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**QUEENS MUSEUM OF ART ANNOUNCES
ARTE ÚTIL LAB,
INVESTIGATING THE PARAMETERS OF USEFUL ART**

***Arte Útil Lab* originated by Tania Bruguera
Presented by the Queens Museum of Art, New York
In collaboration with the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven,
the Netherlands**

**February 17 – June 2, 2013
Lab Hours: 12 – 6pm, Wednesday – Sunday**

QUEENS, NY (January 29, 2013) – In 1917, Marcel Duchamp placed a urinal on a pedestal, signed it R. Mutt and declared it art. In 2010, Cuban artist Tania Bruguera took an identical urinal, signed it R. Mutt, reconnected it to the plumbing system in the Queens Museum of Art's men's room, and called it *Arte Útil*. Roughly translated as "useful art," *Arte Útil* in Spanish also suggest art as a device or tool, and it is in that spirit of artistic utilitarianism that the Queens Museum of Art is transforming its first floor galleries into the *Arte Útil Lab*, a laboratory and archive investigating the proposition of *Arte Útil*. *Arte Útil Lab* will be in operation from February 17 through June 2, 2013, and will be followed by *Arte Útil* Residencies at Immigrant Movement International in Corona, Queens, in Summer 2013, before concluding with Museum of *Arte Útil* at the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, The Netherlands in Fall 2013.

Originally conceived by Bruguera, the *Arte Útil Lab* is not an exhibition, but rather an investigative space that will evolve throughout its run as projects explore this concept by creating artistic tools for transformation, tools for social interaction, tools to address current real-world issues, and tools that challenge the role of art as separated from use. Bruguera states that "*Arte Útil* moves beyond a propositional format, into one that actively creates, develops and implements new functionalities to benefit society at large."

Arte Útil Lab will have two main components, The Library and The Lab. The Library consists of objects and documentation of historical and ongoing projects that fulfill *Arte Útil* criteria. Objects include:

- Mel Chin's *Revival Field*, in which Chin worked with government agencies and scientists to develop seeds that would removed heavy metals from contaminated land;

- Krzysztof Wodiczko's *Homeless Vehicle Project*, which was intended to provide a portable place for homeless individuals with shelter, toilet and washing facilities and space to store their belongings; and
- Rick Lowe's *Project Row Houses*, a social sculpture, neighborhood-based non-profit, art and cultural organization with 6 blocks of housing and 49 properties, , twelve artist exhibition and/or residency spaces, seven houses for young mothers, office spaces, a community gallery, a park, low-income residential and commercial spaces.

The Lab section functions as an open storage for objects that will become *Arte Útil* when they are activated during the run of the project. Objects in The Lab include:

- Azra Akšamija's *The Nomadic Mosque Project*, a wearable mosque in the form of clothes that can be worn for many functions and can be transformed into a minimal Islamic prayer space with all the liturgical necessities, converting any secular space into a prayer space;
- *The Uni Project*, a part library, part classroom portable educational environment that can be dropped into almost any available street-level location; and
- Gaye Chan/Eating in Public's *Free Money*, in which containers are installed in 'public' spaces where people can leave or take money – for or from – strangers.

The Lab will host Hypotheses Panels and Working Groups for practitioners and artists discussing and producing examples of *Arte Útil* throughout the time The Lab is open, with a final presentation of report from the working groups on June 2. The Library and Lab will both continue to expand, as new projects are added from submissions gathered through an open call on the web site arteutil.net and ongoing outreach.

THE CRITERIA

As a lab, this project does not present answers, but tests hypotheses. The endeavor is to find projects that fulfill as many as possible of the criteria listed below. *Arte Útil* should:

- 1- Propose new uses for art within society
- 2- Challenge the field within which it operates (civic, legislative, pedagogical, scientific, economic, etc)
- 3- Be 'timing specific', responding to current urgencies
- 4- Be implemented and function in real situations
- 5- Replace authors with initiators and spectators with users
- 6- Have practical, beneficial outcomes for its users
- 7- Pursue sustainability whilst adapting to changing conditions
- 8- Re-establish aesthetics as a system of transformation

