

incorporates elements of camp but refuses to be camp enough to actually be camp. Dumb vs. smart is not a refresh of hip vs. square. Dumb is both hip and square. Smart dumb has its theorists—De Certeau, Goffman, Debord—those who articulate the mysteries of the mundane and the extraordinariness of the everyday.

From this point forth, unless specified, when I say dumb, I will mean smart dumb.

Dumb breaks things, doing things to things which common sense decries to be simply wrong. When something is that wrong or that broken, it finds a new life: The notorious Monk intentionally hitting the wrong notes on the piano. Charles Ives's use of microtones and overtones, or Andy Warhol's off-register silkscreens. Warhol, the king of dumb, summed it up when he said, "I wanted to do a 'bad book; just the way I'd done 'bad movies' and 'bad art' because when you do something exactly wrong, you always turn up something." *Empire* is dumb. Really dumb.

Dumb shuns allusion and metaphor, opting instead for the flattest interpretation possible, echoing Beckett's claim, "No symbols where none intended." Smart dismisses dumb as the handwork of charlatans—as hoaxes, jokes, frauds, and leg-pulls. Dumb, in turn, taunts smart with intentional misinterpretation, like John Cage's first-ever staging of a twelve-hour performance of Erik Satie's "Vexations"—a scribble on a page of paper from 1893 that gave instructions for it to be played eight hundred and forty times—something smart historians had dismissed as a joke for over half a century. But when Cage actualised it, it was so dumb that it became cosmic. It has been played frequently and regularly since then. Cage's "4'33" is even dumber. Anyone could do that. When asked, Cage always said that was the hardest piece he ever composed, taking years for him to summon the courage to write and have it performed.

Dumb came of age in the 60s with the advent of drugs which magnified minutiae that was previously invisible. Just think of that poor spider in *Life* magazine who was dosed with LSD: his web moved from smart symmetry to dumb anarchy. Overnight, obsessions with micro movement, structure, and language, spawned successive dumb art movements: Judson Church dance, Pop, Fluxus, minimalism, and conceptualism—all based on the *over-obvious*. Counting and repetition, along with similar childlike activities, came into vogue. By the 70s, outsider art and mental illnesses such as autism were fetishized by the likes of Robert Wilson; there was a headlong rush to get dumber. The 70s also saw renewed interest in the work of Gertrude Stein, a seminally dumb writer who embraced dumb decades before anyone. Stein wrote gibberish using a third-grade vocabulary. To the uninitiated, it all seemed foolish. Someone walking across a stage and calling that a dance? How dumb.

Dumb likes to play dumb. Warhol would often say to people, "I'm so empty today. I can't think of any ideas. Can you give me some?" He would then pretend to listen carefully, ultimately rejecting every idea that was given to him. That's what made Warhol so great: he wouldn't take other people's dumb ideas. He had his own dumb ideas, which were really

Or Rod Stewart. In order for dumb to work, you get Billy Idol. But staying dumb is hard work—even harder work than staying smart. With a bit of effort, anyone can get smarter, but few can consciously and continually stay dumb.

Dumb doesn't go out of fashion because it is never in fashion. Dumb is stalled and irredeemable. It's too twisted, too weird, too contradictory and takes too many turns of thought to be reduced to a slogan or ad campaign. No matter how dumb they may appear, ad campaigns are invested in being smart; at the end of the day, you need to communicate smartly in order to get someone to buy something. Dumb muddies the waters. Likewise, juries and prizes don't recognise dumb. Juries and prizes were invented to award smart.

Dumb is not an inborn condition. You get to dumb after going through smart. Smart is stupid because it stops at smart. Smart is a phase. Dumb is post-smart. Smart is finite, well-trod, formulaic, known. The world runs on smart. It's clearly not working. I want to live in a world where the smartest thing you can do is the dumbest. I want to live in a world where a fluorescent tube leaned up against wall is worth a million dollars. Or where a plumbing fixture on a pedestal is considered the most important artwork of the century. Or where building an eternally locked Prada store in a vast expanse of empty Texas desert is considered a stroke of genius. Or where all of the numbers from one to a thousand can simply be classified by alphabetical order and published as a poem. Effortless and easy, dumb is free of failure, an infallible world where the best result is the one you happen to get.

