

## Santiago Sierra: HOMO SACER and the Politics of the Other

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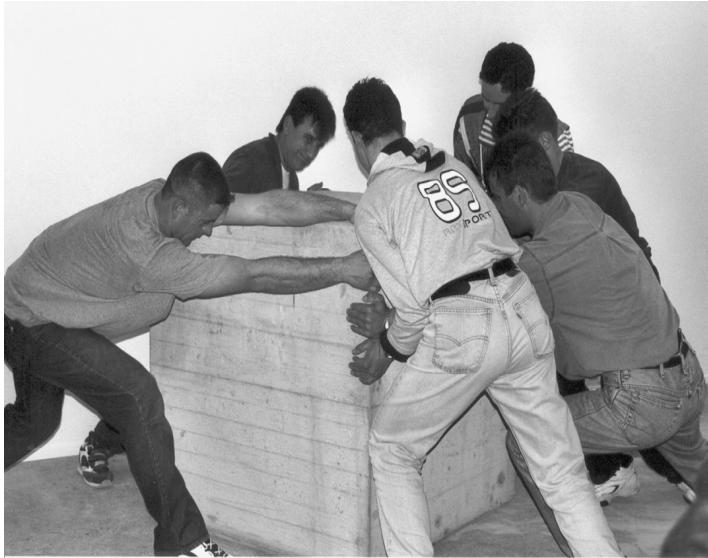
We may say broadly that free thought is the best of all safeguards against freedom. Managed in a modern style, the emancipation of the slave's mind is the best way of preventing the emancipation of the slave. Teach him to worry about whether he wants to be free, and he will not free himself.<sup>1</sup>

In an arresting echo of Chesterson's reflection on slavery, the psychoanalytic model formulated by Jacques Lacan outlines that as infants we are attached to our mothers, much like the slave who is attached to a concept of freedom. The infant eventually obtains its own conception of identity through the realization that it is not a bodily extension of the mother. This shift occurs the moment the infant sees itself in the mirror as a constituted whole apart from her.<sup>2</sup> Yet in Chesterson's logic, the slave will never attain the freedom granted to the child in Lacanian thinking. Freedom is made unattainable by the slave's strictly defined position, unrecognised by the law but simultaneously defined by it and enslaved to it.

In the realm of contemporary capitalist existence, human identity is configured along political, social and economic axes that mark the individual as either included or excluded. Social inclusion stipulates that the populace has to be documented on paper in order to exercise full political autonomy as citizens - outlined, for example, in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.<sup>3</sup> In order to exercise democratic rights, there must be, according to Roman archaic law, *habeas corpus ad subjiciendum* [a body in which to show].<sup>4</sup> Those who lack documentation of their existence within the system, namely refugees and undocumented migrant workers, are outside the rule of law yet most significantly impacted by it. Their bodies, undocumented and therefore lacking access to basic human rights and protections, have become transformed into modern day slaves.

In *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, Slavoj Žižek reflects on the excluded individual's marginal position within society, stating "the ultimate goal of radical politics is gradually to displace the limit of social exclusions, empowering the excluded agents (sexual and ethnic minorities) by creating marginal spaces in which they can articulate and question their identity".<sup>5</sup> It is this search for identity that fuels the artwork of Spanish born, Mexican based artist Santiago Sierra (b.1966). In his photographed installations, constructs of power and otherness become a caveat for exploring the cracks in the political and economic systems of the West. Sierra re-contextualises the stateless individual, whether migrant worker, illegal alien or refugee, as a slave and subsequently unveils this figure as the capitalist, modern day *homo sacer*, a term from Roman law that designates one who is outside the law and therefore may be killed without consequence.

