Matadero Madrid: Modern Ruin, City of the Arts

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English translation, Neil CHARLTON

Abstract

In the mid-20th century theatre creators such as Artaud, Grotowski and Brook, driven by a different vision of the mise-en-scène, developed major reflections on the performing space, which took them to use abandoned spaces for their productions. In some cases, this led to the recovery of those places for the city because multiple aesthetic, functional and social qualities were found in them. Today the phenomenon of modern ruins, spaces which in their time were epitomes of the ideals of modernity and are now in a state of abandonment, is being defended by contemporary architecture. The article explores how these notions fuse with the history of Matadero Madrid to forge a new paradigm that goes beyond the idea of an urban site devoted to theatre activity: the city of the arts.

Keywords: Matadero Madrid, performing space, modern ruin, reuse of spaces, non-theatre space, city of the arts

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A Need Emerges

The interest in reusing abandoned sites in a process of decline in cities is not new. However, as architecture is immersed in a dynamic that prioritises production, we usually find many failed projects disconnected from the daily reality in which they are framed. This situation increases when they are architectonic phenomena outside the traditional parameters and therefore not considered sites with a historical or cultural value because of the degree of deterioration, date of construction or even architectonic typology. This is the case of a large number of modern ruins whose restoration is frequently affected by a constant lack of theoretical definition underlying the forms of intervention in these spaces. To counterbalance we need to generate a different viewpoint and start to take into account the value of these spaces that are often considered waste, superfluous, in a state of abandonment, continuous deterioration and ruin.

For some decades, the notion of what a ruin is has changed radically. Traditionally they have been related to the remains of what were monumental structures that have survived the centuries. Today, this conception still prevails and the historical values on which it rests have been easily integrated into the neoliberal logic and aesthetically exploited to be offered as consumer goods. However, in the contemporary consciousness there are also other ruins that have not gained importance over time and therefore represent a dislocation in the urban space, whose existence and recognition question the values usually related to architecture and the city.

This phenomenon, despite being intrinsically linked to architecture and having such an impact at an urban level, has not always been taken seriously in practice and has been marginalised from reflection by architects. It is in other disciplinary fields where we find approaches that help us understand the significance of the valorization of these spaces and, although there is still a growing interest in them, above all from art, they are still seen as a negative phenomenon: “an environmental and aesthetic disturbance, representing a

dismal and unwanted presence to be eradicated, or transformed, rather than something to be considered, cared for, or accepted, in its current state of being" (Pétursdóttir; Olsen, 2014: 4).[1] Nevertheless, modern ruins have entered the contemporary cultural debate and we need, from architectonic practice, to look at reflections made by other disciplines on the social, symbolic and aesthetic qualities of these sites.

One of these disciplines is theatre, which needs the habitable space to exist because it is the support on which the actions of the character, the raw material of the theatrical event, are played out. This is why many of the reflections made in the theatre field almost inherently include the space. The view of contemporary theatre creators — largely indebted to the ideas of great 20th century theatre figures — is contributing to the revalorization of spatial and urban aspects contained in the phenomenon of the modern ruin through the generation of criticism, debate and later intervention in these places. By reviewing the aforementioned ideas from a contemporary perspective, the objective is, first, to understand the genesis of the interest in this spatial phenomenon that emerged from theatre, which is still a clear line of work. By considering its origin the aim is to rediscover the spatial values that have made them the ideal places for performance but also to form part of the daily life of both artists and audience. The intention is to contribute to the construction of a vision in which modern ruins are no longer seen as a marginal phenomenon that must be transformed or even eradicated but one that must be carefully and appropriately addressed while taking into consideration its specificities.

20th Century: Genesis and Development of a Vision of the Space

The 20th century was one of intensive spatial experimentation in the field of the arts, and theatre was no exception. The performing artists began arduous research into the expressive properties of the space, a concept that opened up before their eyes as another universe of possibilities for performance. "In the 20th century, a different theatre space has been sought: planes on several levels to surround the audience, central arena, technological space, open stage, unitary space of stage and auditorium, non-theatre auditoria, spaces of the lived experience and the everyday life" (Cruciani, 2005: 250; original 1992).

The conscious assimilation of the space as another dramaturgical element on the stage[2] was the great innovation that resulted in such different initiatives. Among others, this enabled the theatre performance to be freed from the heavy burden of preconceptions generated during the development and rise of theatre performed on proscenium stages. "Making the space an element of the dramaturgy means rejecting the idea that a priori it cannot be

1. An aesthetic and environmental alteration, a depressing representation and an undesired presence that must be eradicated or transformed, instead of something to be valued, cared for and accepted in its current state.

2. The dramatic text as the most important element in western theatre is questioned at this moment while value is attached to the mise-en-scène and all the elements it comprises. The space, light, music and sound take on value as part of the dramaturgical language.

modified from outside the mise-en-scène; in short, a neutral container regardless of its possible contents" (De Marinis, 2005: 77). Since the spatial dimension began to form part of the creative process, the rejection of the predetermined frontal relationship of the audience with the stage soon began to spread. This resulted in the most varied and radical experiments, which led to the modification of the internal structure of theatre buildings or even to leaving the theatre building itself.

