

ART FACTORIES TODAY: A CASE STUDY BASED ON TABAKALERA. INTERNATIONAL CENTRE OF CONTEMPORARY CULTURE (2016)

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Old industrial factories in main metropolitan cities have been converted into cultural centers in the past two decades. Such remodeling processes started in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s in Europe but have constituted official cultural policies since the 1990s. The present article analyzes these transformations taking Tabakalera. International Centre of Contemporary Culture (Donostia-San Sebastian, Spain, 2016) as a starting point. The main concepts and issues discussed include: the relationship between art and production, the concept of “art factories”, and the expansion of disciplinary modern spaces beyond the traditional working sites.

Keywords: Art and production; Art factories; Tabakalera; cultural policies.

Introduction

Tabakalera: International Centre of Contemporary Culture (“Tabakalera” from now on) opened its doors in 2016 in Donostia-San Sebastián (Basque Country, Spain). It is a cultural center that stands in the remodeled space of a Tobacco Factory active from 1913 to 2001. The interest of this center lies in the fact that it can be interpreted as a symptomatic example of the relationship between art and production in the last five decades, in which art has served as a sublimating motor for post-industrial cities within global tourism circuits. As a cultural center created in the second decade of the new millennium, it also offers the chance to think about the blurring of clearly delimited spaces of modern work and leisure culture. Furthermore, in our present moment, which —particularly after the onset of the

Covid-19 pandemic— is notable for its dearth of physical (not virtual) space, Tabakalera, with its 37,000-square-meter perimeter, seems to claim the need for a public meeting space, both for culture and for work. The present text proposes a preliminary study of this set of issues and a reading of art and production that feeds on previous analyses of major art and cultural centers in Spain —such as the emblematic case of the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao— as well as critical readings regarding Art Factories.

1. Art as a Document of Barbarism

My reading begins with the thesis that art, and culture in general, has served the purpose of embellishing capitalist policies of progress. It is a thesis that has been presented by the main

thinkers of contemporary aesthetics and culture, from Theodor Adorno (1962) to Walter Benjamin (1968), including Fredric Jameson (1991), Peter Sloterdijk (2020), and several art critics in recent years (Mark Fischer, Hito Steyerl). In his theses “On the Concept of History” (1999), Benjamin sustained that “[t]here is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism”. In this sentence, far from bringing art close to the figure of the “angel of history” in a melancholic, sober reflection that gives an empathetic and poetic account of other ways of thinking about society and its forms, Benjamin establishes that there is an artistic development that accompanies, as a cosmetic device, the affairs of industrial and financial capitalism, key “victors” of contemporary history. The sentence comes in the 7th fragment of Benjamin’s study and warns historians of the need to “blot out everything they know about the later course of history”, that which inevitably nods to the “victor” (Benjamin, 1968: 256) and makes use of “cultural treasures” when celebrating it. Here we have the document of barbarism.

Regarding the field of contemporary art, German artist and critic Hito Steyerl is categorical in relating fine arts to capital. Taking on the changes that the modes of production have undergone in the past ten years, she states that there is no form of expression more complicit with capitalist modes of production than so-called Fine Arts:

Amongst all other forms of art, fine art has been most closely linked to post-Fordist speculation, with bling, boom, and bust. Contemporary art is no unworldly discipline nestled away in some remote ivory tower. On the contrary, it is squarely placed in the neoliberal thick of things. We cannot dissociate the hype around contemporary art from the shock policies used to defibrillate slowing economies. Such hype embodies the affective dimension of global economies tied to Ponzi schemes, credit addiction, and bygone bull markets. Contemporary art is a brand name without a brand, ready to be slapped onto almost anything, a quick face-lift touting the new creative imperative for places in need of an extreme makeover, the suspense of gambling combined with the stern pleasures of upper-class

boarding school education, a licensed playground for a world confused and collapsed by dizzying deregulation. If contemporary art is the answer, the question is: How can capitalism be made more beautiful?