The antithesis to the facile and arguably elitist relational aesthetics of Nicolas Bourriaud, Santiago Sierra stepped onto the international art scene in the late 1990s, bringing the philosophical concept of *antagonism* together with the social concerns of *Arte Povera* and minimalist reduction.<sup>6</sup> Pairing these artistic references, Sierra exposes Western culture and ideology to its barest self in a way that no artist has been able to do as effectively in our epoch of mass reproduction. His practice echoes and exposes the workings of capitalism; all of his works employ hired individuals, whose status as "excluded" complicates the boundary between artistic collaboration and exploitation. He typically employs disenfranchised migrant workers and refugees, paying them substandard wages to perform heavy bodily labour. The remuneration of the worker is a performance that critiques the global capitalist structure of political exclusion that enables him in the first place to engage with migrant workers as human "art supplies".<sup>7</sup> In this



1. Santiago Sierra, *3 cubes of 100cm on each side moved 700cm*, Kunsthalle Sankt Gallen, Sankt Gallen, Switzerland, April 2002. Photograph: Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Switzerland.

framework, Sierra has no qualms about using the human body as an object because the work is about the conditions that facilitate the utter objectification of the stateless individual. Sierra capitalises on the economic status of the disenfranchised in order to sell his photographic documentations in the commercial gallery for upwards of 10,000 U.S. dollars.<sup>8</sup>

Sierra claims that he uses the body as a mere tool for the expenditure of energy in order to make his point regarding the unbalanced power structures of capitalist economics. He exploits the body's capacity for labour to a degree that forces the viewer to confront the reality that, "persons are objects of the State

and of Capital and are employed as such".<sup>9</sup> He goes on to comment, "I don't use [human bodies] any differently than I would any other material. They can be ordered, altered and drawn".<sup>10</sup> This approach to his subjects is well illustrated by the work *3 Cubes of 100 cm On Each Side Moved 700 cm* (2002), wherein six male Albanian refugees, without the right to work in Sankt Gallen, Switzerland, were paid to move solid concrete cubes around the gallery space [Pl.1]. Illustrating how easily the body can be exploited for labour, Sierra paid only a small pittance for the exhausting work. These men did not work toward an aesthetic goal; they were simply instructed to move the blocks around the space. In this highly charged collision of visibility and futility, the men's bodies were marked for their otherness and lack of social value.

### Marked Exclusions

The concepts of *antagonism* pervades Sierra's art of critique by way of his unveiling those that do not exist within the state by way of visually amplifying their lack of presence through illegal labour as installation art. Contemporary political, capitalist and artistic realities diagnose the migrant/refugee as a slave based on their ability to be excluded from the polis whilst maintaining inclusion through the act of illegal labour. Alain Badiou argues that each time a person is forced to hold the spot of the excluded there is a greater potential for the production of evil.<sup>11</sup> The stateless individual dichotomously assumes the position of being simultaneously on the outside of the art world (by the demarcation of its otherness) and inside the art market (use of cheap, illegal labour). Sierra's physical and conceptual engagement with the body of the disenfranchised labourer allows for what Badiou calls, the production of evil in a capitalist (and perhaps ethical) sense because the art world, in its postmodern bliss, takes Sierra's marking of the migrant as a contradiction because they have no body that can be marked or valued. Ironically, this contradiction renders the stateless visible, presenting an opportunity for profit in the art market. Logically so, the excluded are undocumented by the polis and illegally reside in foreign countries which has the right to control its borders and employment markets. This paradox transitions this investigation of Sierra's practice to then turn to the pressing issue of the migrant as a marked exclusion which is set outside the law for that of martial law in Giorgio

Agamben's analysis of the excluded body of the stateless being, *HOMO SACER: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*.

Agamben's treatise takes as its starting point the figure of the *homo sacer*, a term borrowed from archaic Roman law, in which it designated one who is cast outside of the law, stripped of all civil rights and who "may be killed and not yet sacrificed". According to Agamben's text, the term *sacer* presents us with an enigma of the sacred that, "before or beyond the religious, constitutes the first paradigm of the political realm of the West".<sup>12</sup> Otherwise stated, the *homo sacer* acts as a historical/contemporary mechanism for the morally acceptable exclusion of certain bodies from the political order based on their legal positioning within the state (i.e. their 'otherness'). Agamben goes on to explain that through the 'other':

The realm of bare life, which is originally situated at the margins of political order, gradually begins to coincide with the political realm, and exclusion and inclusion, ... enters into a zone of irreducible indistinction.<sup>13</sup>

