



The Art of Displacement: La Menesunda at MAMBA

10th May 2016 By [Erika Teichert](#)

Erika Teichert visits the reconstruction of Marta Minujín and Roberto Santantorín's 1965 work, which sought to redefine what constitutes a work of art.

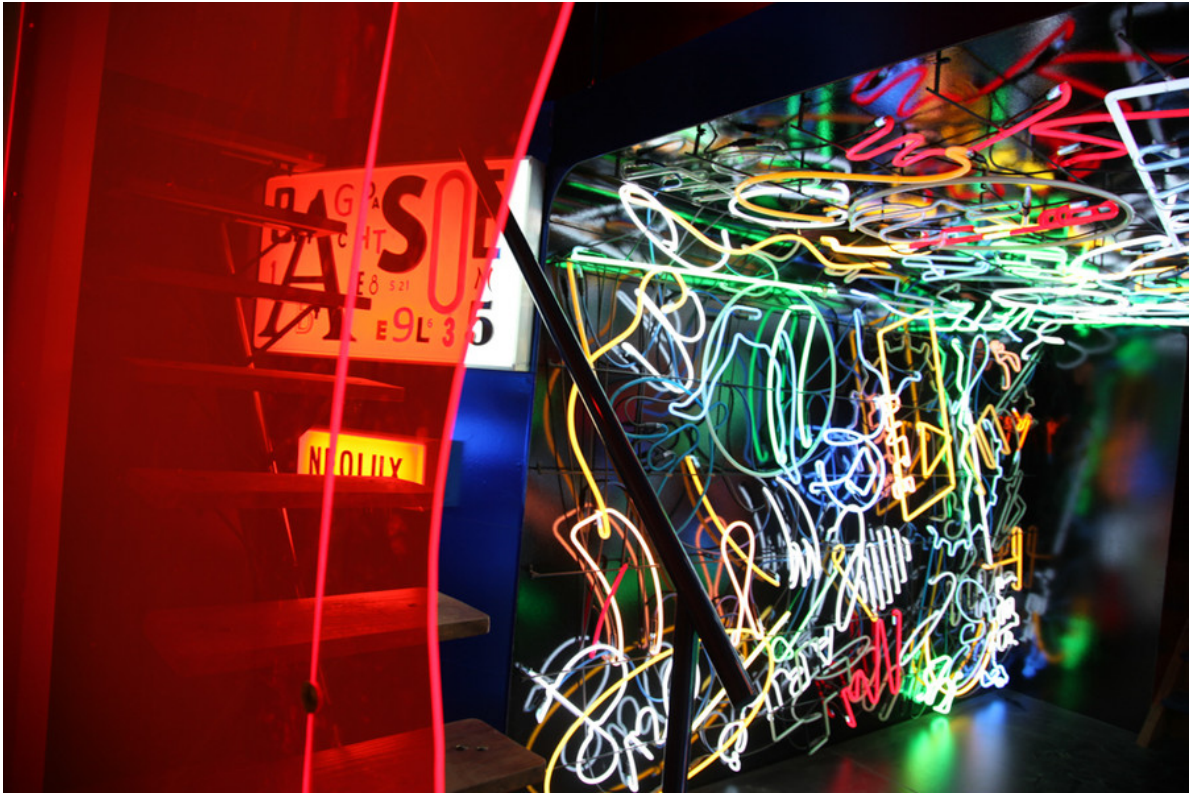


Buenos Aires' Museum of Modern Art (MAMBA) is currently hosting an historical reconstruction of 'La Menesunda', a work originally created in 1965 at Instituto Torcuato Di Tella by Marta Minujín and Roberto Santantorín, with the collaboration of Pablo Suárez, [David Lamelas](#), Rodolfo Prayón, Floreal Amor, and Leopoldo Maler. 'La Menesunda, según Marta Minujín' is also expected to open at New York's Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in 2017.

From the outset, we are told that 'La Menesunda' –just as its very name suggests– is a messy business. Neither performance, nor happening. Neither sculpture, nor architecture. "A total work of art," reads the description on the wall.

The doors opened. We were allowed in one at a time. The exhibition assistant indicated the first few steps into 'La Menesunda'. "The rest should be clear, there are some signs along the way." And then, "make sure you don't turn back on your steps, just keep going forward."

I stepped in through a human-shaped hole on a fluorescent wall. And off I went.



I went up and down, in and out of rooms of all shapes, colours, and textures. I encountered places where I had to fight my way out. Others where pressing the right button would open the door to the next room. I found myself inside a freezer and amidst a storm of confetti. I spun a cage and walked over a floor of such an unusual softness that almost made my knees give in. I stumbled upon a couple arguing in bed and walked into a room made of make up.

All the while I felt dazed, confused, curious, awkward, uncomfortable, trapped.

But it was over before I knew it –an experience blurred by the emotions that it triggers. It was in fact so fleeting that as soon as I emerged from it I told myself that I'd have to arrange a second visit to be able to write a review.

But I'd be missing the point.

As part of the Argentine avant-garde, 'La Menesunda' sought to break with traditional models of art by redefining that which constitutes the work of art. And it did so by placing the spectator at its very centre.



The predictability and familiarity of the museum space disappears. Spectators become actors. Looking becomes doing. And the *raison d'être* of the artwork no longer lies in the work itself, but rather in our reactions to it. And our reactions are no longer a product of contemplation and aesthetics, but one of instinct and phenomenology.

When it opened in 1965, 'La Menesunda' was generally regarded as a frivolous escape: a ludicrous outing for the eccentric elite. And maybe in some ways it is. But it's also an ever-pertinent testament to the capability of art to be political: to test us, displace us, make us think differently, feel differently, and force us to act accordingly.

*La Menesunda is on at **MAMBA** (Av. San Juan 350, San Telmo) until 22nd May. Open Tues-Fri, 11am-7pm, Sat-Sun 11am-8pm. Mondays closed. Entrance \$20.*

All photos courtesy of MAMBA.