

THE FUTURE BEHIND

Political imagination after the 2001 outbreak

When it comes to the historical events related to the popular riots of December 19 and 20, 2001, a major contradiction arises: in the midst of an abysmal economic crisis, the most outstanding social creativity is unleashed.

It was during the course of a decade of state dismantling in which jobs were privatized and closed down all over the country that unemployed movements, assemblies and soup kitchens in the heat of bonfires, and roadblocks sprang up.

The response of the government was fiercely repressive: it decreed a state of siege, which resulted in 39 deaths and hundreds of injured people. In response, the protests multiplied, chanting for solidarity: "*Piquete y cacerola, la lucha es una sola*" [Picket and pan, the struggle is only one].

In a sequence that began with Fernando De La Rúa fleeing by helicopter, five presidents passed through the *Casa Rosada* in just eleven days. The people multiplied the protests, organizing and marching massively, and in the main urban centers there were popular assemblies that established an unprecedented exercise of direct and participative democracy.

An image that sums up this social feeling was that of those families who decided to take a summer vacation at their bank branch with deck chairs and sunscreen, in a spontaneous and desperate performance to call public attention to the banks' capturing of their savings. This source of social creativity also spread to worker-recovered enterprises, barter clubs and multiple experiences that came up with solidarity-based forms of exchange and cooperation, giving rise to protest repertoires deployed by social movements, artists and cultural collectives that occupied the public space.

In the time scale of history, a span of just two decades may seem fleeting. Today, a new crisis is once again sweeping the country and—like an inverted rewriting—it is hard to imagine a greater contrast between the 2001 outbreak and the current situation.

This exhibition seeks to shake the present by resorting to that laboratory of political, economic, cultural, artistic, and emotional experimentation that enabled alternative ways of life in the midst of that vertiginous and vibrant context. If anything encourages this project, it is the ambition that this bursting past, with its precarious gleams and disruptive powers, may contribute to opening new forms of action in the present and gaps in the future, to glimpse possibilities of life in common, summoning up with dignified rage the complex memory of that fragile but also moving beauty.

This exhibition is part of the results of "Después del estallido" (CONICET/Museo), research carried out by the group "Arte, Cultura y Política en la Argentina reciente" (IIGG-FSOC-UBA) together with the Museo Histórico Nacional and the Parque de la Memoria - Monumento a las Víctimas del Terrorismo de Estado. It joins those efforts that, twenty years after the 2001 outbreak, aim at summoning plural and dissident memories, such as the curatorial project "19 y 20" (Centro Cultural de la Memoria Haroldo Conti), the gatherings "Imaginaciones Políticas 2002-2022" (Gloria Gráfica) and the series of talks "2001: El futuro detrás" (Instituto de Investigaciones Gino Germani), among other initiatives.