In relation to Sierra's practice of using the surface of the migrant/refugee's body as his own art material, this zone of indistinction produces what Agamben calls the political 'state of exception'. Sierra, in our case, obtains the ability to suspend sanctioned law for that of martial law appropriating Agamben's role of "sovereign power", disregarding normative laws such as those against the procurement of narcotics and the solicitation of prostitution for the greater purpose of his artistic production in the following works: *160 cm Line Tattooed over the Backs of 4 People* (2000).<sup>14</sup> As a contemporary parallel to Agamben's discussion of the archaic *homo sacer*, the undocumented individual who is on the margins of society may be physically, emotionally and socially compromised without penalty but cannot be sacrificed for the state, and in this case, for art. In effect, Sierra can compromise the mental, physical, social and emotional health of his chosen subjects for the sake of illegal labour because they do not exist within the legal parameters of the state in which the art is taking place. This lack of sacrificial worth is due to the social non-existence of the undocumented worker within the *polis*; the state cannot intervene with any of its social mechanisms of the law in order to 'punish' for the sake of state solidarity because according to Agamben, they are already socially dead existing outside the political order.

In his analysis of aesthetics and politics, Jacques Rancière argues that the function of organisational systems such as the law (or, in this case, the art world) is to divide the community into self-contained groups, clearly demarcating those who belong to the political order and those who do not. Rancière points out that this division into factions actively occurred long before there was "a prior aesthetic division between the visible and invisible, the audible and inaudible, the sayable and unsayable".<sup>15</sup> If Sierra's art, in this analysis of power and politics, "interrupts the distribution of the sensible by supplementing it with those who have no part in the perceptual coordinates", then the artist is not only making a critical comment on the exploitive mechanics of the capitalist system, but also, subsequently, of the commercial art world's capitalist practices.<sup>16</sup> In terms of Sierra's contemporary installations, this notion of unveiling that, which is invisible, allows the human body to traverse normative art historical representations in figurative art. The migrant/refugee becomes a site of artistic emancipation unwittingly breaking down previous ways the canon of art history has experienced the body. More importantly, Rancière argues in relation to the issue of the *homo sacer* and consequently Sierra's practice that:

Those who have no name, who remain invisible and inaudible, can only penetrate the police [political] order via a mode of *subjectivization* that transforms the aesthetic coordinates of the community by implementing the universal presupposition of politics: we are all equal.<sup>17</sup>

This notion of a universal equality in art is a falsehood in light of the contemporary practice of Santiago Sierra who engages, installs and photographs the body of the *homo sacer*, subjecting a body to a bio-politically charged existence under the law of the sovereign rather than that of the state.

### Labour

As the 'sovereign power' within the framework of Agamben's discussion of the *homo sacer*, Sierra is at once the "perpetrator of the crime and casualty within that scheme"<sup>18</sup> In other words, Sierra assumes the role of the 'sovereign' because he engages with his subjects on the level of capitalist exploiter, but at the same time, points out that their socially dead existence within the *polis* can be reversed by overriding governmental bans at will when they are utilized for illegal labour within the confines of the art world by way of Sierra's success in the art market. In order to be included as an art object in Sierra's artistic practice, the body must contradict its own position as 'other' within the state by performing labour when it legally cannot. Sierra paradoxically decrees the state of exception whereby he embodies the 'law' and is able to override moral and legal codes of conduct under the caveat of 'making art'. On a theoretical level, Sierra's work makes a literal artistic appearance of the *homo sacer* by the exploitation of the migrant as both subject and object within his art because he as, "...the sovereign is the point of indistinction between violence and law, the threshold on which violence passes over into law and passes over into violence", ideologically allowing these actions to be usurped by the capitalist model of the Western art market.<sup>19</sup>

