of consciousness can be a transcendental experience, without the intention of finding a definitive solution.
- f) To explore the way in which artists have managed to transmit and induce an exalted aesthetic sensation, such as that of an altered state of consciousness, because it is impossible to reproduce it, valuing the condition of transmediality of the artistic

object and understanding it as an event to be experienced in a situation that requires the participation of the spectator.

- g) To find the connections between contemporary art institutions and practices surrounding the hypersensory or the ecstatic that are located outside this context in order, once again, to speak of intersectionality between discourses and praxis and the current relevance of this theoretical-practical research project.
- h) To situate rave culture as a paradigm of an 'artificial' paradise, a state of altered consciousness where trance, ecstasy and catharsis are experienced, and thus, as a link to the previous objective, to talk about its relevance in contemporary culture: how it has been a source of analysis and inspiration for these intersectional discourses.
- i) Apply the learning that can be abstracted from all of the above to create a moving image piece with a transmedia approach that manages to induce the viewer to the experience of an 'artificial paradise' (rave). To induce for the viewing experience of the spectator the same environment that is documented from the possibilities of the audiovisual medium to generate certain aesthetic experiences that have to do with the participation of the subject in this context of 'artificial paradise'. Likewise, to express through discordant images and sounds, the fine line between pleasure and self-destruction, ecstasy and excess or violence.
- j) To reflect on the use of audiovisual materials, through the possibilities of collective use of cyberspace and the Internet user experience to download, re-meditate and re-contextualise images and sounds, where the individual authorship of these products dissolves, and from the concept of sampling that defines the practice of the DJ, extrapolated to the visual, as a production methodology.

The framework of bibliographical analysis is centred on phenomenology, aesthetics, anthropology, history and sociology applied to art, as well as art theory applied to praxis. Previously elaborated theories are gathered here and applied to works, in order to link concepts and practices from a personal point of view, which is to associate the metaphorical concept of 'artificial paradise' to certain praxes that have to do with the

allusion or the construction of an environment in which an altered state of consciousness is experienced, in a timeless or anachronistic perspective, to expand this simile that has already been established on certain occasions. Subjectivity, openness towards other disciplines, a critical-interpretative sense of both theoretical postulates and works of art, with the analysis of these cases being figures that illustrate or respond to the concepts that are being defined, are thus the main parameters of the theoretical research methodology. Regarding the purely practical research, the main methods have been trial-and-error experimentation with the artistic medium of the moving image using sound mixing, image editing and video post-production software, from the prism of self-taught learning about resources and effects achievable through these softwares, and the search for archive audiovisual material to juxtapose with photographs of my production, thanks to the interconnectivity of internet resources and their downloading and use policies.

The thesis to be defended is that the work of art with the sensory as a material to be manipulated, justifiable from phenomenological and aesthetic precepts, makes it possible for artists to externalise and communicate, in a deeply subjective and subliminal way, certain sensations defining states of altered consciousness -trance, ecstasy, catharsis-, and simultaneously induce them in the operational context of the work for the spectator's experience. The main philosophical reflection that conceptually supports this purpose dictates that the will to explore exalted states of consciousness, different from ordinary ones, is a timeless and transcultural necessity of human experience, which has a dualised problematic nuance: on the one hand, it expresses a discontent with the present and can signal escapist and self-destructive dynamics but, at the same time, it manifests that exploring the sensory capital of the individual can be a transcendental experience for the subject and liberating with respect to social constrictions and routines made insular and alienating by the structuring of life by the power elites, a question which, while it has always occurred in this way, is now posed by the productive dynamics of an overflowing capitalism that has colonised it completely.

After this introduction where I explain the title of the project, what I understand as artificial paradise and what I use it for, what is the approach, the central research question and its derivatives, what are the main objectives to be achieved, the research methodology and the thesis to be defended, chapter 2 will define what is understood in scientific analysis and psychology as an altered state of consciousness and what position it acquires with

respect to the issues surrounding human existence and with respect to art, introducing the approach that will pursue the entire theoretical articulation. The concept of the 'artificial paradise' designated by Charles Baudelaire, as an exploration of the self and a response to its environment, is analysed, and then, through the experiments of Henri Michaux, the state of altered consciousness as alterity and vehicle for investigating human sensory capacity and the possibilities it forecasts, and exploring attempts to describe and record that experience through text and through art, is explored. It then goes on to dissect Edmund Husserl's theory of phenomenology to explain how consciousness and aesthetic experience operate and what the possibilities of art are for showing those operations. In chapter 3, certain aesthetic sensations are explored as constituents of the altered state of consciousness experience: trance, ecstasy and ecstatic dance - the latter as a conjunction of the two previous phenomena - in the light of their anthropological, psychological and phenomenological explanations, their social significance, and the way in which they have influenced or inspired art, assessing how ecstasy is the ultimate sensation to be pursued. Chapter 4 refers to the vast philosophical discussion around the contradictions that integrate the pursuit of the ecstatic from its origin in Greek mythology as the cult of the god Dionysus and the contrast with its opposite, which is the cult of the god Apollo. It takes up Nietzsche's thoughts on this tension between the Apollonian and the Dionysian as a metaphor for the progression of history and the very condition of art, and continues with a reflection on whether ecstatic praxis is a human tendency that leads to self-destruction or is instead a form of social dissidence, to then propose a possible conciliation between the need for the ecstatic and its self-destructive reverse in the formula of catharsis. In chapter 5 I discuss rave culture, which is the realm most explicitly referred to in my artistic practice, analysing its aesthetic qualities, emancipatory and community-building potential, ephemeral communities and moments of cohesion and fulfilment, and how I value it as the culmination of the concept of the artificial paradise, from as a place where trance, catharsis and ecstasy are experienced, to the most explicit embodiment of the realm of contradiction.

Chapter 6 discusses the sensory capital of the moving image in trying to convey, rather than represent, an altered state of consciousness. It first explores how photography and the moving image emerge at a time when the fascination with altered states of consciousness was very latent and substantially affect its development. Then, in parallel to introducing my artistic project, which begins with the attempt to produce a video piece in transmedia perspective alluding to the whole discourse here on the significance of altered states of

consciousness and making rave culture the main medium, I dissect Gene Youngblood's thesis to delve into what particular kind of sensory relation the moving image enables and focuses on the concept of synaesthesia, to move on to how the moving image expands to other forms and, centred on the purpose of activating all the senses, to inaugurate the territory that most specifically articulates the meaning of the whole project, which is the condition of transmediality that allows all the resources to be concentrated to produce a hypersensory environment capable of transmitting or generating an effect of altered consciousness. Thus, the installation is discussed on the basis of phenomenological theses that situate the body as the receptacle of aesthetic experience and non-verbalised thought - kinaesthesia-, and on the basis of the union between installation and moving image where art as an event is highlighted, the paradigm of the transmedia spectacle is proposed, with the analysis of transcendental and conclusive practical cases for everything that articulates this research project: Stan VanDerBeek's (1957) installation *Movie-Drome*, founder of the concept of expanded cinema, Roland Nameth's (1966) video piece and video installation *Exploding Plastic Inevitable*, which becomes the main reference for my artistic production in the practical part, as Nameth manages to induce the sensation of a lived event without specifically reproducing it, La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela's (1969) installation *Dream House*, where sound, interactivity and the visual modulation of space through light become driving forces to induce the spectator into a state of altered consciousness, and the case of the Cerebrum club in New York (1968) which functioned as a multisensory laboratory and which allows me to end the chapter by talking about the feedback between club culture and contemporary art institutions. Finally, in chapter 7 I refer to the practical, conceptual and subjective approaches I base my experiments with the moving image on the purpose of inducing aesthetic sensation and the whole theoretical discourse I propose, on the rave as the closest location to all the knowledge accumulated throughout the research and concretised in the use of sampling as a visual extrapolation of the DJ's praxis, with the practical questions that this raises.

2. WHAT IS AN ALTERED STATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS?

In dreams we experience a type of thinking that differs significantly from that which we have when we are awake, which we cannot re-inhabit in the same way, even if we retain a vague memory of what it was like. However, there are cases in which in the waking state,

we may experience what is known as an altered state of consciousness⁶ : a state of mental lucidity in which there is, however, a distortion of normal sensory processing, in the way reality is processed, which may be more analogous to the arrangement of senses, visualities and sensations that unfolds in sleep than in the waking state. Or it is simply a different state that does not seem to accord with the way we usually process sensory information.

Categorically, scientifically based studies have recorded four primary types of altered states of consciousness: hallucination, hypnotic states, trance states and meditation⁷ . All of them, in disparate socio-cultural contexts, but with a recurrence that makes them one of the essential needs of human communities, have been linked to spiritual practices and to more or less radical experimentations within psychology and psychiatry with what could be defined as the recesses of the human psyche.

However, in the very definition of altered state of consciousness is the nuance of the unusual, the infrequent, the ordinary. It is therefore at the origin of debates about the unexplored regions and possibilities of consciousness, with the phenomenon of spiritual or religious transcendence, and all its by-products: fantasy, mysticism, madness, obsession. It connects with the idea of possession and ritual, and focuses on the body as a catalyst of experience.

Whatever the prism from which they are analysed, "altered states of consciousness play a fundamental role in the maintenance of the human social fabric and the social-spiritual nexus"⁸ . As a timeless and transcultural human concern, art has also maintained an active dialogue and fascination with altered states of consciousness, linked above all to the complex questions of aesthetics that surround them: aesthetic sensations linked to consciousness and perceptual processes.

Perhaps inescapably, altered states of consciousness are associated with drug use. This analysis, however, aims to transcend this association, while pointing out its problematic scope, which at the same time feeds the discourse that seeks to disassociate itself from them.

2.1. HOW ARE ALTERED STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS RELATED TO ART

⁶ Ember, C. R., Carolus, C. 'Altered states of consciousness', p.3.

⁷ *Idem.*

⁸ Ember, C. R., Carolus, C. 'Altered states of consciousness', op. cit., p.8.

The relationship of altered states of consciousness with art occurs in two areas: 1) artists who have experienced them, through drugs or other means that appeal to the body and sensoriality and attempt to document the experience through art, or think of art as their parallel; 2) authors from aesthetics and/or philosophy and anthropology who have reflected on their potential, with a focus on their social effect, and who propose paradigms on how to understand art in relation to this.

These two fields will appear intertwined in the course of the discourse I am proposing through nexuses and/or related concepts. I will explore the common nexuses in order to try to lead this research towards artistic practice in my personal project.

In the first area, the analysis begins with Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867). From the poet I take the concept of 'artificial paradise'. *The artificial paradises* were a series of essays that the poet published in the press between the 1850s and 1860s⁹. They are reflections on the poet's relationship with the consumption of narcotic substances and the existential questions that arise from them and, at the same time, an attempt to relate the bodily sensation and the mental journey that manifests itself when these substances are inserted into the organism.

Baudelaire played an important role in the development of art theory insofar as he reflected on some of its essential questions, such as the origins of inspiration and creation and the role of the artist in the world. For the reading that interests us, his texts reveal that one of the essential places of art, for the poet, is the imagination of the artist. That is why he wanted to delve into the depths of human consciousness. In doing so, he set out to locate the senses at the heart of the artistic act, from the production by the artist to the reception by the spectator. But it is in the first stage - production - that the exploration or work of introspection takes place, which led the poet to become interested in altered states of consciousness¹⁰. In his case, drugs become an avenue for exploration, a methodology for investigating questions, and writing a way of describing those experiences, which Alexandro Neundorf compares to the work of ethnography - which in this case would be, rather, autoethnography, a field widely explored by art.

⁹ Neundorf, A. *Baudelaire e os paraísos artificiais: A busca pelo 'jardim de beleza verdadeira'*, p.156.

¹⁰ Neundorf, A. *Baudelaire e os paraísos artificiais: A busca pelo 'jardim de beleza verdadeira'*, op. cit., p.210.

In his analysis, Neundorf considers that Baudelaire's inclination towards the concept of the artificial paradise is very profound and has more implications than are apparent, for it marks his perception of the world by integrating features that go beyond the literary into the articulation of his particular metaphysics. In the order of all things, for the poet the artificial is superior to the natural¹¹ .

The 'artificial' has to do with the discussion of the concept of reality. Baudelaire associates it with the dream, a state of consciousness indicated as opposed to the real, but which at the same time points to the very instability of what we consider to be real. Baudelaire's predilection for the artificial is also rooted in the idea of the rejection of the figurative, which, in the case of his time, is associated with realism and neoclassicism in art. For the poet, realism connoted a "war against the imagination"¹² . In his view, the search for the real meant the search for an "external, positive, objective nature" which led to "fanaticism" and "immolation"¹³ . This area of his thought is linked to the primacy of the "supernatural" as opposed to the natural and the real. He also criticises the tendencies of science and its philosophical ramifications¹⁴ .

Underlying this line of thought is also an idealistic fascination with those unexplored territories of human consciousness, as a futuristic promise of an alternative status that is more interesting than the ordinary. This relationship, this search, is born out of dissatisfaction with society, the weariness of modern life¹⁵ that engulfs and dissolves the individual and with it, also unfolds the will to subvert accepted morality, which is restrictive. Achieving this through drugs is a path that many chose to explore. However, as we shall see below, it is not the only one possible.

Baudelaire belongs to the 'decadent' generation or movement¹⁶ . Decadence, as a form of 'abandonment' of the subject to oneself in the eyes of society and also reaffirmed by the individuals who conform to this label - redefined as a mark of insurgency, social dissidence - is a recurring theme, which relates to the tension that this research aims to explore, about the conflictive nature of the act of 'wanting to get out of oneself' to sweeten an

¹¹ *id. Ibidem*, p.157.

¹² *id. Ibidem*, p.166.

¹³ *idem*

¹⁴ *idem*

¹⁵ *idem*

¹⁶ Neundorf, A. *Baudelaire e os paraísos artificiais: A busca pelo 'jardim de beleza verdadeira'*, op. cit., p. 166.

unsatisfactory present. Another important nuance is that of recovering agency as a 'historical subject', that is, reasserting oneself in otherness, in the alternative - from individualism, to dissolution in the mass, to reasserting oneself in the dissidence of difference.

In Europe, psychotropic substances gained prominence in the 19th century. Apart from addictions and recreational uses, they were justified as tools of exploration for psychological and scientific purposes, or as stimulators of imagination and creativity¹⁷. Thanks to the latter, they were very common in literary circles. The drug was used as a stimulant for creative thinking, because it provided a different relation of sensations; as a way out of boredom: "Beyond the dominant romantic horizon"¹⁸.

A relevant fact brought out by Neundorf¹⁹ is that, while later generations of decadentists and symbolists continued to be seduced by the universe of drugs as if it were part of an inherited identity, Baudelaire truly sought to construct a critical view of his own relationship with them - which will always be fraught with dualities and contradictions, between pleasure and disgust. He undertook an intensive self-analysis that, again, transcends the literary and moves into the territories of the phenomenology of art.

Baudelaire serves as an introducer to all the secondary concepts of the artistic that will be explored here: ennui, social dissidence, moral corruption or self-destructive tendency, artifice, emancipation through aesthetic experience. But, what is more, it points to the artistic use of the experience of having entered an altered state of consciousness through drugs. Thus, from an aesthetic point of view, the relationship between object and subject proposed by Baudelaire is one of the central focuses of this analysis. In *Artificial Paradises*, subject and object are "amalgamated in a single experience, where the narrator is intimately combined with the narrated action"²⁰. Neundorf situates Baudelaire as the "sedimenter of an analytical approach that is based on participant observation, understanding and reflection"²¹. The artist uses his own experience as material for analysis, a view from within the experience, in order to refer to it afterwards. And here we find an arduous, almost impossible task.

¹⁷ Id. Ibid., p.160.

¹⁸ idem

¹⁹ idem

²⁰ Id. Ibid., p.167

²¹ Neundorf, A. *Baudelaire e os paraísos artificiais: A busca pelo Jardim de beleza verdadeira?*, op. cit., p. 166.

2.2. SELF-EXPLORATION OF OTHERNESS AND DIFFICULTY IN REPRESENTING IT

Henri Michaux (1899-1984) followed in the footsteps of Baudelaire and the decadent poets, but he was also interested in the production of visual art, so that his experimentation with altered states of consciousness moved in these two spheres of creation: literature and the visual. As the writer Rafael Conte summed it up: "Michaux's work arises from the poet's sensations of the outside world, but soon he also investigates the transformations of that world and of his own sensations: from the exterior journey to the fantastic, and from this to the interior journey, to the experience with drugs, (...). The drug expanded the limits of the journey and of the experience itself"²².

Like Baudelaire, Michaux situates himself as an object of study and, in doing so, at the same time leaves us with a teaching on how a sensation, and what is more, an accumulation of exalted sensations such as those experienced in an altered state of consciousness, can be explained or reproduced, externalised or materialised in any form. The story about oneself helps others to find patterns applicable to their own experience. As the editorial line on Tapiès' book, *Art against Aesthetics*, states, in the end the artist, by dealing with himself, paradoxically, becomes a universal subject.

In Michaux's terms, the drug becomes the vehicle for exploring an alterity, which is another possible relation of sensations of the subject, which is able to open a space against or outside the 'folds' - the ordinary standards of life, in his thinking. The exploration 'beyond the ordinary state of consciousness'²³. Michaux warns us, however, that drugs are only one vehicle, among many possible ones, for reaching an altered state of consciousness, and are useful only insofar as they reveal the possibility that there is more to the workings of the human mind than meets the eye, or more than enables us to carry out the normal functions of life. It is the knowledge that can be detached from experience and how to use it that is truly significant. Nor is this knowledge to be understood as a spiritual revelation, in a religious or esoteric sense, but as the mark of a potential that is detached from sensory stimulation that can be harnessed, investigated, induced. Drugs, artificial paradises are not an end in themselves. We return to what this analysis seeks to address: the altered state of

²² Conte, R. 'Henri Michaux: el viaje, la droga y la mirada'.

²³ Iribas, A. 'En búsqueda de la alteridad: las autoexploraciones de Henri Michaux', p.173.

consciousness, whether it is a matter of narcotics or, hopefully, something attainable through other means, as one of the main human concerns. This can be dealt with by religion, science or art. In his article on Michaux, Iribas brings together these transcendental quotations to highlight the author's vision of drugs:

"Drugs bore us with their paradise. Let them rather give us a little knowledge. This is not a time of paradise.

"Every drug changes the fulcrum. The fulcrum that you have in your senses, the support that your senses had in the world, the support you had in your general impression of being".

"The enormous semi-hidden activity of the spirit is evident here".²⁴

Although other practices with which the author experimented to reach an altered state of consciousness, such as meditation or directed dreams, have also been recorded, according to Iribas, "entheogenic drugs (especially mescaline) [...] are the ones that have taught him the most, both about the abysses of madness and the most transcendental ecstasies"²⁵. Here, once again, we can perceive the ambivalence with which Michaux treats the subject of drug use, between the pleasure of sensation and knowledge, and self-destruction.

Mescaline made Michaux experience a series of sensations that did not belong to the ordinary: "they were complex and kinetic, including speed, vibration, metamorphosis, polyopia [multiplication ad infinitum of a motif], symmetry, enjambment, coexistence of simultaneous dimensions, series of one element and then its opposite, synaesthesia, and so on"²⁶.

The question at hand is: how to record such complex sensations? Despite having dedicated texts in a quasi-scientific style to describing the matter objectively, based on notes he wrote during psychotropic journeys which he then laboriously tried to reconstruct. Iribas believes that for Michaux, drawing became the way that came closest to the possibility of 'representing' - this being an impossibility, as we shall analyse - the experiences that the altered states of consciousness had produced in him, over and above the text, the word.

²⁴ Iribas, A. 'En búsqueda de la alteridad: las autoexploraciones de Henri Michaux', op. cit., p.182.

²⁵ Id. Ibid., p.173.

²⁶ Id. Ibid. p.175.

Art, as a register of abstract sensations, creates a bridge to experience, and in addition to (or because of) this, generates another sensory experience that alludes to the previous one, without the need for kinship or an evident relationship between cause and effect. It is another register of the mind unmediated by the laws of rationality ascribed to the use of the word as expressive matter. Drawing, "with its agile immediacy and lack of grammar"²⁷, comes closer to illustrating the experience of altered consciousness than text.

It seems that at this point we are plotting a defence against the text, but the real intention here is to point to how the visual can induce (rather than represent) those recondite and unusual sensations of altered consciousness, or perhaps 'zones unexplored in the everyday', in a way that, in principle, the word cannot.

To speak of the inadequacy of text to represent this experience, one must first understand text as a signic-semantic complex that functions through the word, and the 'rational' as the rules subject to this order. The visual is a different sign-semantic complex. Rejecting text does not mean rejecting language, and its communicative-expressive function.

Gillo Dorfles determines that there is no other possible form of communication "between thinking beings" than through language, "understood in its broadest sense as a symbolic-semantic complex"²⁸, but with a nuance: language is determined by a "symbolic-semantic concatenation" and therefore does not have to be reduced to the textual. Then there is the case of the image. For Dorfles, the image is a "mental picture not yet conceptualised through verbal expression, but full of meaning"²⁹. The mind thinks through symbolic elements mediated or constructed in a plastic way (with colours, graphic motifs...) before constructing their linguistic equivalent³⁰. Thus, the visual is the very origin of the process of perception, is constitutive of the oneiric and also of the artistic, and is categorised through textual language, but only after the above. And as we have already seen, the altered state of consciousness could be understood as dreamlike sensations in the waking state. On this, Dorfles added:

"Such thought by images, which in all probability constituted the only form of thought in ancient times, when the word was not yet articulated, still exists in almost all men, and is the only connotative form which allows us an expansion or a reduction *outside the spatio-*

²⁷ Id. Ibid. p.174.

²⁸ Dorfles, G. *Símbolo, comunicación y consumo*, p.97.

²⁹ Id. Ibid., p.99.

³⁰ Id. Ibid., p.100.

temporal schemes, among which we are, or were, since childhood, conditioned and constrained"³¹ .

In this sense, Michaux's drawings have more power to describe the experience to which they refer than his texts, because they are signifiers anchored in the subjective, which means that the possibilities of association they determine are infinite, and as such perpetually mutable.

The word does not achieve this effect of inaugurating a different prognosis (of sensory experience), a compendium of possibilities always open, each time one is confronted with it, as does the image. The image is the pre-logical moment that connects with sensation.

Three concepts emerge from this that we can expand on in order to delve deeper:

- a) Flashback
- b) Sensation and ghost
- c) Epojé

2.3. THE PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPLANATION

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) is the founder of transcendental phenomenology, and from him the phenomenological movement was established, one of the most influential currents of thought of the twentieth century, which has an essential relevance in the artistic fact. Phenomenology is concerned with analysing the elements that emerge in human consciousness, and the perceptual processes that arise therefrom; in other words, the structures that construct experiences. If aesthetics is concerned with the field of sensibility, phenomenology as a derived branch is concerned with analysing how sensibility starts from the manifestations and processes of consciousness. For Husserl, these processes respond to basic laws: "association, reproduction (memory, fusion, fantasy)"³² . To this end, he speaks of 'sensation', which we could consider as the response to a stimulus (which is a set of associations), and the 'phantasm', which is its trace or imprint. At the same time, this 'phantom' is not a datum, but its representation, a phantasy, which implies that the memory has been transformed, but is not therefore unreal with respect to everything outside human

³¹ Id. Ibid., p.99.

³² Chávez Báez, R. 'Transcendental aesthetics' and phenomenology of art in Edmund Husserl', p. 117.

perception, but is real for the consciousness and is stored there, without having a concrete material translation, although perhaps a vague image.

