

Between Outgoing and Incoming Directors, Dismissals and Major Changes are made to the MACBA Organisational Structure

Last Friday, July 16, I, Pablo Martínez, and my colleague Tanya Barson both received an email communication in which the manager of MACBA, Josep María Carreté, notified our imminent dismissal as a consequence of the proposed modification of the Museum's organizational model, which had been approved the day before by the MACBA General Council made up of representatives of the Barcelona City Council, the Generalitat de Catalunya, the Ministry of Culture and the MACBA Foundation. This change in structure would affect the museum's curatorial and program areas as follows:

- It groups together all the departments of the curatorial area and programs under a single "Directorate of Curation and Research", to include the departments of Collection, Exhibitions, Public Programs and Study Program Independent, Study Centre -with the Archive and the Library-, and Publications.

- This grants more power to the manager, by retaining the areas under their responsibility with a greater number of senior positions, and leaves the Artistic Director a lesser and more symbolic role by having charge of fewer senior staff. It also diminishes the importance of the curatorial teams.

- It creates a new position of Director of Curation and Research, with overall responsibility for the curatorial and programmes of the museum, that duplicates the role of the Artistic Director.

- It creates a new Directorate of Education and Mediation that will depend on both manager and director, but in which most of the departments would be reporting to the manager and would be emptied of content: mediation together with sponsorship, and social responsibility together with accessibility, publics and education. After years of experimentation with education as an independent and emancipatory cultural practice, the current structure extracts it from the content and research area to locate it together with visitor services.

- These changes to the organizational chart do not respond to any objective need and have as a main consequence the constitution of a museum management model in which neoliberal governance is placed above the design and development of

content. It also causes the elimination of the two current artistic directions (curatorial and programs) to be suppressed and with this, it tries to justify the dismissals of my colleague Tanya Barson, chief curator of the museum, and myself as director of programs.

It is striking that this proposed organizational change is made at a time when the museum is without an Artistic Director, by means of email communication and by “burofax” and, therefore, without the possibility of labour mediation. It is effective immediately, so is also made without time to close or handover to the teams some fundamental projects for the museum (including publications, the next edition of the Independent Studies Program, exhibitions, projects in collaboration with entities in the neighbourhood, local, national and international level), which both Pablo Martinez and I were managing and developing.

On the other hand, the supposed changes in the organization, which would affect the entire workforce of the museum, have not been communicated to the workers' representatives until after the dismissals were made. There has been no negotiation by management either with the outgoing or incoming Director about the design of this change of model that breaks with any possibility of institutional experimentation and leaves the museum under the protection of managerial governance and at the service of a mega-conservation area that we imagine will be, for the most part and at a time of reduced budgets, oriented towards the exhibition of its collection in the controversial extension of the museum. With this museographic turn, the institutional model that MACBA had built since the late 1990s and which gave it international recognition as a critical institution and builder of an oppositional public sphere, is demolished.

Faced with this authoritarian gesture on the part of the management, with the complicity of the Barcelona city council and other public administrations, we wonder about their ability to ensure, on the one hand, the rights of workers and, on the other, the preservation of the public service role of a museum of international prestige such as MACBA. Faced with these unilateral organizational modifications, we also wonder about the role of workers in the cultural institution, whether as mere executors of managerial will or as true agents for change inside and outside the institution. And finally, we are powerfully struck by the reduced scope of action that remains for the new Artistic Director, with their diminished functions, to build a programme with the complexity and sophistication that MACBA has had during the last twenty-five years.

We hope that the public administrations, on whom the governance of the museum depends, will reconsider and return the museum to the prior situation.