



MOCA:

Re/Claiming Art
Power
Ideas and Vision
in an Ethnically
Plural Community



INTRODUCTION

THE POLITICS OF CULTURE: SPACES IN TIMES OF MUTATIONS

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What kind of moment is this, in which the collective thinking is *Re/Claiming Art, Power, Ideas and Vision in an Ethnically Plural Community*? It is a moment of conjuncture with its historical specificity, which, although exhibiting similarities and continuities with other moments, is not the same (Hall, 2009).

Late in 2013, the City of North Miami learned from the media that the Board of Trustees it had appointed for its Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) had been in secret negotiation with another museum in another city to move MOCA and its art collection out of North Miami and merge it with the latter. After several denials by the Board, the evidence, like the shockwaves of a mega earthquake, stunned not only the citizens of North Miami but many professionals in the art world. How could they do this? Where had this ever been done or heard of before? Why had leaders in the museum community not made any public comments about this unprecedented activity? Did any of the MOCA former Board's actions conform to the Ethics and Standards governing the field? Why were funding institutions persuaded to remove grants they had already allocated to the museum? Was the decision unanimous among the thirty-five board members including those who reside outside the United States? How could the receiving sister city accept this unethically acquired bounty? Ultimately, the citizens of North Miami wanted to know: Why Us?

The combination of what is different and similar defines not only the specificity of the moment, but also the specificity of the question and our attempt to make sense of the senseless predicament in which the Museum of Contemporary Art of North Miami found itself.

It was grossly unfair that a small city which had been spending a million and half dollars a year to support a Board that never cared for its citizens was faced with the dismantling of its most important future asset. The myopic vision of a certain privileged class, the senselessness of the intense, inexorable damage to the institution and the former Board's enigmatic refusal to be held accountable all raised the uncomfortable suspicion that perhaps, after all, the art world has no genuine order.