What Husserl suggests, and what we can associate with the intricate work of documenting the sensation of being in an artificial paradise, is that we cannot specifically represent something as volatile as sensation, which here would be the pleasurable or revealing accumulation of sensations experienced in an altered state of consciousness, but perhaps we can materialise something from its trace that serves as a referent for returning to that experience. This is the phenomenological explanation for the same thesis that Dorflès put forward about the power of images. That is, someone looking at Michaux's drawings can imagine, in a free and non-concretised way, by analogy or comparison with their own mental images, the tumultuous and powerful journey with mescaline. This happens because there is a realm of sensation that is not housed in the present, but exists in possibility. And this is how art works, as a trace of one experience and an inducer of another.

Michaux's drawings were not dated because the artist "considered that they were made in a time outside the usual time"³³. I believe that what he wanted to express with this is in line with Husserl's thesis, and is also explained by two other concepts, the flashback and the *epoché*.

Flashback is a process of returning to the experience that gave rise to the sensory distortion as a result of the brain learning from it. It is the memory of the event that conditions or predisposes the body to re-experience it (or remember its sensations very vividly) without the need to re-expose itself to the 'stimulus' that transported it to the event.

This work wants to suggest that art can perhaps function in the same way, and that it is the only possible way to represent such a strong and chaotic experience at the same time.

The flashback is a recurrence, a return from sensation, like a Proustian transport back to sensation through a subtle way (not obvious, and which also connects with the idea of synaesthesia which is the extrapolation of one sense into another) Flashbacks are: "episodes which, triggered by an activity, a focus of attention, an association of ideas, reveries or by an external element, recreate the past state of altered consciousness and its content".³⁴

We could suggest that his drawings function as an illustration of the flashback episodes, which he himself claimed to feel, towards that altered state of consciousness that he

³³ Iribas, A. 'En búsqueda de la alteridad: las autoexploraciones de Henri Michaux', p.179.

³⁴ Id. Ibid., p.180

reached with drugs, and have the same position or distance with respect to the moment in which it was experienced. But what is important is that following this discourse, they can be a way of returning to experience, posed in artistic terms, and Michaux, consciously or unconsciously, makes this clear. That is why they exist outside of time. The idea that what is embodied through art is a way of reliving that previously apprehended experience, but not in a mimetic way, but as an allusion to the sensoriality that constitutes it.

According to Husserl, aesthetic experience breaks time "momentarily and transiently"³⁵. Existing outside of time also connects with the idea of *epojé*, which is also mentioned in his thought. *Epojé* is a term originating in Greek philosophy, in its sceptical current, to designate the phenomenon of the momentary suspension of judgement, a state of equilibrium of the mind in which nothing is neither denied nor affirmed, but one approaches reality, the fact of being in it, of inhabiting it, without prejudice. It is in this pausing, a symptom of the aesthetic experience, that art is concerned with valuing the instantaneity of the moment, which is, we might say, what defines it as unrepeatable. And it is significant that it is produced through the pausing of the 'logical' process of thought. Of an experience that has been significant for the individual, because of its intensity, there remains the residual presence of having lived it, which exists in a latent realm and supposes the suspension of rational judgement and of time at that precise moment of the aesthetic assimilation of the experience. This is the terrain on which art can work.

As conclusions, between Michaux and the theories of Dörfles and Husserl, Michaux is the bridge from the literary to the artistic to speak of consciousness as a region in which an emancipation, an 'unfolding' can be found. The thought is the same: aesthetic experience opens up a space outside of time and social codification.

It is from this point of view, critical and oriented towards the analysis of the dissident experience of the norm with respect to the sensorial, that this analysis proposes the reference to narcotics to talk about altered states of consciousness. Drugs are the path chosen by these authors to explore the perimeters of human consciousness, but the present work attempts to analyse how it leaves this area to locate itself in the artistic, in the exploration of consciousness through aesthetic theses (phenomenology of the artistic fact).

³⁵ Chávez Báez, R. A., 'Arte em Herbert Marcuse: formação e resistência à sociedade unidimensional', p.125

The artificial paradise exists on an ephemeral temporality and is an environment that envelops the subject to the point of altering their consciousness. So far we have spoken of states of altered consciousness as an accumulation of sensations that are situated outside the ordinary, registered as images in the consciousness, communicated through the visual in the field of art and from the artist's interest in documenting and expressing an apprenticeship for which he situates himself as his own source of experience and focus of analysis. Also, the difficulty or impossibility of representing and its possible safe conduct in the translation of aesthetic experiences.

3. THE AESTHETIC SENSATIONS THAT MAKE UP ALTERED STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR ART

What are some of these aesthetic sensations related to the altered state of consciousness, the rupture with and at the same time the pausing of the ordinary?

Now, let's take a closer look at the artistic-cultural symptoms of the fascination with altered states of consciousness as the relation of aesthetic sensations that I want to refer to ('translate', or seek equivalent) in the practical part of my project: trance, ecstasy, which will later derive in the formula of catharsis, and later on, we will link them to synaesthesia and kinaesthesia, as some of the aesthetic processes that explain the scope of these sensations.

3.1. TRANCE

The trance state, which encompasses a complex amalgam of sensations, has been recorded as a thought process that is both introspective and 'altered'. Sociological-scientific study reports that it involves certain internal cognitive processes in a state of amplification and, at the same time, a dissociation in sensory processing³⁶.

As the ethnopsychologist Dr. Josep M^a Fericgla points out, trance is a phenomenon caught between subjectivity and an only partial objectivity, which requires a transdisciplinary analysis methodology. I am interested in highlighting the definition he gives in this same analysis of trance:

³⁶ Fericgla, J.M., 'The relationship between music and ecstatic trance'.. p.7.

"For psychology, ecstatic trance is an outflow of the ego outside its ordinary boundaries by virtue of our innate and deepest affective drives. It is an extraordinary state of waking consciousness, determined by feeling and characterised by inner rapture and by a partial or total break with the exogenous world, directing waking consciousness - understood as "capacity to know" - towards the subjective dimensions of the mental world"³⁷ .

On this definition Fericgla continues with a distinction between trance and ecstasy through what the cognitive sciences say about them. Namely, trance is a "cognitive process", which means that it is a process of transit, while ecstasy is a "cognitive state"³⁸ and as such, the result of the process. For him, it is relevant to speak of ecstatic trance, thus bringing together both fields, to designate "the mental process that ends up leading to an alternative cognitive state"³⁹ ". For the equivalent that this research work wishes to trace, trance is an artistic process, the intentional conduction of sensations, what Fericgla calls "mental imagery (auditory, visual, tactile, or affective)". That is to say, what artistic matter produces. Art plays with these conditions and, although sufficiently aesthetic in themselves, ecstasy could be defined as the effect to be achieved by the artistic process, its moment of climax. This is the equivalent of John Dewey's distinction between artistic work and artistic process.

Trance as an aesthetic sensation is generated, among others, by repetition. It is a hypnosis that has to do with the flow of movement in the body but at the same time the meditative concentration on certain elements: focusing the attention on something so intensely that it transcends until somehow the body forgets its own corporeality, and from there arises the concept of 'being outside oneself'. For example, the Korean artist Park Seo-Bo constructs his paintings from the systematic repetition of the same pattern. Inspired by Buddhist and Taoist philosophy, he uses repetition as a therapeutic process of meditation, and so we can affirm that what gives meaning to his work is not so much the final object, but the process through which the artist involves himself bodily in it and uses the pictorial medium as an extension of the trance-like state caused by the very act of producing it. It is an *epojé*, in which thought is put on hold and the artist works directly with the senses.

³⁷ Id. Ibid., p.6

³⁸ Idem

³⁹ Id. Ibid., p.7

Through the process of countless repetitions, through repeating the action, you become purified. Art can only be achieved when one's character is built. It appears when one reaches great dignity. - Park Seo-Bo for his exhibition at White Cube Gallery, London (17 March - 1 May 2021)⁴⁰

Of the concepts I am going to analyse, trance is perhaps the most anthropologically and ethnographically charged, and has the most connection with the knowledge and aspirations involved in tribal rituals, in the shamanic, although this does not mean that trance appears only in these communities. From an anthropological point of view, this ecstatic trance has an adaptive function with the environment. Therefore, there is a culturally determined purpose for each type of trance. In these cases, it is the shaman who manipulates this mental imagery.

There is an anthropological consensus that there are two main types of trance recorded across cultures. The first is a type 'in which the person's soul is believed to leave the body because he or she is abducted or goes on a journey', while the second is a 'possession trance, in which the change in a person's behaviour and expressions during the trance are explained by being possessed or dominated by a spirit of some kind'⁴¹. It may be that the structure of society - the particular complexities and vicissitudes that emerge in each society - determines the "type of trance" that manifests itself in it. "If the effect of political hierarchy is controlled, societies where people are more involved in decision-making are less likely to have possession trances"⁴². In this last line we find the most transcendent for the discussion involved in this research work, for the question it opens up is: could this be a symptom of the urgency we have to break out of established social roles and the anguish we feel for feeling dominated, for feeling that we have no real control over ourselves as subjects, but that we are a homogenised mass, driven by the prevailing norm? Then, as a result of this sensation, a kind of dissociation is produced: does it become physical in that moment of trance hallucination to think that we are effectively dominated, that someone takes control of us, that we do not have an autonomous personality or a factual power to transform our environment? Trance then becomes an expression of delirium and a search for healing, a constant in all cultures.

⁴⁰ *White Cube - Artists - Park Seo-Bo* (n.d.).

⁴¹ Ember, C. R., Carolus, C. 'Altered states of consciousness', op. cit., p.7.

⁴² Id. Ibid., p.8.

Depending on the practising culture, there are different methods to induce trance. Many are based on the use of psychoactive or hallucinogenic drugs, but there are also other ways, such as subjecting the body to a limiting physical state, like fasting or sleep deprivation. It is in these latter cases, which can be understood as a natural catharsis of the body, where art can intervene - activating these resources - to enter into dialogue with the states of altered consciousness, in an attempt to generate experiences that appeal to the body in such an explicit and intense way, that this moment of trance is achieved without needing the mediation of drugs. In fact, music and dance - we could understand dance as the bodily reaction to an artistic product that is music, or the tool to activate the aesthetic appreciation of the work during the time of its experience - have also been fundamental resources to induce trance in rituals.

At present there are communities of individuals who revere 'ecstatic dance', as a way of reaching an exalted state of wellbeing, or a revelatory spiritual experience, solely through music and dance, with a specific typology in both: repetitive rhythmic patterns that generate the hypnosis that leads to trance. Drums and a dance focused on concentrating on the movement of the body by not deviating from the same sequence of gestures, and then forgetting one's own body. It is a free flow of the body in relation to the music in order to reach ecstasy through trance.

The problem with these recent communities is the tinge of a harmful neo-spirituality into which they drift by making associations that are too risky, that overlook the fact that trance has a subjective functioning, a potential that is not characterised by a concrete effect and that reveals a truth about our own body and the cosmos in connection with it.

From this may arise the scepticism of many when speaking of trance in discourse framed within the spheres of interest of contemporary art, since in theory it has overcome the dogmas and fanaticisms of the past, and its critical commitment to reality is different. It is not interesting and it is not the intention of this work to make an apology for the construction of a new religion or a para-scientific science. Art cannot operate within these parameters, but it can address the need to find in the interaction of body and mind a greater understanding of perception and the functioning of emotions and sensoriality, of what we are able to produce or experience by attending to our bodies alone. One can aspire to exercise the body in order to predispose it to an aesthetic experience, and many artists work on this resource.

Marina Abramovic in her performance *Freeing the body* (1975) dances for hours to the beat of drums to the point of total collapse from exhaustion. Here, she induces herself into a trance, and, as is a constant in her work, explores the limits of her body and the artistic situation. She enters a liminal barrier with self-aggression. Abramovic's work does not confine itself to holistic rhetoric, but raises all the angles of the discourse we have been defining, with its intrinsic problematics.

*Moments of ecstasy do not occur as an exception or an accident; they are the moments when we savour what our life is meant to be. life should be. Ecstasy is an ideal, but it can also be the work of the day, the integration of the body, the purity of the heart, the integration of the body, the purity of the heart, the clarity of the mind, the clarity of the mind, the lucidity of the mind, the spaciousness of the soul and the vibration of the spirit that spirit that leads to healing beyond all healing*⁴³ . - Preface to Gabrielle Roth, *Maps to Ecstasy* (1998)

Trance is the vehicle to reach ecstasy, in terms of aesthetic experience. One artist who reflects on this is Jef Cornelis in *De Kleuren Van de Geest (The colours of the mind)*, an audiovisual essay on trance, ecstasy and ritual in a cross-cultural perspective. Through music, iconography and signs of fascination with the incorporeality of different spatio-temporal cells anachronistically set against each other. With this piece he points out that "abandoning one's body and connecting one's mind to a greater unity", through dance, is an eternal and timeless human restlessness.

3.2. ECSTASY

Ecstasy is a "biosocial phenomenon" that has been investigated in many different disciplines, from the cultural, anthropological to the scientific, and with special attention from neuropsychology⁴⁴ . As a perpetual human restlessness, it has had a very active presence, implicitly or explicitly, in art throughout the ages.

It is a type of experience related to states of altered consciousness that for the purposes of this paper can be paradigmatic or culmination, climax, climax, in that it is understood as a moment of pleasure, fulfilment and happiness, acting against the potentially unsatisfactory

⁴³ Roth, G., & Loudon, J. *Maps to Ecstasy: Teachings of an Urban Shaman (Illuminates the Five Life Cycles to Enlightenment)*, p.3.

⁴⁴ Groos, U., Vieth, A., Muller, M., Waldmeier, M., & Zimmer, N., *Ecstasy: In Art, Music and Dance*, p.33.

premises of the ordinary. Ecstasy is at the deepest and at the same time in the global vision - as an effect produced by the accumulation of aesthetic sensations - of all the aesthetic effects under investigation.

In *Ecstasy*, the Kunstmuseum Stuttgart devoted an extensive exhibition between September 2018 and February 2019 to the recurrence of ecstasy, in all that the term encompasses, in the visual arts in collusion with music and dance, from Antiquity to the contemporary. The book resulting from the exhibition, which is not just a catalogue but its extended theoretical body, functions as an intensive and ingeniously articulated way of recording the transversality and scope of the concept, as well as its breakdown into semantic domains, the main reference for the methodology that this research work seeks to apply. Of interest is the way of juxtaposing epochs and artefacts, linked by these nuanced divisions of what is considered ecstatic. This demonstrates the relevance of the subject in current discourses on art and on a mode of transmedia thinking and also inseparable from other fields of the social sciences.

As a confirmation of what we have been articulating previously, the point of view of this exhibition asserts that the will to experience altered states of consciousness is a constant in all human civilisations insofar as it promises a break against routine and coercive processes, whatever they may be⁴⁵. Based on a quote by the writer Robert Musil, they argue that "ecstatic states open up the possibility of a different way of life", and that this is the source of its seductive power and its potential to induce a "radical or utopian" aesthetic experience. The key to *Ecstasy's* relevance to this research is that from there he points out that on the phenomenological basis of ecstasy, it seems impossible to discern whether it is a form of "heightened lucidity" or a form of "euphoric escapism from a reality that is experienced as unendurable"⁴⁶. Herein lies the principle of contradiction that I want to analyse and a purpose that they claim can only be investigated incisively through art.

"In an age of parallel reality, fake news, bots and trolls, of religious exercises and ideological exorcisms, the question or the potency of alternative modes of perception

⁴⁵ Groos, U., Vieth, A., Muller, M., Waldmeier, M., & Zimmer, N., *Ecstasy: In Art, Music and Dance*, p.11.

⁴⁶ Idem

becomes incredibly topical. And what some denounce as clouded vision is championed by others as a form of higher reason".⁴⁷

In order to narrow its spectrum and to be able to apply it to the premises of a social and artistic discourse, in the section 'Ecstasy in modern society', *they* define ecstasy in five features. The first, "an exuberant feeling of happiness that allows forgetting everything around one; depending on the context, a more or less intense connection to transcendence is produced". The second refers to the bodily translation of the above sensation, which is "psychophysical excitation (arousal)". The third is the way in which "consciousness is averted from the external world and extremely focused on subjective experience" during the moment of ecstasy and, at the same time, the subsequent loss of consciousness, which "emerges during the final phase" although a memory of it, although modified, may remain - from the knowledge we have accumulated, we can say that this is the flashback effect. The fourth feature refers to the intensity of the physical performance, which is "spontaneous, formless, uncontrolled and often spatially expansive", although when ecstasy is a deliberately induced experience, it must have certain conductive elements, such as "a fixed rhythm" that "is present in the buildup phase (music and dance, standing clapping, hollotropic breathing)"⁴⁸. In relation to the above, the fifth trait is precisely the progressive loss of physical control over the body, "with regards to both self- as well as external perception"⁴⁹.

As far as the history of art is concerned, one of the most significant forms of the concept of Ecstasy comes from the cult of the god Dionysus in classical antiquity. In the Middle Ages it began to be associated with Christian mysticism and the elevation of the soul through its connection with God. From the Renaissance, however, interest returned to the artistic, expressive and symbolic approaches contained in the culture of classical Greece, and thus to the prospect of its association with the cult of Dionysus, which shares many of the same characteristics as the shamanic cult of trance. This fascination continued in later centuries, during Neoclassicism, the Baroque and Romanticism, and it was in the latter movement that artists recovered their interest in the ecstatic, as an exponent of passion and madness⁵⁰ and precisely as a reaction to the formal, purist rigour and content of

⁴⁷ Idem

⁴⁸ Groos, U., Vieth, A., Muller, M., Waldmeier, M., & Zimmer, N., *Ecstasy: In Art, Music and Dance*, p.33.

⁴⁹ Idem.

⁵⁰ Id. *Ibid.*, p.45.

Neoclassicism. At the same time, it was in the Baroque that one of the most universal symbols for the representation of ecstasy was formed, taking up Catholic mysticism, *The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* by Gian Lorenzo Bernini, through the expressive force of the saint's face, which appears disfigured by pleasure. Thus, one of the formulas found in the plastic arts since antiquity to represent ecstasy is through the emphasis on the distortion of the body. As in the case of Bernini's sculptural ensemble, within this practice there are certain recurring forms that have transcended the collective imaginary - popular culture - as the iconic representation of ecstasy. The face of Saint Teresa, dislocated and twisted limbs, in vertiginous movement, instead of the static and balanced figures themselves, "distracted gazes, upper bodies arched backwards, and heads thrown violently backward and forward"⁵¹.

Louise Bourgeois in *Arch of hysteria* (1993) alludes to the iconic representation of hysteria, the supposed illness and delirium of women. But the elevation, the incorporeality and terrible beauty of the figure, how it seems to allude to a spiritual or post-human ascension, seems to turn the iconic representation of hysteria into this splendid, golden moment of ecstasy, as if to say that in this misogyny that takes on shades of disdain and fear, there is a secretly hidden masculine fascination with the otherness that is for him the woman.

*It is not an image I am looking for. It is not an idea. It is an emotion that I want to recreate, an emotion of wanting, of giving and of destroying*⁵² - Louise Bourgeois, extract from her diaries

The body is the receptacle and catalyst of ecstasy. From its representation to its production in the artistic event for the spectator, and in this, dance plays a fundamental role.

3.3. ECSTATIC DANCE

As we have been articulating, dance is one of the tools to reach ecstasy, and that, in fact, although it has been repeatedly combined with narcotic substances, it does not need them to reach that status. Specific types of movement have been categorised, such as everything that has to do with the bodily expression of the trance state, to induce the body into that

⁵¹Groos, U., Vieth, A., Muller, M., Waldmeier, M., & Zimmer, N., *Ecstasy: In Art, Music and Dance*, p.33..

⁵² Style, F. C. (2020, November 21).

state of "self-renunciation"⁵³ " that is the phenomenological prelude to ecstasy. From the "dance mania"⁵⁴ of the Middle Ages, to shamanic practices, to rave culture. In all of them, depending on the approach, there are individual dynamics and collective dynamics. They are not mutually exclusive conditions. That is to say, it is sometimes the contagion effect of the mass and the feeling of community that leads to ecstasy, and sometimes an individual is self-sufficient.

It is relevant to speak at this point of dance as a bodily response to an artistic stimulus - music - and in itself, an integral part of an artistic process, to suggest what the artist can do with the body of the spectator, in the experiential situation he proposes to him. That is to say, the learning that the art of dance can do, which is perhaps a more spontaneous manifestation, is the visible mark of the spectator's involvement, of the delight it induces in him.

The conceptual artist Joachim Koester (born 1962) who works mainly with photography and video, and has been extensively engaged in a dialogue with the boundaries between documentary and fiction⁵⁵ , produced the piece *Tarantism*, in which he takes up one of these 'dance manias' from the Middle Ages. In Italy, the bite of a spider, 'tarantella', supposedly caused the affected individuals to enter into a delirium that made them dance non-stop, a state of ecstasy whose conclusion was extreme fatigue. In this work Koester is interested in investigating "the convulsive, uncontrolled forms of movement that are associated with such phenomena", where the dancers "penetrate into a grey zone, a terra incognita of the body"⁵⁶ , plunging into the unknown of consciousness. It is one of the works selected for the exhibition *Ecstasy*, and is described as a look at ecstatic dances where it leaves it up to the viewer whether they should be valued as "collective psychic disturbances" or are instead "aestheticized as artistic forms of expression"⁵⁷ .

Regarding the type of ecstatic dance that is expressed individually, there are many dancers from the performing arts who are inspired by and perform ecstasy. This is the case of 20th century dancers such as Isadora Duncan or Mary Wigman. This is another angle added to

⁵³ Groos, U., Vieth, A., Muller, M., Waldmeier, M., & Zimmer, N. (2019), p.137

⁵⁴ Idem

⁵⁵ Tate (n.d).

⁵⁶ Groos, U., Vieth, A., Muller, M., Waldmeier, M., & Zimmer, N. (2019), p.137.

⁵⁷ Idem

the current discussion: the question of the ambiguity between representing a lived experience or living the experience for, in this case, performance, or choreography. We have talked before about how Marina Abramovic in *Freeing the body* proposes to induce herself into a trance through dance in reaction to the music and to the point of exhaustion.

Is the dancer working with the ecstatic inducing himself into a state of ecstasy for his audience? Does he want to represent instead the sensations he had when he managed to experience a state of ecstasy through dancing? Or has he consumed narcotic substances that induced him into that state and uses the memory of that sensation - the flashback effect - to construct the choreography of ecstasy? Here we return to the point of complexity in representation, and the position of the subject with respect to the experience he is trying to refer to or induce for himself or for the context external to him, the audience. The complexity of the will to represent an artificial paradise.

As the exhibition *Ecstasy* suggests, the fascination of visual artists with dance of these characteristics lies precisely in this conundrum between the representation of ecstasy or the live experience of ecstasy. Whichever of these two options, what is fundamental for this analysis is that "in dance, ecstasy seems to become palpable and hence representable"⁵⁸. Mary Wigman claimed to have a "feeling of 'incorporeality' and 'self-renunciation'" through ecstatic dance⁵⁹:

*And then the sudden release and the plunge of the relaxed body into the depths. Alive is only a feeling: that of incorporeality*⁶⁰ -Mary Wigman

Gret Palucca, a dancer, was said to be able to make her audience enter into a trance-like state of ecstasy⁶¹. Given the difficulties of direct representation or translation of sensation, this possibility is the effect pursued by this research work, the art that is based on the use of the resources of the medium to induce the subject-spectator into a state of altered consciousness.

⁵⁸ Id. *ibid.*, p.138.

