

WHAT NOW?

Ágora:

Democracy, dictatorships,
revolution and us

A project by Fernando Rubio

Produced by PS21 (Chatham, NY, US)



SYNOPSIS

What now? is a performance-conference and installation that brings together artists, activists, and thinkers from different parts of the world within a shared space. By recreating the logic of the agora, and by staging local histories through diverse narrative forms, it invites the audience to engage in dialogue and to participate actively in the construction of memory, fostering a collective way of thinking from the present toward the future.

At the same time, the project seeks to build an audiovisual archive that brings together militant voices from different parts of the world. Taking as its central axis the memory of the most recent dictatorships in the Americas and the articulation of Operation Condor, the work enters into dialogue with the histories of people who were disappeared in different contexts of state-sponsored institutional violence. In doing so, it foregrounds the urgency of reflection and of creative proposals capable of confronting the same violent practices that persist in the present.

In each place where the project is presented, as a coda to the process, a written document will be produced and, through a performative action, presented to the parliaments of each location.

To care for memory by articulating an affective dimension that builds futures through artistic practice.

CONCEPT



WHAT NOW?

During the research phase, stories will be collected as the foundation for the dramaturgy, interweaving poetic and theatrical narrative with the spontaneity of live discourse. These filmed encounters will also generate an audiovisual archive—a documentary that can later take multiple forms and uses.

The scenic mechanism invites the audience to engage with a pulley system that transports the very texts they write themselves, activating and multiplying the action. At the same time, some people write, others hang and send messages; the protagonists share their stories; the thinkers ask questions and guide the themes.

Together, we build a large collective game: our topics and our ways of seeing them unfold through creative action—writing and playing, thinking and moving through space, putting both body and ideas in motion, listening, feeling the sensitivity of stories, and multiplying what we hear through a film that combines archival material and present-day footage.

We are all part of the performance's construction.

The performance travels from place to place, merging art and activism, creating movement, and transforming itself into a larger action: all those people who had never met before begin to move, to approach others, and through art, build a new sense of hope—a shared affect, a possibility to transform our differences through listening. It seeks to achieve something profoundly complex: a genuine encounter, a space where everyone, regardless of differences, can come together to build a sense of community.

And debate—especially in spaces like this—must be one of our fundamental social purposes. Let's discuss, because the permanent confrontation of ideas and facts is the only way to live better. Let's accept that we must discuss and debate until the end of time. Let's invent all possible procedures to organize our societies with that goal in mind.

CONCEPT



WHAT NOW?

What else -what's next- must we confront, work on, discuss, change?

And what are all the things we can still do?



WHAT NOW? is an interdisciplinary project that merges performance, conference, and audiovisual installation. It connects activism, politics, philosophy, and sociology, intertwining archival materials with contemporary testimonies.



At its core lies a dramaturgy that brings together Argentine and U.S. activists, revisiting the legacy of the last Argentine dictatorship and Operation Condor, while reflecting on present-day struggles marked by the rise of far-right movements.

As in all my works, the audience plays a central role—not as passive spectators, but as active participants in an open space of dialogue, conflict, and imagination, where memory and activism converge to shape possible futures.

THE PERFORMANCE

WHAT NOW? reimagines a contemporary agora:

a circular forum that proposes intergenerational encounter as a space for dialogue and collective creation.

At its center, a ten-meter stage gathers activists, militants, and political figures over the age of seventy who once resisted authoritarian regimes across the Americas. They share who they were, what they did during moments of transformation, and how their ideals have endured or changed.

From elevated chairs, a philosopher, a sociologist, and a young girl moderate the debate: they pose questions, provoke reflections, and open space for new ideas.

The audience participates actively through a scenic device - a pulley system that transports to the stage the texts written by the spectators themselves. This mechanism turns writing into performative action, expanding the dynamics of the event.

Simultaneously, other participants hang and send messages, the protagonists tell their stories, the thinkers open new lines of reflection, and a circular projection of archival and contemporary footage establishes a dialogue between past and present.



PROJECT SUMMARY

The project unfolds in three complementary dimensions

- ▷ The live performance, which activates a collective and participatory event.
- ▷ The creation of an archive and an audiovisual piece based on interviews and recordings with activists and militants—materials that engage with the present and remain as shared memory.
- ▷ The energizing action of activism in each place where the work is presented, fostering new forms of encounter, debate, and organization born directly from the performative experience itself.



COPRODUCTION AND SUPPORT

An original production by **PS21** (United States)

Coproducers:

- ▷ KVS (Belgium)
- ▷ Bienal de Performance (Argentina)
- ▷ University of Oklahoma

Distribution:



**PS
21** CENTER FOR
CONTEMPORARY
PERFORMANCE

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