Steyerl establishes a direct relationship between art and economics in the present moment. The same operation of labor precarization and privatization runs through them, as does a “creative imperative” in their modes and forms of production. Peter Sloterdijk, in response to the question of the contemporary city, states that we live in an era that, as Baudelaire also noted, “the political city dissolved forever into the aesthetic phenomenon”. In this aesthetic defense, there is no clear distinction between art and production; the separation of the two realms, which still prevailed at the outset of the twentieth century, melted into the air of the twenty-first. Gilles Lipovetsky and Jean Serroy, following the research of other sociologists —such as Luc Boltansky and Eve Chiapello, or Pierre-Michel Menger—, define the present as “the era of artistic capitalism”:

The hypermodern era has developed this artistic dimension to such an extent that it has become a major element of corporate development, a sector that creates economic value, an ever more important source of growth and employment. The aesthetic activity of capitalism had previously been minor or peripheral, but it has become an integral part and an exponential factor for growth. The systemic incorporation of this creative and imaginative dimension into sectors of commercial consumption, as well as the formidable economic expansion of the aesthetic domain, make it possible to speak of capitalism’s artistic regime.

Art and production are thus equally documents of barbarism, of a barbarism that confirms the “victory” of transnational businessmen concerned with the aesthetics of their merchandise and producers of lifestyles. In what sense is the city of Donostia-San Sebastián yet another site of artistic capitalism? How does Tabakalera serve as a cosmetic device that allows the city to participate in a global circuit? Is it able to exert any deterritorializing capacity within that circuit?

As its name suggests, Tabakalera was from 1913 to 2001 a Tobacco Factory, home to a common industry in the Iberian Peninsula since the eighteenth century with a primarily female workforce. It is not the first manufacturing space to undergo a regenerative makeover. This is a trend that took off in Europe as a form of investment in the 1990s and 2000s, though it had its precursors in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. In fact, in the Basque Country, although Tabakalera directly embodies economic regeneration—existing within the key economic space of the factory—the main driving force of urgent make-up with respect to capitalist production is the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao (1997, GMB from now on). It is a global referent in the transition from an iron-and-steel-based economy undergoing a financial crisis in the 1980s to a postindustrial economy based on the intense promotion of services, specifically the promotion of leisure tourism for a global middle/upper class—the famous “economic miracle” that is held up as a shining example. With the GMB, the Basque Country enters the era of artistic capitalism, filling the coffers of tourism as a significant economic source operating on a global level: according to the World Tourism Organization tourism represents approximately 12 percent of the gross domestic product, and at the state level, within a wider network of services in Spain, it constitutes in 1990, 55.4 percent of the GDP.

The 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s mark the consolidation of the information era, the beginning of cognitive labor or “info-production”, the relegation of factory labor to developing countries with a precarized workforce, and, in turn, the creation of financially dominant network labor at a global level. Infoproduction takes the main contestatory claims of industrial labor—such as the emphasis on the intellectual qualities of workers, their individuality and creativity—and turns them into the bastion of its modes of production. It is in the so-called New Economy where entrepreneurship replaces the work of

small companies with the designing of individual projects, which raise competitiveness to a universal rule and depend on network economy. Although the latter entered into crisis in 2007, networking has not ceased and has spread as such. This is the moment in which production does not understand spatial limits; enters the obsolete concept of public space or the privacy of home, wherever there is a computer or a cell phone with internet connection and applications associated with network communications.

This transformation in production is inaugurated in Europe and the United States with the opening of global markets under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom, Elmund Kohl in Germany, and Ronald Reagan in the United States, and directly affects cultural policies. Art is considered a consumer good, transforming “the bourgeois notion of [art or] culture into that of a cultural industry of mass projection”, a transformation that ties contemporary art and culture to documents of neoliberal barbarism. In Spain, this turn is reflected in the predominance and influence of the Contemporary Art Fair in Madrid, ARCO, where, unlike other spaces for the circulation and creation of art, such as museums or art workshops, the act of consumption predominates in the appreciation of art. In the context of the Basque Country, the importance of the GMB can be placed in this same realm: although it is a modern art space, develops an image of the Basque Country as the hallmark of a “cultural industry with a massive projection”, associated in turn with the North American brand Frank Gehry.

