



TEHF DINNER SERIES

New York, December 2014

It was while going through a random search that Agustin accidentally came across two photographs that were to become the turning point in our project. He was not looking for anything in particular, just diving in the adventure of the hidden materials at The Emily Harvey Foundation. Having lived in the gallery for a year and a half then, he knew there was a lot of story to the space but was also aware of the somehow mysterious and always elusive nature of its functioning. These photographs displayed a dinner table placed perpendicular to the space with chairs and people around it sharing a dinner. It is most likely that the event took place at night because the light in the pictures was clearly artificial.

The research we were conducting on the EHF archives had made it clear for us that collection's status had been unstable and dimmed from the very beginning. As Christian Xatrec -director of the EHF NY branch- had explained us, there had never been a proper, complete and thoughtful cataloguing process of the objects, works, shows and transaction that had taken place at the EHF. The explanation to the gallery's inventory status had been the urgent response of a bureaucratic requirement in order to become a foundation: "We were asked to catalogue the pieces of the foundation by the Internal Revenue Service, which was the organism we then started to depend on. We had to tell them what we owned. So I specifically came from Paris -I was living there at the time- and spent about two months cataloging all the work. I simply shoot images of everything I found, put them into a kind of order -which was mainly by artist's name-, and then store them. This is how it happened: what you see here in this so called catalogue is nothing else

than an IRS requirement, with the price of the works, which had been put on it."

Of course, many of the objects skipped that cataloguing process, which consisted on the registration and upraise of pieces of art mainly. Therefore, and as it would continue to occur in the cases of other odd findings, what the pictures could tell about themselves was all held in their own materiality: no register was to be found anywhere, no inscription, not an album to match them or a circa footnote to know when they had been taken.

The TEHF Dinner Series Project was conceived as a site-specific event that would re-enact the setting of those two photographs: we would display the table in same way and invite a group of artists to dine, and show a piece of their work or perform in the space during the venue. We were certain that by trying to address our curiosity on that particular event, we would somehow come up with a better idea of how the rest of the elements in the collection worked.

Moved by the desire of addressing the question on whether those materials -being their coordinates so elusive- worked as an archive or were not more that a mere random storage, we decided to activate certain objects and pieces by conferring them a performatic drive during the event, bringing the collection of the gallery back into life, showing a piece that belonged to its archive every night.

What we found out was that these material would work as a store as long as they were kept in their stillness and anonymity -both because of them having not been exhibited in a long time but also due to the abnormal nature of their labeling and cataloguing- but that as soon as the objects

were placed in the space of the gallery again, actions and people around them turned them into pieces that not only became part of an archive but also gain the ability to archive what was happening at the time. By showing them in the present and using the shape of an action long time ago activated in the space -Emily dinners-, we found a way to engaged both the space and past and present time in the nature of our project.

The idea of chance or accident played a very important role in this: There is a very strong contingent element regarding this particular space, as if the gallery itself was asking for that activation -because the conditions regarding this particular institution and the fluxus nature of its materials- that somehow shows borderless and exceeds the clear boundaries of a storage. The idea of chance and accident soon showed to be directly related to the opportunities materials themselves allow -and there a new question arrived: What were those opportunities materials allow to re-enact and actualize in this specific space and how did it related to the idea of a performatic archive?

Valeria Meiller
Agustín Schang

























