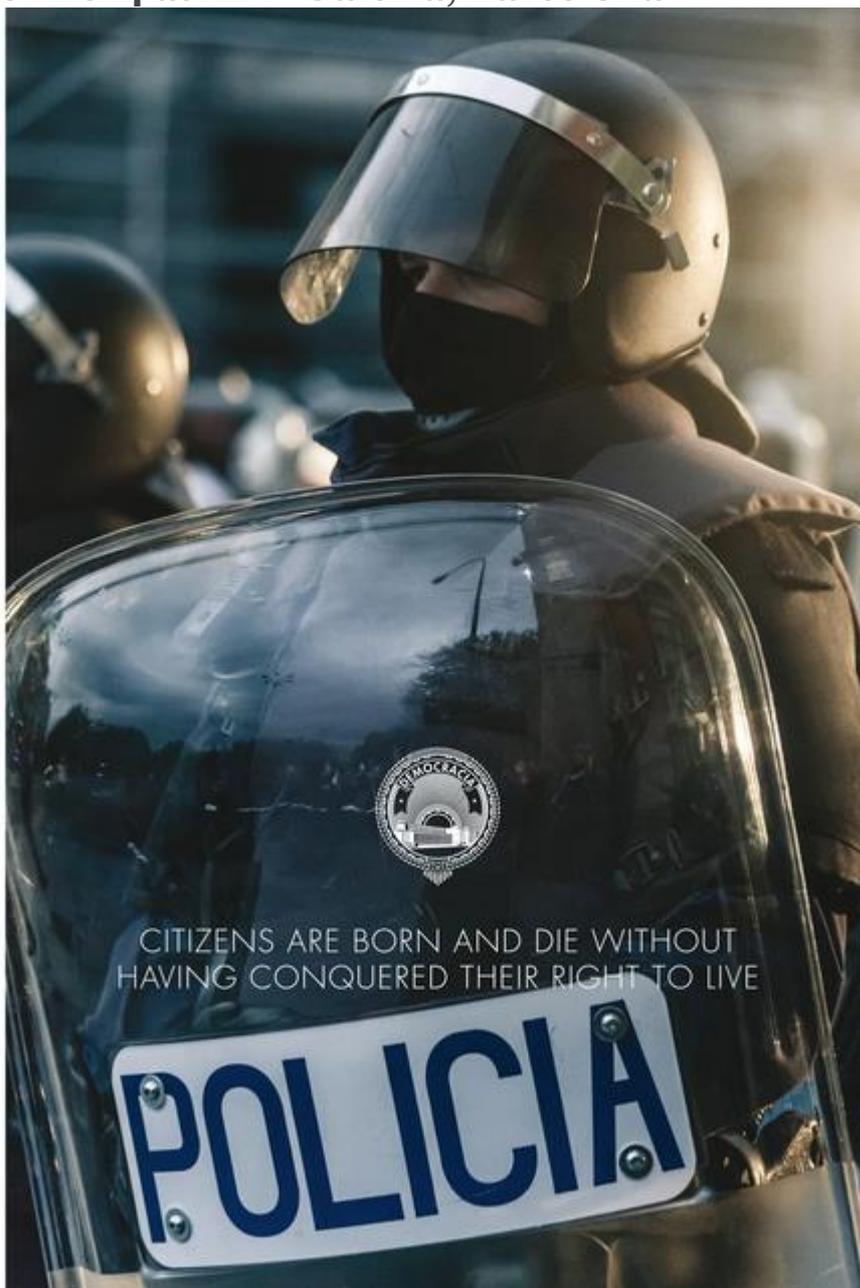


Wall Street International

[Economy & Politics]

Democracia. We protect you from yourselves

3 Oct–11 Nov 2014 at ADN Galería, Barcelona



Courtesy of the artists / Courtesy of ADN Galería.