The transformation of production spaces and activities on the one hand, and this importance that art and culture acquire as an industry on the other, seem to unite the old concept of the factory with the new concept of culture. Octavi Comeron offers us an example of this conceptual proximity through his study of the “Transparent Factory” in Dresden, Germany; a highly technologized factory, within glass

walls, that serves a hybrid function, somewhere between the (Post)Fordist factory, theater, and museum: “In the way of life of late capitalist societies, spectacle, work, and subjectivity are in a state of fusion. The Transparent Factory that extends into our lives has no glass panes that clearly define its limits: this is its defining feature and what determines its phantasmatic character”.

This hybridity is not to be understood as liberation from the disciplinary exercise of modern spaces, as analyzed by Michel Foucault (1977); but rather as an expansion beyond those spaces, now including non-places of discipline, such as the transparent factory, or, as I suggest here, Art Factories, hybrid spaces of postindustrial discipline. As a response to Foucault’s analysis on modern disciplinary societies, Gilles Deleuze stated in “Postscript on the Societies of Control”, the transition we are referring to. Homes, factories, hospitals, prisons, and schools do not mark anymore the spatial limits of the disciplinary exercise; new forms arise, “the ultra-rapid forms of free-floating control that replaced the old disciplines operating in the time frame of a closed system”. This transition coincides with the apparition and massification of internet and cell phones, together with the creation of virtual platforms both for leisure and work; the above mentioned cognitive capitalism.

But before Art Factories were established via specific projects with assigned funding from the municipality, autonomous community, or state in Spain, initiatives emerged in various neighborhoods of the industrial capitals in the Basque Country. Such is the case of a number of projects in the areas surrounding Bilbao and San Sebastián, and in neighboring small towns: individuals and groups of artists/cultural agents led initiatives in abandoned sites, including factories, opening those spaces to artistic and cultural experimentation and offering the results to the communities where they were located. Examples include Arteleku (1987-2014), Kukutza I (1996), Kukutza II

(1998), Kukutza III (1998-2011), Abisal (1996-2011), La Hacería (1997-), and Bilborock (1997-). These spaces, which received varying levels of funding and municipal programming, did not set out to be centers of production in a “cultural industry with massive projection” but rather responded to local needs, promoting the creation, development, and circulation of knowledge.

Among the aforementioned spaces, Arteleku stands out for its geographical proximity to Tabakalera. It was located in an industrial site, formerly a warehouse for animal feed and electric components, converted in 1987 into a space for research and artistic creation, with an important library collection. The project comes close to the Basque 1960s avant-garde aspirations to create, in the words of artist Jorge Oteiza, an “Institute of Aesthetic Research or Laboratory of Comparative Aesthetics [...] for the training and care of sensibilities”. Its closure in 2014, after 27 years and the training of an entire generation of artists in the Gipuzkoa province, coincided with the first activities carried out at Tabakalera. Oteiza is significant here because in 1988, at the height of the crisis of deindustrialization that was sweeping Bilbao, the city’s mayor proposed to the artist that the old Alhóndiga be remodeled and transformed into a true art factory, which would set in motion Oteiza’s aesthetic proposals in the 1960s. The project involved architectural plans drawn up by Juan Daniel Fullaondo and Francisco Javier Sáenz de Oiza, in collaboration with Rafael Moneo. A cube would rise up above the old Alhóndiga, housing not only the art workshops, but also the regional library, a music conservatory, and a Basque museum of contemporary art. This possibility was ruled out in favor of the alliance with Frank Gehry.