⁵⁹ Idem

⁶⁰ Id. *ibid.*, p.139

⁶¹ Groos, U., Vieth, A., Muller, M., Waldmeier, M., & Zimmer, N., *Ecstasy: In Art, Music and Dance*, p.139

In the dancer Anita Berber I find, on the other hand, what this search is also aimed at: the dark reverse of the desire to live an altered state of consciousness, out of necessity, as escapism. Berber introduced the expression of ugliness as an aesthetic innovation in dance, and that ugliness in the case of her piece *Dances of Vice, Horror and Ecstasy* (1922), with choreographies such as *Cocaine, Morphine, and Suicide*, where she represents intoxication and her own dependence on it, has a greater scope, as it is the expression of that inversion towards the dark and self-destructive of the experience of ecstasy, and more specifically of reducing it to drug consumption.

Berber explicitly alluded to drugs as a means of attaining ecstasy, and does not suggest that dance is a substitute. In her speech, a tragic expression of her personal experience, she does not subscribe to "commonplace ideas of an ecstatic Dionysian state as the source of dance and hence of the restoration of the spiritual wholeness of humanity"⁶². Unlike previous dancers, who were digested and taken over by bourgeois society for political-propagandistic purposes, Barber was deeply underground, marginal, a discomfort to these elites who ran the culture.

In this way, we already inaugurate the field of contradiction and the problematic of needing an artificial paradise to make the present habitable, and we will try to propose a possible conciliation, which is gathered in the experience of catharsis.

4. CONTRADICTION. ECSTASY AS THE TENSION OF OPPOSING FORCES: THE DIONYSIAN AND THE APOLLONIAN.

As introduced above, the concept of ecstasy in Western culture stems from mythology and forms of worship of the Greek god Dionysus. His main attributes were "joie de vivre and sociability, libidinousness, a tendency towards the dissolution of boundaries as well as towards anarchy"⁶³, which significantly, as Ulrike Groos points out, brought him closer than any other deictic figure to the nature of the human being. Ecstasy was the central element of the Dionysian cults, a status that was achieved by way of "orgiastic festivities"⁶⁴ centred on music, dance and dance. Central to these were the maenads, bacchantes or Bacchae - and for this reason they are also known as bacchanals - the nymphs devoted to

⁶² Idem.

⁶³ Id. Ibid., p.43

⁶⁴ Idem.

the cult of Dionysus. These maenads, a name derived from 'mania', "referring to frenzy, madness and fury"⁶⁵, embodied the most visceral and bodily experience of ecstasy, in which it is from the liminal point between energy discharge and self-aggression that that precise moment is reached.

"Accompanied by rapid, rhythmic music, the maenads danced and swarmed, singing, through nocturnal forests, racing along to the point of physical exhaustion for the purpose of dissolving the boundaries of their own bodies, relinquishing self self-control, and stepping outside of themselves, opening themselves up to the divine in this altered physical and mental state - to the experience of *enthusiasmos*, of oneness with Dionysus"⁶⁶.

Continuing with the discourse of Greek mythology, that unrestraint or madness that was consubstantial with ecstasy unfolded in two forms: human madness and divine madness. In the latter, Apollo represented the use of the state of intoxication and ecstasy as a means within a ritual to achieve the revelation of a prophecy, and as such could be understood as a process to a rational end, aspiring to higher knowledge. By contrast, in the cult of Dionysus, this delirium to reach a state of altered consciousness was an end in itself: that of collective enjoyment through the moment of ecstasy achieved through dance and music, and its productive effect was liberation "from the world as it is, and from one's own self"⁶⁷. Moral laws and conventions are sidelined in this reverie of the Dionysian⁶⁸, which is at the same time a human, worldly delirium. This is why, as Nietzsche described it, the course of Western philosophy and art is marked by two opposing but complementary readings: that of the Dionysian and that of the Apollonian.

For Nietzsche, they are two facets imbricated in each other to the point where they need each other. Artistically, the Apollonian embodies the splendour of harmony, measure and restraint achieved in Classical Greek architecture and sculpture. The Dionysian is its counterbalance, the wild, instinctive and unbridled. As such, one cannot appreciate the Apollonian without the Dionysian, and vice versa⁶⁹. It is interesting to analyse it as the art of the Apollonian, of the beautiful, of contemplation, is a pleasurable idealisation but one

⁶⁵ Groos, U., Vieth, A., Muller, M., Waldmeier, M., & Zimmer, N., *Ecstasy: In Art, Music and Dance*, p.43.

⁶⁶ Idem.

⁶⁷ Id. Ibid., p.44.

⁶⁸ Id. Ibid. p.45.

⁶⁹ Nietzsche, F., Kaufmann, W., & Gay, P., *Basic Writings of Nietzsche (Modern Library Classics)*, p.49.

that is removed from the mundane, from the Dionysian, from the vices and passionate daring of human experience and the contradictions it embodies⁷⁰. It could be understood that the Apollonian shows that the resources can be found in art to transform chaos into order with a pleasurable effect, and in the Dionysian that this viscosity and will to transgress limits is within the vital impulse that leads to creation, which takes its inspiration from life itself and not from its idealised version.

In the philosophy that is detached from the artistic and inseparable from it, the tension of forces between the Apollonian and the Dionysian serves Nietzsche to respond to the model proposed by Schopenhauer, in *The World as Will and Representation*, configured on the basis of a profound pessimism. In a very schematic way, will is the instinct that drives all the internal movement of nature, and representation is the form in which we try to materialise everything that is external to ourselves, in a consensual way and apprehended in society, and therefore, not a reality that exists in itself, but a reality that exists in the confines of its representation.

The will, in the purely human sense, is the impulse to live and the accumulation of desires that make up the individual. It is an irrational impulse that lies beyond individual consciousness, for it is a matter that lies in metaphysics, in the very essence of the order of all things. On the other hand, individual consciousness is encapsulated in such a way that it cannot express itself directly, but it can emerge in the territories of dreams and art, and also in "distortions of reasoning and neurotic behaviour"⁷¹, i.e. in forms that have to do with a delusion that is not positive in itself.

The paradox is: the will is thus necessary as the driving impulse of human life, but it is a painful and perpetual effort that never achieves its ultimate end, because if the impulse ceases to exist, life ceases to exist - the motivation that makes it possible ceases to exist - and if it can never be completed, desire can never be fulfilled. So, what we understand as happiness is the satiation of desire and its disappearance as a need, but this occurs only momentarily, because if it were prolonged in time it would degenerate into boredom, and into the search for the satisfaction of a different desire⁷². Hence, Schopenhauer concludes that "man's life swings like a pendulum between pain and weariness"⁷³.

⁷⁰ Nietzsche, F., & Allen, I. J., *The Dionysian Vision of the World (Univocal)*, p.3

⁷¹ Rocca, A. V. 'Del Mundo como Voluntad y Representación al Pesimismo Metafísico', p.4.

⁷² Idem.

⁷³ Schopenhauer, A., *The world as will and representation*.

Ecstasy is etymologically derived from the Greek ek [out of] -stasis [stability], the act of going outside oneself. In Nietzsche's rhetoric, ecstasy is a way of alleviating pain, of transforming it, through this mechanism. As Sergio González Aráneda articulates it, Nietzsche somehow proposes the overcoming of Schopenhauer's pessimistic vision of the world, which, together with Wagner's romantic music, for him embodies what he calls "romantic lies", since both postulate "the illusion of signifying the world from a negation which, in turn, is the product of dissatisfaction with reality"⁷⁴ .

The Dionysian cult, as described in mythology and in Nietzsche's thought, is an event that often ends in violence, as an extreme of the experience to which debauchery leads. From this point of view, experiencing ecstasy involves several levels of violence. The violence of pushing the body to the limit, with no guarantee that the effect will end up being positive or satisfying. The violence of questioning the extent of our freedom, in the sense of how our will to do or not to do marries or does not marry with the values and socio-cultural norms imposed in our environment, which leads to a phase of self-questioning and subsequent confrontation, against us, against the external. Thus, the need to go outside ourselves is a symptom of an instability with respect to what we are and what surrounds us. But for Nietzsche, it is not a failure that "reveals an objective absence of meaning"⁷⁵ , but precisely the challenge that leads us to the affirmation of life and to disavow the cultural values that harm us: "for those who can accept the challenge to remain affirmative of life, the Dionysian event is experienced and evaluated as having the fundamental meaning of an undergoing of the highest levels of value and a higher level of powerfulness, and of only undermining what was already rotten in culturally based values."⁷⁶

For Nietzsche, suffering is an essential part of all phenomena in nature, but like everything in nature, as between the Apollonian and the Dionysian, everything brings with it its opposite: in ecstasy "'bliss [is] born of pain' and vice versa"⁷⁷ . Contradiction and moral turmoil seem immanent in the quest to live an ecstatic experience of an altered state of consciousness, to enter an artificial paradise, to signify the present or to reconcile with it, through satisfying desires, finding momentary pleasure or escaping from a reality that will

⁷⁴ González Aráneda, S., 'Sobre arte y artistas por Friedrich Nietzsche', p.110.

⁷⁵ Murray, P. D., *Nietzsche and the Dionysian (Studies in Existentialism, Hermeneutics, and Phenomenology, 320)*, p.27.

⁷⁶ Idem.

⁷⁷ Nietzsche, F., & Allen, I. J., *The Dionysian Vision of the World (Univocal)*, p.17.

always seem insufficient. Self-destruction is in some way marked in experience, but the experience of the ecstatic is not negligible. Attempts to repress it only enable it to express itself in other counter-cultural forms.

The effect of this ecstasy understood from the Dionysian is the need for the creation of alternative life values⁷⁸. Through art that dialogues with altered states of consciousness or pursues the ecstatic, the participating subject, in the artist-work-audience chain, becomes involved in what in Nietzsche's thought can be defined as a "Dionysian community of companions, beyond self-control and self-importance"⁷⁹. And from this perspective, the phenomenon of the artistic - the event - "becomes a grounding for an ethics which expresses the affirmation of the ultimate value of the earth and life"⁸⁰.

Nietzsche's thinking on art has profoundly shaped the course of contemporary philosophy of art and aesthetics. For him, art is defined in the first instance as an "aesthetic and creative impulse", which resembles the essential functioning of the world, "as a work of art that gives birth to itself"⁸¹. Romantic pessimism stems in large part from a Christian morality that attempts to "overcome the world", and in so doing denies it. Intoxication is an essential condition of art - albeit metaphorically - because "it has the task of opening up and intensifying the excitability of the medium"⁸².

One of the conclusions of the discourse on the Apollonian and the Dionysian is that the role of the artist is to "mediate the tension" between the two, "shaping and measuring the intensity expressed as reality". In this way, 'in contrast to the Romantic and Judeo-Christian tradition, life is constantly reaffirmed and re-signified', and simultaneously, 'it is recognised that the raw material, always uncontrollable, underlies life and is shaped as the artist shapes it'⁸³. Nietzsche rejects the art that "unemotionally observes reality"⁸⁴, which, on the other hand, is art that does not pose any problem for morality.

Fullness, one of the sensations that this work associates with the concept of artificial paradise, is one of the conditions that for Nietzsche constitute art as such, and for him, it

⁷⁸ Murray, P. D. Murray, P. D., *Nietzsche and the Dionysian (Studies in Existentialism, Hermeneutics, and Phenomenology)*, 320, op. cit. p.27.

⁷⁹ Idem, p.28.

⁸⁰ Idem.

⁸¹ González Aranceda, S., *Sobre arte y artistas por Friedrich Nietzsche*, p.110.

⁸² Idem.

⁸³ Idem.

⁸⁴ Id. Ibid., p.111

means "a joyful engagement with and anticipation of the possibilities of life⁸⁵". It also confirms the other characteristics that we have been gathering: "the ecstatic-creative response" is an experience that we could posit as ephemeral although it is not really measurable, and at the same time timeless, because it transcends the conventional notion of time itself, and precisely therein lies its power. The ecstatic event is not the direct response to the intention of the one who produces it, and cannot have a programmed meaning. Even further, "the event is not simultaneous or identical with the projected cause of the event, but instead succeeds in being the apparent external origin of the affect, while, in its undergoing, seems to express something of the veracity of the encounter through the power of its impression on the self, with the power being a compulsion to give meaning to the event⁸⁶".

4.1. SELF-DESTRUCTION OR SOCIAL DISSIDENCE? THE COUNTERCULTURE OF ECSTASY

From the angle of the social taboo on the unbridled expression of desires and the ambivalence about intoxication and registered all the previous characteristics of what it implies at the level of aesthetic experience, ecstasy is understood - as I pointed out at the beginning following the theoretical line of the *Ecstasy* exhibition - in its semantic connotations, as a metaphor to speak of a compendium of similar sensations that when responding to the altered state of consciousness, marks a divergence with respect to the norm, here comes into play the discourse of the role that society, cultural schemas and coercive forces have in predisposing certain conditions so that we feel that our routine is unsatisfactory and oppressive and that we need the ecstatic, on the one hand, and in defining or regulating what is acceptable and what is criminalisable, on the other. And this tension with what should be acceptable is also embedded in the discussion between the Apollonian and the Dionysian that Nietzsche raised.

For bourgeois morality in particular and the construction of modern Western society in general, this 'loss of control' embodied in ecstasy has historically been very problematic. On the one hand, because it goes against the norms of rationalisation of thought, and perhaps,

⁸⁵ Murray, P. D., *Nietzsche and the Dionysian (Studies in Existentialism, Hermeneutics, and Phenomenology)*, 320, p.132.

⁸⁶ Idem *ibidem*, p.58.

we might add, the secularisation of culture, for there would be no use or place for starting from an altered state of consciousness to analyse reality, once science seems to have finally been able to overcome the dogmas of the Christian faith, as happened in the Enlightenment, which also proposed to neutralise excesses, to return to the apparent principle of order of classical Greece, to impose reason over the instinctive, the passionate, the erratic.

On the other hand, more crucially, ecstasy disrupts all the implicit methods of social control, the rationalisation of habits and ways of life which the individual internalises but which are actually externally induced, and which are intended, among other motivations, to protect the smooth functioning of the industrial production system. Thus, following the cyclical logic of machines, at the time of the industrial transformation it became necessary "a state of consciousness that was objectively rational and focused on the external world and on the completion of the assigned tasks"⁸⁷ .

The avant-garde movements of the 20th century were sustained by a desire to transgress the rational, and a rejection of this mechanised and alienating way of life. Thus, while some may have romanticised the industrial transformation - even if only aesthetically - such as Futurism, many artistic currents, especially Expressionism, Dadaism and Surrealism, reacted against it, and placed their focus on the illogical or irrational as artistic subject matter, which, in this context, could also be understood as an altered state of consciousness⁸⁸ .

All attempts within this creative spectrum, whether based on actual consumption or on the metaphor of the narcotic, were situated as a direct confrontation to the puritanical Protestant morality which, beyond the defence of rationality and order, explicitly condemned pleasure. The "dictatorship of reason", which subscribed to the bourgeois classes, was also closely coordinated with the misery of the proletariat and the horrors of the First World War⁸⁹ . The condemnation of pleasure brings with it the need for excess, for hedonism, and this force is all the more violent the more it is repressed.

The poet, playwright, essayist, novelist, actor and stage director Antonin Artaud declared that intoxication is an intrinsic need in human nature, but that it is also rooted in and aggravated by the constitution of modern society, which generated a status in which

⁸⁷ Groos, U., Vieth, A., Muller, M., Waldmeier, M., & Zimmer, N., *Ecstasy: In Art, Music and Dance*, p.34.

⁸⁸ Idem *ibidem*, p.177.

⁸⁹ Idem.

"human beings were remote both from one another and from their inner nature"⁹⁰ . Moving forward chronologically, Artaud is followed by the authors that Waldeimer inscribes as "the prophets of intoxication and ecstasy of the 1968 generation"⁹¹ . Among them he mentions Timothy Leary and Herbert Marcuse, who, in a post-war context, found in the narcotic a source of wisdom and an emancipatory potential in the face of a society they considered spiritually impoverished by capitalism and marked by the rise of surveillance and control methods. The ecstatic state provided by drugs, whose permissiveness they defended against their social reading as dangerous and criminal, could for them open a path towards "an utopian, anti-authoritarian, and anti-bourgeois society in which the creative power of ecstasy would become the driving force behind philosophical insight and social progress"⁹² . Both authors were highly relevant to popular culture and the visual arts.

Timothy Leary conceived what was to become psychedelia's motto: *Turn on, tune in, drop out*⁹³ . Psychedelia is a term conceived in 1957 by the scientist Humphrey Osmond⁹⁴ and, in the linguistic and conceptual consensus of a dictionary, means:

1. *Sensory arousal manifested by euphoria and hallucinations and produced by the use of hallucinogenic drugs.*
2. *Artistic movement, especially musical, which aims to express the effects of hallucinogenic drugs*⁹⁵ .

In the book that uses this phrase as its title, Leary speaks of psychedelic guerrillas and the psychedelic revolution with a very spiritualist rhetoric that only tangentially circles around the artistic and focuses on the psychotropic experience as revelation. Herbert Marcuse, on the other hand, articulates a thought that is more directed towards what this analysis proposes: not a self-indulgence in the sensory universe made possible by drugs, but a consideration of how art can be their equivalent.

⁹⁰ Id. Ibid., p.178

⁹¹ Id. Ibid., p.178

⁹² Idem.

⁹³ Leary, T., *Turn On, Tune In, Drop Out*.

⁹⁴ MACBA Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona (n.d.-b).

⁹⁵ Oxford Languages Dictionary search engine linked to Google

For Marcuse, art is a "psycho-social mediator"⁹⁶ for an individual who does not conform to the ways of inhabiting the present that the social norm exhorts. What he calls a one-dimensional society is a totalitarian society dominated by capitalist logic and is so tightly knit that it disables the individual from thinking that there are other alternatives. As the power structures are infinitely more powerful than any individual action, they drive all individuals to passivity⁹⁷. In contrast to this, art embodies a strong revolutionary potential, which however does not actively transform the present, although it will be implicated in the outcome of its possible transformation. Its power lies in the aesthetic articulation of mechanisms for the destabilisation of what is imposed on us as real, "points to horizons of transformation", "subverts forms of perception and understanding", when it makes evident the absence of freedom and forces of coercion involved in this effect. All through image and language⁹⁸.

Furthermore, in line with his theses on art, Marcuse places Baudelaire, along with other figures such as Edgar Allan Poe, Marcel Proust or Paul Valéry as "examples of authors who, in their works, express "a 'crisis consciousness', a pleasure in decay, in destruction, in the beauty of evil, a celebration of the asocial and of anomie, the secret rebellion of the bourgeois against his own class".

Hashish, like all other solitary delights, makes the individual useless to mankind, and also makes society unnecessary to the individual -Baudelaire, *Les Paradis artificiels* (1860)

Should art then emphasise or reject the everyday?

The MACBA (Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona) articulates for a section of its permanent collection that the decade of the 1960s was the epoch of the hatching of social and political revolutions that demanded alternative ways of living, social changes against restrictive traditional social structures, such as the family, and the morality that is detached from them in interlinked issues such as sexuality, gender and desire. Theodore Roszak and his book *The Birth of a Counterculture* (1969) nourished all these dissident proposals. Two related artistic currents emerged in art: pop art and psychedelia. The difference between the two lies in the fact that pop art is rooted in the present and focuses on "the everyday and the spectacle"⁹⁹, while psychedelia was marked by evasion, a rejection of reality that found

⁹⁶ Chaves, J. C. & Ribeiro, D. R., 'Arte em Herbert Marcuse: formação e resistência à sociedade unidimensional', p.13

⁹⁷ Id. Ibid., p.14.

⁹⁸ Id. Ibid., p.15.

⁹⁹ MACBA Museum of Contemporary Art of Barcelona (n.d.-b).

its culmination in states of altered consciousness, which allowed an alternative, and thus dissident, perception of social structures.

As defined by MACBA's curatorial team, psychedelic art was inspired by the visual experience that was detached from psychotropic drugs such as LSD, characterised by hallucination over vivid colours, synaesthesia, and in general an expanded state of consciousness. This artistic movement has certain similarities with surrealism and employs formal resources "that favour entropic phenomena"¹⁰⁰, in order to evoke the same symptoms. Sture Johannesson (1935-2018), one of the leading exponents of psychedelic art, used and defended psychotropic drugs as an instrument of counter-systemic dissidence. Experimenting with film and posters, as well as new media "from electronic and digital to narcotic", he developed a psychedelic iconography with which he managed to show that "the socialisation programmes developed by the modern state are often more hallucinatory than any psychotropic substance"¹⁰¹.

On this terrain of ambivalence, in accordance with the conclusions reached by Marcuse, art shows the way towards the otherness that makes the autonomy of the individual possible. It evinces a crisis, it provides an experience that points out that there are other possible paths, and that functions as a pause in the imposed world. This is what, in a radicalisation of the proposal, is achieved with the allusion - metaphorical or real, with drugs or only with the resources of art - to an altered state of consciousness, the meaning of which is precisely that it does not respond to the ordinary sensorial status imposed on the individual, but neither does it enclose itself in that experience and finds it self-sufficient.

4.2. CATHARSIS AS A POTENTIAL ALIGNMENT

*Art brings about a pleasure that comes from beauty and catharsis, which is not totally reconciling and therefore generates a certain non-conformism. This pleasure does not deny what is repressed and is realised as sublimation*¹⁰².

¹⁰⁰ Idem.

¹⁰¹ Idem.

¹⁰² Chaves, J. C. & Ribeiro, D. R., 'Arte em Herbert Marcuse: formação e resistência à sociedade unidimensional', p. 20.

In this conflict over how to try to harness the aesthetic and pleasurable potential of ecstasy without confining oneself to the entropy of experience and a self-destructive rhetoric, the concept of catharsis, which is also intimately connected to the experience of ecstasy itself, can come into play. Catharsis was conceived by Aristotle in classical Greek philosophy to explain the artistic and aesthetic functioning of the literary form of tragedy. On a purely literary level, catharsis means the total identification of the spectator with the character who, in that tragic literary work, suffers catastrophes and dramas linked to the human experience, and after suffering through its vicissitudes, abstracts from the experience a learning applicable to his or her own life. However, the term expands to be understood as the emotional process that the spectator undergoes because of the artistic object, that is to say, its aesthetic reception, and from there it transcends to be valued as a psychological symptom, and phenomenological element. On a phenomenological level, catharsis is the participation in an intense or even extreme situation that requires a level of involvement on the part of the subject that is produced through the body, as a discharge of physical, emotional and visceral energy, which after reaching its climax, empties us until "there is nothing further to be felt"¹⁰³. It has a transformative effect that is only provided by the act of experiencing that complication which symbolises the requirement of intense involvement, be it intellectual complexity or a phase of physical suffering. Aristotle stated that catharsis is the vehicle through which the individual can be reconciled with life and with pain¹⁰⁴. On an artistic level then, catharsis starts from the intense immersion of the spectator in the work. Thus, in this work it symbolises the entry into, and experience of, an artificial paradise, but in a way that is contained and regulated by a purely artistic process. It is not only the activation of a sensory process such as trance understood as a path to the altered state of consciousness, nor exactly the inconcrete and chaotic experience of ecstasy for its own sake, which in relation to the above is the altered state of consciousness pursued.

Although conceived as being applied to tragedy, whose fundamental subject matter is pain, in order to catalyse it into a learning process that is transformative for the subject, Aristotle recognises that there is no single path to catharsis. It can occur not only through experiencing unpleasant or painful emotions, but also through positive emotions, in celebratory rituals, as in the Dionysian praxis of ecstasy. So, we can make the following

¹⁰³ Watson, *The Lost Second Book of Aristotle's "Poetics"*, p.145, in Bioque, C., 'Ecstatic catharsis. Rhythm, intersubjective social body and rave culture', p. 6.

