

AMALIA PICA

A \cap B \cap C
(LINE)

13TH OCTOBER – 17TH NOVEMBER

In a conversation a while ago – I think we were looking at some holiday photos – I said to Amalia Pica how hard it was to take a picture that didn't look like a picture that had already been taken. She replied, quickly and with some passion, 'Welcome to the life of an artist in the twenty-first century!'

Being a quasi-journalist, I wrote this down. It's in many ways an ironic comment for Pica to have said, because that problem – the ease by which we often see configurations of reality as ready-made images – is not a stumbling block to her practice, but one tackled head on by her work. In her installations, drawings and performances she looks at how we visually communicate and pass on information to others. What are our means of non-verbal communication, and how can these ways themselves be pictured? Public sculpture, copied images, mathematical models and inherited gestures all re-appear in her work as means by which people share histories and knowledge. Through them, she shows how people come together in a kind of sociality of knowing.

In *A \cap B \cap C (Line)*, 2013 -read as 'A intersection B intersection C' - the piece on view here, a group of performers pick up the Perspex shapes that line the wall, and arrange them into a composition in front of the audience, who are invited to sit in the bleacher-like stands facing the shapes. Pica has not determined the compositions beforehand; her main stipulation is that no more than one shape can stand alone at any one time. Such a requirement derives from the set theory that gives the work its name: the title denotes the places where set A and set B come together, and where set B and set C come together. They are a performative manifestation of Venn diagrams, and indeed this work carries on from the artwork that Pica showed at the Venice Biennale in 2011. *Venn Diagrams (Under the Spotlight)* investigated a specific episode in the history of such models: when they were banned under the Argentinean dictatorship of 1976–1983, perhaps, Pica surmises, because they provided a means of picturing cooperation. In *Venn Diagrams*, two sensors were triggered when there was a critical mass of people in the room, with the two overlapping lights representing, visually, the amassing of people that would have been illicit. *A \cap B \cap C (Line)* leaves that history behind (that history which is also the Argentinean artist's history) to look more directly at the ability of forms not just to represent but to literally create cooperation among participants. Here the Venn diagrams are given bodily form, animated by performers as they coalesce into images before the eyes of the spectators.

The geometric forms stacked against the wall nod to histories of avant-garde abstraction, and the rise and fall of the utopian aspirations of that period. As the performers choose shapes and arrange themselves into patterns, different compositions appear – becoming an image for some thirty seconds – and then just as quickly dissolving. Moreover, in the same way that these images build upon *Venn diagrams*, they also take part in a further chain. When Pica showed a version of this work (*A \cap B \cap C*) at the Museo Tamayo in Mexico City this past spring, she asked a photographer to record the performances in black and white 35mm film, a medium inadequate to documenting the colours and their intersections. From the resulting photographs, Pica made a series of sculptures, to be shown later this year at the Kunsthalle Lisbon, based on what she imagines the colours had been: an exercise in subjectivity, as memory butts up against at the perfection of captured images. From the multiple possibilities of combinations here, Pica thus depicts how forms come together, but also the fragility of such moments of intersection.

MELISSA GRONLUND