Pablo León de la Barra

Novo Museo Tropical

Novo Museo Tropical Manifesto

When museums and cultural centres outside of the hegemonic centres remain empty of content because they don't have budget for a programme or curators...

When artists living in the semiperipheries produce specifically for the international market, art fairs and biennales, while ignoring their local public and context, or while abusing their local public and context...

When art produced elsewhere is bought legally (without looting like in the past) by international patrons and museums...

Shouldn't we rethink the kind of "art" we do?
Shouldn't we rethink the kind of exhibitions we produce?
Shouldn't we rethink the kind of museums we aspire to have?

Novo Museo Tropical

A museum without walls...
An invitation to rethink the museum outside the centre...
Do we need new museums and mausoleums?
Can we think a different kind of collection?
Do we need art bought in galleries, biennales and art fairs?
Can we think a museum that exists beyond the inherited conventions of the twentieth century contemporary art world and its structures?
How can we protect the art and the collection from the climate without resorting to air conditioning?
How can cultural production and memory survive humanity after humans disappear from the earth?

Novo Museo Tropical, Soon somewhere near you

Novo Museo Tropical Architecture

I'm still not sure of how the architecture of the Museum is. I only know it has a concrete roof (in which you can also walk), no windows or enclosed spaces (although some spaces might be closed with mosquito nets). The roof is mostly supported by pilotis (from which you can hang hammocks), or there could also be monolith free standing concrete walls, creating some kind of labyrinth.

Because it's located somewhere in the tropics, in the future the Museum will probably be covered by the jungle and disappear. On one of the free standing walls (or maybe on the floor) the plans of the museum will be inscribed in concrete or rock, to allow future archaeologists, if they wish, to reconstruct the museum.

I have also been thinking seriously about the content of the museum, which artworks would exist there, and how they would survive the climate. Apart from temporary exhibitions (in Kippenberger MOMAS style), and of works of art that required no technology and could survive the weather (and age with it), there might be no works exhibited in the Museum. In the past, I had been thinking of some works which would definitely have to be part of the Collection, for example, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster's *Promenade* from 2007, where the space is filled with the sound of rain, or Oswaldo Macías' *Something Going on Above my Head* from 1999, where the space is filled with the sound of birds. As much as I love these works, at the moment they wouldn't be needed in the Novo Museo, as these sounds and effects would happen within the Museo naturally (unless a catastrophe occurred where birds and rain disappeared and we would need to resort to the recordings to remember them). As such the Novo Museo Tropical would be, in Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster's words "a place to observe, enjoy and describe the effects of tropicalisation."¹

I've also been thinking about the Collection of the Novo Museo. I have already included some of the works or artists that could form part of the Collection in the Diagrama Tropical. But maybe these works don't exist inside the museum in the physical sense. Maybe information would be available about the works in the museum's "library," and there would be an Instruction Manual/Time Capsule, which would allow for the works to be recreated at present time, but also reconstructed in the future. There should also be some kind of alphabet/code to allow for future inhabitants of the planet to decipher and read these instructions in order to reconstruct works and museum, should human kind as we know it disappear from the planet.

Some Notes for Exhibition Making in the Tropics

Think of the exhibition as a process, not as a final result.
Think of the exhibition not as an accumulation of objects, but as a way of doing research on ideas and contexts.
Create flexible exhibitions where things can change.
Design the exhibition without specifying every detail. Non-design: suggest instead what might happen.
Integrate new works during the duration of the exhibition.
Allow errors, surprises and collaborations to happen within the exhibition.
Find inspiration on people's everyday design solutions.
Allow the spectators to become part of the exhibition. To activate it and become a participant.
Think of the exhibition as a place where things happen.
A place for Experiments and Experiences.
Allow the exhibition to become a place (or a non-place), a scenario, a landscape, a social club.
Plants and hammock always make an exhibition much better (as well as fans if you have access to electricity).
Use reproductions (or photocopies taped to the wall) if you can't have access to the "real" work.
When there's no budget, count on the economy of friendship.
Use what you have at hand.
Let the unexpected happen.

¹ GONZALEZ-FOERSTER Dominique, *SET: Sitio Experimental Tropical*.