¹⁰⁴ Bioque, C., 'Ecstatic catharsis. Rhythm, intersubjective social body and rave culture', p.6

claim: ecstasy is the aesthetic symptom of catharsis that focuses on the experience of intense positive or pleasurable emotions - but somehow suffering also underlies the experience, whether it becomes more or less evident - and so it could justly be its moment of climax, which is the peak of intensity of the experience. However, catharsis on a total level implies a commensurate construction of the artistic moment, the conducting of a just balance of emotions to be experienced by the subject-spectator, unlike ecstasy, which in itself is only viscosity or expanded consciousness focused on pleasure. Ecstasy is the raw and chaotic matter that catharsis orders in the construction of the artistic event, because catharsis, following literary schemes, is constituted by a succession of marked and differentiated phases, by the use of stylistic and formal resources... In general, the reflexive construction. The philosopher David Hume said that form is what turns drama into pleasure, and emotional contradiction is the psychological basis of the aesthetic experience. Reconciliation with pain, with life, with art and through art. Moreover, the experience of catharsis, like that of ecstasy, is strengthened when it is shared collectively.

According to John Dewey, experience is the result, sign and reward of the successful interaction between organism and world that transforms interaction into participation and communication. Aesthetic experience is an intellectual experience¹⁰⁵. But, here we can affirm, according to what this work has been articulating, that in letting go, in altering consciousness, through resources such as dance, a type of thought is produced, unconscious, that uses the body, but only if the subject puts effort into it, that is to say, concentrates on transforming his experience. The artistic moment will only be transformative if the individual has the qualities to make it so. Emotion gives qualitative unity to materials that are externally dispersed and unequal, through experience which, if it meets the required conditions, is aesthetic even if it is not inherently so¹⁰⁶. This suggests that there can be aesthetic experience in what is not deliberately artistic, in the chaos of ecstasy, in violence, in discord, in the ugly... But art has to deal with ordering it in some way. In fact discord is an integral element or condition of the artistic according to Dewey, and the effort, intellectual, physical or emotional, is what differentiates it from non-artistic and therefore passive spectacle and entertainment.

Then, in the rawness of the dark reverse side of the allusion to states of altered consciousness, decadence, addiction, escapism, all the dissonances... artistic matter itself

¹⁰⁵ Dewey, J., *Art as Experience*, in Bioque, C. 'Ecstatic catharsis. Rhythm, intersubjective social body and rave culture', p. 11.

¹⁰⁶ Idem

can also appear. Therefore, for Dewey, the form of what is art has a form very similar to Aristotle's catharsis: different differentiated phases, emotional or conceptual, practical variations of tone, of rhythm... that lead to their climactic moment.

The aesthetic experience starts from recognising the intrinsic impulses of the human being, which lie in the instinctive and in the sensory organs, and linking them to a conscious meaning, which is produced through communication and expression, which "is not mere emotional discharge, but an administration of objective conditions, a conscious transformation of natural, spontaneous, involuntary materials, in the interest of embodying emotion, in a particular spatial temporality and in the processes of 'intimate human interaction"¹⁰⁷ "¹⁰⁸ .

As the exhibition *Ecstasy* argues, "the space of art becomes a locus where the 'loss of control' can assume constructive and in the best sense consciousness-expanding forms".¹⁰⁹

5. ARTIFICIAL PARADISE AT THE TURN OF THE 21ST CENTURY: RAVE CULTURE

As they situate it chronologically in *Ecstasy*, a rejection and fear of ecstasy persisted within bourgeois society until the mid-twentieth century, on the one hand as a phenomenon "for the most part reduced to corporeal-prophane forms of expression", and on the other as the loss of control that would lead to the destabilisation of the system. At the beginning of the 21st century, two strands of thinking about ecstasy practices can be perceived: the "culturally tolerated" and the "socially accepted". The former is associated with neo-religious movements, and the latter are practices that trivialise what ecstasy is, because they deprive it of the transgression represented by sexual liberation, debauchery as a purification of stigmas, codes of conduct. Thus, the media portrayal that transcends ecstasy does not allude to the sensorial depth of the experience, it is a compensatory version adjusted to bourgeois, white, western normativity¹¹⁰ .

¹⁰⁷ Dewey, J. *Art as Experience*, p.606

¹⁰⁸ Dewey, J. *Art as Experience*, in Bioque, C. 'Ecstatic catharsis. Rhythm, intersubjective social body and rave culture', p.11.

¹⁰⁹ Groos, U., Vieth, A., Muller, M., Waldmeier, M., & Zimmer, N., *Ecstasy: In Art, Music and Dance*, p.11.

¹¹⁰ Idem *Ibidem*, p.35.

In terms of subjective experience linked to consciousness, contemporary society is understood as "a set of interchangeable, multiracial, multiversal subjectivities"¹¹¹. The struggle for free subjectivity is the right to deviate from the norm that constrains this experience of subjectivity in two ways: that of our individualisation within systems of power, and that of assigned collective identity. The acceleration of technological progress and the radical forms of intercommunication and immediacy in the transmission of messages that it supposedly inaugurates could be understood as a path towards destabilising all coercive forces through a new sense of community and proximity, of the possibility of agency and revolution from the bottom up, and of finding truths that are not manipulated by economic or political interests. But two decades into the 21st century, we know that this has not been the case. All the ways of building such a functioning 'supercommunity' are overshadowed by the economic superstructure that is the real form of governance of the world, over and above the political.

Zygmunt Bauman said about his concept of 'liquid modernity' that in this metaphor of modernity on which our present is built - fluidity, permeation or intersectionality, overcoming the previous, self-destruction, mobility, lightness, but also disinterest, disaffection, insubstantiality of life, emptiness, superficiality - on the one hand, it opens the way to assume that we can freely construct our identities, that there is a very extensive terrain to experiment with them. But on the other hand, what he calls "melting the solids", overthrowing order, overthrowing absolute truths, brought with it a perverse and decisive collateral damage: that the economy too was freed from all restraint - political, religious, moral - and managed to organise itself around a superstructure of global and irrevocable domination, for, as Bauman says, "and not because the economic order, once established, had colonised, re-educated and converted to its liking the rest of social life, but because that order came to dominate the totality of human life, rendering irrelevant and ineffective every aspect of life that did not contribute to its incessant and continuous reproduction"¹¹².

The aggressiveness and impact of capitalism is intensifying and with it the deafening polyphony of messages cunningly designed to manipulate. As users we are confronted with such a magnitude of information that it is impossible to filter it out. Through this media hyperstimulation, the digital is already making evident changes in our personality and the

¹¹¹ Aranda, J., Wood, B. K., & Vidokle, A. *Supercommunity. Diabolical Togetherness Beyond Contemporary Art*, p.18.

¹¹² Bauman, Z., *Liquid Modernity*, p.10

way we relate to our material habitat and to each other as a society, such as the tendency to function in multitasking mode, not disconnecting from work, the increasingly limited attention span we have and simultaneously the all-consuming addiction to social networks, a growing problem.

The concept of '*supercommunity*', which I mentioned earlier, I draw from an artistic manifesto of artists and theorists in the production of a journal relating to the 56th Venice Biennale. *Diabolical Togetherness Beyond Contemporary Art* (2015) explores through essay, poetry, action and art, how we are apparently more 'together' than ever, but at the same time so devoid of collective agency, for if there is a supercommunity, it is subordinated to the capitalist superstructure that dominates the world and leads it, ever more notoriously, to ecological disaster, the casualisation of life, inequality, in the widening gap between the richest and the poorest, which is only one of its channels.

Within this situation of dystopian overtones, ecstasy continues to embody a promise of relief through the transgression of limits, of morality, of the body, of conscience, of accepted social behaviour. Thus, in the temporal context of the end of the 20th century, rave culture emerged, a contemporary paradigm of artificial paradise in the terms proposed in this analysis. And with it was born a counterculture based on the pursuit of ecstatic, unprejudiced and depoliticised behaviour.

In the same temporal space, Nicolas Bourriaud is decisive for one of the fundamental drifts of art in the run-up to the 21st century with his conception of relational aesthetics, "collective sensibility within which the new forms of artistic practice are inscribed"¹¹³, a question that can be superimposed on Dewey's line of understanding art as process and event and not object, and advances towards the idea of constructing an idea of community as a result of the shared aesthetic experience, which is applicable to what happens at a rave.

The critic and curator Manel Clot speaks of rave culture as "the varied experience - sentimental, sensorial, aesthetic, psychotropic, relational, bodily, gendered - associated with those who frequent and construct these environments and their related areas of production and consumption, a fact that has generated an incipient agitation in the central spheres of the contemporary art scene"¹¹⁴. Broadening the spectrum of his vision, he says that artists are inspired by their own experiences of presence in these environments, and use the

¹¹³ Bourriaud, N., *Relational Aesthetics*, p.8.

¹¹⁴ Clot, M., *Homologías, Heterónimos y transfusiones. Espacios logrados, emociones sónicas, sentimientos difusos*, p.29.

sensoriality they remember from it, the aesthetic experience, as a starting point. Which, working from experience, "is a symptom of a resounding present"¹¹⁵. Experience and creation are intimately connected in the sphere of art today. Operating in the realm of subculture and in order to remind or create for the viewer an artificial paradise, artists work, as Clot says, "to continue or complete processes of understanding that can appeal as much to the triumphant or crumbling sojourns of the spirit as to the trace of fleeting irony, crouched deceitfully behind festive or celebratory coatings, apparently innocuous and harmless, liquid and contrived at first sight, banal and ephemeral, light and brazen, but finally sharp and effective in their difference"¹¹⁶.

The rave culture was born from the development of electronic music towards a concrete formula based on the production of synthesizers and the use of sampling techniques to generate musical patterns based on repetition, noise, fragmentation and absolute abstraction of sound: characteristics of the techno music genre. The rave, as an event that worships this way of understanding music, was born in the abandoned factories of Detroit in the 1970s and then, due to the stratospheric success of the phenomenon, it spread worldwide in occupied outdoor spaces with the installation of the relevant soundsystem - the 'free party' movement - as well as in clubs¹¹⁷.

The musical performance in the rave revolves around the figure of the DJ, a person who becomes the centre of the event that brings people together to dance and uninhibit themselves, because he no longer simply dedicates himself to generating a predictably differentiated musical thread in which one song follows the previous one, but begins to use vinyls and record players as instruments with which to fragment a pre-existing sound until it becomes something else. Vinyl becomes a source of sound that is not complete in itself, and the DJ becomes a musician. The DJ is the new shaman, in that he is the conductor of the experience that so closely resembles ancestral trance-based rituals.

What is interesting is that techno is a music that requires the activation of the listener, and that the DJ is the artist who directly confronts his audience, i.e. modulates the environment in real time. There are several layers of experience that dialogue with each other to construct what was understood as a rave in those abandoned factories in Detroit. On the one hand there is the music produced, on the other how the DJ works with this material as

¹¹⁵ Id. Ibid., p.30.

¹¹⁶ Idem.

¹¹⁷ Reynolds, S., *Energy Flash*

a reference but to mix it, distort it, fragment it even more and turn it into something else, and on the other, the audience that reacts with their bodies to the stimuli that the DJ, and the techno music, presents them with. It is an artistic product that moves in this circuit of exchange and feedback to generate a synergy, which directly breaks that invisible wall between the artist and the work and appeals to the collective construction. The DJ pours his sensitivity and aesthetic intuition into sampling, mixing sounds and understanding the audience and what he wants to generate in them. The tracks are never a finished product in themselves, but signifiers of the syntax that the DJ constructs in the moment.

The philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, conceptualised the new musical proposals of electronic textures as the fruits of a "sound machine" that takes the form of a synthesiser, but referring not to the physical reality of the device but to its philosophical plane: the synthesiser as what makes sound and thought navigate to become a "force of the cosmos"¹¹⁸.

Synthesisers introduce the possibility of constructing a sound from the modulation of electronic currents, a sound that is completely 'unnatural'. Similarly, the technique of sampling consists of taking a fragment of sound, either from a pre-existing track or from any aural material to which one has access (the possibilities are endless) and relocating it in a new composition. By rendering the original sources of sound unrecognisable, Phillip Brophy suggests that the culture of sampling in techno music dictates the complete disfigurement of form, which can be read as a total embodiment of the modernist ideal of self-destruction, of eradicating the aural identity of the instrument or the source of the sound in order to make something new, a new noise. Due to his impetus of experimentation with fragmentation through these musical techniques and technologies, he establishes the most absolute abstract sonority and is produced thinking about what the different frequencies and effects applied to this raw and synthetic material of electronic music can unleash in the listener on a sensorial level. His intention is to generate a continuous listening environment with zones of descent, ascent, and moments of climax; structural contrasts that are, like the gesture of the brush in abstract painting, a suggestion, an induction to, a non-predetermined response of the subject, and that is where his infinite potential lies and, at the same time, responds to what John Dewey articulated as the ingredients that the artistic process that intends to generate a catharsis must have.

¹¹⁸ Kahn, D., *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts*, p.114.

Techno music "disorients" the listener by dislocating the sensations he or she experiences. The ear cannot establish a spatial figuration of sounds, i.e. in the close relationship of sound to its spatial representation, the acoustic-spatial association is broken and techno employs stylistic devices focused on the sensory stimulation of the body and a break from the ordinary utility of the senses. Repetition is the main axis to produce the effect of an enveloping atmosphere, in which the listener is immersed, chained and abandoned to the rhythm, dancing in a trance-like state. As Ansgar Jerrentrup¹¹⁹ defines it, techno is a "multi-sensual" phenomenon and a "multimedia interconnection of elements", and "rarely can we find areas of perception that are so intimately intertwined with each other or a type of music that encompasses such an array of multi-sensual stimulants: auditory, visual, physical, social and mental (drugs)". In fact techno attempts to emulate the sensory effects of drugs or in its distortion (here the debate) is produced to be consumed alongside drugs, as a prerequisite for its experience.

Simon Reynolds¹²⁰, in the discussion on whether the techno-rave phenomenon is inseparable from drug use and specifically from ecstasy, that is, whether the same state of altered consciousness cannot be reached without stimulants, raises a paradox: in the same way that techno-rave culture cannot be reduced to the consumption of drugs to achieve ecstasy, neither can it be understood without the concept of drugs, even if only as something metaphorical, because techno music condenses, by sensorial induction, those very effects that are identified with drug consumption, of altering the state of consciousness. Techno 'gets you high'.

Techno also has a spatial specificity. In abandoned factories, the immensity of the space, the acoustic reverberation, the darkness as a canvas where sound and strobe lights are superimposed as a minimum, functions as a temple, like a gothic church, whose intention is to overwhelm the individual, and the individual, upon encountering the mass of people experiencing the same as him, can reach a euphoric state. This is why so many spiritual readings and religious analogies have been made with the techno-rave phenomenon.

Graham St John says that in a rave, as a ritual setting, a phenomenological experience unfolds: the sense of community and interpersonal connection, even love in the sharing of

¹¹⁹ Jerrentrup, A., "Techno Music: Its Special Characteristics and Didactic Perspectives. *The World of Music*", p.70.

¹²⁰ Reynolds, S. *Energy Flash*, p. xxxviii

moments of euphoria. He quotes Fritz, who points out that this connection, moreover, occurs without a strict sense of purpose and direction, is spontaneous. It is a "collective effervescence" with no inherent political positioning, but which ends up being a political positioning, an "anti-politics of pleasurable rapture"¹²¹, as Simon Reynolds stated.

The state of altered consciousness in which the individual finds something meaningful, like ecstatic enjoyment, even if it derives in excess, a Temporarily Autonomous Zone, a concept developed by the anarchist writer, essayist and poet Hakim Bey. TAZ, following its English acronym, in its most material sense is the taking of a clandestine space, as a minimal and almost invisible geographical place and therefore not controlled by any institution of power, for the temporary uprising of a community established there. This community is destined to self-dissolution, for at some point it will become visible and be controlled or forbidden by the institution of power, but its effective functioning lies precisely in this particularity, which makes it ungovernable, nomadism, in assuming the ephemerality of a space and then finding another to conquer or reclaim. On a purely conceptual level, the fact transcends the clandestine occupation of spaces where there is a crack in power, as a "microcosm of the anarchist dream of free culture". It is not a revolution, which is always doomed to failure, but a revolt, an organisation of energies (a community dedicated to a cause) where it is shown that there is a possible alternative to what is being rebelled against. More than a result, it is a movement, which indicates that there will always be small resistances formulated out of discontent, like a guerrilla that continually appears and disappears, and is therefore uncontrollable. For Bey, revolt is a 'limit experience', the counter to the standard of ordinary consciousness and experience. He draws an equivalent, which becomes significant in this analysis, between revolt and party. Like parties, revolts cannot happen every day - otherwise they would not be extraordinary, but such moments of intensity give shape and meaning to the totality of a life.

Jean-Luc Nancy said that the concept of 'community' is a circumstantial illusion, a space of resistance against something specific, whose integrity is not capable of prolonging itself in time beyond that¹²². What is left? Emotion without the need for narrative, ephemeral communities, free sensation and intersubjectivity, temporally autonomous zones.

¹²¹ Reynolds, S. *Energy Flash*, p.22.

¹²² J. Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*.

A rave functions perfectly like a TAZ, because no matter how much the system absorbs it and decontextualises it and strips it of its essence, or instead bans it or denounces it, raves will always exist, the collectives that organise them will always find new spaces in which to establish themselves ephemerally. This is very explicit in the case of freeparties that take place in the open air or in 'occupied' interiors, such as the illegal raves in the UK under Margaret Thatcher's dictatorship.

'Out of time, out of space' is the title of the section of the analysis in which Ben Malbon explains that, at a rave or in a club, the subject acquires the bodily understanding that listening to music is a creative process and that the act of dancing means simultaneously losing and gaining control over one's own body and is also "momentarily displaced, lost between the community and the isolation of the dancing crowd"¹²³ .

Techno music functions as a stimulant with the attempt to induce people into an exalted type of dancing "of the longest possible duration, from the most exuberant to the most self-absorbed" (Jerrentrup, 2000, p.68). According to Melanie Takanashi (in John, 2009) it is the conjunction of the repetitive rhythm, the long hours of dancing, the adrenaline of the semi-legality of early raves and the use of psychoactive substances, which makes possible the release of feelings of connectedness, spirituality and ecstasy.

Here, for Malbon it is the accumulation of "sensations of extraordinary and transitory euphoria, joy and empathy that can be experienced as a result of the intensive sensory stimulation of the dance floor", and which generate the perception of being outside of time and the ordinary world, being aware of oneself but also finding oneself overwhelmed by one's own experience, "pleasurable fluctuations (...) between sensations of intensity and withdrawal, and between practices of interaction and reflection"¹²⁴ . Simultaneously between introspection and connection with others. It is this pursuit of ecstatic experience through the altered state of consciousness produced by concrete sensory stimuli that underpins the whole sense of rave culture.

Again on the concept of trance, the previously mentioned film by Jef Cornelis, *De Kleuren Van De Geest*, a cross-cultural video essay on trance, of course includes scenes of raves as

¹²³ Malbon, B. *Clubbing: Dancing, Ecstasy, Vitality (Critical Geographies)*, p.103.

¹²⁴ Id. *Ibid.*, p.105.

opposed to trance possession rituals practised in certain tribes. The artist states: "Techno rituals are expressions of a single desire: to be possessed"¹²⁵ .

The Boiler Room sessions¹²⁶ started as an experiment in how to do broadcasting on DJsets, and ended up becoming a type of party: in a room with a small number of attendees, it places the DJ in the centre, in a way it is a return to intimacy. The Boiler Room sessions in Paris are precisely called 'Possession', and gather the DJs with the most accelerated and aggressive rhythms.

Putting the focus on the body, on experience, on sensation, on the non-narrative, is a very liberating practice. That is why spaces that invite us to merge with them and feel, and think, but in a more subliminal, more unconscious way, are so attractive. In the fact of abandoning oneself through dance in a moment that puts routine practices on hold, the individual aesthetic experience is prolonged and feeds back into the collective. Aesthetic experience and intersubjectivity, exchange of aesthetic experiences as a point of social cohesion, abandoning oneself through dance in a moment that puts routine practices in suspense.

In the face of the attrition of the social climate, the inability to distinguish the real from the performance in the frenetic flows of capital, politics and media communication, the only thing that can be done is to imagine another reality that could be and resist the norm. An alternative experience through the aesthetic differential, as the anthropologist and cultural critic Néstor García Canclini says. Following his discourse, art cannot dissociate itself from its dependence on economic, political and media circuits, and its autonomy is blurred. It exists in a condition of postautonomy, where there is nothing solid to transgress, nothing solid to reveal. Art works in the realm of imminence. Imminence is what art hints at without declaring absolute facts or fully realised forms in themselves, something that could be, an experience that breaks with the usual but does not promise to be an ideology or a stable alternative to reality.

Art critic Michel Gaillot, for his part, speaks of techno as a laboratory for experimenting with new ways of understanding the present and of relating to each other where techno, by not expressing any kind of message in itself, represents, among other things, a deliberate

¹²⁵ *IN THE VESTIBULE WITH JEF CORNELIS*. (n.d.)

¹²⁶ *Boiler Room* (n.d.-b).

renunciation of representing an "Ideal" or a "Truth", an obsolete purpose to which contemporary art no longer pays attention¹²⁷. "Techno is undoubtedly the most concrete experimentation where a new reconfiguration of the world is being conducted". It is neither an "aesthetisation of the political (the community as a work of art)", nor a "politicisation of art (a social or critical art)"¹²⁸.

To exemplify the parallels between techno-rave culture and contemporary art, I would like to highlight the work of Ryodi Ikeda, *Test Pattern*¹²⁹. Although not directly linked to discourses akin to techno-rave culture, Ikeda is a visual artist and electronic music composer born in 1966 in Japan, who is one of a vast group of artists "who oscillate between the 'glitch' edges of dance music production and electro-acoustic music production"¹³⁰. *Test Pattern* (2008 - ongoing) is a series of audiovisual installations in which Ikeda uses sound as a raw artistic material that, combined with an audiovisual infrastructure, seeks to alter and challenge the subject's perception. *Test Pattern* is based on a programming system that converts data of any kind (text, sounds, photographs and films) into binary code patterns of 0 and 1. Used as a compositional (self-generating) technique, it results in a sound of very low bass lines and constant percussion, like those of techno, and a sequence of images moving at a frenetic speed, which are vertical or horizontal lines - here, Ikeda plays with the composition, which is unique to each installation performed, in that it is site-specific. From this, Ikeda constructs a space in which sound and image merge on the same plane with a direct and exact correlation between the two. The image does not follow the sound or vice versa, but rather the binary system unfolds simultaneously in two interfaces, the sound and the auditory.

A couple of years ago I had the opportunity to attend a *Test Pattern* installation at 180 The Strand gallery in London¹³¹. The experience was that of entering a black box where all spatial references have disintegrated, and the only conductor, the sound and light that generates the graphics and appears and disappears, plays against you if your purpose is to orientate yourself. You lose awareness of your own spatial position, of your relationship to others. In this work, Ikeda alters the spatial and perceptual coordinates and proposes an

¹²⁷ Gaillot, M. *Multiple Meaning Techno: An Artistic and Political Laboratory of the Present*, p.18.

¹²⁸ Idem

¹²⁹ *ryoji ikeda | test pattern* (n.d.).

¹³⁰ Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, *Network: Techno Culture Sonic Occupancy*, p10.

¹³¹ RYOJI IKEDA exhibition at 180 Studios extended until September 2021

environment with which to merge and, at the same time, to lose oneself. And also a vision of the infinite.