One of the most influential figures in the development of theatre outside the canonical building, bearing in mind this new spatial conception, was Antonin Artaud. In 1932 Artaud expressed in his first manifesto of the Theatre of Cruelty the desire to "abandon the architecture of present-day theaters" (Artaud, 1958: 96; original 1938) and create a *theatre of masses* — the counterpoint to bourgeois intellectual theatre — that could be performed in hangars and barns or on the street: places where the action could be all-enveloping; where the physical aspect of the theatre language "aimed at the senses" could be expressed throughout the space. Artaud was highly aware of the importance of the space in theatre and not only considered its dramaturgical potential but went beyond: for him it is the essential support for theatre. He insisted on replacing a poetry of language with a poetry of space and identified that one of the problems of the performance was "to make space speak, to feed [...] it" (Artaud, 1978: 98). This is very significant because the relationship, previously taken for granted, of the stage with the theatre architecture and the latter with its context began to change.

During the 19th century, the theatre building, along with being shaped in its interior until reaching a very specific model in which the stage box is separated from the audience, also emerged as a determining monument in the city. What happened within the stage box did not modify the relationship that the building that contained it had with its surroundings. Moreover, the building did not have a significant effect on the ephemeral space of the performance. This stage-building theatre-environment relationship, comparable to a Russian doll, remained almost static and without many modifications until the multiple 20th century performing experiments began, which, in very diverse forms, took to the limit and blurred the borders between these three dimensions of the theatre space.

In 1973 Richard Schechner used the term *environmental theatre* to define a series of initiatives that managed to unify these three dimensions and make them feed each other: works in which "all spaces are actively involved in all the aspects of the performance" (Schechner, 1973) regardless of whether it was a theatre building or a non-theatre space. Theatre events where the performance is not contained in a specific space given that "the theatre itself is part of larger environments outside the theatre. These larger out-of-the-theatre spaces are the life of the city; and also temporal-historical spaces — modalities of time/space" (Schechner, 1973). The stage and the theatre space fused in the performance to complement each other. Even the values of the environment could be part of the experience of the performance. Similarly, these environments were modified, sometimes temporarily and others permanently, by what happened on the stage.

Within this definition, Schechner includes the works of Jerzy Grotowski and Peter Brook, two particularly interesting visions for the purposes of this text. In his first period as a creator, Grotowski conducted multiple experiments to create various spatial relationships between actors and audience. Subsequently, he carried out a radical purification of stage media to unveil the essence of theatre. Gradually he removed from the stage all those aspects with particular characteristics that would lead it to a specific definition of the space, such as set design and lighting effects; he even eliminated the stage completely. With this, he concluded that the essential space for the theatrical event was an empty room (Grotowski, 2002; original 1968).

This impacted on the subsequent choice of spaces for his performances, which no longer necessarily had to be theatres, and, if they were, had to be modified so that the space was unitary; places where it would be possible to achieve the experience of communion between actors and audience. When Grotowski began the period of his *paratheatre*, the space he had managed to purify completely was no longer enough for him. He undertook the search for spaces that contained reminiscences of signs and symbols with which to feed the theatrical experience, which led him to use abandoned and even ruined churches; places that in their time were conceived to house a superior reality; that had been appropriated by a community and nurtured through the experiences lived in them; environments in which it was possible to experience the essence of the true encounter.

Peter Brook, after a long and important career and having described his artistic aspirations in *The Empty Space*, began a more radical period of research related to the theatrical event and, consequently, to the place of performance. In 1969, Brook and Michelin Rozan created the Centre International de Recherche Théâtrale (CIRT) with which they set out on a period of travel and research that led the company to perform in the most unusual and varied spaces, which included ancient Persian tombs and various African locations, as well as streets, some vineyards and a dance hall in the United States. Once this acting and space exploration had been carried out, Brook, together with the CIRT, undertook a new project and set up in a ruinous theatre in Paris, the Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord.

This space satisfied the aesthetics that the group had developed: "it had something in common with the squares of the settlements of Nigeria and Iran, the tough street corners of the Bronx and the spaces improvised in barns, railway stations, schools and hospitals on the outskirts of Paris" (Lecat; Todd, 2003: 54). It was the perfect place to put into practice the spatial and sensory experience acquired in previous years. And so it was. Different productions were put on where the theatrical building itself and its architectural elements — in which the passage of time is quite apparent — were part of the universe of the performance and the theatrical experience, since "the architecture of theatre as a scenographic support is within an aesthetic project that seeks what is true, in which there is no room for falseness or artificiality" (De Blas Gómez, 2009: 189). A search which even involved the context in which the building was located, generating a global experience from the urban space and involving the three dimensions of the theatre space: stage,

theatre building and environment. "Les Bouffes du Nord is literally buried within a uniform structure of daily life [...] a visit to this place becomes a special event even before crossing the threshold, in a kind of pilgrimage to daily life" (Lecat; Todd, 2003: 6).