Further conceptual and ideological tensions are raised by Sierra's practice of displaying and selling photographic documentations of his performances. By using the photograph, Sierra commodifies the migrant who lacks inclusion in order to be visible enough to be consumed. What results from these photographic exposures of his installation practices is that Sierra is able to defy the logic of binary oppositions of value and non-value in order to garner notoriety from galleries and collectors alike because he places a spotlight on the darkest depths of capitalist existence: those excluded from its protection. The value of the art market is transformed by Sierra's use of the human body because he brings value to that which has none, blurring the boundaries between included and excluded. Sierra not only utilizes the body of the migrant for hard, exploitive labour, but he also claims to exploit for advocacy by way of his aesthetic and conceptual revelation of Lacan's conception of the Real *vis-à-vis* the body of the migrant.<sup>20</sup> Ultimately, this paradoxical situation creates a work which relies on the power of dichotomous structures. Therefore, we cannot, for the purposes of this investigation, attempt to brand the artist as an advocate by way of his political critique envisaged through the edifice of art history. Rather, we must navigate through the tensions of the *homo sacer* in Sierra's work in order to question the autonomous character of the art world advanced by the capitalist market that sustains its purpose. Most importantly, it is critical to read Sierra's performances as paradoxes, for it is not he who created, nor maintains, the Western capitalist market that sustains global exploitation. Sierra at once exposes the capitalist system of inequality and simultaneously reaps the benefits of its protection, thus, securing a position within Agamben's discussion of the *homo sacer*. More strikingly, Sierra aims at provoking his public through the exposure of the variable forms of the capitalist exploitation of human rights of a vulnerable labour pool and invokes *jouissance*, as perversely, we are glad we sit on this side of the screen.

### Physical Disfigurement

In 2000, Sierra achieved a new level of notoriety within and outside the art world with his performance and documentation of a work entitled *160 cm Line Tattooed on 4 People* [PI.2]. In this solicited tattoo happening, Sierra set out to test the limits of labour not only for the sake of sensation and monetary gain in the commercial gallery, but also to comment on the traumatic



2. Santiago Sierra, *160 cm line tattooed on 4 people*, El Gallo Arte Contemporáneo, Salamanca, Spain, December 2000.  
Photograph: Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Switzerland.

condition of contemporary society. Serving as the raw material for the piece were four migrant Eastern European women living and working as prostitutes in Spain, who agreed to let Sierra tattoo a horizontal line across their backs in return for payment. The ethical problem of this arrangement is further complicated when considering that these women, like the Albanian refugees, were hired by Sierra without a contract, however the women were not paid in monetary terms like the Albanian men but rather by way of his knowledge of their addiction to heroin he provided each one of them with a dose worth at the time valued at approximately 67 U.S. Each of these women would have had to sell

themselves for a couple of days in order to pay for that single dose. Thus it seems likely that the women accepted the bodily disfigurement out of desperation – they do not make enough money to support their habits; without any access to the power afforded by the state, they are left no choice but to be exploited by its conventions, parallel to the situation of the slave in Chesterson's who worries more about the concept of freedom rather than actually being free. In this case, the displaced existence of these women is comforted by the use of drugs, thereby limiting their motivation to be free of the sex-trade industry that has been forced upon them due to their migrant status and lack of recognition within various European states.

The application of a tattoo under such conditions, in the discourse of power, could be theoretically likened to cruel and unusual treatment of the bio-political sphere of the concentration camp. Although the use of tattoo for identification purposes varies within World War II and may not be applicable within the entire history of the German concentration camp, Sierra's minimal effort on the backs of these women calls to mind this sphere of traumatic subjectivising of the body which occurred at in some camps. According to the artist, "having a tattoo is normally a personal choice. But when you do it under 'remunerated' conditions, this gesture becomes something that seems awful, degrading – it perfectly illustrates the tragedy of our social hierarchies".<sup>21</sup> When Sierra marks the migrant/refugee with tattoo in order to show her disenfranchised position of drug addict and her illegal existence as prostitute, he justifies his practice as the sovereign overriding the state of exception within Agamben's theoretical discussion of the *homo sacer*. "The tattoo," as put forth by Sierra, "is not the problem. The problem is the existence of social conditions that allow me to make this work. You could make this tattooed line a kilometre long, using thousands and thousands of willing people".<sup>22</sup> In the short term, Sierra offers a quick fix to those on the fringes of the economic spectrum, but at what cost will the body be exploited? There is little onus on the art world for fostering such artistic practice in the open market because it is directly attached to the Western construct of economic power, thereby, superseding the moral obligation of the artist to that of the law. In essence, Sierra makes the link between the tattoo as a self-controlled inscription of identity and, conversely, the administration of it for drugs, likened to a cut that firmly grounds these women in their own reality of servitude for sale as *homo sacer*. No longer signifying inclusion within the symbolic order, the tattoo in Sierra's practice instead functions as a marker of 'otherness'.