Compared to the experience of techno at a rave, what Ikeda constructs enhances the experience of the abstract language of techno, as well as the post-human experience of immersing oneself in the data of the electronic. Binary language, at the basis of all the digital visual information we consume, functions "like a black hole"¹³², because of its infinity. It is a step beyond techno in sound deconstruction towards absolute abstraction, and directly connected to the visual. As Ikeda explains, the idea for this installation stems precisely from the need to accompany his DJ set with visuals. Although the artist affirms that the auditory material generated in *Test Pattern* is not techno music, but a kind of sonorisation of computational mathematical information, for me, its sounds are very similar and I believe that the corporal experience it produces can be extrapolated to that of techno.

Techno is a more clumsy, as human, manipulation of the infinity of electronic synthetic matter, while *Text Pattern* makes explicit that addictive rhythm per se in the pure and perfect generative capacity of that digital infinity, which confronts us humans with the sublime, the aesthetic quality of that which causes simultaneous terror at the overwhelming and fascination at the beauty of the technological. It could be argued that this experience is what Richard Coyne¹³³ defines as 'technoromanticism' to explain the aesthetic relationship of art with technology.

In my case, I have tried to use the logic of sampling applied to the image, and techno or techno-derived forms of electronic music as a common thread.

6. THE SENSORY CAPITAL OF THE MOVING IMAGE TO EVOKE AN ALTERED STATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS

6.1. FROM INTOXICATION TO PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE MOVING IMAGE

¹³² *ryoji ikeda | test pattern* (n.d.).

¹³³ Coyne R., *Technoromanticism*

In line with this approach, the argument will now focus on the more technical aspects of artistic practices that are capable of alluding to an artificial paradise, and to do so it is worth returning to the temporal context of Baudelaire, the decadentist poets and the literary and artistic circles that were interested in altered states of consciousness, because in the artistic sphere, a revolutionary event occurred at that time: the invention of photography and, shortly afterwards, of the moving image.

In Baudelaire's time, the first decades of the twentieth century, the invention of the photographic image meant a new crisis for art: why should art be concerned with trying to represent reality as faithfully as possible through plastic resources when the camera was capable of doing so with unimpeachable precision? However, what the photographic image represents cannot be taken as reality, for however faithful it may seem, it is a transformation of the referent of reality, through the composition and chemical processes that make it possible. In its supposed ability to capture a precise moment, the photographic image was taken as a duplication of reality, but it was later realised that these images cannot present an absolute reality and veracity in themselves either. It is deceptive in its qualities, but it is just another construction, like painting.

Sadie Plant analyses how these new resources are directly linked to the desire to represent the subjective manifestations of the mind through the prism of altered or expanded consciousness. To do so, she first draws a parallel between the very fact that it is ingested chemical substances - narcotics - that induce the subject into this state, and the fact that photography also relies on a chemical process to construct the image.

The camera was introduced as the revolutionary possibility of capturing moments of reality, which, once achieved, would serve as documents of a past event, which would remain a fact and could not disintegrate, as a freezing and treasuring of time itself. This was a transcendental possibility for a present marked by the accelerating rhythms of modern life. But it failed in the same way that drugs fail in the attempt to open up a sensory space of solace that is entirely productive and does not turn the other way round, because the photograph's sense of reality is also artificial and also ends up limiting life in a certain sense. Interesting for this analysis, therefore, is this approach of photography functioning as another artificial paradise and the nuance Plant introduces, that while the psychonaut experience of drugs - which offered new perceptions and perspectives on what we consider

to be reality and which "had once been seen only with the naked eye"¹³⁴ - was confined to the individual who consumed them, the artificial gaze of photography, which also makes them possible, can be shared with everyone.

"The hallucinogen drugs shift the scanning pattern of 'reality' so that we see a different 'reality' - There is no true or real 'reality' -- 'Reality' is simply a more or less scanning pattern" -William Burroughs, *Nova Express* (1964)¹³⁵

Thomas De Quincey had already written extensively about his experiences with opium, and described the mental passages the drug produced in him as theatrical forms in vivid, dreamlike colours, for he could not yet find the equivalent in the photographic. But his visions seem to correspond more to what comes after the photographic image: the moving image.

Photography and especially the moving image take as their explicit referent the universe of sensations that poets, writers, theorists, psychologists and artists had been describing as symptomatic of drug-facilitated states of altered consciousness, again, as a will to resolve a dissatisfaction with the present. Plant concludes: "opium nevertheless ensured that the nineteenth century was photographic long before the camera arrived"¹³⁶. To demonstrate this, he brings to light Gilles Deleuze, who affirms that European cinema in its genesis dealt specifically with a "group of phenomena: amnesia, hypnosis, hallucination, madness, the vision of the dying, and especially nightmare and dream"¹³⁷. Paul Virilio, for his part, states that the fundamental effects with which this cinema worked were "psychotropic derangement and chronological disturbance". Such effects remained a constant in all the new media that emerged in the 20th century: "television, video, multimedia, virtual reality, the Net, cyberspace"¹³⁸.

Jeremy Shaw, in *DMT* (2004)¹³⁹, works with a video piece exhibited as an installation to document the effect of DMT, a very potent psychedelic drug. It is interesting to see how Shaw leaves the camera recording the subjects experiencing this psychotropic trip, and we

¹³⁴ Plant, S. *Writing on drugs*, p.53.

¹³⁵ Id. *ibid.*, p.114.

¹³⁶ Id. *Ibid.*, p.53.

¹³⁷ Idem

¹³⁸ Idem

¹³⁹ *Jeremy Shaw at Cherry and Martin*, Artforum International.

can see their disfigured faces and moments of strangeness, highlighting an almost voyeur-like position of scientific curiosity on the part of the spectator's gaze, but the artist does not generate a sensorial environment that alludes to what the subjects are experiencing. He thus seems to highlight the impossibility of representing what is happening inside the mind, the inner consciousness of the individual, when the camera acts only as an external and distanced gaze, as a documentary action without transforming through the resources of post-production that 'reality' that is being captured.

Therefore, we are going to explore how effectively the moving image could turn the gaze inwards into the mind, into consciousness, through resources that have to do with post-production, the montage of the sequence of images, and combination with sound, and from the work with the perceptive processes that both the artist and the spectator undertake.

6.2. THE SENSORIALITY OF THE MOVING IMAGE TO REPRESENT AN ALTERED STATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS. THE SYNESTHESIA

*Even the most sovereign individual
lives in a world in which drugs have already had
profound effects.* -Sadie Plant, *Writing on drugs*¹⁴⁰, 2001.

In the self-indulgent counterfeit effect, the trap to paradise, and thus artificial, in the discussions of drugs and their potential to heal or appease the mind in the face of dissatisfaction with society, photography and the moving image appear as exponents of the same logic. This demonstrates the profound link between the narcotic, altered states of consciousness and the art world, as it is a matter of the distancing between the individual mind and society. Reality, the way to evade it, to experience it from another sensory prism, to deny it, to filter it or to verify it.

Media art theorist and critic Gene Youngblood (1942-2021) is widely regarded as a prophet of what was to come in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. His book *Expanded Cinema* (1970) was a turning point that affected and transformed the art and media arenas, for he predicted the paths that the moving image would take thanks to new technologies, from

¹⁴⁰ Plant, S. *Writing on drugs*, p.162.

the evolution of video cameras, editing and montage software, the introduction of the television format as a medium of communication and the advent of the cybernetic age. As a result, there is a transition from the production of films, more or less narrative, to the territory of art with cinematic forms, which could be situated as what we understand by moving image in contemporary art, and that is the concept that encapsulates the term 'expanded cinema', which had been coined by the artist and experimental filmmaker Stan VanDerBeek, whose work and theoretical-practical contributions we will analyse below.

Gene Youngblood elaborated a vast study to capture the technical and conceptual progression of the moving image and, as we have said, taking the baton from VanDerBeek, he developed the concept of expanded cinema to speak of all the practices that transcend narrative cinema and move towards a condition of intermediality in the use of all the technologies that make it possible. For him, directly, expanded cinema means expanded consciousness. It is not the production of a film but the way of manifesting man's historical will to externalise the sensory processes that take place in the mind¹⁴¹.

*Life becomes art when there's no difference between what we are and what we do. Art is a synergetic attempt at closing the gap between what is and what ought to be*¹⁴² - Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema*, 1970.

Firstly, the aesthetic condition with which we work and which allows the art of the moving image to achieve the purpose that this research work sets out to investigate - which is to alter consciousness through art (from the artefact to the subject who is exposed to it) or, on the other hand, to register in some way the experience of altered consciousness (from the artist subject to the work he produces as an externalisation of an experience he has lived), Having already raised the difficulties of this task and analysed the phenomenological functioning of art and the bodily-mental effect of that same experience of altered consciousness - is that of synaesthesia.

Baudelaire himself, who seems to resonate everywhere in the concepts under investigation here, developed his own idea of the relevance of synaesthesia in art, starting from the concept of 'correspondence'. Correspondences, in his poems, consist in the description of

¹⁴¹ Youngblood, G., *Expanded Cinema*, p.41.

¹⁴² Id. *Ibid.*, p.42.

one kind of sensation with the terms of another, and this starts from an experience that to a greater or lesser extent affects us all: a form of double perception, or the way in which "two modes of sensation can be affected when only one sense is being stimulated"¹⁴³ ". For example, Baudelaire claimed that colour was capable of inducing him into a euphoric state, very similar to that which music led him to¹⁴⁴ . With all this, he contributed to the progression of aesthetic theory in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, articulating a vision that proposed hybridisation between different artistic disciplines.

Youngblood says that "synaesthesia is the harmony of different or opposing impulses produced by a work of art. It means the simultaneous perception of harmonic opposites"¹⁴⁵ . On this basis, synaesthesia becomes especially significant in the relationship between image and sound. In this area the theory of synaesthesia has been scientifically corroborated, with studies claiming that visual art and music share abstract characteristics with each other, even when they do not communicate directly. This means that there is a cross-sensory translation between auditory and visual matter that is shared by the majority of the population and is called "cross-modality abstraction"¹⁴⁶ ".

The visual arts have had an active dialogue with music on this idea of synaesthesia and on the desire to represent time in disciplines considered static, such as sculpture or painting. The avant-garde tried to represent time and 'musicalise' it, in an attempt to integrate concepts typical of music, such as rhythm, simultaneity, cadence...

It is, however, with the technological development of the moving image that the possibility of formulating a visual space in which to materialise the time and movement of the image and to transcend its hitherto omnipotent staticity and give plasticity to sound, in the condition of total and simultaneous integration between sound and image, is established. As Wagner's opera had done before, whose concept of total art, or Gesamtkunstwerk, integrated the interaction between music and visual art, - but still with hierarchies, physical disaggregation and allocation of functions between them - in the practice of what has been called video-art music, which has proliferated since the mid-1960s, there is a fusion of media, a condition of intermediality and transmediality that could never have been achieved before. Because image and sound, with the 'live' factor of the camera, can be manipulated

¹⁴³ Neundorf, A. 'Baudelaire e os paraísos artificiais: A busca pelo "jardim de beleza verdadeira"', p.200.

¹⁴⁴ Idem Ibidem, p.211

¹⁴⁵ Youngblood, G., *Expanded Cinema*, p.81

¹⁴⁶ Duthie, A. C. 'Do music and art influence one another? Measuring cross-modal similarities in music and art', p.4

in real time, a vast arena of experimentation opens up in terms of performance, 'visual interactivity', expansion of cinematic space and towards 'spectator activation'¹⁴⁷ among its most notable effects. As Holly Rogers said, many visual artists were musicians before and vice versa, fascinated by the possibility of plastically modelling image and sound in the same medium. There are many great names in this compendium, such as Nam June Paik, Bruce Nauman, La Monte Young or John Cage.

The experimental composer and film theorist Michel Chion said that one of the particularities by which the art of the moving image differs from cinema is that while in the latter the image is more leisurely and the narrative line is sustained and develops over a longer period of time, in video a frenetic time and visual language is condensed and, therefore, although it is not narrative as a priority, these characteristics bring it closer to the speed and rhythm of reading the text, that is, of the sound of the text and not of the text itself¹⁴⁸. Because of this, it can be closer to everything that is instinctive and sensory.

For Youngblood, synaesthetic cinema functions as a "space-time continuum"¹⁴⁹. "It is neither subjective, objective, nor nonobjective, but rather all of these combined: that is to say, extra-objective". It is through perception, which he defines as the union of sensation and conceptualisation, that the artistic object and the viewer merge¹⁵⁰. And within the gaze, the process by which the union of harmonic opposites that constitutes synaesthesia becomes effective is syncretism, which is the hybridisation or synthesising of many different forms into one¹⁵¹. "Synaesthetic cinema provides access to syncretistic content through the inarticulate conscious"¹⁵². This form of moving image overcomes the very concept of time, which is one of the essential parameters that conventional cinema tries to reproduce in order to construct a sense of reality, "by interconnecting and interpenetrating the temporal dimension with images that exist outside of time"¹⁵³. Again, we encounter the idea of images that exist outside of time, as proposed by Michaux, which connects with the phenomenon of flashback and aesthetic epoché. The purpose of the artist working with the moving image in this way is to reproduce for the effect of visualisation aesthetic sensations

¹⁴⁷ Rogers, H., "Video Art-Music.", p. 367

¹⁴⁸ Chion, M. *Audio-vision*

¹⁴⁹ Youngblood, G., *Expanded Cinema*, p.81.

¹⁵⁰ Idem, p.82.

¹⁵¹ Id. *ibid.*, p.84.

¹⁵² Id. *ibid.*, p.85.

¹⁵³ Idem, p.85.

and not an objective reality, at most an abstraction of it, which produces in the spectator another aesthetic sensation that may or may not approximate the one experienced by the artist. There is a lot of experimental scientific work in this respect, and we do not know if in the future a definitive way will be found to detail this sensory sequence more faithfully for transmission to the other, but so far it seems that the attempt to represent aesthetic sensations through art works in this way. One such example of this attempt to merge art and science is that of the artist Pierre Huyghe, who developed the installation *Umwelt* (2018-2019) for the Serpentine Galleries in London, in which he set out to reduplicate mental images as explicitly as possible. To do this, he used a neural network, which is an artificial intelligence mechanism inspired by the workings of the human brain. Technology seems to be making great strides in this direction, which continues to highlight the timeless significance of this purpose in the history of art, of the aesthetics of human thought.

I don't want to exhibit something to someone, but rather the reverse: to exhibit someone to something. -
Pierre Huyghe, *Umwelt* (2018-2019), Serpentine Galleries, London¹⁵⁴

Huyghe selected a series of images, along with descriptions, that an individual tried to recreate mentally. Artificial intelligence technology reconstructed these images from a record of the subject's mental activity, connecting them to a bank of associated images. In the installation, these image sequences were displayed on large LED screens in conjunction with an ecosystem of their own: "The rhythms and pauses within the succession of images were endlessly modified by conditions in the gallery; sensors detecting light, temperature and humidity levels, the presence of insects, and the gaze of visitors produced a feedback loop¹⁵⁵".

This connects with or is the justification for Gillo Dorfles' thesis on mental images as a location prior to the linguistic formalisation of thought, and the moving image is used for this purpose, but it does not exactly express the will to translate an aesthetic sensation. It is, on the other hand, the most radical expression of the possibility of externalising the human mind through the moving image, although here it is not the camera that is involved, but a sequence of images produced with programming and image coding software based on artificial intelligence.

¹⁵⁴ Serpentine Galleries (2020, June 22).

¹⁵⁵ Idem.

Synaesthetic film is based on the constant metamorphosis of one image into many others¹⁵⁶. Youngblood says: "Synaesthetic cinema, whose very structure is paradox, makes paradox a language in itself, discovering the order (legend) hidden within it"¹⁵⁷. Thus, "the conflict-juxtaposition of intellectual effects is increased when they occur within the same image"¹⁵⁸. The treatment of the moving image for these effects works through evocation. Youngblood defines evocation as "the place between desire and experience, the interpenetrations and displacements which occur between various sense stimuli"¹⁵⁹. Vision is "an aggregate of sensations", therefore if a new kind of vision can be created through the evocation of sensations, for the theorist synaesthetic cinema directly inaugurates a new kind of consciousness, "oceanic consciousness", which, as he explains, is what Freud referred to as the experience of feeling our consciousness lost in the vastness of the universe, but somehow connected to it¹⁶⁰. This feeling is also itself a state of altered consciousness, a "mindless wonder", the moment of aesthetic *epojé* or suspension of judgement, which for Zen philosophy is the most expanded form of consciousness¹⁶¹. He also explains the concept of oceanic consciousness through a passage from Herman Hesse's *Demian*:

"The surrender to nature's irrational, strangely confused formations produces in us a feeling of inner harmony with the force responsible for these phenomena... the boundaries separating us from nature begin to quiver and dissolve... we are unable to decide whether the images on our retina are the result of impressions coming from without or from within... we discover to what extent we are creative, to what extent our soul partakes of the constant creation of the world. ¹⁶²"

The synaesthetic film makes paradox its regulating, formal principle. Paradox is the association of harmonic opposites, which is the effect of synaesthesia according to Youngblood, but also that of discordances, which reveal a meaning that vertebrates them

¹⁵⁶ Youngblood, G. *Expanded Cinema*, p.86.

¹⁵⁷ Id. *Ibid.*, p.87

¹⁵⁸ Idem

¹⁵⁹ Id. *Ibid.*, p.92

¹⁶⁰ Youngblood, G., *Expanded Cinema* p.92

¹⁶¹ Idem.

¹⁶² Id. *ibid.*, p.93.

and is consubstantial to them¹⁶³. The paradox that the pleasurable can also be self-destructive, that the obsession to reach an altered state of consciousness in order to live from there can be destructive, insufficient, or empty. My art project, which is based on the production of a moving image piece, starts from this principle of contradiction. Entitled *To transcend an artificial paradise*, firstly a title video that I do not understand as a film, not only because it does not acquire any narrative quality, but also because it does not have a defined beginning and end, so it could be reproduced in a loop, and intends the subject to inhabit an immersive experience by viewing it. The intention is to refer to the sensoriality of what is experienced at a rave, the trance generated by the repetitive base music, techno, and above it, the dance, which leads to moments of ecstasy, of connection with the environment and the subjects involved, but also integrates certain moments of strangeness and violence. And for this, the synaesthetic relationship between image and sound is articulated through this principle of discordance that somehow becomes coherent, for example, with sounds that we could define as 'intense' and 'hard' and soft images, and vice versa, or the digression of the diegetic sound of video clips and found footage films that I use when I eliminate their original sound. The sound is the driving element and from it the image, but both exert a force and autonomy of their own that disputes the individual prominence that either sphere could exert over the other. They are disparate connections of elements that aim to generate unconscious associations and sensorial effects. The rhythm of the sequence of images is intended to respond to the rhythm of the music, but the 'tone' or meaning of the images often has nothing to do with that of the music.

As Jef Cornelis did in his video-essay *De Kleuren Van de Geest*, my video piece is about juxtaposing images that in principle come from very different contexts, and in their very association one can suddenly see connotations and parallels - almost a sense of similar energies in very different motifs - that come both from my subjectivity and that of the viewer in his gaze and sensory experience.

6.3. FROM THE MOVING IMAGE TO THE TRANSMEDIA SPECTACLE

6.3.2. KINAESTHESIA AND CORPOREALITY. THE INSTALLATION AND THE BODY OF THE SPECTATOR

¹⁶³ Id. *ibid.*, p. 81.

Taking into account the understanding of art as an event, which is the preliminary condition on which I build all the ideas presented here, and Youngblood's description of sensoriality, as well as bearing in mind that we have talked about the fact that all the accumulation of aesthetic sensations comes from the body - from consciousness and the body as a receptacle for the sensorial processes carried out by the organism and above all because the extreme I want to take my project to, even if it begins as a video, is to produce an atmosphere (the experience of seeing the work) that appeals to an ambience (the experience of seeing the work), is to produce an atmosphere (the experience of watching the work) that appeals to an atmosphere (the experience that the work captures), for this purpose, at an even deeper level than through these juxtapositions of images charged with meanings, how does one manage to evoke these aesthetic sensations linked to the experience of a rave so that they generate an impact on the spectator, in the form of sensorial and non-narrative transport, without constructing a documentary about rave culture? How can we allude to the sensation of an event and at the same time produce it in situ?

First, it is worth recapitulating that through the same logic of catharsis that we developed previously, in terms of the construction of the artistic process, first, an object of certain qualities has to be constructed, with contrasts of emotional rhythms and then, the spectator has to be taken into account, to focus on the spectator - because the work is the process and the event, and within both, it is a joint effort between the audiovisual object and the spectator, through empathy and the will of the gaze, which starts from the latter, and also to shape with it an experience, for which the spectator is in himself his own creator.

Taking into account the viewing space as an extension of the video, in the interplay between video and space, we will now investigate some theoretical notions on which the installation is based, and examples ranging from the video-installation that produces a sensory event, to the attempt to record the sensation experienced in an event through another event, to the transmedia spectacle and, mentioning cases in which the relevance of the physical conditions of the space that welcomes the spectator is highlighted, in order to create an environment that can be understood as an artificial paradise, where although the video does not intervene, it materialises those qualities of sound and space that I want to refer to with my video, which has influenced club culture, and brings the contemporary art and leisure scene closer together. Regarding Youngblood's idea of synaesthesia, I find it

relevant for my project at this stage to investigate the parameters on which the installation is built, firstly because I intend to generate certain viewing conditions of the video that lead it to finally realise itself (this is what I will do in the future) as an installation, but also because in reality in any video piece, even if it is not originally conceived as a video-installation, I think that the installation of the video becomes relevant for it to generate one effect or another, because the space that contains it is what will encapsulate both the object and the spectator in the same context.

Following Youngblood's thesis, the concept of kinaesthesia also comes into play to explain the attainable sensoriality. Kinaesthesia is the condition of the aesthetic fact that is constructed on the basis of movement, and an exchange of energies between object and subject, in order to produce the artistic experience on the basis of sensorial perception. This is what, once again, explains phenomenology applied to art: it is not what we see but the process and effect of seeing it, which lies in us, as subjects. This is how Youngblood explains it, to conclude with this what we have been articulating: this slippery aesthetic experience cannot be represented in what concerns us in this investigation has to do with the altered state of consciousness, which could also be defined as a metaphysical force, in the author's language. This can only be evoked in the consciousness of the spectator and in a way that cannot be concretised verbally. In short, as Youngblood defines it:

"In perceiving kinetic activity the mind's eye makes its empathy-drawing, translating the graphics into emotional-psychological equivalents meaningful to the viewer, albeit meaning of an inarticulate nature. Articulation' of this experience occurs in the perception of it and is wholly nonverbal. It makes us aware of fundamental realities beneath the surface of normal perception: forces and energies"¹⁶⁴ .

If we consider the relevance of the spectator subject in order to make the transmission of the artist subject's aesthetic sensations effective through evocation, we must allude to the concept of the emancipated spectator proposed by Jacques Rancière. Artists may not explicitly wish to instruct the spectator, but historically and to a large extent, a cause-effect relationship between their artistic object and the spectator has always been assumed. There is, however, a third space between the artist and the viewer: the art object itself, which

¹⁶⁴ Youngblood, G., *Expanded Cinema*, p.97

possesses an autonomy of meaning of its own¹⁶⁵. The collective power as spectators in communion is not in the action as a unified body of individuals, but in each individual's execution of their independent intelligence, of their own unique and non-transferable explicit translation of the stimulus to which they are exposed, in a dynamic of synergy with one another. Therein lies the possibility for each one to exercise autonomous action. For Rancière, contemporary art embodies the dissolution of frontiers between those who look and those who act, individuals and members of a collective body, through mechanisms that make the artistic disciplines themselves transcend the fact of belonging to a single formal domain and "exchange places and powers"¹⁶⁶. Aesthetic enjoyment is the path to social emancipation, and a rave generates an atmosphere of aesthetic intersubjectivity and feelings of community through a moment of enjoyment that is generated in the collective experience and, at the same time, part of the individual aesthetic experience of each individual who gathers there, which feeds back into the collective. That is to say, it is the music, it is the conditions of the space, it is the predisposition of each individual to feel, but it is also the sharing with others, in the dance and the common emotion. In this way, as Rancière says, the work of art is an object that produces sensory vibrations in the community, and the community is nothing but a group of individuals who experience sensations individually but in synergy, in a status of intersubjectivity¹⁶⁷.