ARTE ÚTIL LAB PROGRAMMING

The *Arte Útil Lab* will include extensive programming with working groups of artists, activists and interested members of the general public dealing with environmental, political, pedagogical, economic, social, and scientific issues convening at the Queens Museum. Groups will be lead by practitioners in the field and will work through individual projects. Additionally, the *Arte Útil Lab* will host public workshops testing hypotheses critical to formulating the principals of *Arte Útil* including questions of aesthetics, ethical responsibility, sustainability, reproducibility and accessibility. Hypotheses will be tested by bringing experts/practitioners in to challenge or support these questions. Events will be recorded in a lab book that will enter the archive. Through experiments, discussions and audience feedback, the *Arte Útil Lab* will be a living, breathing laboratory, uncovering new projects that fit the criteria as well as challenging projects already

considered *Arte Útil*. Thus, the Lab will be accepting and including realized projects in the archive, “storage space” and online database throughout the run of the project.

WORKING GROUPS

The *Arte Útil* Working Groups will provide a springboard for a deeper understanding of *Arte Útil* concepts and methodologies, an opportunity to strengthen local communities of practitioners, ask valuable questions, and ideally act as a catalyst to create new work and/or further develop existing work

April 13, 2013: Rethinking Social Services facilitated by Marisa Jahn and Anjum Asharia/-REV

April 14, 2013: Ecological & Scientific Interventions facilitated by Mary Mattingly

April 20, 2013: Shaping the Public Sphere facilitated by Damon Rich

April 28, 2013: Pedagogical Projects facilitated by TradeSchool.coop

HYPOTHESES EVENTS

The Lab is hosting four public workshops testing hypotheses critical to formulating the principals of *Arte Útil* including questions of aesthetics, ethical responsibility, sustainability, reproducibility and accessibility under these four sections: Aest-ethics: Moral Aesthetics in *Arte Útil*; Access & Replication Mechanisms; Project Ecosystem Management; and Usefulness as Ideology. Hypotheses will be tested by bringing experts/practitioners in to challenge or support these questions and by analyzing the case studies in the Lab. The events will be recorded in a lab book that will enter the archive.

April 6, 2013:

Panel 1. Usefulness as Ideology – 2-3:30pm

What are the potential new roles of art in society? What is the function of the utopic and propositional in art? What are the differences between generating visibility and novel framing of an issue versus actual problem-solving? How does one measure the importance of implementing the project in the realm of the real and how is that impact evaluated? What is the role of harmony or congeniality in *Arte Útil*, while at the same time generating a subversive or challenging position towards existing systems?

With guest panelists Tania Bruguera, Stephen Duncombe, Randy Martin, and Lucía Sanromán

Panel 2. Project Ecosystem Management – 4-5:30pm

What are the different expectations of *Arte Útil* when it works as a proposition, a prototype, or a fully-implemented project? When should a project end, and when and how should an artist-initiator leave? How does one choose, develop, and maintain partnerships across cross-sectors? How do artist-initiators work with or against institutions? How are projects funded and sustained or in need of the creation of alternative economic models, and to what extent is this central to the project’s conception and ideology? How is scale determined and evaluated?

With guest panelists Kalia Brooks, Jim Costanzo/Strike Debt, Marisa Jahn and Christine Lewis

May 11, 2013:

Panel 1. Aest-ethics: Social Aesthetics in *Arte Útil* – 2-3:30pm

If *Arte Útil* takes transformation as its aesthetic principle, how do we develop a language that enables us to comment

upon the changing values and qualities of these projects? *Arte Útil* projects necessarily engage non-artist users in the real world, and therefore, run the risk of unintended consequences — artist-initiators are not in full control of who uses the tools or to what end they are used, so how are they to be accountable? Who benefits the most from engaging in the project itself: the artist, institutional partner, or the users? Furthermore, how does one evaluate the ethics of *Arte Útil* projects that employ legal loopholes, unsanctioned gestures, or even illegal acts in achieving a social good?

With guest panelists Tom Finkelpearl, Núria Güell, and Carin Kuoni

Panel 2. Access and Replication Mechanisms – 4-5:30pm

How are *Arte Útil* projects made accessible to the intended users? What are the challenges when a project works as a prototype versus when it intends to have a more permanent presence? What are the challenges of passing the project to others or becoming an open source project, and how does that challenge the concept of authorship? How do *Arte Útil* projects navigate local needs while still becoming a reproducible model? How does *Arte Útil* maintain its political topography and coherence while changing location and circumstances?