Although regarded in Western contemporary popular culture as a marker of our materiality and identity in visual culture in the twenty-first century, some religions such as the

Judaism and the Muslim faith have historically viewed the tattoo as a form of bodily disfigurement as opposed to the Maori conception of it and therefore, one could look upon the forcing of a tattoo as sacrilegious and demeaning. The concept of cutting ones flesh is linked to tattoo by Zizek, who notes that, "...The 'postmodern' passion for semblance ends up in a violent return to the passion for the Real".<sup>23</sup> In other words, the drive toward representation and identity within the contemporary artist winds up exposing a brutal truth about our existence as being grounded in fantasy, trauma and terror, which is delivered *vis a vis* the media and high culture.<sup>24</sup> Zizek expands this concept of seeking identity via brutal and violent means by the explanation that cutting ones own flesh:

... is strictly parallel to the virtualization of our environment: it represents a desperate strategy to return to the Real of the body. As such, cutting must be contrasted with normal tattooed inscriptions on the body, which guarantee the subject's inclusion in the (virtual) symbolic order ... Cutting is a radical attempt to (re)gain hold on reality, or (another aspect of the same phenomenon) to ground the ego firmly in bodily reality, against the unbearable anxiety of perceiving oneself as non-existent.<sup>25</sup>

In Sierra's case, he tattoos the human body as a way in which to establish the divide between the migrant/refugee and himself.

### Segregation



3. Santiago Sierra, *3 people paid to lay still inside 3 boxes during a party*, Vedado, Havana, Cuba. November 2000. Photograph: Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Switzerland.

As we have seen, Sierra's critiques of capitalism often hinge of the increased visibility of the *homo sacer*, forcing the viewer to confront the concrete physical existence of those who do not exist within the law. Yet in another facet of Sierra's practice, the migrant *homo sacer* is placed in isolation as a methodology for critiquing the capitalist system of economic exclusion in a space where such capitalist pervasion is nil: Cuba. However, one could view the theme of isolation for it reinforces Cuba's marginalized position to that of the West. In the paid working conditions of his practice, the illegal worker occupies a space between physical and literal existence, akin to the *homo sacer*. In the work *3 People Paid to Lay Still Inside 3 Boxes During A Party* (2000), Sierra hired three illegal female workers in an effort to visually and physically segregate them from the world of high culture which, ironically, is not considered to exist within the communist state of Cuba [PI.3 and 4]. He placed the women in wooden boxes reminiscent of cheap coffins that also served as chairs for party guests at the official party for the 2000 Havana Biennale. The

most controversial element of this performance's success was that each coffin-like seat had a list posted on the outside detailing the contents of the box, forcing the party-guest a moral choice to sit or not to. The choice to sit exposes the pervasive and expansive power of capitalist structures over the non-West.



4. Santiago Sierra, *3 people paid to lay still inside 3 boxes during a party*, Vedado, Havana, Cuba, November 2000. Photograph: Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Switzerland.

Migrant workers, once employed, should not, under international conventions and legal standards, be treated on a basis of race, gender, or national background in light of 'universal' human rights.<sup>26</sup> However, Sierra functions as the sovereign power and the migrants, based on their undocumented status, are not entitled to 'universal' rights of the political spectrum as they are, by contemporary standards, discarded onto the fringes due to their complete lack of political participation. This loophole of belonging within the production of art in Sierra's practice allows the viewer the ability to reason that the work is worthy of collection and display because it was deemed ideologically of higher quality due to its associations with a biennale.

Such physical exclusion of the other literally and ideologically creates a space in which Western culture can physically 'exterminate' the other based on the systematic rejection of that which does not comply with political and economic mechanisms of the West, ultimately acting as a reminder of the physical terror that was once inflicted onto the Jewish body in the biopolitical sphere of the concentration camp. In this way,

Sierra illustrates that the division between politics and aesthetics is minimal. In simplified terms, *3 People Paid to Lay Still Inside 3 Boxes During A Party* is an example of Western culture's widespread belief that certain bodies may be left outside the political spectrum based on their difference. Like those who work in the sweatshop, the women in this piece affirmed their degraded social value, but also their economic value – they were ironically paid to play dead.