The theses of the philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who speaks of the aesthetics of bodily movement as the essential basis of the experience of being in the world¹⁶⁸, contributed extensively to founding the theory on which the artistic discipline of installation is based¹⁶⁹, which focuses on the spectator's body, on how this subject navigates the exhibition space and, through the elements that compose it, interacts or immerses himself in them to activate this process of sensorial perception, which is the material with which the discipline of installation works, aiming to create a concrete experiential situation¹⁷⁰. Ponty argues that subject and object are thus intertwined in a relationship of interdependence. Thus, the artistic object cannot be separated from the subject that perceives it; the object is the opposite extreme of our gaze and it is our own

¹⁶⁵ Rancière, J. *The Emancipated Spectator*

¹⁶⁶ Idem

¹⁶⁷ Idem

¹⁶⁸ Levin, K., 'Aesthetic movements of embodied minds: between Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze', p.187

¹⁶⁹ Bishop, C., *Installation Art*, p.50

¹⁷⁰ Id. Ibid., p.6.

perception that configures it and makes it function as an artistic entity, for which the spectator carries out a process of sensorial exploration that starts from himself, from his introspection and will -involvement in the moment¹⁷¹ . In this context, gaze is equivalent to 'directing attention towards', because this process of sensory exploration is carried out through the sensory completeness of the body, not only through the visual. Thus, the body, as the site in which aesthetic sensations take place, becomes a realm manipulable by the artist, in which all the learnings of altered states of consciousness can be applied. Here a relationship to the body is explored in two senses: that of the artist who has poured the memory of a sensory experience into the work, and that of the viewer who experiences the artist's work, which is the opposite extreme.

Many authors in the field of post-structuralism constantly allude to the body and the altered state of consciousness to explain the interrelationship between the subject and the socio-cultural environment, and point to its emancipatory potential and aesthetic qualities. Michel Foucault uses the body as a matter of experimentation on ways of obtaining pleasure, on repressed sexuality and on drugs as a way of broadening the horizon of sensations that can be experienced in it, and, most importantly, concludes that there is a direct connection between corporeality and thought that is produced through the exercise or act of trance: "thought becomes a trance; and it becomes worthwhile to think¹⁷² ". In exercises such as focusing on the movement of the body, to stop thinking actively or to stop thinking through textual forms, and through that letting go, to reach a point of sensory awareness, about our own sensations, the way our body is stimulated, what it reacts to. This is once again the aesthetic epojé or suspension of rational judgement, and constitutes a type of knowledge not articulated through language but expressed through the body. In this regard Gilles Deleuze said: "The body is no longer the obstacle that separates thought from itself, that which it has to overcome to reach thinking. It is on the contrary that which it plunges into or must plunge into, in order to reach the unthought, that is life¹⁷³ ". Deleuze inserts his infamous metaphor of making oneself "a body without organs"¹⁷⁴ , which means the dismantling of subjectivity or the self through experimentation and, with this, the production of new possibilities of subjective sensibility. The ultimate goal of this process is freeing the body from the actual or already embodied

¹⁷¹ Id. Ibid., p. 50.

¹⁷² Plant. S, *Writing on drugs*, p.167.

¹⁷³ Id. Ibid., p.191.

¹⁷⁴ Levin, K., 'Aesthetic movements of embodied minds: between Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze'.

organisations (pre-conceptions) that the artist or the audience has to remove or overcome to produce a new sphere of senses.

So here he comes into play in the discourse of the installation, in order to "provide an experience of expanded consciousness"¹⁷⁵. An artist who connects very well with this philosophy of understanding the artistic space as a stimulant to manipulate the perceptual states of the spectator and who dialogues in a very crude way with the concern to take the body to the extreme of its sensorial capacity is Carsten Höller, who produces installations with which he directly proposes to assault the perceptual system and the consciousness of the spectator. He does this by exposing them to highly disorientating environments, and takes the proposal to such an extreme that he employs, for example, blinding lights that provoke visual hallucinations (*Lightwand*, 2000) or rotating swing machines (*Flying Machine*, 1996), which, as Claire Bishop describes it, seek to induce a state of bodily euphoria¹⁷⁶. On a further level, whether or not one wants to enter into the discussion of whether drug use is necessary to achieve certain kinds of perceptual states, in *Pealove Room* (1993), Carsten Höller arranges a space explicitly intended for lovemaking in it, composed of sexual harnesses and, indeed with "the love drug" ampoules containing the narcotic substance phenylethylamine, which belongs to the amphetamine group, said to be the chemical that the body secretes when in love, and which causes exaltation, joy and euphoria. Returning to *Flying Machine*, what interests us most is Höller's statement that with this installation he wanted to produce "a mixture of ecstasy and futility that frees us from the gravitational certainty of everyday life"¹⁷⁷.

6.3.3 THE TRANSMEDIA SPECTACLE

Intermedia art is but another path in man's ancient search for himself -Gene Youngblood, *Expanded Cinema* (1970)

By inserting the video piece in an environment that aims to be immersive and relies on certain resources to exploit the sensorial capital of the spectator's body, a concept of

¹⁷⁵ Bishop, C. *Installation Art*, p. 48.

¹⁷⁶ Idem

¹⁷⁷ Idem

spectacle not understood, however, as passive entertainment, but which appeals to the aesthetic involvement of the spectator, we arrive at the terrain of artistic transmediality. To construct his vision of transmediality that defines the progression of the moving image into spatial forms where it ends up being linked to installation, Youngblood quotes Susan Sontag, who asserted that contemporary art is the tension and dialogue between two radical positions: "that which recommends the breaking down of distinctions between genres, and that which maintains or upholds those distinctions". From this interrelation what transcends is that all seemingly opposing art forms end up constructing a harmony to drive a synaesthetic experience, which can be defined as a transmedia spectacle.

6.3.3.1. *Movie-Drome*, Stan VanDerBeek

Learning about the sensory possibilities of the moving image in interaction with sound, body and space, and about the conception of art as an event, are synthesised in the transmedia spectacle. In this respect, the artist Stan VanDerBeek is a paradigmatic case in point. In *Movie-Drome* VanDerBeek, for the New York Film Festival in 1966, he built an ecosystem, a space articulated through multiple projections to elaborate what he defined as expanded cinema, which is articulated as a "spherical theatre"¹⁷⁸ where spectators can navigate through a space in which moving images surround and envelop them.

The artist, with this experimentation on the video format and the resulting construction of events between intermedia and transmedia, declared: "we're just fooling around on the outer edges of our own sensibilities"¹⁷⁹ , on the perimeters of the ordinary state of consciousness.

On the concept of expanded cinema, with the format of multiple projections, the moving image can be understood as the transformation of cinema into a performance art, which provides an audiovisual experience marked by "a tribal language that expresses not ideas but a collective group consciousness"¹⁸⁰ . In his 1965 Manifesto, VanDerBeek says that the purpose of this treatment of the audiovisual is "both to deal with logical understanding and to penetrate to unconscious levels, to reach for the emotional denominator of all men, the nonverbal basis of human life"¹⁸¹ . Likewise, the generation of empathy and aesthetic

¹⁷⁸ Media Art Net (n.d.).

¹⁷⁹ Youngblood, G. *Expanded Cinema*, p.349.

¹⁸⁰ Id. *Ibid.*, p.387.

¹⁸¹ Idem

intersubjectivity in the spectators, whose individual experience is somehow projected onto the collective, is one of the fundamental pillars of expanded cinema.

Gloria Stutton says that beyond simply exploiting the visual possibilities of film, *Movie-Drome* is VanDerBeek's reaction "against the alienating impulse of computer and telecommunications technology", thus aiming to "heighten social awareness through a variety 'of methods rather than isolating viewers from existing political conditions'"¹⁸². Here, then, is the angle that interests me: VanDerBeek uses the medium to exercise a critical point of view, which goes beyond the celebration of an experience of escapism made possible through the sensory possibilities of the audiovisual medium. He points to how the development of cybernetics and new media can take on a dystopian, alienating hue. A prophetic question, since what he intuited in the 1960s has reached its wild extreme in today's society of media hyperstimulation and instantaneity, where the messages we receive have the power to immediately transform our environment.

Movie-Drome, conceived by the artist as an "Experience Machine"¹⁸³ is sustained by a mode of production based on reading and researching the vast archive of materials in culture. He used his own film material, but also appropriated found material, which is what I do in my video, as I will describe below. He uses visual elements from painting or photography and applies them to multimedia installations, film events, collages, visual essays... without confining himself to any particular format, to create his "imagescapes"¹⁸⁴.

On the perceptual conditions that *Movie-Drome* designs for the spectator, the sensation of the subject, the experience of confronting the space, is what activates the functioning of the work (for himself). The subject is immersed and not absorbed¹⁸⁵. Absorption is the effect that conventional narrative cinema and other media narratives seek in order to make the spectator believe the reality of the audiovisual material he or she is consuming. As Gloria Stutton highlights, in *Movie-Drome* the viewer is placed in an intermediary position, where he or she is involved in the experience but not as a result of assuming an input into the veracity of the images¹⁸⁶, a situation that takes on a totalitarian tinge. He immerses

¹⁸² Sutton, G. *The Experience Machine: Stan VanDerBeek's Movie-Drome and Expanded Cinema*. p.111.

¹⁸³ Idem.

¹⁸⁴ Id. Ibid., p.113.

¹⁸⁵ Id. Ibid., p.112.

¹⁸⁶ Idem

himself by being aware, instead, of his position as a spectator and reacting to the sensory stimulus of the work in order to heighten his own sense of subjectivity. Stutton says that, as a result, the subject exposed to this immersive environment is left in a liminal state "neither completely lost in the experience nor completely in the here and now"¹⁸⁷. And Stutton goes on to assert that through this approach a critical point is also made about the contradictory conditions of viewing that point to the instability of the viewer's concept of agency, depending on how the experience is conducted. As Rancière's theory states, there are certain nuances, with which the artist has to be cautious, that determine whether the work is geared towards a real sense of emancipation of the viewer, or towards a one-way absorption of the work into the subject. The possibility of emancipation becomes effective if it induces the subject into a state where he gives free rein to his own subjectivity.

In *Movie-Drome* the multi-sensory experience is prioritised over visual representation in a dynamic in which viewers "were bombarded with a seemingly endless stream of sounds and images, what VanDerBeek referred to as a "visual velocity."¹⁸⁸ The projectors move multi-directionally across the space and the auditory is built on distorted sounds and voices, without the viewer being able to identify their source. The body, "heat generated from bodies grouped in an enclosed space and a heightened sense of one's own physicality"¹⁸⁹ takes a fundamental role in this immersive environment, an artificial paradise.

6.3.3.2. Roland Nameth's *Exploding Plastic Inevitable*

However, in the act of somehow conveying the accumulation of aesthetic sensations of experiencing an artificial paradise while producing that same 'recorded' experience - in an abstract, sensation-based way - for the viewer, through the moving image inserted in an installation context, *Exploding Plastic Inevitable* (1967) by Roland Nameth, an artist working on film, experimental video and multimedia, is the transcendental guideline, and the main reference of my artistic project. It is the transmedia documentation of a transmedia performance, and thus has an extreme hypertextual functioning.

¹⁸⁷ Sutton, G. *The Experience Machine: Stan VanDerBeek's Movie-Drome and Expanded Cinema*, p.112

¹⁸⁸ Id. *Ibid.*, p.115

¹⁸⁹ Id. *Ibid.*, p.111

Exploding Plastic Inevitable was a series of multimedia happenings by Andy Warhol, which took place between 1966 and 1967. These events, which have also been understood as forms of expanded cinema, combined live music by The Velvet Underground with the projection of films by Andy Warhol and The Factory. Through the band's performance and the rapturous dance-like interaction of the audience, over an installation of strobe lights and flashing, enveloping colours that create moving textures and frenetic rhythms overlapping those of the music itself, a psychedelic and ecstatic atmosphere was produced. For Youngblood, *Exploding Plastic Inevitable* functioned as a sensorium, a psychedelic disco concept, like many that emerged in the 1960s.

What is fundamental to this analysis is that Nameth succeeded in making his film not just the documentation of the *Exploding Plastic Inevitable* event, but the production of an analogue experience, which alludes to the sensation experienced at the event, for, like Warhol's own live show, the art object is an experience and not an idea¹⁹⁰. Through the documentation of an event that is a transmedia video show, he produces another artistic object that is not simply the trace of the previous one; in evoking the aesthetic sensations of the event, the feeling of ecstasy and other aesthetic effects that can be detached from the sensorial stimuli. Nameth takes up its essence but produces another experience that transcends the event itself.

For Youngblood, Nameth achieves a profound knowledge of kinaesthetics and kinetic empathy¹⁹¹ and manages to convey the "frantic uncontrollable energy" of *Exploding Plastic Inevitable*, through his manipulation of the artistic medium¹⁹². How did he do it? First he photographed the *EPI series* of events for a week, in black and white. To film, he used a sequence of eight frames per second, as these events were dominated by a dark environment with strobe lights, which was difficult to capture. He then printed the footage at twenty-four frames per second and used a mathematical curve to produce a repetition of frames and overlays. The colours were superimposed on the black and white negatives, and vice versa. With this he achieved "an eerie world of semi-slow motion against an aural background of incredible frenzy"¹⁹³. The images lose their individual logic and their

¹⁹⁰ Youngblood, G. *Expanded Cinema*, p.103.

¹⁹¹ Id. *ibid.*, p.83.

¹⁹² Id. *ibid.*, p.103.

¹⁹³ Idem

cohesion as juxtaposition and amalgamate in an atmosphere that generates for the viewer a sensation close to what could be experienced in the live event:

"Time stops, motion retards, the body seems separate from the mind. The screen bleeds onto the walls, the seats. Flak bursts of fiery colour explode with slow fury. Staccato strobe guns stitch galaxies of silverfish over slow-motion, stop-motion close-ups of the dancers' dazed ecstatic faces"¹⁹⁴.

Another resource that Nameth uses is to 'freeze' the frame, to introduce a moment of pause within the total sequence, within the madness of the agitated movement.

Manipulating the phases of the experience as when we talk about catharsis, to generate a sensorial journey with different moments that regulate the energy and pursue the moment of 'climax'. It is, for me, using the image with the same constructive logic as music, and what I try to do in my art project, as we will explore later. Youngblood says that with these moments of pause that contrast radically with the overall frenetic tone of the sequence, Nameth manages to introduce a sense of 'timelessness', which we can associate with the aesthetic *epojé* we were talking about when dissecting Husserl's phenomenology: the moment when aesthetic experience puts all logical thought on pause, from the figurative sense to the literal sensation of time.

"Stop-motion is literally the death of the image: we are instantly cut off from the illusion of cinematic life- the immediacy of motion- and the image suddenly is relegated to the motionless past, leaving in its place a pervading aura of melancholy"¹⁹⁵.

His film, which has also been considered a precursor of the video clip, expands into an installation of multiple projections, such as the one currently on display in MACBA's permanent collection. In other projects, Nameth worked with the musician John Cage in the construction of multimedia environments in which experimentation with moving image and electronic music was a central element.

This is, then, to generate a visual trance (repetition, lights, colour overlays), to reach a moment of ecstasy, which is the climax of the experience of catharsis that the viewer of the video installation has today as the subject attending the live event of *Exploding Plastic Inevitable* already had. The moment is frozen and looped forever. An experience of altered

¹⁹⁴ Youngblood, G. *Expanded Cinema*, p.105.

¹⁹⁵ Idem.

consciousness through visual resources, for which the spectator does not basically need to consume any kind of narcotic substance to experience it.

It also captures the essence of the Warhol-like pop culture experience in the New York scene, which somehow finds in hedonism and glamour a salvation against a convulsive present, which of course also contains superficialities and emptiness, excesses, self-destruction, as its dark reverse side, Nameth's film captures the sweet moment, the artistic moment, the full moment, which is what justifies or makes the existence of everything else that surrounds it survivable. The promise that perhaps it is possible to seek a balance between the euphoric celebration and its self-destructive tendency that makes it a mere act of escape, that the solution is to focus on the artistic-aesthetic experience. This is a way of dealing with the inevitable contradiction, the inherent decadence, transformed and revitalised in the art object as a possible conciliation.

Along these lines, we can annex certain critical positions that Brandem W. Joseph takes up in the analysis he developed in relation to *Exploding Plastic Inevitable*, both Warhol's event and Nameth's film.

The critic Wayne McGuire, who declared that *Exploding Plastic Inevitable* was "the strongest and most developed example of intermedia art"¹⁹⁶, stated that Warhol's happening was in fact integrated a liberating potential with respect to the dystopian conditions into which the society of the time, the 1960s, was degenerating, marked by "cybernetics, automation, the dissolution of humanist subjectivity, and Burroughsian¹⁹⁷ visions of social control"¹⁹⁸. Art Seidenbaum said that "It's a dislocation of the senses-a breaking down of ordinary responses."¹⁹⁹. Art that works on aesthetic resources for the generation of an alternative sensoriality to the common one, an altered state of consciousness. About the possible decadence intrinsic to the experience, the opposite pole, Michaela Williams said: "To experience it is to be brutalized, helpless... The strobe lights blaze, spots dart, flickering pistol lights start in on [the audience] and their humanness is destroyed; they are fragments"²⁰⁰.

6.3.3.3. *Dream House*, La monte Young and Marian Zazeela

¹⁹⁶ Joseph, B. W. "My Mind Split Open: Andy Warhol's Exploding Plastic Inevitable", p.82

¹⁹⁷ William Burroughs

¹⁹⁸ Joseph, B. W. "My Mind Split Open: Andy Warhol's Exploding Plastic Inevitable", p.82

¹⁹⁹ Id. *ibid.*, p.91

²⁰⁰ Idem

The musically trained Monte Young, who entered the art world through her relationship with John Cage and her contact with the Fluxus movement and Conceptual Art, as well as through her association with Marian Zazeela, produced *Dream House* with this artist, an acoustic structure in which sound continuously mutates as a result of the viewer's interaction with it: different sound frequencies and musical patterns emerge and vary depending on how the subject moves through the installation space, whether standing, lying down, moving, or standing still. Zazeela designed the space through an installation of coloured lights whose shadows project almost three-dimensional figures, which intermingle to construct different tonal nuances, thus showing how the position of the objects, as ethereal in this case as the light, in the space and their interrelation construct and transform the architecture of the space, in a direct simile with what the spectator does when navigating the space and thus effecting differences on the soundscape.

If earlier we spoke of Stan VanDerBeek's *Video-Drome* as an imagescape where the subject exercises subjective autonomy over an enveloping saturation of moving images, here the experience is that of an entry into colour, into a space beyond all prognosis, where the subject seems to make an entry into his mind, into the most explicit attention of his sensoriality, completely externalised and surrounding him. In conceiving the project, La Monte Young set out to produce a sound work to be reproduced uninterruptedly, existing in time as "a living organism with a life and tradition of its own".

Ulrike Groos says that the spectator becomes receptive to space, insofar as he realises that his presence transforms it and aspires to harmonise with it. In immersion, he reaches moments in which he can feel a "slowing down and disintegration of time"²⁰¹. Through qualities that appeal to meditation, such as sound waves, loops, "the impression of an uninterrupted respiration"²⁰², the result of the work for the one who experiences it is: "our perception of the sound and light may become a mental and spiritual trance or an ecstatic experience"²⁰³.

²⁰¹ Groos, U., Vieth, A., Muller, M., Waldmeier, M., & Zimmer, N., *Ecstasy: In Art, Music and Dance*, p.229

²⁰² Idem

²⁰³ Idem

The dream element alluded to in the title of the work is a concept in itself: a 'dream house', for me an allegory of entering into and inhabiting the altered state of consciousness in the form of an object. A 'dream house' is an artificial paradise. In the aspect of the temporal and the construction of an environment to enter and immerse oneself in. In the factor of time. Outside of time, within its own temporality, being at the same time infinite (the perception of being inside) and ephemeral (it ends when leaving).

Regarding this work, Brandem W. Joseph explains, alluding to the significance of its socio-cultural context, that "the installation formed a semi-autonomous zone that acted to negate, rather than embrace, the realm of commercial culture, allowing for a consciousness of individual perception and an experience of bodily depth against the expropriating alienation of spectacle"²⁰⁴ .

The relevance of music as a vehicle for ecstasy, as a producer of the necessary meditative process of trance beforehand, is once again manifested here. Juliane Rebentisch stated that space is an integral condition of sound. "There is no distinction between background and foreground in the relation of sound and space. Sound brings atmosphere to space, what is defined as a soundscape, whilst space physically exhibits sound. The conceptual base on employing music and space for the construction of an art experiential situation can be defined as it being a movement that constantly "shifts the object of attention" between sound and space, thus generating an acoustic-visual phenomenon that enables the aesthetic potential of sound installation"²⁰⁵ .

6.3.3.4. The Cerebrum Club

Cerebrum, a club founded in 1968 in New York, lasted less than a year. Designed by architect John Storyk, it was conceived as a "conceptual space for human sensorium"²⁰⁶ . It functioned as a multisensory laboratory, integrating video, installation, happenings, music and experiments of all kinds on altered states of consciousness.

²⁰⁴ Joseph, B. W. 'My Mind Split Open: Andy Warhol's Exploding Plastic Inevitable', p.86

²⁰⁵ Rebentisch, J. *Aesthetics of Installation Art*, in Bioque, C. 'Ecstatic catharsis. Rhythm, intersubjective social body and rave culture', p.21.

²⁰⁶ calormagazine.blogspot.com

Youngblood claims that the Cerebrum club is neither a discotheque nor a gallery, because there is no sense of economic transaction within it (ignoring the fact that you have to pay an entrance fee, as if this claim is valid only once inside). For him, the only fungible material is time²⁰⁷. It does not acquire any objectifiable form, for its place is properly that of the mind. "One purchases three hours of time in which to practice leisure, decision-making, interpersonal responsibility, body awareness, and sensory perception; Cerebrum's "guides" supply the necessary intermedia environment"²⁰⁸. Youngblood describes it in a very personal way, as only those who have experienced it can. In a very detailed way, he quotes in *Expanded Cinema*, that the actions conducted within the club were intended to sharpen all the senses. For example, the tactile, in the experience of touching objects and other bodies, and the olfactory, as perfumed mists were released.

"All the senses were stimulated in various subtle ways: the touch and taste of the camphor ice on the lips, the slippery intermingling of hands and feet, the scent of the vapors, the kinetic stimulation of the light show and parachute, the visual alterations in the general level of luminosity that also affected one's perception of forms and distances. Bits of melon and fruit were passed around, as well as a communal mug of Coke. There was no sensation-numbing alcohol"²⁰⁹.

I regret to find here that drugs were still consumed, because this would be a paradigmatic and conclusive example for this research as an artificial paradise based only on the sensory experience that art is capable of conducting without further synthetic additions, since if here the most complete and radical sensory experience of all those I have collected so far is collected, it seems that the most extreme of non-narcotic experiences would not be effective enough by itself to make the individual enter a state of altered consciousness. At the same time, I find it curious that alcohol, socially accepted and claimed as a 'legal drug', was rejected as a substance that nullifies sensoriality.