Unlike these projects that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, by the beginning of the new millennium, art factories, institutionally known as “Factories of Creation”, show up on the cultural agendas of municipalities, autonomous

communities, and the ministry of culture itself. Thus, larger projects emerge along with larger-scale plans to remodel factory spaces. Such is the case of Laboral: City of Culture (2007) in Gijón, Matadero (2010) in Madrid, and Tabakalera (2016) in San Sebastián. In Barcelona, an entire cultural agenda emerges under the heading of “Fàbriques de Creació”, “a municipal program based on the transformation of old industrial buildings that have fallen into disuse, converting them into new spaces for culture and artistic expression.” The Basque Government also gets behind “Factories of Creation” starting in 2015: “The project consists of reusing old industrial spaces as places for artistic development where hybrid projects will be based on collaboration among creators from different disciplines”.

With the proliferation of factories of creation, critical voices emerge, such as those of Jesús Carrillo and Tere Badia. Carrillo identifies the main evils of these proposals: the proximity of these spaces to a culture of mass projection inscribed in a European-global (tourism) circuit, and the depoliticization of the concept of culture, far from the political engagement of the artistic (neo)-avant-gardes and promoting instead a “display” or “client-based” relationship with the spectator.

Arantza Mariskal Balerdi, head of the Tabakalera multimedia library, noted in 2014 that the main goal of the space was to be a source of cultural creation:

A site for the exchange and transmission of knowledge, through the creation of new learning spaces. It drives the generation of debates and reflections, fueling critical capacities understood as an element of social change. It is a place for *making contemporary culture visible*, complementing and enriching cultural programming in the area in a dynamic way, and *bringing contemporary practices to the people*.

This proposal, shared by most factories of creation, contains a broad conception of culture and seeks to promote a particular relationship with the spectator. The processes of mediation and education that Tabakalera has established

since its opening activities spanning 2011 to 2015 —at odds with Carrillo’s reading of the cultural center— insist on establishing a harmonic and integral relationship with the neighborhood where it is located, the old working-class neighborhood of Egia, and an emphasis on memory, which engages with the Tobacco Factory’s industrial past. I am thinking mainly of the two projects that I will analyze in the following section: Trans’itoak (2013) and Smoke Archivers: A Group of Women Who Work Together (2016-2020).

Beyond these efforts at mediation, a plebeian concept of culture in Tabakalera is mainly threatened by the way in which the 37,000 square meters of the old Tobacco Factory are distributed. That space is shared by the offices of San Sebastián International Film Festival, the Etxepare Basque Institute, the Elías Querejeta Film School (EQZE), the Basque Film Archive, LABe (a gastronomy lab run by the Basque Culinary Center), Kutxa Kultur (the cultural initiative of Kutxabank), and a series of private initiatives (Impact Hub, Basque Living, nana., cultura de diseño, the Arteuparte gallery, the Lantoki photo studio, the Tobacco Days bookstore, and the hotel One Shot Tabakalera House). Thus, the space houses heterogenous projects backed by public and private funding and framed by a conception of creative work that is tied to global business interests, be it the promotion of culture through global tourism (as with the San Sebastián International Film Festival, the development of a gastronomy industry that is of global interest, or the One Shot Tabakalera House hotel) or the promotion of a culture of postindustrial work that drives the search for decentralized funding under the canopy of “entrepreneurship”. All of the private initiatives in the old factory rent the space they use and are marked out by doors and walls in their use of the space.

We could argue that Tabakalera is —like the Transparent Factory for Comeron— a non-place that fuses entertainment and artistic proposals with post-industrial production, and

even, if private initiatives are taken into account, a non-place that exists in much the same imaginary as the Shopping Center. A passerby can occupy the square meters assigned to a certain public space (the entrance plaza, the exhibitions, and the library) but then enter to observe the display of a culture that is for sale, or to observe the promotion of archival work that goes on behind closed doors (the Etxepare Basque Institute, the Basque Film Archive, EQZE). The mediation work built into the exhibitions and the public library could also be understood as existing in the framework of a postindustrial politics of the precarization of labor, as they depend on subcontracted companies to provide the human capital to manage those spaces. Proof of this precarity is the seven-month strike that library employees (subcontracted by the company Sedena) carried out between 2018 and 2019 citing the “workplace precarity”, which was only resolved with “an improvement in the working conditions of the group of educators: a 32.3 percent salary increase along with other economic advances; a shorter workday than the one currently in place for employees; and various improvements regarding shifts, particularly on weekends” (my translation).