Over the last decade, Sierra has made a visual and conceptual shift toward representing the precarious realm of bio-politics. As an extension of his critique of the logic of capitalism, he brings the negated body of the *homo sacer* to the fore, forcing a violent return to the Real, whereby all that is too traumatic to communicate verbally within the political realm is transformed into a visual message within the art world that relies on shocking the viewer into seeing that which is not normally witnessed. In the work *The Spraying of Polyurethane Over 18 People* (2002) [Pl.5], the contrast between the political non-existence of the stateless body and its bio-political reality is laid bare. Not surprisingly, Sierra was accused of defiling the sacredness of the Church of San Mateo in Lucca, Italy, when he paid a group of prostitutes to take part in the work. Inside the church, the women stripped to their under garments; Sierra subsequently covered them with blankets and plastic sheets, proceeding by placing them in sexual positions. He sprayed highly toxic polyurethane over their covered genital areas in an effort to politically, morally and visually segregate these women from society. As in Badiou's analysis of the production of evil, the fact that Sierra marks them for their difference depicts the omnipotent power of the state over the life of the *homo sacer*, ultimately marking a bio-political shift from his earlier works toward a more aggressive subjectivisation of the body to that of the bio-political. In the work *3 People Paid to Lay Still Inside 3 Boxes During A Party*, Sierra's message is achieved by highlighting the invisibility and political non-existence of the undocumented, stateless individual. By contrast, *The Spraying of Polyurethane Over 18 People* interrogates the realm of torture and bodily control in a manner that forces us to confront this individual's physical existence. Not only were these women not given any kind of mask for respiratory protection, they were in danger of even greater physical harm as their genitals were cast in polyurethane foam. These molds created were a way in which to visually concretize their position as prostitutes – they were marked for their 'otherness'.



5. Santiago Sierra, *The Spraying of Polyurethane Over 18 People*, Church of San Mateo, Lucca, Italy, March 2002. Photograph: Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Switzerland.

This demarcation of the sex trade worker as *homo sacer* furthers Sierra's discourse of power located within Sierra's artistic practice. The prostitutes recruited by the artist, already marginalized on the basis their gender, ethnicity and profession, were exposed to highly toxic chemicals in an act of bio-political control that calls to mind the sphere of the concentration camp. Here, Sierra ultimately exploits how the value of art within the capitalist system has breached moral and ethical thresholds because that which has become collectible is that which is diametrically opposed to this type

of consumption due to the unvalued existence of the stateless person in contemporary society. As a result of Sierra's ideological shift toward the bio-political, the *polis* and the viewer, by way of this work, we are made to realise by our own ties to capitalism that we support the extermination, literal or figurative, of the 'other'. This piece also visually questions any obligations Western culture has to upholding the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which it created, thus rendering humanistic law arbitrary. Ultimately, Sierra shows his audience that rules and laws can be twisted and manipulated all for the sake of profit. The artist is admirable for his political commentary but more importantly, breaks down borders between exploitation and labour, politics and aesthetics as a way to question human value and meaning within contemporary life. But what is to be made of the physical endangerment of the human body in Sierra's practice? Solicitation of sexual acts, procurement and dispersal of narcotics are punishable violations of the criminal code. Nevertheless, while operating as an artist located within a political state of exception, Sierra manipulates the art world by way of the art market's unregulated character and suspends the law for the sake of art as the 'sovereign power'.

Ultimately, Sierra forces the viewer to consider whether the work can be considered humanitarian if it is also exploitative? The viewer and human object are in fact implicated by Sierra's artistic practices. First, the viewer via this direct exploitation of the migrant/refugee becomes a consumer of this inequality, for the act of looking entails a moral and social engagement with the exploitative practices of the capitalist system. Secondly, the body of the migrant/refugee paradoxically becomes both object and subject, thereby blurring the boundaries between law and crime, art and life, ultimately rendering the political and social order of the West highly suspect under the framework of the commercial market of the art world. Sierra's practice skews the value of bodily labour because he includes within his art a body that has no socio-political value, thereby rendering him above the law. This dialogue has attempted to address the severity of Sierra's work in not only the art community, as perhaps an end of art whereby, according to Jacques Rancière, it becomes, "equivalent to the identification of art with the life of the community", but also as a radical attempt at creating social change by ironically rejecting the concept of it through the utilisation of the *homo sacer* today within the realm of contemporary art.