The work and experience at Les Bouffes du Nord had a great influence on the subsequent selection of the spaces where the company would appear on tours. When it sought to tour internationally, Jean Guy Lecat joined the team and was in charge of *finding*[3] places "full of life" (Lecat; Todd, 2003: 60) for the CIRT performances all over Europe, including theatres in ruins, an old cinema and a monastery used as a garage, industrial spaces and abandoned pavilions. After being adapted for the performances, some of these spaces remained as permanent theatres.[4] In this way, theatrical and ephemeral events led to permanent transformations in urban contexts.

These two examples are just a small sample of the great diversity of initiatives regarding the theatre space that were developed throughout the 20th century. Today we can see that diversity has triumphed and all the explorations that were carried out now make up the baggage that is used in an eclectic way in contemporary theatre. "What was done before in non-theatre places is now done in flexible theatres, the proscenium stage has been revalorized, and the restored theatres house utopian imaginary architectures surrounded by nothingness, in which light makes up the atmosphere and marks the passage of time" (De Blas Gómez, 2006: 54). But what has happened to that theatrical search and experimentation in the space of the lived experience and the everyday life?

The truth is that these practices have not only remained in force but continue to be a resource for redefining the theatrical performance itself, and still retain a glimpse of the revolutionary character that prompted their appearance in the last century. Theatre continues to escape from the theatre building to the spaces where daily life has taken place, and not only that. One of the objectives is to forcefully influence the development of life in the spaces where it intervenes, because in this way it reasserts its own social character.

The experiences since the late 20th and early 21st centuries tell us about a better assimilation of the needs that the spaces dedicated to both performing and artistic production have to cover. Temporal distance allows us to understand the successes of the projects that have managed to materialise some of the ideals of those utopias that began in the 1960s and that today no longer appear as pillars but as nodes in contemporary production.

In the 1970s, in addition to the Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord, another very important project was founded: La Cartoucherie, an abandoned ammunitions depot, whose warehouses were taken and arranged by different

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3. Peter Brook summarises the concept in the following sentence: "What does finding mean? Finding is recognising that what you're for searching is suddenly here" (Lecat; Todd, 2003: 3).

4. This is the case of the Mercat de les Flors in Barcelona, where in 1983 *La Tragédie de Carmen* and two years later *Le Mahabharata* were performed, both directed by Peter Brook. El Mercat de les Flors occasionally used other adjacent non-theatre buildings that would later become the reformed Teatre Lliure de Montjuïc and the new Institut del Teatre. With these two facilities in full operation, the Mercat has focused on dance shows.

creators and finally adopted by Ariane Mnouchkine as headquarters and *refuge* (Banu, 2011: 48) of the Théâtre du Soleil. These two projects fit into what Cruciani — taking into account 20th century ideas and experiences — describes later as *living spaces*, the only "possible theatre building of the future" (Cruciani, 2005: 251), a future that seemed very much far away but was already becoming reality.

The examples explored show that for a theatre space to feel *alive* it does not depend on specific formal characteristics, much less on the design of a building's content. It has to do with many other issues, including the activities that this space is capable of generating and the relationships that can be fostered therein. In addition, it is no longer enough for it to be transformed during the performance but should also invite us to inhabit it in different ways. On the other hand, it should also be a material container of memory, this complex human process of connection between the past and a present to which it had to continue to belong actively; a space "rooted in contemporaneity; in other words, it does not deal with the past but rather asks it to be present memory, living tradition" (Cruciani, 2005: 251).

Matadero Madrid appears as a space that, aided by an architectural intervention respectful of its status as a modern ruin, has been heir to these ideals. Not only does it work as a theatre complex but it is a city of the arts of the present that has had a great impact on its current environment due to its symbolic significance and its history in relation to the city and its inhabitants.

Matadero as a Modern Ruin

From the outset, the new Matadero y Mercado de Ganados de Madrid was conceived and designed under the paradigm of modernity. Since the mid-19th century, the Madrid slaughterhouses had endured countless criticisms of their functional, sanitary and administrative inefficiency, even becoming a political problem.[5] It was not until 1907, after a controversial resolution, that the municipal property architect of Madrid City Council Luis Bellido y González was commissioned with the new slaughterhouse and adjacent market. This task may have been related to Bellido's critical stance regarding French and English slaughterhouse models, which he considered to be backward compared to the advanced systems of the German model. "In keeping with the most modern and appropriate systems for Madrid in this field" (Lasso de la Vega Zamora et al., 2005: 27) were the words with which the architect described the project he agreed to carry out and whose construction began in 1911 (photo 1).

After receiving the commission, Bellido decided to go on a field research trip through Germany, France, England, Belgium, Italy and Portugal, in which he concluded that, indeed, the German slaughterhouse model was the most suited to solve the requirements of the future slaughterhouse in Madrid given its "excellent and rational operation" dominated by the maxims of

5. The introduction to *Memoria histórica para el proyecto de rehabilitación del antiguo Matadero Municipal de Madrid* mentions the specific problems related to each of these spaces, as well as some solutions to resolve them. This text reveals the great symbolic significance that the expectations of creating a unique space for meat management in the city started to awaken; these expectations were to be eventually met by the new building.