Labor precarity at Tabakalera is accompanied by instability in the global vision of its project, which resulted in the resignation of its directors in 2018. Haritz Azkarraga, a technical industrial engineer, had been the director of the center, and Ane Rodríguez, who had an extensive background working with the most prominent Spanish and Basque contemporary art centers and art fairs (Arteleku, Zinemaldia, Manifesta, MUSAC, ARCO, Matadero), was in charge of cultural management; both had held their positions since 2012. They were replaced by Edurne Ormazabal, a renowned journalist and the face of the San Sebastián International Film Festival, as General Director, and Clara Montero Tellechea as Cultural Director. This leadership profile is more aligned with the promotion of a mass cultural industry with greater control by the Basque Government,

given the cultural director’s experience in public mediation projects run by the Basque Government. It is worth noting that the center’s management team has no personnel specialized in contemporary art or in the hybrid category of “contemporary culture”, a specialization that is relegated to lower ranks of the administrative hierarchy, to the Exhibitions, Artists’ space, and Public Programs Area Manager (Oier Etxeberria), the Cinema and Audiovisual Area Manager (Víctor Uriarte), and the Education Head (Leire San Martín).

3. Contested Critical Space

Tabakalera’s mediation and education projects engage with the surrounding Egia neighborhood, delving into archival resources rich in nuance and critical perspective on the very topics in question in this article: public policies and the transformation of working/cultural institutions. Such is the case of *Transitoak* (2013) and *Smoke Archivers: A Group of Women Who Work Together* (2016-2020). I focus on these two projects because they privilege the critical perspective that I am interested in, particularly the former, and the latter does critical and creative work regarding the transformation of the industrial factory into the art factory.

While I do not have space here to detail all of the issues involved in these projects, I do wish to highlight several important aspects. *Transitoak* is one of the first projects carried out by the Tabakalera mediation team, before its official opening, and it sought to activate a relationship with neighborhood residents, not to pedagogically and hierarchically explain what was to be done at Tabakalera, but to learn more about residents’ concerns regarding certain spaces in Egia that had fallen into disuse. It is an urban education project with a central activity: #EgiaMapa (Egia map), a tour of the neighborhood, hand in hand with its neighbors, in tandem with an inquiry into how abandoned spaces could be revitalized. Those

sites are marked with signs that suggest what they could be in the future. Unfortunately, these projects did not transform into actual urban interventions, but they did pose the question as a way of activating imaginaries of change.

Smoke Archivers: A Group of Women Who Work Together (2016-2020), a more complex mediation project, is made up of a wealth of activities and to this day is positioned to create an archive of the old Tobacco Factory. It consists of a group of women from the Tabakalera mediation and education department, headed by Leire San Martín, meeting and collaborating with a group of women who used to work at the factory. These meetings would seem to have several aims: 1) to create a record of photographs, interviews, and stories about women's experiences in the factory, called the "Cigarette Maker Archive"; 2) to involve the workers in Tabakalera's foundational activities through a creative project that resulted in twelve filmed episodes titled *Mañana Goodbye* (2015-2017), directed by Marion Cruz and Pablo Marte, and various extension activities in the program titled "After Leaving the Factory" coordinated by Miren Jaio; and 3) to exhibit that work to the public, particularly the archival work, presenting the recent history of the center's space with the exhibit "Smoke Archivers" designed by artist Sahatsa Jauregui (July 6, 2017 to July 5, 2018). In addition, the public programs team, headed by Oier Etxeberria, created a conference where experts in various areas investigated tobacco production, questioning its colonial roots, "Kearen politikak. Bizigarriak: zirkulazioa eta euforia" [Smoke Politics. Stimulants: Circulation and Euphoria], which resulted in the publication of a book.

