

Sight Rests on Touch: XYZ, Eduardo Navarro.

We usually win games by refining the synapses between our mechanical and intellectual skills. A sports team wins because it sees, feels, hears, and perceives even that which the weathered onlookers can't see. Eduardo Navarro's **XYZ** sets out with the desire to create a game that requires reprogramming of those honed nexuses and skills. As such, winning almost becomes a byproduct.

That is in great part because the outset of Navarro's game requires significant sensory limitation, especially in an art context: for **XYZ**, the players' eyesight is blocked. At the same time, the artist intensifies their sensorial environment--there's, for example, increased aural, tactile or olfactory input. Meanwhile, the task at hand is as simple as it gets. [*Horses don't lie*ⁱ] Together, players are to roll around a ball larger than life in a court that resembles the most geometrically stable of courts, a rectangular grid. The ball's dance on this grid is determined by sensory stimuli and guidance: players use applause to signal their relative positions on the court while the ball reveals its location through scent or sound, depending on its outer jacket.

Even if this proposition creates an unusual field of forces, the activity is undoubtedly a game. There is a delineated court, an arch from zero to win. There's a time of the game that stands apart from the rest of time. There are teammates and rules, and, with those, come desire, stamina and excitement. Though there's smelling, touching and clapping, none of this should be confused with free, open-ended play: what matters is invention of effective communication methods over role-play or imagination. [*Tratamiento homeopático para el Río de la Plata*ⁱⁱ] In essence, success in this game is measured in the swiftness of single passes among players. In **XYZ**, the conventional goal climax with its subsequent outburst of applause disperses over the individual passes and the clapping that functions as integral signal.

Often, ball games depend on symmetry (such as the position of players and their antagonists in the court, or the court's layout itself). The terrain Navarro designed resembles a blueprint for calculated symmetrical action. Yet, that surface symmetry is overwritten by the non-linearity and intensity of waves and particles emitted by the ball. [*Poema volcánico*ⁱⁱⁱ] Perhaps players start out in symmetrical composition but the game requires them to go elsewhere. All of a sudden, this game is about the sharpening of collective perception. Forget conditioned muscle or performed speech. Given this restricted repertoire of human expression and reception, the ball drives the process of sensory development. And, ideally, it becomes part of the player's expanded body. [*Timeless Alex*^{iv}] When players eventually depart, the ball remains on view in latent hibernation, deflated and accompanied by its different sensorial jackets (olfactory, auditory, tactile).

Whereas this work took its final shape as a scheduled activity that is part of the exhibition's educational program, the work didn't originate as such. It was a proposal of a field game that was, from the get-go, meant for children. Navarro did not impose the structure of the game; rather, starting with coloring and meditation activities he did together with the children, the rules emerged. **XYZ** is not a game *for* children, satisfying

their imagined desires, but rather a game *from* children. And it so happens that the most adequate way in which it is played requires excluding adults.

ⁱ Passing a ball may be too plain to contemplate, just like walking in a field. In *Horses don't lie*, a work made for the 9th Mercosul Biennial | Porto Alegre in 2013, Eduardo Navarro created a horse outfit for dancers. This equine structure obstructed movement. The resulting choreography, only observed by the visitors from afar through binoculars, slowed down both a basic dance vocabulary and the everyday movements of grazing horses.

ⁱⁱ Communication through field invention deals with adequate, equivalent response to received information. In *Tratamiento homeopático para el Río de la Plata* (2013, Parque de la Memoria Buenos Aires) Eduardo Navarro makes a large, semi mobile capsule to contain homeopathic medicine for the highly contaminated Río de la Plata. Through the lens of homeopathy, the work posits a direct interaction between the particles in the river and those composed by specialists and subsequently energized by the created contraption.

ⁱⁱⁱ Expression happens in the emission and reception of particles. In *Poema volcánico*, a work made for the 12th Cuenca Biennial in 2014, Eduardo Navarro inverted the model of the exploring landscape painter and journeyed up an active volcano to have the mountain make a drawing.

^{iv} Costumes subvert, but they also force bodily reprogramming and, hence, another attuning to time. *Timeless Alex*, a forthcoming work commissioned by the New Museum in 2015, is a Galapagos turtle outfit that is periodically brought out of hibernation by a dancer.

Note on the title:

First part is a phrase lifted from Michel Serres Variations on the Body.