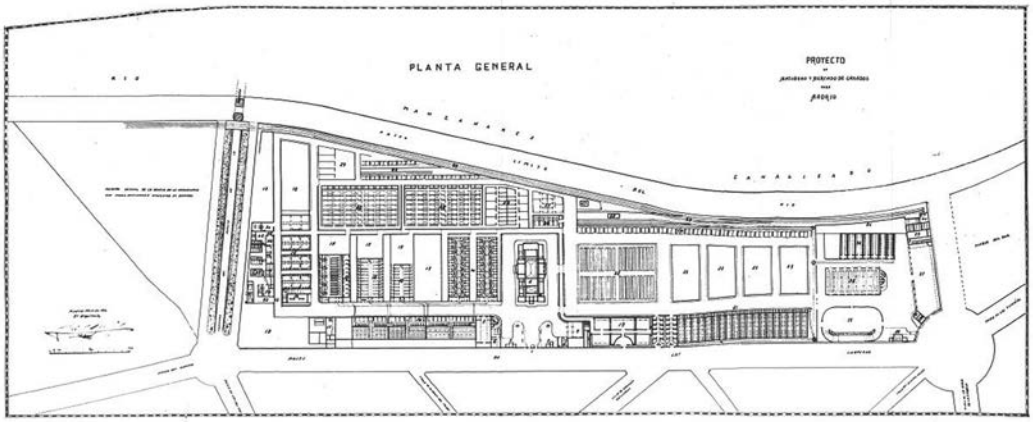

Photo 1. *Floor plan of the Nuevo Matadero y Mercado de Ganados de Madrid project*, 1914.
Phototype: Hauser y Menet. Taken from the book *El Nuevo Matadero y Mercado de Ganado*, by Luis Bellido.
CC. Biblioteca Digital Memoria de Madrid.

"precision, order and culture" (Lasso de la Vega Zamora et al., 2005: 28-29). Bellido's obsession with cementing his proposal on the functionality of the architectural complex was clear, as was his conviction that the entire project should be governed by the principle of economy. This did not prevent him from using the eclectic style in force at that time, specifically *neo-Mudejar* (photo 2) and from neglecting the aesthetic aspects of his work.

With these premises, Bellido designed a set of very simple industrial buildings but of great expressive force, in which "any element not essential to its practical purpose was excluded" (Lasso de la Vega Zamora et al., 2005: 149) and whose structures clearly expressed their function and internal distribution resulting in great spatial sincerity and harmony. The foregoing, together with the management of light, lent some solemnity to the different warehouses of the slaughterhouse, undoubtedly dominated by the modern materials used for its construction (photo 3).

Photo 2. Exterior of the Matadero Madrid warehouses. September 2018. Author's photo.

Photo 3. *Works in the warehouse for the exhibition, selling and housing of pigs in the municipal slaughterhouse*, 1916. Publisher: Servicio Fotográfico Municipal. The photograph shows the construction technique and materials used. CC. Biblioteca Digital Memoria de Madrid.

Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, there were different opinions about the use of the new materials in architecture: steel and concrete. The most critical considered them inauthentic and related them to buildings that only had a transitory purpose (Benjamin, 2002: 33; original 1939) such as industrial warehouses. Another argument used against this architecture was that its ruins would not be *friendly*, like those of classical antiquity (Yablon cited by Pétursdóttir; Olsen, 2014: 6) and its main material: stone. Being the maximum expression of the most modern technology, it was logical that when using them, one did not even think about their capacity to cope with the passage of time with dignity; they were the expression of a static future, the product of *pseudo-cyclical* time.[6]

An interesting aspect was Bellido's decision to use the most modern but also some traditional construction systems in the new slaughterhouse:

> In the Matadero buildings the architect combined two construction typologies: the artisanal traditional, based on the brick and rubble stone partitioned techniques, and the industrial in the structures, with pre-manufactured pieces or made in situ but with a specialised workforce and that, this case, are both metal and reinforced concrete (Lasso de la Vega Zamora et al., 2005: 185).

While it was of the utmost importance to denote modernity and seek the renewal of architecture, Bellido, like many other architects, also believed in

6. In *pseudo-cyclical* time man's awareness had taken on its irreversibility but lives trapped in a daily temporal cycle from which it cannot escape and where the everyday experience is "cut off from decision-making and subjected no longer to the natural order, but to the pseudo-nature created by alienated labor" (Debord, 2014: 82; original 1967). In it "it is strictly forbidden to grow old" (Debord, 2014: 86).

searching for a national style. He found a way to combine these two premises by mixing traditional construction forms with the most advanced construction technology of the time, that of steel and concrete. In addition, with a clear view to austerity, he decided to leave both the materials and the structure exposed. This combination proved to be a great success because it gave the space an ambiguity that, even today, is aesthetically attractive. This ambiguity is one of the reasons why it has been possible to change the use and connotation of all the buildings so radically; it is what has allowed Matadero to become an *empty space* suitable for artistic production and performance, but never *neutral*: "A good space cannot be neutral, as impersonality is sterile and does not stimulate imagination" (Lecat; Todd, 2003: 25).