The archival work and exhibit design were carried out collectively, with proposals coming from both groups when it came to classifying the material and questioning the primary ways in which narrative and history are constructed. As for the twelve episodes of the film *Mañana*

Goodbye, they also carry out a creative and critical-thinking exercise tied to memory. This memory is not embedded in a search for the absolute truth but instead appeals to the imagination, to testimonies, and to fragmentation as the constitutive axis of memory. It is made up of three types of materials: 1) interviews with the workers in their homes, including one in which a worker reads from her personal diary; 2) an activity with parodic and dramatic undertones in which a play is simulated with the workers; and 3) a film montage that shows scenes from a varied cast of films in the history of cinema, as well as from the film archives documenting the functioning of the tobacco factory, organized in thematic axes for each chapter. These materials are not shown separately; they are woven together into a *collage* exercise that reinforces the idea that history feeds off of multiple experiences of a diverse nature and is always in construction.

This film is a contemporary update to the most important cinematic explorations of the history of workers, such as Harun Farocki's homage to one of the first films by the Lumière brothers, *Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik* (1995). Farocki's main hypothesis in his visual essay comprises the idea that cinema inaugurates an era of control over people's desires outside the working spaces. With the beginning of industrial cinema, there are no clear limits anymore between the inside and the outside of factories; all realms are, according to Farocki, keen to be shaped by the bourgeoisie desire of leisure. Another important referent in *Mañana Goodbye* is the film *Numax presenta* (1980), by Joaquim Jordá, a film made by the workers of the Numax factory in Barcelona. It narrates their attempts at self-management and control of the company when faced with the precarization of labor and the imminent closure of the factory due to the restructuring of production and manufacturing in the late 1970s. Very much ingrained in the partisan efforts of the period, during the so-called transition to democracy in Spain, the film lets

the workers explain their working conditions and demands. These two films are key to understand *Mañana Goodbye*, not only in terms of the content displayed but also in terms of the chosen filmic syntax. *Mañana Goodbye* is a montage of an extensive filmic archive, as it was the case with Farocki's film too, and it includes the vision of the women workers, quoting *Numax presenta*. In line with this second film, *Mañana Goodbye* also establishes a rich dialogue between cinema and theater blurring the division between life and dreams, life and theater. *Mañana Goodbye* displays an open po(i)etic license in this sense.

What one could not find in Farocki's and Jordá's films and is key on Marion Cruza and Pablo Marte's vision of the relationship between art, cinema and production is an open feminist and postcolonial perspective. Quotes to the work of Cuban filmmaker Sara Gómez or the feminist work of Marguerite Duras and Chantal Akerman enrich what otherwise would have been a conventional approach to problematizing the closure of a predominantly female-run factory in the Iberian Peninsula. Furthermore, *Mañana Goodbye* is also very sensitive to the closure of a factory and the foundation of a cultural center in the Basque Country. The film shows footage of important and controversial urban transformations of metropolitan areas in the region —epitomized in the Ocharcoaga neighborhood in Bilbao—, and considers Jorge Oteiza's failed attempts at creating a public space for promoting a laboratory of aesthetics.

In brief, Cruza and Marte select sequences of multiple films and cultural references, and structure a rich dialogue, in the form of an open-ended *collage*, by creating thematic capsules around the main issues related to the conversion of the Tobacco Factory into a cultural center. These issues include: a problematization on (post)modern disciplinary spaces, colonial violence in tobacco production, the place of women as producers in sharp contrast to the romantic figure of

“Carmen”, the relationship between the machine and the worker, desire as the motor of (post)industrial production, the end of an industrial era marked by factory production, and the place of culture in supplanting this loss. There is no male *voice-over* directing this kaleidoscope of sequences and experiences, but rather the voice of a woman weaving together experiences and reflections, just as these had been written in a personal diary.