One cannot view these works without bias because issues of perspective and context pervade any concept of 'truth' and 'justice' in the socio-political aesthetic discourse of Sierra's *homo sacer*. However, one can, after careful analysis, note that Sierra's work hovers in a paradoxical world whereby systems of power temporarily disarm societal notions of homogeneity within the state for that of the inclusion of the heterogeneous migrant/refugee. Most importantly, through the reincarnation of the Roman archaic figure of the *homo sacer* in a contemporary



context, Sierra is able to traverse the fantasy of capitalist reality by engaging a body that cannot be used and as a result, uncovers the excess of the art world – the other.<sup>27</sup> For many viewers, his work becomes a nightmarish apparition of our remotely realized lives. Let us not forget that Sierra sacrifices the undocumented migrant (the un-sacrificeable) to the arts as a documentary photographic exposure of capitalist reality, while simultaneously engaging with that body as a site of artistic murder, conceptually placing that which cannot be depicted within a frame of the art gallery within the art market.

In our age of heightened fear of terrorism and fragmentation from the polis due to technology, the artist's critique no longer remains on the sidelines - it involves a displacing of the current political and social notions and exceptions of when and where the human body can be used for labour and rightly explores the cracks in the political order. Sierra's art questions not only how art functions today but also the status and worth placed on life in a society based on the exclusion of individuals in the network of capitalism.

<sup>1</sup> G. Keith Chesterson, *Orthodoxy*, San Francisco 1995, 114.

<sup>2</sup> J. Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis Book X1*, New York 1978, 257.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, available online at <<http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>>.

<sup>4</sup> G. Agamben, *HOMO SACER: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Stanford 1998, 124.

<sup>5</sup> S. Zizek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, London 2002, 101.

<sup>6</sup> For a furthered conversation of Sierra's practice in this light, please consult: C. Bishop. *Installation: A Critical Introduction*. New York 2005.

<sup>7</sup> J. Menick, 'The Grand Guy, Santiago Sierra', *BBS.net*, 2002 available online at <[www.bbs.thing.net](http://www.bbs.thing.net)>.

<sup>8</sup> M. Spiegler, 'When Humans are the Canvas', *ARTnews*, June 2003, 97.

<sup>9</sup> 'Santiago Sierra', *Post Media.net*, 4/04/2005, available at <<http://www.postmedia.net/02/sierra.htm>>.

<sup>10</sup> P. Echeverria, 'Santiago Sierra: Minimum Wages', *Flash Art*, Vol.34, No.225, 2002, 100.

<sup>11</sup> A. Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, London 2001, 61–88.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> J. Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, New York 2004, 3.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> P. Day, 'Scene of the Crime', *Art Review*, Vol. LIV, 2003, 76.

<sup>19</sup> Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 32.

<sup>20</sup> J. Lacan. *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, 53-64. The Real, according to Lacan, is the excluded, unrepresentable remainder that results from our entrance into language and symbolism. It is impossible in so far as we cannot express it through language because the use of language marks our irrevocable separation from the primordial space of the Real. There fore, the Real in this context is the space where all that is too traumatic and normally not verbally conceived (the violent situation of the migrant selling the body with sex whom is either tattooed or sprayed with toxic chemicals) is brought into existence by artistic representation by Sierra.

<sup>21</sup> Spiegler, 'When Humans are the Canvas', 94.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 95.

<sup>23</sup> Zizek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, 10.

<sup>24</sup> For a further discussion of the Real in contemporary art, please see: H. Foster. *Return of the Real*, Cambridge 1996.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> See: J. W. Nickel, *Making Sense of Human Rights*, Malden 2007.

<sup>27</sup> Zizek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*, 17.