There is a constant in the "spaces of the lived experience and the everyday life" that were *found* by Peter Brook and Jean-Guy Lecat in their joint projects, and it is precisely this capacity for adaptability that they possess without ever losing their personality. They are hybrid places where there is a constant contrast of values that come together in the space despite being apparently contradictory. What Brook looks for in his theatre is "not a new Mass, but a new Elizabethan relationship — linking the private and the public, the intimate and the crowded, the secret and the open, the vulgar and the magical" (Brook, 2002: 12). The spaces he found resist definition. In Matadero Madrid there is also this continuous dichotomous tension that prevents values from petrifying. Matadero is an ambiguous space that belongs to the city, but it is isolated from it; it can generate sociability but also retreat; a space in which there is a "curious mix of realism and abstraction" (Lecat; Todd, 2003: 85), conceived as a transitory space and transformed into a refuge. Matadero is also a ruin, but modern.

The state of ruin in which it was found is another reason that makes Matadero a unique place. In the 1970s the slaughterhouse facilities began to become obsolete and the desire of neighbourhood groups and associations was for the complex to be demolished and turned into a park. The negative perception that existed of the place is evident. In 1996, after a gradual process of abandonment and readjustment of some warehouses for other uses, those that were still used as a slaughterhouse were finally closed. Gradually, a space that had once been a symbol of modernity deteriorated and became a ruin. As in many other modern ruins, it is now possible to see in it the effects that time produces on steel and concrete, and although its deterioration is different from that of traditional stone ruins, it is as capable as they are of pleasingly evoking a past.

Modern ruins face the process of destruction that is an active part of the city and this process can lead to the *unveiling*[7] of aspects of the space — and

7. This term is chosen by drawing a parallel with those used by Jerzy Grotowski in his proposal for an acting method of the *negative path*. The destruction is precisely the vehicle of the unveiling. This was not negative for Grotowski, rather it was necessary so that "the spectator sees only a series of visible impulses" (Grotowski, 2002: 16). Theatre should bring about this destruction. Only in this way it "returns us to a concrete mythical situation, an experience of common human truth" (Grotowski, 2002: 23). Although here it refers to a destruction of internal obstacles for the actor, this idea can be extrapolated to other fields where, under the umbrella of masks, values that end up petrifying, distancing from the human dimension, denying something as inherent to it as ageing or even death itself are mythologized: "This social absence of death coincides with the social absence of life" (Debord, 2014: 86). *Unveiling*, therefore, equates to going beyond conventions, stereotypes and habits imposed by society that make up everyday life, affirming authentic and conscious existence itself.

the life that takes place in it — that are hidden by the veils of order and proper operation, linked to a specific aesthetic. The abandonment of the spaces causes these curtains to fall and expose previously hidden material layers, as well as the structures that make up the space, and show how it was used over time. Memories deposited in them come to light that, as they emerge without any type of hierarchy, do not privilege one over the other and where what was once trivial or even irrelevant can acquire a new connotation very different from the original.

From a more conceptual approach, modern ruins are spaces where the lack of a definition of capital value, utility value and even the absence of aesthetic regulation make clear "the hidden excess of the urban order, the surplus of production, the superfluity of matter and meaning which violates order and disrupts the capitalist quest for the always new" (Edensor, 2005: 833).[8] They highlight the absurdity of the mythologization of spectacular values petrified in society. This condition is amplified by using these spaces, either through artistic events or as places of recreation. By inhabiting them, the specific and rigorous functionality with which they were conceived remains on a secondary level and those elements that had ceased to be useful begin to be valued, without denying the state in which they are found, and thus making them a possible deposit of the *memory of the present*.

The condition of ruin in Matadero, as well as its gradual obsolescence, are phenomena that are commonly considered negative. Finally, what about a building whose function declines when its conception has always been based on it? Fortunately, the project of the new Matadero y Mercado de Ganados was based on other values that, when separated from functionality, have resurfaced. These take on a new meaning that is enhanced by artistic production, the new function assumed by the site: it is granted a second chance at life. The destruction process of its buildings has served to empty it from the excess of aspirations and meanings that capitalism and modernity deposited in it. By becoming a ruin, Matadero resists *pseudo-cyclical* time and proudly shows its ageing process. It acquires a unique atmosphere that, as in Les Bouffes du Nord, depended on factors that escaped the control of the original architect, like "the forces of entropy that marked the passage of time on the walls" "(Lecat; Todd, 2003: 25).

The project for the restoration of warehouse 17c of Matadero, the first intervention, was very receptive to the particularities of the space and its state as a ruin. To a large extent, this was due to the cultural project that accompanied the restoration project: from the outset, Intermediæ, the new institution created at that time by Madrid City Council, had as a guiding thread the *process* and its value "as a mechanism of experimentation, reflection and intervention of contemporary creation" (Matadero Madrid; last accessed: 16 September 2018). The *process* also became the guiding concept of the architectural project.

8. The hidden excess of the urban order, the surplus production, the surfeit of matter and meaning, which violates the order and interrupts the capitalist search for the ever new.