With guest panelists Azra Akšamija, Tom Kalin, and Manon Slome

ARTE ÚTIL CONVERSATIONS

March 30, 2013: Amy Sara Carroll & Ricardo Dominguez of the Electronic Disturbance Theater present the Transborder Immigrant Tool

ORGANIZATION AND FUNDING

The *Arte Útil Lab* is originated by Tania Bruguera, with research by Gemma Medina. It is organized at the Queens Museum of Art by Adrienne Koteen, Prerana Reddy, and Diya Vij in collaboration with the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven. The Lab is supported by the Lily Auchincloss Foundation. Additional support provided by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and the New York State Council on the Arts.

QUEENS MUSEUM EXPANSION AND ARTE ÚTIL LAB DESIGN

The *Arte Útil Lab* will be the final presentation before the museum closes in the Summer in anticipation of reopening the expanded space in the Fall. Construction is becoming increasingly present with a somewhat unpredictable schedule. In the spirit of *Arte Útil*, the design of the lab will respond to the challenges of the current QMA capital expansion project: the entire exhibition will be mobile, allowing it to move when construction necessitates re-location but also for the redistribution of the Lab materials to best fit the current experiment, workshop or discussion. The working group leader will become the Lab Director and will be able to set up the *Lab* to be most 'useful' to his/her presentation. Furthermore, each element of the exhibition furniture was chosen by the Curatorial and Education Departments of QMA based on the needs of the Museum rather than aesthetic requirements of an exhibition. These objects include a-frames, carts, white boards, and other art handling material that will ultimately be used to efficiently install future exhibitions in the future QMA space.

Tania Bruguera is one of the leading political and performance artists of her generation. Bruguera's work researches ways in which Art can be applied to the everyday political life; creating a public forum to debate ideas shown in their state of contradictions and focusing on the transformation of the condition of "viewer" onto one of "citizenry." Bruguera uses the terms ARTE DE CONDUCTA (conduct/ behavior art) and ARTE ÚTIL (useful art) to define her practice. Bruguera has participated in Documenta, Performa, Venice, Gwangju and Havana Biennales and at exhibitions at mayor museums in Europe and United States including the Tate Modern, The WhitechapelGallery, PS1, ZKM, IVAM, Kunsthalle Wien, and The New Museum of Contemporary Art. Her work is part of the collection of the Tate Modern; Museum für Moderne Kunst; Daros Foundation; Museo del Barrio; Bronx Museum; IVAM; Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Centro de Arte Contemporáneo Wifredo Lam. A graduate of the MFA programs at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (United States) and Instituto Superior de Arte (Cuba), Bruguera is also the Founder / Director of Arte de Conducta; the first politic art studies program in the world, hosted by Instituto Superior de Arte in Havana. She is visiting faculty at Ecole des Beaux-Arts, Paris, IUAV in Venice and Rijksakademie in Amsterdam.

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The Queens Museum of Art is a local international art space in Flushing Meadows Corona Park with contemporary art, events and educational programs reflecting the diversity of Queens and New York City. The museum presents the work of emerging and established artists, changing exhibitions that speak to contemporary urban issues, and projects that focus on the rich history of its site. QMA is also home to the Panorama of the City of New York, a 9,335 square foot scale model of the five boroughs; the Neustadt Collection of Tiffany Glass; and a collection of more than 10,000 artifacts from both New York World's Fairs. The museum seeks to exact positive change in surrounding communities through engagement initiatives ranging from the multilingual outreach and educational opportunities for adult immigrants, to our new year- long residency program, Corona Studio, which embeds artists in the local community. The museum also conducts educational outreach tailored toward schoolchildren, teens, families, seniors as well as those individuals with physical and mental disabilities.

The Museum's hours are: Wednesday – Sunday: noon - 6 pm. Admission to the Museum is by suggested donation: \$8 for adults, \$4 for seniors, students and children, and free for members and children under 5. For general visitor information, please visit the Museum's website www.queensmuseum.org or call 718.592.9700.

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