Globalization brings with it a feeling of mistrust, rejection and powerlessness towards the mechanisms of government and political power. This turns into a

crisis that alters our perception of events such as social conflicts, economic crises, wars, violence, catastrophes, etc. In the face of this scenario, a group of intellectuals, artists, activists and citizens are backing a form of commitment which makes different kinds of abuse in society a central theme and which counteracts them with oppositional and imaginative social models. Often, against the cynicism that dominates global capitalism, they not only establish an attitude of protest and opposition but also generate growing interest in building a new collective action space within existing social structures, combining ideology and imagination, in order to express a will that is anti-system, anti-capitalist and anti-state through actions that try both to make visible and to undermine power.

Within this context, Democracia explores different power structures and the status of the spectator through its work and through its public interventions in the cultural, urban and socio-political space of democratic societies. Performances which provoke subversive and critical situations that take place in the context of the city understood as a space of conflict. Political and social reflection is a constant element in Democracia's work, commandeering aspects of consumer culture – archetypes of mass culture – and strong theoretical foundations in which they refer to philosophers, thinkers and activists as a basis of a narrative that seeks to re-define aspects of the public urban space.

In *We protect you from yourselves*, Democracia encourages the spectator to reflect on the tension and action characteristic of their practices – practices which are positioned as a crisis of contemporary contradictions between the subject and the historical context.

The exhibition begins with the question *Ist eine Welt ohne Polizei möglich?* (Is a world without police possible?). This piece consists of two silkscreen prints accompanied by a copy of the German police union's journal *Deutsche Polizei*. The first print reproduces an advertisement that the Democracia collective placed in the German magazine under the heading *Ist eine Welt ohne Polizei möglich?* In the second, we read a text in German that answers the question that the artists have posed, by means of a children's poem by Russian writer Sergei Mikhalkov, a poet whose verses advocated communist ideology.

The slogan that gives the exhibition its title – We protect you from yourselves – is represented by the image of a member of the riot police, a familiar image that speaks to us of the spectacle of repression by Spain's political power, whose oppressive perspective targets any social or political initiative that is antagonistic to our system. The collective seizes the rhetoric of advertising in order to design a campaign which superimposes on the image of the riot policeman phrases taken from a text written – at the artists' request – by the philosopher and former military policeman Luis Navarro. The work is complemented by three copies of French magazine *Tribune de Lyon* in which this campaign was included as part of the advertising.

The next piece, 16 retratos [16 portraits], consists of a series of portraits of policemen. All these pictures transmit to viewers a paradoxical image, which both presents an "untouchable" and "impenetrable" figure and suggests an intimate approach to his face and his identity.

Finally, in the back room we can see the video *Aquí no hay espectadores* [There are no spectators here], accompanied by a banner. This work shows the respective routines of a group of ultras (Los Panzers) and Chilean police before going to the football stadium – a new "black hole" as Piedad Solans points out in her essay *Public and violence in the age of global performance* (2010), a space which memory forgot, a space of global trash, where a ritualized confrontation takes place between the two sides. The vast majority of the Panzers are the children and grandchildren of those who were locked up during Pinochet's dictatorship in one of the locations used as detention and torture centers, such as this very stadium of Playa Ancha, in Valparaíso, where this particular action takes place. The Panzers, who see in this sport not only a show and a business but also a form of community organization, display a banner with the slogan *Aquí no hay espectadores*, a motto created from their collaboration with *Democracia*, which refers to the denial of the concept of the viewer as a passive agent. This work sets out the fact that architectures of control such as this one are metaphors for the rise of social repression – in this case, the strict laws concerning sports, which impose a state of emergency on the ultras that are increasingly moving throughout the entire society.

All these works represent a reflection on the space of the polis, because the city is the main stage of the capitalist system in which we are immersed. As Toni Negri would say "Resistance starts with finding the common reality of our lives". What capacity does art have to represent reality in the current capitalist system? What is the place of art in a society absorbed by the spectacle? Following this approach, this exhibition explores the always difficult relationship between art, society and politics as well as art's ability to understand the complex reality of the society in which we live.

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