Photo 4. Intervention of the interior of warehouse 17c of Matadero (Box office of the Centro Internacional de Artes Vivas). September 2018. Author's photo.

Photo 5. Intervention of the interior of warehouse 17c of Matadero (Anteroom to Intermediæ and the Central de Diseño). September 2018. Author's photo.

Instead of seeing Matadero as a "dead" entity that had to be completely redeveloped inside and out to try to return its appearance of life, as *El País* (1996; last accessed: 16 September 2018) dramatically stated, it was decided to accept the space in the conditions in which it was found. The interventions were limited to the absolutely essential (photos 4 and 5) and a space was even left in the state in which it was found, called "Abierto x obras", where you can see the marks of a fire from the 1990s. The architecture practice itself was aware that this position was radical and in a neoliberal context even more so because, within its logic, *non-intervention* is not productive; it is necessary to produce for the system to continue operating.

By showing its "signs, wrinkles, unhealed wounds like the life of an unconcerned old man, where its excessive personality seems to be above everything" (Aullón, 2011; last accessed: 16 September 2018) Matadero resists the cult of newness. It accepts ageing as an important part of the process of the building that must be shown. It is not about the death of a place but "the continuity, discontinuity and continuity of the process, living reality" (Aullón, 2011). Matadero was not intervened as an object-building but as a living space going through a process.

Matadero as City of the Arts

It is undeniable that a core part of the Matadero y Mercado de Ganados project was choosing the place where it would be built. Since 1888, after the Municipal Health Board advised that it should be "in the southern area of the town, near the river and the railway" (Lasso de la Vega Zamora et al., 2005: 30) — and long before Bellido even began designing his project — the Dehesa de la Arganzuela had been chosen as the suitable location. It was no coincidence that Matadero was located south of Madrid. For several centuries, the main slaughterhouses in the city, both those of El Rastro and Puerta de Toledo, had been located in this sector. Moreover, since 1860 the project for the expansion of Madrid had been approved, in which Carlos María de Castro proposed to juxtapose an orthogonal grid of rectangular blocks with the old 18th century avenues on the outskirts of the city. The triangle formed between the railway tracks of Atocha station and the former avenue of Santa María de la Cabeza was intended to house industrial facilities and workers' homes. In fact, since 1851 the construction of Atocha station had already begun to give that character to the area, and the expansion project only consolidated it.

The start of the new Matadero y Mercado de Ganados was gradual. The main services were opened between October 1924 and June 1925. From 1927 to 1930, the municipal architect, Fernando de Escondrillas, built on the adjacent land a neighbourhood of 74 buildings with over 1,500 homes for workers in the area (photo 6). By the year in which this settlement — known as Pico de Pañuelo — was completed the growth of Madrid had already exceeded the limits of the Manzanares River (Instituto Geográfico Nacional; last accessed: 17 September 2018). Matadero ceased to be a confined area and started to be rapidly absorbed by the city although it never became part of it.

The slaughterhouse had been conceived as a "small productive city" (Lasso de la Vega Zamora et al., 2005: 33), autonomous and far away from the city, although well linked to it, and was always a space isolated from the city both physically and perceptually. The physical boundaries that led to this isolation were of two types: a natural one, the Manzanares River, and another, artificial, formed by the wide Calle del Vado de Santa Catalina and Paseo de la Chopera, whose centrifugal attributes and purely transitional purpose were accentuated by the high wall that was built around the estate. On the other hand, although the Pico de Pañuelo housing estate was created as a result of the slaughterhouse, since it was conceived with the purpose of housing its workers, there was a very marked border that delimited the life of the neighbourhood and the activities that were carried out inside the site.

> The residents' relationship with Matadero is interesting as, from the outset, they do not know or experience its interior every day [except when, curiously, they were allowed to go in during Easter or at other times] but they do know its outward manifestations [viscera, sounds, livestock, meat delivery routes, smells...] (González García, 2015: 51).

Photo 6. *Aerial view of Matadero Municipal*, 1929. Photo: José Gaspar i Serra. The picture also shows the Pico de Pañuelo neighbourhood. CC. Biblioteca Digital Memoria de Madrid.

For this reason, although the slaughterhouse clearly defined the citizens' perception of the neighbourhood, as well as the daily experience of the residents, it was an *empty space* — in the sense expressed by Bauman (2000: 98) — and borderline, not registered on the mind map of most citizens. This did not happen because the space was meaningless or was a surplus place in the city but because from the beginning the activities carried out inside could not be visible outside. From its conception it was a necessarily invisible space. "The neighbourhood has always had its back to the Matadero. It was a place of industry. In the fruit and vegetables market there was far more life. The Matadero has never been a part of the neighbourhood" (Hristova, 2015; last accessed: 16 September 2018).