From what I can glean from what Youngblood describes, Cerebrum is a place that promises the individual to act freely, to perform the facets of himself that he hides from society, to create an experience that is his alone, to give free rein to all that he represses,

²⁰⁷ Youngblood, G. *Expanded Cinema*, p.359.

²⁰⁸ Idem.

²⁰⁹ Idem *Ibidem*, p.363.

even if it is pure delirium. A place to retreat into anonymity, and let go of his own eccentricity, to act out of the norm in the rawest and most uncontrolled way. "People began to act out their fantasies, get into their own realities, perform anonymous little psychodramas".

Youngblood mentions that there is a 'guide' who leads you and prepares you for the ritual, who has you undress and dress only in a white dressing gown. A group of 'guides' are the conductors of the whole experience. It could be said that this is another form of neo-spirituality in a group, with its certain dynamics and hierarchies, but beyond the eccentricity of this ritualistic appearance of the guide who performs, what is intended to be encouraged is the interpersonal contact of the audience to induce them to experiment with their corporeality and with that of others. Thus, the experience seems to privilege the sensorial aspects that are achieved through the design of the space and the music, and a vast compendium of visual and tactile resources, such as giant balloons, parapets that encapsulate the individuals (we could suggest that they are tactile sculptural figures), as if taking all the learning that has been built up in art about the hypersensorial and arranging it in one space and one moment. It is an in-between art piece.

Youngblood prophesied that the clubs of the future would broadly emulate the dynamics that Cerebrum experimented with and that they would be run by art market figures who would commission artists to produce "places of ecological experience"²¹⁰ similar to the New York club. It is a prediction that has been fulfilled, of course, to a large extent and in a ripple effect to this day. Most museums and contemporary art centres, institutional or self-managed, include in their programming musical performances and, above all, DJ sets of electronic music, hypersensory installations and events that merge the two previous areas, such as the *Zaratan* space²¹¹ in Lisbon, which in addition to a regular programme based on these elements, in August 2022, very significantly for this research work, inaugurated a collective exhibition of sound artists called *Estática*, where "sonority inhabits the exhibition often silently, leaving visible its multiple dimensions, sometimes equally artistic, sometimes cultural and social: the moment of the construction of the score; the ritual and therapeutic power of music; the physical and technological qualities of the audible"²¹².

²¹⁰ Youngblood, G. *Expanded Cinema*, p.363.

²¹¹ *Events | Zaratan - Arte Contemporânea* (n.d.).

²¹² *Idem*

From the other pole, clubs are increasingly emphasising the design of the space to produce an experiential situation beyond the pure musical display, and this combination of, for example, visuals from moving image pieces installed on large screens, a specific set of lights that is accompanied by the music and provides blinding moments such as strobe lights, smoke machines... The play with this vast array of resources also often ends up shaping the idiosyncrasy of the venue itself, and becomes one of its main attractions. For example, the Printworks club in London is famous for the experience of converting what was once Europe's largest printing factory²¹³ into a club, with a powerful sound system, huge LED screens for visuals and a complex web of lighting resources. The sheer size of the venue makes it truly cathedral-like. Printworks then integrated a museum space inside: the Youth Club Archive, a photographic archive focusing on London's subcultures through the prism of the commonplace: professional and anonymously delivered photographs, a participatory network that is highly faithful to the stories captured in them.

On the other hand, Planeta Manas²¹⁴, one of the main references of rave culture in Lisbon, also arises from the conversion of an industrial space into a club and cultural space marked by self-managed and DIY production by a community of DJs and multidisciplinary artists, where the architectural design and the visual resources it integrates provide a totally raw experience where all spatial coordinates are broken for the attendee. At times the atmosphere is even too aggressive, but in it there is a marked contrast of spaces, which provides the transit from one dimension to another depending on the room, from darkness to light, a true ecstatic catharsis. The morning lights are accompanied by the music playing at the time, the enveloping darkness of the rooms at night, the warmth, the sweat, the atmosphere charged with smoke and elements covered with neon paint that project the light that reaches them.

And then there is the case of clubs, which in addition to producing an equally hypersensory experience from the visual design of the space and its acoustics, occasionally host artistic works and thus become an exhibition space, within their programming as a club - and not permanently but separately from the music programme, as in the case of Printworks and the Youth Club Archive, and also of Lux Frágil in Lisbon, that has had a wide connivance with the artistic scene of the city. In April 2022 There, I had the opportunity to attend the

²¹³ *Printworks London - A Groundbreaking Multi-Purpose Venue.*

²¹⁴ *Planet Manas.*

sound and moving image installation *Veils and Vesper*²¹⁵, by John Luther Adams and Zef Pinheiro. On Adams' electronic sound compositions, Pinheiro produces an installation that becomes a landscape where "sound, light and image mingle, contaminate and evolve like an ecosystem" and where "the time of music is the time of nature, slow, inexorable and dealing with cycles that go beyond our momentary comprehension and invite us to a sensorial immersion in an ocean of sound"²¹⁶.

In one of its spaces, a huge disco ball presided over the visual core of the installation. Its slow rotation and enormous dimensions, together with the sound that surrounds it, seem to represent the gravitational orbit of a planet. Its suspension gave it the sensation of being ethereal, above the Lisbon night, which could be sensed over a room where the horizon of the open river can be glimpsed in the opening that opens onto a terrace. The sound seems to suspend time and at the same time dilate it; to make you aware of the gravity of your body, to feel the reverberation of the sound as something tangible, which exerts a weight on the body and, at the same time, seems an amplification of your inner self, vibrating in you, and expelling that vibration outwards as if it were a chain of transmission, an exchange of inside and outside, a perpetual oscillation from inside to outside. The amplified bass sound, which produces vibration, resembles a beating pulse. Each loudspeaker provides a sound line, a different frequency. This space is designed like a chapel, with church pews. Even though I was there at night, the installation interacted with the different lighting conditions throughout the day, thanks to the opening onto the terrace, marked on the horizon, which is also projected onto the interior space.

The downstairs set-up consisted of couches to lie on while a large diagonal LED screen hung from the ceiling above you. You saw a different angle depending on your position. The visuals reminded me of the landscapes of filmmaker Andrej Tarkovsky's *Solaris*, (1972) landscapes of a superhuman, sublime nature. The hypnotic beauty of infinity and the unknown.

There is a great interest in contemporary art in electronic music as a material, and in clubs to expand or extend its conditions of use. Does art (institution) feel 'envious' of what is generated in a club? Are clubs the new places of access to contemporary art? Perhaps it represents the ideal that contemporary art sets out to achieve, to invite the spectator into

²¹⁵ Webster, P. *John Luther Adams | Veils And Vesper*.

²¹⁶ *Lac: Frágil*

the space to be a community and not a spectator, without previously telling him what he is going to face, what it means what he is going to experience, it's just opening the doors to an experience that he will be in charge of managing himself, through the stimuli that the space offers him, a map of imprecise coordinates.

'To go directly to the works, to Beauty!' It is a matter of rediscovering, through the work of art, the fullness of the first glance and the first desire, of breaking through the layer of a rationality imposed by the needs of the historical development of capitalism' -Antoni Tàpies, El arte contra la estética, 1986

7. MY ARTISTIC PROJECT. TO TRANSCEND AN ARTIFICIAL PARADISE, AN ATTEMPT TO EVOKE THE AESTHETIC SENSATIONS EXPERIENCED INSIDE A RAVE, AS A CONTEMPORARY LOCATION OF THE ARTIFICIAL PARADISE AND FROM THE SPHERE OF CONTRADICTION.

Electronic music, together with the culture of the hypersensory, is so fascinating that it has generated a great impact on visual arts, aesthetic theses and ways of understanding leisure. My art project pays homage to what can be understood as the origins of this synergy: rave culture as an echo of the tribal, of trance, of ecstasy, of catharsis. A rave is not a place, it is a Temporarily Autonomous Zone, in Hakim Bey's terms. A rave is a transmedia spectacle, like Andy Warhol's *Exploding Plastic Inevitable*.

On this concept I consider the relevance of rave culture in contemporary art, but more specifically in terms of the methodology I have used to produce my artistic project, I base myself on the theses that he constructs in his book *Postproduction*, an analysis of the trends in the visual arts so far this century. For Bourriaud, in today's art it is fundamental to understand the work as a process of post-production. Extrapolated from the praxis of the moving image, in the editing of visual sequences after their recording or compilation, post-production symbolises in the broadest sense a mediation, not the direct work with the raw material but on a "third field". It is about working with pre-existing materials recontextualised. The artist undertakes a selection of elements - which, with the possibilities of cybernetics, have mostly free access to an infinite number of downloadable materials, often organised in online databases - and recombines them. In this way,

production and consumption merge. The gap between audience and artist dissolves. The artist is spectator, observer, reader, creator. Echoing Duchamp's formula of the ready-made, the pretension of originality is obsolete, and reformulation is more interesting, in an infinitely open "network of signs and meanings". For Bourriaud, both in the theory of relational aesthetics and in that of post-production, "we take as a starting point the mutant mental space opened up to thought by the Internet network, a central tool of the information age we have entered". Thus, cultural products and works of art function as "an autonomous stratum capable of providing instruments for linking individuals"²¹⁷ .

Bourriaud picks up the baton of the cultural impact of electronic music and declares that the figure of the DJ has been a transcendental influence on the understanding of the artistic process. Sampling, resignification, archiving, browsing, downloading, working with signifiers, fragments and modelling something different, the listening experience, a product that is detached from its referents and mutable, reacts to the interaction and energy of the spectator in a direct confrontation with him, in the live (or we could also say site-specific) factor of the event. He warns, however, that it is not a matter of "producing images of images", which would be a mannerist stance, nor of feeding on the afflicted thought that everything has already been done and nothing new can be built, but of "inventing protocols of use for existing modes of representation and formal structures"²¹⁸ , which consists of 'appropriating' and 'inhabiting' all the codes of culture, heritage and forms of everyday life, on the limitless plane of the global. For this purpose the artist, the DJ and the cultural programmer are one and the same.

"Things and ideas", writes Gilles Deleuze, 'sprout or grow through the medium, and it is there that one has to install oneself, it is always there that one makes a fold'. The artistic question is no longer: 'what is the new thing that can be done', but rather: 'what can be done with'. In other words, how to produce singularity, how to elaborate sound out of the chaotic mass of objects, proper names and references that constitute our everyday environment? So today's artists program forms rather than compose them; rather than transfiguring a raw element (...), they use the given"²¹⁹ .

Using internet search software and the possibility of downloading and archiving digital elements, the semi-autonomist embarks on a path of research, deliberate and arbitrary in

²¹⁷ Bourriaud, N. *Postproduction*, p.14.

²¹⁸ Idem.

²¹⁹ Id. *ibid.*, p.13.

terms of time, and generates connections. The relevance of the sampler, a machine that makes it possible to fragment, extract and repeat sounds, for Bourriaud turns the act of listening into an activity of production, "which attenuates the frontier between reception and practice, thus producing new cartographies of knowledge". As Bourriaud explains, what a musician does when he uses a sample is to continue a previous product, to isolate a sound and give it a different meaning, while at the same time, once he releases it to the public, he opens up a new space for someone to use it and reformulate it in a new composition or interpretation (in terms of reading, meaning). It is a democratic and open formula, as it promises universal access to the products, and to free art from the individual ego and understand itself as a continuous game. Thus, the contemporary work of art is not a closed product to be quantified as an object or a series of objects to be contemplated, it is a process of tracing cartographic points on which to circulate or expand, without origin or end, a "site", a "generator of activities", "figures of artistic use of the world"²²⁰. As Bourriaud points out, the essential conclusion to be drawn from this approach is the "blurring of the boundaries between consumption and production"²²¹.

As Nicolas Bourriaud explains, Roland Barthes states that 'culture is an infinite palimpsest', and thus, in his literary theory, which serves as a paradigm for understanding the phenomenon of the creation and circulation of the work of art, he proposed that the writer (the creator) is a 'textual operator', since each text is inserted in a circuit of infinite readings, referents, signs and intercultural dialogues. This implies that as artists, we do not generate anything radically new, but compose from pre-existing materials to which we give meaning, and that as spectators, by giving meaning to an object, we are simultaneously participants in its creation. The line between producer and reader, between artist and spectator, is blurred. "Given that one writes by reading and that a work of art is produced as an observer, the receiver becomes the central figure of culture - to the detriment of the cult of the author."²²²

On a more material level, the same logic of sampling is applicable to the image, because, as Hito Steyerl says, "paradoxically, production begins to take more and more place in post-production (...) production becomes an aftereffect"²²³.

²²⁰ Bourriaud, N. *Postproduction*, p.16

²²¹ Idem

²²² Id. *Ibid.*, p.14.

²²³ Id *ibidem*, p. 34

Steyerl predicts that "in an environment of mass circulation, images lose quality in favour of their universal accessibility"²²⁴. The image, in a distortion of its original context, is no longer a luxury object, but an object of consumption open to all, to be re-appropriated. Steyerl makes a defence of images of poor quality, due to their compression when re-mediated, that circulate through the cybernetic medium, which he calls 'the damned of the screen', and that the idea of imperfection in favour of signification, of speed and its democratic use, is like a condition of dematerialisation analogous to what conceptual art proposes and "with contemporary modes of semiotic production" and "against the fetish value of visibility"²²⁵.

My artistic project proposes to delve into the case of raves, understanding techno as artistic matter, and based on the principle of moral and existential contradiction, transcultural and timeless, around the figure of the altered state of consciousness, which I have been articulating in this research. And it takes the concept and practice of sampling, extrapolated from the figure of the DJ to artistic composition based on the fragment.

In *To transcend an Artificial Paradise*, a 13-minute video that I would like to place in an immersive installation through an LED screen, I have aimed to create a transmedia moving image piece that somehow induces the experience of a rave, or translates it from the aesthetic experience, to convey for the viewer's viewing experience the same environment that is documented, as Roland Nameth did with his work on *Exploding Plastic Inevitable*. Having learned that it is impossible to represent phenomena that start from altered consciousness, where the processes of subjectivity are as abstract and intangible as they are complex, I try to allude, in an openly subjective way, to the aesthetic experiences that have to do with the subject's participation in this context of 'artificial paradise', which I have been breaking down in the theoretical part, but starting from my own sensations. Thus, the video piece is full of strong images, stroboscopic effects, speed... resources that try to somehow induce the spectator who sees them to a sphere of sensations that somehow approaches the type of bodily, sensorial experience, of altered consciousness, of trance and ecstasy. To this end, the best effect would be for the subject to view the video in a space that enhances these qualities: a screen or a very large projection, with a strong

²²⁴ Id. Ibid., p.44

²²⁵ Bourriaud, N. *Postproduction*,

sound system, so that the audiovisual envelops the viewer, and the colours extend from the screen into the space.

The idea at first was to create an audiovisual essay, but then I realised that it was more interesting not to have any narrative or conclusive pretensions and for the film to function as a loop, a mental passage without coordinates of beginning and end, a frenetic flow of images and sounds from the poetic linking of elements. Sometimes there are more literal associations in the video, as in its very beginning, where heartbeats appear, marked by their bpm's, accelerating more and more, and then the beats of techno music are introduced, because one of the electronic faculties is precisely the beats, which are the strong rhythmic pulses, measured by beats per minute (beats per minutes) in the same way as is done with the heartbeat. This seemed to me a way of alluding to the fact that there is an innate rhythm in our organism, and that techno appeals in such a visceral way to the corporeality starting from there, as if it were trying to get inside our body in a literal way, it makes it vibrate, it makes it accelerate as the heart accelerates when it is agitated or excited.

The tension intrinsic to rave culture is how it can mark self-destructive dynamics, as Simon Reynolds points out, the darkness of needing to push the body to its extremes to make life more habitable, which was what Baudelaire was talking about in the first instance and what music writer and critic Simon Reynolds²²⁶ values, citing philosopher Gilles Deleuze's concept of the 'body without organs', when he analyses the decay of rave culture as the inescapable shadow of something glorious. The rave, then, makes explicit the tension that has been gathering all this work. The rave is: a state of altered consciousness, trance, catharsis, occasional and inescapable violence and self-destruction.

Ultimately, I have tried to express through often seemingly discordant images and sounds, not only my aesthetic sensations regarding techno music and the ecstatic experience of a rave, but a landscape of tensions and contradictions, without the intention of arriving at a final position on a question that I have explored in this research work through the relationship of art with altered states of consciousness, its social reading, on a conceptual level - through aesthetic and philosophical theses - and on a praxis level - how the sensoriality common to an altered state of consciousness can be transmitted through the artistic medium, but which remains open: the fine line between pleasure and self-

²²⁶ Reynolds, S. *Energy Flash*

destruction, the limits of human perception and the will to transcend them. To try to express how the experience of the ecstatic encloses in itself chaos and can be absolutely wonderful and transcendental, but can also derive in violence, because it transits on the frenetic - the excess, the uncontrolled - that is necessary to reach this state, the movement that governs the video, somehow tries to illustrate sensations such as speed, dizziness, compassion, empathy, affectivity, repugnance, feeling fully connected with the moment, dissociating from the moment? The explosion of momentary bliss and then a descent into emptiness, into insubstantiality, into the apathy of life - a pendulum swing from one state to another.

The production methodology has consisted of experimenting with a way of working with images and sounds based on sampling, and the superimposition and editing of elements in layers, largely based on the reappropriation of images and sounds from others, which raises questions about the power of participation we have over images and sounds, their accessibility, how we consume them in a context of mass circulation. Thus, in my project, I collect self-produced photographs, some digital and some analogue.

I use images taken from digital databases, which are searchable by words, and which allow me to introduce terms related to theoretical research, such as trance, ecstasy, catharsis, euphoria, but also violence, love, empathy. I have also transformed video footage and film fragments, such as Fellini's *La Dolce Vita* (1960) or Curtis Harrington's *The Great Tide* (1961). I also insert video documentations of raves from the late 80s and early 90s, such as the massive Love Parade in Berlin, in broad daylight on the streets.

I let my subconscious find and associate seemingly disparate images. Some are fragmented, distorted and decomposed works of art, such as Karel Dujardin's *Allegory of the transience and brevity of life* (1663). Also, press photographs, or anonymous YouTube videos. I have to point out, for example, that I used footage of Russian tanks that had been spotted driving over the Ukrainian border, which I did before the war broke out and therefore now take on another devastating significance.

The sound is a mix made with DJ hardware and software. I combine sounds extracted from talks, podcasts, videos available on YouTube with music tracks (essentially techno or derivatives), and I use the pulse of techno beats as the common thread of the whole audiovisual sequence. I have tried to make all the elements somehow follow the sound

patterns, so that the image responds to the sound in a rhythmic way. I use melodies that sometimes acquire a melancholic and/or spiritual tone, mixed with sounds taken from discourses on the greatness and decadence of raves, on philosophy and metaphysics, on spiritual visions of ecstatic dance... that make reference to all the theoretical research I have been carrying out in the development of this project. Ultimately, I wanted to generate contrasts between the tone of the music and the significant charge of the images, to work the superimpositions as an audiovisual collage and the audio as a polyphony on the repetitive base rhythm over techno beats.

Transmediality and intermediality unfolds in the use of material, dialogues between photography and moving image, in the use of software and productive modes of DJ praxis for both sound and image, in the resulting synergy produced of image with respect to sound, and in how I would like to situate the video piece in an immersive installation.

The altered state of consciousness ultimately involves necessity and inspiration. It is impossible to represent the aesthetic sensation experienced in this experience, but instead a trace can be produced, which exists in the temporality of its aesthetic experience, through artistic resources, so that the spectator connects and immerses himself in the experience, activating his own sensorial and perceptive processes and with this he can feel something similar, or different, but significant.

My art piece aims to demonstrate that it is possible to 'visualise', in a very subliminal way, the aesthetic effects of trance, ecstasy and catharsis located in electronic music and the hypersensory and intersubjective experience of a rave, if we dissect what are the most primary ingredients that define each of these sensations and generate a kind of association and juxtaposition between images and sounds to generate textures such as those involved in these sensory processes, for example, metamorphoses of images into other images, distortions of image qualities, of colours and shapes.

Trance is the hypnosis of the body through repetition and has a ritualistic connotation, so it can be made latent using techno music, as if the images were in themselves the syntax of the musical composition. Extrapolating the productive resources of DJ culture to the moving image, alluding to corporeality, of dance and also of delirium, treating the images as if they were not figurative, using expressions that have been associated with the iconography of ecstasy, such as the distorted face, from Bernini's *The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* (c.1645) and perverting it in some way... playing with all the material, mine and found,

bearing in mind that what is going to be produced is not a document. So, I wanted to avoid literalness as much as possible. Regarding what I've learned, I think that a video in which the protagonist is simply a rave, with the camera capturing something that is happening outside and not distorting the reality it captures, would not manage to portray the different layers of the sensorial experience that is taking place at that moment, the introspective processes that the subjects being portrayed are carrying out. On the other hand, if we use our sensation of experiencing that event, as in my case, we can try to refer to it in a way that might more closely approximate the possible spectrum of subjective processes that the moment offers.

Another conclusion I draw from experimenting with video post-production software is that, as Steyerl said, the possibilities of post-production have reached such an extreme that it is not even necessary to record a sequence to construct a piece of video.

If I had to situate myself as an artist to justify my practice, it would be in this place described by Manel Clot:

*The place of crossroads between the intricacies of the experience of the world and the mechanisms of the will to create, the terrible scenario of the encounter between knowledge and power, the eternal moment of the dilemma between being and being, between being a work and being looked at. Between being an artist and being a spectator*²²⁷. Clot, M. *Homologías, Heterónimos y transfusiones. Espacios logrados, emociones sónicas, sentimientos difusos*, 2001

8. CONCLUSIONS

The field of contemporary art, conceived on a status of postautonomy where it can no longer be said to be inseparable from other spheres of life, such as the flows of capital, as defined by Néstor García Canclini²²⁸, can only be understood as the production of intersectional discourses. It is difficult, however, for art to respond empirically to the questions it seeks to investigate, as it is based on the spectrum of the subjective, but the way in which it dialogues with these problematics at the same time has a deeper impact on questions whose complexity exceeds the possibility of creating a stable field of knowledge

²²⁷ Clot, M. *Homologías, Heterónimos y transfusiones. Espacios logrados, emociones sónicas, sentimientos difusos*, p.31.

²²⁸ Canclini, G. N. *La sociedad sin relato: Antropología y estética de la inminencia*

in this respect. Perhaps, as they define it in the exhibition *Ecstasy*, it is the most suitable way of referring to a discourse where contradictions abound. Likewise, creation and thought are inseparable phenomena.

An artificial paradise is an environment in which one experiences a pleasure or plenitude in the act of letting oneself be enveloped by the experience of the senses in a state of altered consciousness, produced by certain non-natural resources, which we cannot frequent in our routine experience of life, it is an exceptional and ephemeral state. To express its temporality, this can be defined as the temporality of the aesthetic experience, which somehow seems to be ungraspable by time.

The experience of an altered state of consciousness can be achieved through drug use, but it can also be achieved through art, because in the way that art manipulates sensoriality, and extends it into contexts in which the shared aesthetic experience also unfolds, the subject can achieve that same dissociation, immersion and fullness that result in a pleasurable experience. It is a mental environment but one that in some way can be made physical through art. And this environment then acts as a moment of relief and personal significance, something that we all pursue in some way, and that is why it has been a constant in humanity. However, we need to find a balance, which is just what art can provide, over and above the uncontrolled and uncontrolled entropy that narcotic experience provides, or the snatched emotion as an end in itself.