Mañana Goodbye closes with the opening of Tabakalera, as the group of women workers are the first to enter the space. The ending of the series shows a mass of people entering the center and inhabiting the space, a number that has barely been repeated since. Regarding the efforts at mediation and education, Tabakalera's main problem might be just that: how to make that ground continually inhabitable when the space is shared with so many private initiatives.

In line with the critical and creative work displayed in *Mañana Goodbye*, I would consider Tere Badia's hopes for art factories in general. Badia embraces art factories' hybrid condition, its quality as a “third space”. However, such synthesis between the factory and the art center should not be understood as censoring opposites, on the contrary, as a space “where controversy and the inclusion of disparate visions are considered its fundamental parts”. Badia is very clear when demanding the need for the art factory not to become only the justification of big investments in cultural “macro-projects”. Her hope is for art factories to become true laboratories where the arts, history, and creation meet in order to reshape and create anew, akin to local needs: “It is a matter of enabling a complex and counter-hegemonic space that could facilitate a new context to redefine the functional standards that have already been assumed and memorized; and to distribute a learned knowledge so that we can retake all things, revisit and reinterpret them because history is done in the writing”.

4. Addenda

In 2020, Donostia-San Sebastian inaugurated a new factory, Adegí's *Fabrika Nueva Cultura* [Faktry New Culture] with a Basque "k". It replaces the factory as a space that produces commercial or cultural goods with a space of modern architecture that produces *networks* among companies promoting greater flexibility and competitiveness. In its advertising campaign Fabrika uses a sports-based outlook, and endorses values of effort and teamwork to reach young people. Here the long but telling voice-over illustrating the new transition:

Fabrika: a high-performance center for the cultural transformation of business. We are rooted in hard work, loyalty, trust, and teamwork. This essence drives us to be better every day, to transform our surroundings, and to always go above and beyond. It is not an easy path. Therefore, working together is the only way to reach our goal, because the present demands that we view the future with different eyes, that will take us to different places. Paths in new directions that will lead us all to the same place, a shared future in which we are stronger, assisted by coaches who guide and inspire us and allow us connect with that new generation of talent that seeks innovative, more creative, and participatory models and company cultures. And all this in a building that reflects this new outlook, a flexible building capable of changing directions to adapt to the needs and opportunities of a world in constant motion. A building that combines the emotion that defines our essence with constructive rationality to reflect coherence, closeness, versatility, and respect, both for the environment and for people. A building in Donostia that opens to the world as an example of how to drive us forward, to improve productivity, redouble the strength of businesses, and inspire a different and exciting way of competing and constructing the new business culture: Fabrika.

Here is the Basque version of the Transparent Factory, or more precisely, the Transparent Non-Factory if we consider its lack of production in terms of material goods. The building is as transparent as the Volkswagen luxurious factory in Dresden, but we do not see any production at work. There are no workers in white overalls. Instead, (young) people chatting with a cup of coffee within glassy walls, and in front of a computer, adding names

and references to lists of companies in need of expansion.

2020 has also seen the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic. Cultural and workplaces have turned into yet less identifiable spaces. What was previously the intimate space of home, only disrupted by the apparition of the television and the internet in the second half of the twentieth century —main devices disciplining leisure—, now cannot be identified only by the conquest of intimacy; the hiper-expansion of the so-called remote work has blurred the division between leisure and work at home. Homes have become the new non-places with a heightened drive to expand disciplinary control over all workers and non-workers alike. Fabrika, on the other hand, stands as the place to cheat-chat and hang-out. Tabakalera, with its 37,000 square meters, should prioritize the expansion of critical exercises like Transitoak and Smoke Archivers and broaden its horizons so as to not only gather spectators seeking concrete cultural experiences but to become the public space of (dis)encounters *par excellence*.

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