The slaughterhouse was in use for about six decades. At the end of the 1960s its facilities began to become obsolete despite the technical improvements that had been made and the new uses that had been given to the warehouses. In the conception of the project, the location of the slaughterhouse had been a great success, and this was now precisely the cause of its definitive closure in 1996 due to the great political, citizen and neighbourhood pressure. One of the strongest motivations for its disappearance from the 1970s was the desire for the site to be turned into a green zone,[9] in a radical attempt to erase the negative connotations of the space and improve the health conditions and quality of life of the environment. The buildings of the Matadero survived the repeated desire for their demolition, managing to remain standing by means of tentative conservationist reactions that arose in

9. This was supported by "Act 23 of 1967, called 'of La Arganzuela', through which the state ceded to Madrid City Council a strip of land near the Manzanares River to be converted into a green zone within ten years, as well as the land of the Matadero Municipal and the neighbouring Mercado de Frutas y Verduras. The first phase of this park was opened in May 1969, but the second, which involved the demolition of Bellido's building, was delayed in 1977 another five years" (Lasso de la Vega Zamora et al., 2005: 54).

the cultural climate of Madrid around 1978,[10] until finally in 1997 the General Urban Development Plan included the Matadero Municipal in the Inventory of Protected Buildings.

During those years and until 2005 different proposals were considered to provide new uses for the warehouses of the former slaughterhouse, mostly of a cultural nature. However, none of them managed to take root. Only the warehouses of the northern sector escaped the abandonment and deterioration process that, for almost a decade, afflicted the rest of the site; these had been converted into a greenhouse and the headquarters of the Ballet Nacional de España and the Compañía Nacional de Danza and integrated into the new Arganzuela Park.

Among the initiatives to reactivate the remaining warehouses were the spaces devoted to communication, exhibition of old cars, film sets, the Anthropology Museum, the Air Museum and the Water Museum, an experimental theatre, studios for artists, workshops of Latin American arts and crafts, exhibition rooms of the Fundación Arco art collection, Museum of the Spanish Language or a documentation centre on architecture. It is worth highlighting that most of the initiatives did not take into account the desires and expectations developed in the neighbourhood over the previous decades. There was a desire to turn the premises into a "city of the arts" although there was also a latent concern that the diversity of functions might endanger its unity (Lasso de la Vega Zamora et al., 2005: 63-67). Moreover, none of the initiatives had a clear strategy to attract citizens to a somewhat degraded area and with low cultural interest. This was complemented with the serious problem of the lack of integration of the venue within the neighbourhood and the city.

It was in 2006 when the project "Matadero Madrid. Centro de Creación Contemporánea" began to take shape. Its objective was clear from the beginning: to become a new leading cultural focus. Different institutions took on the management and restoration of some warehouses, therefore the overall project rested on diverse pillars whose main challenge would be to open this space, both physically and symbolically; giving it a meaning, because during its abandonment it was gradually losing its original one, and, above all, erasing its innate borders.

The first venue that opened its doors in 2007 was Intermediæ. Its main objectives included fostering "citizen involvement in the cultural production of the neighbourhood and the city" (Matadero Madrid: Intermediæ; last accessed: 9 September 2018). This interdisciplinary venue was absolutely necessary because it would be in charge of mediating the relationship between Matadero Madrid and citizens. During its first decade of existence, it has managed to build bridges that have enabled citizens to cross the old borders and reach Matadero Madrid from different fields (photo 7). It has become a venue that enables reflection on culture and promotes collective actions to imagine multiple forms of inhabiting the environment. It has also managed

10. That year, Mayor José Luis Álvarez saw it as "feasible to preserve, given their architectural value," some parts of the site (Lasso de la Vega Zamora et al., 2005: 57).

Photo 7. Children playing inside warehouse 17c, in the venue belonging to Intermediæ. September 2018. Author's photo.

and directed by Mario Gas. It is no accident that the theatre was used to consolidate the project. Different experiences throughout history, and especially those in the mid-20th century, had shown that theatre is capable of attracting audiences to the most remote places, even a forest in Vincennes, where the very excursion to the place became part of the cultural experience.

It was necessary to attract people who had never stepped foot in that area, just as Peter Brook had achieved 40 years before when he managed to get "cultivated" people to visit a place as chaotic and unwelcoming as the back of a train station. In this case it was not a Parisian neighbourhood of immigrants, but a Madrid neighbourhood of industrial tradition away from the area of theatre activity concentrated in the centre and north of the city.[12] Curiously, Jean-Guy Lecat became part of the team to carry out the intervention to develop it as a performing space. The result was a large empty, unitary and flexible space contained in warehouse 11, connected with warehouse 12 and capable of generating multiple configurations within them to house all kinds of productions. Subsequently, warehouse 10 was also included and, for a decade, the Teatro Español managed the site consisting of the three warehouses. Throughout this period, the space hosted high-quality plays that attracted a large number of spectators, thereby becoming a theatre reference

11. "Efforts to keep the 'other', the different, the strange and the foreign at a distance, the decision to preclude the need for communication, negotiation and mutual commitment, is not the only conceivable, but the expectable response to the existential uncertainty rooted in the new fragility or fluidity of social bonds" (Bauman, 2003:108; original 2000).