For Baudelaire, the concept of the artificial paradise becomes almost an obsession, as something he cannot escape from, something that gives him pleasure but is also a form of escapism that signals self-destructive dynamics. It is his personal rebellion as a subject who wants to detach himself from the structuring of ways of feeling and doing of his social context, and also his torment, since it is incapable of providing him with a meaning sustained over time.

The altered state of consciousness as a waking dream experience is composed of sensations that we do not normally experience. It can be analysed as a spiritual practice, or as an expression of delirium, it opens debates in religion, philosophy and science, and has been anthropologically evaluated as one of the manifestations through which human beings ask questions that transcend the realm of material life.

Art has had a very active dialogue with altered states of consciousness, through the sphere of aesthetic experience, and consciousness, which explain the origin of creation (the need

to externalise sensations resulting from introspective processes) and the effect of creation (the introspection of others), since it is in visuality and sensation that art can influence and generate knowledge that cannot be expressed through text or logical-empirical approaches.

It is not possible to make a discourse on altered states of consciousness that does not go somewhere in the eternal discussion about the nature and validity of drugs, but we can say that there is a natural predisposition of the body to get carried away without explicitly intoxicating itself. There is a sensory capital to be explored, we can experience altered states of consciousness simply by engaging in certain exercises of sensory stimulation. So, although intoxication is a rhetorical condition, we can detach ourselves from the narcotic in the material and focus on this heightened sensoriality as a resource that art can use.

Altered states of consciousness are an experiment from which learning can be abstracted, because they activate sensory processes unexplored in everyday life. The question of what there is to discover, what we can feel, how far sensations can take us, has been fascinating and addictive throughout history, because it is another way of investigating questions to which we still have no answers, the realm of the unknown. Just as science and physics advance to try to understand the universe, which is still so extremely alien and mysterious, so too are the formulas of consciousness and perceptual processes, the unconquered territories of the mind, for we still know very little.

What is most relevant in Baudelaire's *Artificial Paradises* is the set of existential questions that the poet gathers in them from the purpose of experiencing an alternative state of consciousness, which is revealing of issues, and also a way of putting distance with the present. For this research, the most transcendental thing to abstract from Baudelaire is that, on the surrounding question of where the artist's production, his inspiration, and what role the artist has as a subject, he shows that the senses are the constituent matter of art, in the artist and in the spectator, and that both start from the subject's work of introspection at one end or the other. Baudelaire tries to investigate and document his research and the focus of study is himself, and he ends up using it as an artistic practice, in his lyric. For the poet the real is unstable, and the artificial is more interesting because it provides the present with unique characteristics, and so he denounces the realist tendencies of the art of his time, declaring that art that takes refuge in reality runs the danger of believing that there is a stable truth and generating followers of it, 'fanatics', as he called them.

From dissatisfaction with society, reaffirming oneself in otherness and somehow, albeit symbolically, regaining individual agency, one takes refuge in the very design of the 'decadent'.

Baudelaire seems to inaugurate the possibility of using a lived sensory experience as a reference point from which to create, even if it is very difficult to refer to it. The story about oneself is relevant because it becomes universal insofar as it affects others. We all ask ourselves the same questions deep down, we all look for life outside Michaux's 'folds', which are the standards, because we are all aware that our position in relation to the environment in relation to all systems is extremely small, but of course, also all the experience we live is adjusted to our point of view. We, subjectively, are the centre of our universe and it seems strange to us, and can even generate dysphoria, to realise how little agency we actually have over our environment. So we will always look for a small rebellion against that - apart from the obviousness that there is indeed a factual power that oppresses us and drives our lives.

From Michaux's experiments we can learn that art, as it always operates in the realm of the abstract even when it pretends to be a figurative narrative because it constructs a vision of reality that is only 'real' for the realm of its own representation, generates a bridge with the experience that the artist intends to refer to, without this constituting a parallel, an evident relationship between cause and effect. The text is insufficient to describe these processes of consciousness, but the visual can fulfil this purpose because it is a symbolic-semantic complex that is always open to new and infinite 'readings' and, with it, experiences. The image is the pre-logical moment that connects with sensation, because the mind thinks through images before finding their linguistic equivalent, which is the way we learn to communicate verbally. The mind thinks through plastic elements and the visual is at the origin of all the processes of perception.

As Husserl's phenomenology explains it, from the notions of 'sensation' and 'phantom', we cannot explicitly express the sensation (which is the response to a stimulus), but we can work from the trace that it leaves in us (which is like a phantom) a trace and that gives rise to produce an experience that is the activation of a sensory process of the other. On the other hand, there is a neurological phenomenon which is the flashback, the return to the experience based on what the brain learnt from it, the memory without the need to re-expose itself to the stimulus, because it has left a subliminal trace. We have suggested here that art could operate in the same way, acting as a flashback to the sensation, and at the

same time opening up the possibility of experiencing a new sphere of sensations on that same trace.

The aesthetic experience breaks time momentarily and generates an 'epojé', the pausing of rational processes through the activation of the sensory, or the interruption of the logical process of thought that we have apprehended and put into practice in everyday life, to find other ways of relating without prejudice to sensation, to value the instantaneousness of the moment, which is unrepeatable, as an exercise to be more present, paradoxically, through that 'going out of oneself' that becomes explicit in the experience of ecstasy.

Trance is the focus of 'awakened' consciousness towards the unconsciousness of mental processes and a partial rupture of the ordinary procedure of the senses, which has a lot to do with repetition and the act of redirecting attention by focusing it on the sensory and the bodily, activated by a set of auditory, tactile, visual, affective 'mental imagery'.... It is a hypnosis between the free flow of the body and the attention to the body, because the mind also thinks through bodily movement, in a way that is not concretised in the linguistic, as happens with the image.

From an anthropological point of view, trance has an adaptive functionality with respect to the environment and there seems to be a parallelism between the concept of possession, that the body is somehow dematerialised and dominated by another entity, as an expression of the delirium of feeling dominated and inhibited. Trance focuses on the pursuit of the ecstatic moment, as its climax, and dance is one of the ways of entering trance, on repetitive rhythmic patterns.

Trance, as a sensation or aesthetic process related to an altered state of consciousness, is what condenses the most anthropological charge and connection with ritualistic practices, but when appreciating it and inserting it into an artistic discourse, one runs the risk of entering into purely spiritualist rhetoric, as in the case of neo-religious communities that make dangerous associations about the effects of trance, from the corporal to the spiritual. Without going there, what art can learn from trance is that in the body there is a sensorial capital to exploit and exercise in order to achieve the effect of immersion, introspection and exalted subjectivity.

Ecstasy has been defined as a moment of pleasure, fullness, happiness, which is translated bodily, which, as it is intimately linked to trance, makes consciousness detach from external

phenomena and focus on itself, on the subjective experience, and at the same time, a 'loss of consciousness phenomenon' in its final moment. The ecstatic moment is an expression of spontaneous and uncontrolled emotions. It has been associated with the cult of the god Dionysus in Classical Greek antiquity, with Christian mysticism as an ascent of the body towards connection with God, with madness and rapture, as it marks the 'momentary departure from oneself'. It has been attempted to be represented figuratively by the distortion of the body, but it seems that it is in dance that it becomes most tangible to represent trance and ecstasy. Thus, the phenomenon of ecstatic dance has been the focus of attention of many artists, on this very concept of madness and mania and also as art learns about it is that it is the expression of a spontaneous emotion, which shows the involvement of the subject in the moment, as something to be achieved.

But from artistic research we can go a step further and assess first that dance is a universal element of expression and non-verbal communication, about which there may be a consensus or a universal pattern, because we all like to dance, or we all externalise emotion through the body in some way. And then to question what can be done with this condition, can ecstasy be induced in the artistic context? Because in dance there is also the question of whether the expression is performance or real and spontaneous, that is, the ambiguity between representing a lived experience or living the experience in the artistic context.

On a more global scale for my research and artistic project, I have tried to lead these postulates towards the realisation that we all enjoy the aesthetic experience, even those who say they do not agree with or participate in art, because they need the aesthetic and also the ecstatic experience to live. And this can unfold in ordinary matters that for them may go unnoticed, in unconscious, spontaneous excitement. Art can be the resource to manifest this reality, for as Dewey says, art operates by finding the aesthetic qualities of the everyday.

On the other hand, this research has highlighted how profoundly contradictory it is to assume that the pleasurable, which makes life habitable, is to a certain extent also an escapism from life itself, a suspension.

Madness and debauchery are consubstantial with ecstasy. The vision of the Apollonian and the Dionysian are complementary opposites, they are implied in each other. The former is an expression of measured harmony, of balance, and the latter of passion and rapture. As Nietzsche says, that which is only containment and idealisation is removed from the

mundane and is like a state of sedation, an ascertainment of reality without excitement and without pointing out its complexities, and as it thus becomes a denial of reality, we can say that it is another form of escapism. In this way we can conclude that balance is necessary, but that within it moments of excess are necessary to value the present, as well as moments of restraint to value the excess. As we have articulated in a moment of theoretical research, viscosity and the will to transgress limits is within the vital impulse that leads to creation, which takes its inspiration from life itself and not from its idealised version. Above all, what marks the impulse to live is the pursuit of desires that are absolutely unattainable. There is a need for the chinks of enjoyment, euphoria, excess, which make life habitable, and the contrasts from one state to another.

Violence and pain can be integral parts of the life process and can be alleviated through the sensory universe that art makes possible, but art should not be 'easy' and self-indulgent either, even if it can be argued that this research I have conducted is valuing pleasure per se as an artistic object, the celebratory and thus superficial. This is not hedonism, but a conscious use of the pleasurable, to turn it into an exercise to achieve moments of fulfilment.

On the other hand, in terms of its position in relation to society, the repression of the ecstatic as amoral only causes it to express itself in counter-cultural forms. Ecstasy has tried to become a social taboo precisely because it exposes the broad mechanisms of repression that make the experience of life futile, and the will to transcend them, even if it is in one's experience of oneself and not an organised social revolution, goes against the productive logics that limit or directly prohibit pleasure and leisure. Ecstasy is a confrontation with this norm. As against the mechanisation of life in the industrial revolution and the subsequent alienation, the condemnation of pleasure brings with it the need for excess, for hedonism, and this force is more violent the more it is repressed.

Intoxication', even if only as a metaphor, is an essential condition of art. For this Timothy Leary speaks of psychedelic guerrilla - using the rhetoric of drugs - but more interesting is Herbert Marcuse's vision of art as a psychosocial mediator, as the equivalent of everything emancipatory that can be found in drugs. Marcuse says that art is capable of articulating mechanisms of destabilisation through the aesthetic experience, through the language of the image, which points out areas of transformation without enclosing itself in them and thus does not end up reducing the ecstatic experience to an end in itself, as an absolutely

conclusive experience. Art according to Marcuse shows the way towards an otherness that affirms that it is possible to experience another order, social, sensorial... in the pausing of imposed mechanisms.

On the question of emphasising or rejecting the everyday, the ecstatic is a potential to be exploited without confining oneself to the entropy of experience, and art can regulate it, for it is the deliberate construction of the moment to be experienced. To achieve this regulation, the formula of catharsis seems an optimal solution. Catharsis as a discharge of energy that then becomes transformative, that is, the learning of the experience in the most literal sense, is the emotionally - and taken to the extreme, physically - intense process through which the spectator engages with the work and draws conciliatory conclusions. It requires complication or intensity to be effective.

It is about finding order within entropy. The trance, the ecstasy, the state of altered consciousness, is the chaotic mass that can be regulated, conducted, modelled and refined through art, but always without anticipating its effects on the spectator or wanting to reach conclusions or unilateral effects, as each one will assume it in his or her own way. It is to show that the aesthetic experience is based on recognising intrinsic impulses, the unconscious mechanisms of pleasure in all subjects, and that art can deliberately construct the moment to lead and catalyse them. The loss of control can become constructive.

At the end of the 21st century there is still a socially accepted fear of what ecstasy implies, and its media appearance is a compensatory version devoid of its real meaning, but rave culture appears as a countercultural form.

The struggle for the affirmation of both individual and collective subjectivity lies in the fact of deviating from the norm, as resistance to what is expected of us. Technological and capitalist accelerationism creates a false sense of interconnectivity thanks to the cybernetic that provides instantaneous intercommunication of messages, but the result is a saturation of information where we are unable to filter against political manipulation or abstract any kind of truthfulness, over an economic superstructure that dominates and dictates the ways we inhabit our material reality and interrelate. Against this the experience of the ecstatic remains a promise of liberation or at least relief. The counterculture of the rave creates sensations of community that are sustained by the shared aesthetic experience, focused on festive enjoyment, and thus for me it is the contemporary paradigm of artificial paradise,

embodying all its grandeurs and also contradictions about the act of pushing the body to the limit.

On the other hand, rave culture emerges at a time when the relational aesthetics introduced by Nicolas Bourriaud generates a turning point in the way art is understood and produced, for in a context where even postmodernism seemed to have reached deadlock over what to understand as art, the work of art becomes the artistic process of generating social interstices, a 'collective sensibility'.

Rave culture arises around a way of understanding music that is applicable to the image based on the concept of sampling, radical fragmentation and the composition of textures on previous artistic products. It is the gesture of de-contextualising in order to re-signify. As the DJ manipulates the tracks live and remixes them, he becomes a shaman. It is the artist confronting the audience directly, creating from his sensibility and that which he senses in the audience, for the purpose of generating an immersive listening environment, of driving the experience. The tracks are never a finished product, they can always be fragmented and recomposed, like the visual, like the work of art, conceptually and practically, and without predetermining the effect it will have on the spectator.

Techno music, from which the rave culture arises, disorients the listener, breaks down spatial coordinates, has the effect of alluding to a state of altered consciousness that also makes use of trance, as it makes repetition explicit, pulses like beats that resonate in the body and in the act of rave it is joined to visual and spatial resources such as strobe lights, which emphasise the musical experience. It is thus the artistic use of sensory stimulation to generate aesthetic effects in the construction of the moment.

Rave culture generates feelings of empathy, interconnectivity and ephemeral communities. The concept of the Temporally Autonomous Zone uses its own ephemeral temporality to exercise its potential. As it assumes this faculty of temporal self-dissolution and reappearance, it is so slippery that it cannot be eliminated, it can always appear as a small crack of resistance, and is thus ungovernable, an anti-politics of pleasurable rapture, as Simon Reynolds defined it. The extraordinary, the borderline experience, against all standards, in a paradoxical way, can give meaning to routine experience, as an act of charging and discharging emotional energy. The rave, the Temporally Autonomous Zone, the altered state of consciousness focused on the ecstatic, is ultimately a moment that exists

outside of time, outside of space, outside of logic and does not pretend to be anything else, but is charged with meaning. The aesthetic experience and the state of intersubjectivity as acts of collective sharing of emotion become nuclei of social cohesion.

Art is the optimal space to imagine another reality that could be and to resist the norm, without it becoming an ideal in a totalising experience. It does not promise to be an ideology or a neo-religious experience built on a community of faithful followers. This is what Néstor García Canclini says about the state of imminence of art, which is about insinuating without declaring absolutes, and about the deliberate renunciation of representing an ideal.

Photography and moving image take as a referent the possibility of inserting themselves inside the mind and 'reproducing' its processes through all the stylistic resources that it can employ, but it is in the moving image where the purpose becomes more effective, because in the same medial unit, from the technology of the camera and the production techniques on the sequences of captured images, it is possible to combine static image (or photography), moving image and sound, as never before had been possible. This is what I do in my video piece *Transcending an artificial paradise*. Thus, from the syntax of the juxtaposition of images to the superimposition of sound on this same relationship, another possible space of syntax opens up, an audiovisual collage that can be worked from many layers.

On this range of accessible resources, expanded cinema is the moving image that departs from the purpose of narration and instead seeks to externalise sensory processes taking place in the mind, and synaesthesia is the fundamental aesthetic condition for the ability of the moving image to allude to sensoriality, as the union of harmonious opposites. The realm of post-production is essential in this, and digression, routpura and fragmentation have much capital to say without being made explicit in this audiovisual syntax. The principle of tension and opposition that, as Youngblood argued, is so important for working from the sensory, is kept latent there.

It is in this way - through subsequent stylistic devices, on post-production - that the moving image can allude to sensoriality, rather than representing an apparently unfiltered reality - something impossible, because there is no such thing as a veracity of the camera's 'mechanical eye', when the camera is left to record a scene and not many post-production resources are used, or when a narrative film or video-essay is constructed using other

resources and parameters, which, although they may integrate poetry, are built on more rational parameters and are structured so that the spectator follows a story that has a beginning and an end. My video is based on a poetic association of elements, pursuing the juxtaposition of images on the faculty of pouring unconscious associations into them, and although it has a beginning and an end, it has neither an opening nor a closing. From this we can conclude that, depending on how the position and action of the camera is approached, one effect or another is achieved. If the camera is left only capturing 'reality' external to it, it does not have the same effect as if it is deliberately posed through a stylisation in post-production based on aesthetic phenomena and alluding to or trying to translate sensations, from the introspection of the artist who undertakes this praxis. But beyond this, nowadays we have reached a point where sometimes it is not even necessary to record a sequence with a camera to produce a video piece, and this is what I propose in the video *To transcend an artificial paradise*.

Regarding the form of artistic production that inspires the practical development of my project, I choose sampling as a way of directly intertwining the productive context of electronic music that shapes rave culture, of experimenting with the possibilities of extrapolating the logic of the DJ to the logic of post-production in the moving image, for as Nicolas Bourriaud says, the DJ, the artist, the cultural programmer and the spectator are different appearances of the same praxis, that of the semionaute who selects, articulates, recomposes through the accessible materials of visual culture. The artist is a spectator and consumer, he does not create anything absolutely new, he is a navigator of signs and constructor of others.

From this point of view, sampling, which diversifies the authorship of products, no longer in an individual perspective, raises questions about precisely this accessibility to images and sounds, as a universal heritage to be used and claimed, based on remediation as an artistic process, on possibilities opened up by the cybernetic, with its dynamics of image archiving and downloading facilities. This is the way in which the interconnectivity of the cybernetic becomes useful, especially for the field of art.

In the work of the moving image with the perceptive processes that artist and spectator undertake, the artist can work from his subjectivity on a lived experience, and as a result of this, the spectator can live another one, which may or may not be similar. In working as an

artist on the basis of the experience - between remembering and creating the artificial paradise in situ - and as a spectator, living an experience within the artistic context, which he himself is responsible for producing by activating his own subjectivity, experience and creation are intimately linked.

The conclusive explanation as to why the moving image can allude to and induce the experience of an altered state of consciousness, with its integral aesthetic sensations such as trance and ecstasy and through the regulating formula of catharsis to drive that very experience, is that certain resources can be manipulated by the moving image, as can the space in which it is inserted,

It is because based on evocation and without the intention of representation, the poetic, free, unconscious and sensorial juxtaposition of images and sounds builds a fabric on which the spectator can come to feel the same energy of the images and sounds confronted with each other, in a subtle way and from associations that are also unconscious, spontaneous and free, drawing parallels and drawing conclusions that are always open about what he sees and what he experiences in the physical space of visualisation: the installation.

As what I have tried here is to investigate the possibilities of art to allude to the accumulation of aesthetic sensations that have to do with states of altered consciousness through the induction of sensation and not the representation of sensation, because it is impossible, I find that this possibility is built around a condition of transmediality in the artistic process. I have found that the work that is most faithful to an 'artificial paradise' (a relationship of alternative sensations, of altered consciousness, a physical or mental environment to be experienced and ephemeral in terms of temporality) is the one that gets the spectator to activate a sensorial process that can approximate the idea of altered consciousness and this has to do, on the one hand, with the precondition that I explain in my work, with the precondition I explained at the beginning of understanding art as an event and not an object closed in itself, as it appeals to the corporeality of the spectator, and here, even if the artistic product were only a video, the interaction of the spectator with it, the space, the installation of the video, becomes important in order to achieve this effect of sensorial immersion.

As we explored the concept of transmedia performance, the installation space is an essential condition to take into account, which enhances the viewing experience and makes

it an immersive environment, and this is what I intend to do in the future with my video piece, to be installed.

My intention is that the viewer is confronted with my video in a small, dark room on a large LED screen, so that the sounds and images envelop the viewer and the viewing experience is to some extent aggressive, so that the effects such as stroboscopic lights or flickering, affect the viewer's body, reverberate in it. I want to experience what would happen, because I can't know yet, maybe my spectator will get dizzy when seeing this frenetic sequence of lights or sounds, maybe he will enter into a trance, maybe he will dance, maybe he will close his eyes and only feel the music.

The predisposition of the spectator to allow himself to be felt is fundamental for the effective transmission of the aesthetic sensations of the artist subject through evocation. It is a matter of the execution by each individual of their independent sensorial cognition and subjectivity, of their own unique and non-transferable explicit translation of the stimulus to which they are exposed, in a dynamic of synergy with one another. As Rancière put it, it is to make evident the dissolution of frontiers between those who look and those who act, individuals and members of a collective body, through mechanisms where the artistic disciplines themselves transcend the fact of belonging to a single formal domain.

Immersing oneself in the work and not allowing oneself to be absorbed, as Stan VanDerBeek in *Movie-Drome* suggests about the hyper-stimulation and visual speed with which he saturates the spectator, through the multiple projection of videos in a circular form, and the spatialisation of the sound sources,

Exploding Plastic Inevitable is the closest and most essential artistic reference for my project, as it is the 'documentation' of an event that ends up producing an experience that transports the spectator to the reference event by alluding to the sensation that was experienced there, so that it seems that the experience is produced anew for the spectator, and this is the effect that I have tried to achieve.

In the future, working more on the installation, I would like to design a space like *Dream House* to host my video, an environment with hypersensory qualities, perhaps elements for

the subjects to lie down on, surround lights that evolve in different tones, to be able to space out the sound by locating it in different sources in the installation.

In the case of the Cerebrum club, I would like to think that the place of my project in a very expanded version would be conceived as a multisensorial laboratory, in a space that would function as a fusion of a club and an art centre, where to programme musical, audiovisual and transmedial performances, audiovisual and transmedial performances based on the concept of the hypersensory to produce an environment in which trance and ecstasy are experienced, regulated as a catharsis, and which is open to the public as a leisure experience outside the schemes of the cultural centre and closer to those of the club in this sense.

As I have gathered in this research, nowadays there is a very present symbiosis between club culture and contemporary art, as there is a great interest of contemporary art in a transmedia perspective in electronic music as a subject, and of clubs to expand or extend their conditions of use towards a space that functions as a cultural community, and that is something more than a place of leisure, without losing that essence.

In order to defend the aesthetic experience as the essential subject of art, and as a generator of relational experiences, of social cohesion, and of the intellectual emancipation of the subject, whether artist or spectator, it is necessary to understand that there is no single reading of the artistic object (even more so in the realm of sensation and not of narration), and thus recognise its aesthetic autonomy, which goes beyond even the intention of the artist himself, which allows us to overcome the conception that the spectator has to be educated in certain codes in order to understand art. In this way, it is possible to escape the excessive intellectualisation of art that distances it from the public and the everyday. The perspective of aesthetic intersubjectivity points to the fact that each individual constructs his or her own experience of the artistic object and exchanges it with the other factors involved, and from the altered state of consciousness, artificial paradises are inhabited that allow us to reconcile ourselves with a convulsive present.

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10. ANNEX

To transcend an artificial paradise, Carmen Bioque Zurita (2022), video 12:49 to be looped and exhibited in an immersive installation, in a darkened room and on a large format LED screen and stereo speakers.

Link to view the video: <https://vimeo.com/765886635>

Password: Artificial2122