12. From 27 September to 18 October 2018 the exhibition "Theatre Mapping: Barcelona, Madrid" was held in the Institut del Teatre and included a contemporary theatre map of Madrid, where this phenomenon can be seen. The research group developing it proposes a methodology comprising various analytical approaches: morphological, historical and artistic. Based on these it is possible to have a better understanding of the logics and conditions that led to the arrangement of the city's theatres over time. (Ramon Graells et al., 2018: 2)

in Madrid — creating a new cultural focus south of the city — and a cultural project that was a milestone in Spain.

From March 2017, those previously known as "Naves del Español" became independently managed and known as "Naves Matadero. Centro Internacional de Artes Vivas", whose objective is "to generate a space of contemporary creation and thought — paying special attention to the new performing languages and the territories of transversality — so that they function as a catalyser between creators and citizens" (Naves Matadero; last accessed: 4 June 2019). In this way, it becomes a space dedicated not only to exhibition but also to research and creation of performing projects that links national and international artists.

Both Intermediæ and the Centro Internacional de Artes Vivas currently coexist in Matadero Madrid with other public artistic and cultural institutions (photo 8), including the Casa del Lector, dedicated to the new expressions of reading and its promotion; the Central de Diseño, where this activity is disseminated and promoted; the Centro de residencias artísticas, which gives creators time, space and resources to work on solo and group projects; a Cineteca, whose content covers everything related to audiovisual creation dedicated almost exclusively to non-fiction cinema; Extensión AVAM, managed by the Asociación de Artistas Visuales de Madrid; and the Factoría Cultural, a support space for the creative community that aims to contribute with workspace and personalised advice to the development of emerging initiatives in the creative field (Matadero Madrid; last accessed: 4 June 2019).

Matadero Madrid owes much to previous initiatives such as La Cartoucherie, which has been defined as "a real city of theatre, a place of meeting where, without being confused, Art and Life come together" (Ramon Graells; Prieto López, 2016: 805), and the Théatre des Bouffes du Nord, the

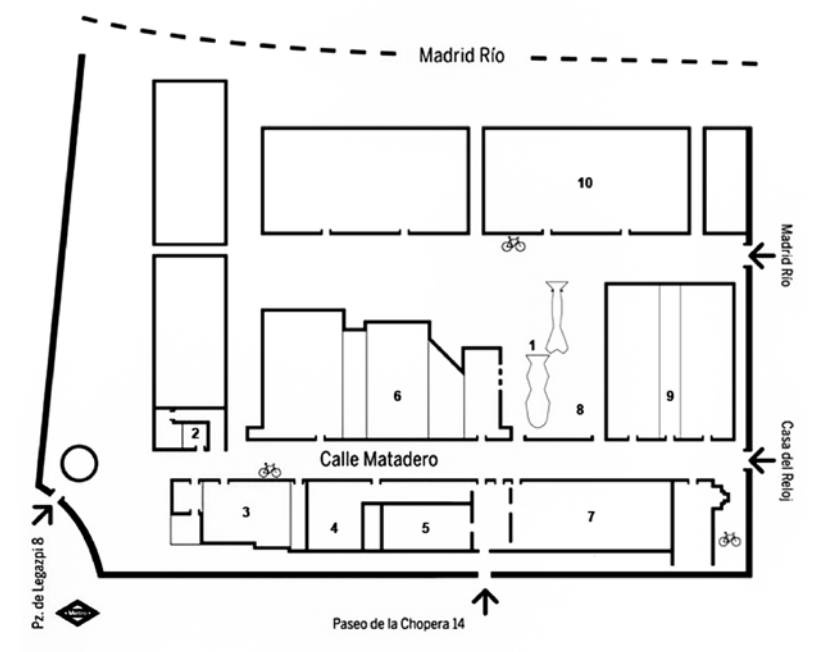

Photo 8. Current map of the premises of Matadero Madrid.

1. Escaravox
2. El Taller and Oficina de Coordinación
3. Cineteca
4. Central de Diseño and AVAM
5. Abierto x Obras
6. Naves Matadero
7. Intermediæ and Foyer
8. Plaza and Calle Matadero
9. Casa del Lector
10. Warehouse 16

Last accessed: 4 June 2019 at http://www.mataderomadrid.org/mapa
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Photo 9. Citizens walking along Calle Matadero. September 2018. Author's photo.

hybrid space in which an "alliance of refuge and building" is achieved (Banu, 2011: 51), which forms part of the city; and although it shares many of their characteristics, the nature of Matadero Madrid is different to theirs. Today a great diversity of artistic and cultural activities converge in this place that are intertwined with the recovery spaces that the residents have integrated into their daily lives (photo 9).

It has an inter- and cross-disciplinary vocation in which theatre participates, in all its expressions — and no longer as a driver — but now mixed with this dynamic from which proposals arise that are enhanced with the characteristics of the *conceived and lived* space of the Matadero.

In the spaces of Matadero Madrid, artists, citizens, residents and occasional visitors converge without problem; it is "a human settlement in which strangers are likely to meet" (cited in Bauman, 2000: 94). If we consider this classic definition of the city that Richard Sennett offers and all the possibilities of activity that it brings about, Matadero Madrid is now much more of a city than that functional settlement that Bellido had planned towards a future that it reached very quickly: Matadero Madrid has established itself as the *city of the arts* of the present.

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