COMISART. NEW PERSPECTIVES ON THE "LA CAIXA" COLLECTION

BENEATH THE ARM: BETWEEN THE PALM OF THE HAND AND THE ARMPIT

“LA CAIXA” FOUNDATION. THE SPIRIT OF ”LA CAIXA”

Exhibition

BENEATH THE ARM: BETWEEN THE PALM OF THE HAND AND THE ARMPIT

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6 **INTRODUCTION**

ÁNGEL CALVO ULLOA
8 **BENEATH THE ARM: BETWEEN THE PALM OF THE HAND AND THE ARMPIT**

13 'TO FILM ONE HAND WITH THE OTHER HAND'
22 'PLEDGE FOR THE WHOLE'
28 'A TRAVELLER GOING SOMEWHERE AND TO SOME DESTINATION'

48 **LIST OF WORKS**

52 **BIOGRAPHY**

One of the characteristics of today's global, hyper-communicated and hyper-populated world is that it has lost its human scale. Everything is grandiose, vertiginous and immeasurable. Cities bursting at the seams, thousands of millions of displacements per year, thousands of millions of pieces of information circulating daily on the Net, parallel realities and virtual realities multiplying by the minute. Where are we?, many of us ask ourselves from the private refuge of our homes or workplaces. This feeling of facing a reality that overwhelms us has led some artists to try and discover the measure of things in their own bodies, through withdrawal and introspection. And also to try and understand the reality around them by taking to the streets with a new gaze. Landscapes are no longer mountains, cliffs or farmland crops, as in the age of the Impressionists: a landscape can now be found in the doorway to a building in Barcelona's Raval district, in a work by stanley brouwn, or in a home no longer subject to the social housing scheme in Badia del Vallès, where a spellbinding dance by flamenco dancer Israel Galván forms part of a work compiled by Pedro G. Romero in *Archivo F.X.*

Beneath the Arm: Between the Palm of the Hand and the Armpit is a very interesting proposal that addresses the issues that affect our relationship with our surroundings in the work of fourteen contemporary artists. The title alludes to the gesture of carrying a canvas, and refers back to the investigations of the painters who went out to paint *à plein air*. It brings us back to the body, to the knowledge of reality through the body, and to art as a way of approaching reality from the human scale we thought we had lost. The author is a young curator, Ángel Calvo Ulloa, born in Lalín, Pontevedra, in 1984, who has taken part in the Comisart exhibition programme held for the third time this season of 2017-2018. One of the most emblematic projects of the "la Caixa" Foundation in the field of the plastic arts, Comisart offers art students, researchers and curators from the youngest generations an opportunity to develop an exhibition starting from the works in the "la Caixa" Contemporary Art Collection and the MACBA Collection.

Comisart exhibitions combine compositional gazes, interrogations and theoretical reflections with what we could call modern myths: visual narratives and plastic stories. Thus, *Beneath the Arm: Between the Palm of the Hand and the Armpit* deals with the body, solitude and landscape. The other two shows staged this season focus on the relationship between images and violence (*H(a)unting Images: Anatomy of a Shot*, by Arola Valls and Ada Sbriccoli) and on opacity and concealment (*You Are Not Here*, by Alexandra Laudo). The oeuvre of Francesco Arena, Jorge Barbi, stanley brouwn, Fernando García, Christian García Bello, Irene Grau, Pere Llobera, Fina Miralles, Radouan Mriziga, Perejaume, Rodríguez-Méndez, Pedro G. Romero, Thomas Schütte and Juan Uslé, enables Ángel Calvo Ulloa to construct a discourse in which the works are evocative and at once complement one another, tracing transversal connections that enhance our collection.

"la Caixa" Foundation would like to thank Ángel Calvo Ulloa for his work, and extend our gratitude to all those curators, artists and visitors thanks to whom Comisart is a pioneering initiative in the world of contemporary art.

"la Caixa" Foundation

BENEATH THE ARM: BETWEEN THE PALM OF THE HAND AND THE ARMPIT

ÁNGEL CALVO ULLOA

> A study of measurements is like a guide to the process of civilisations. The first thing that is measured is the distance that separates us from objects of daily use. The first movements are aimed at overcoming these distances. To transpose distances we have applied resources. The first resource is the step and the series of steps that constitute movement. Movement on foot is the basic measurement, the first measurement of all distances in all civilisations.[1]

Around four years ago, artist Irene Grau told me that the dimensions of her *Color Fields* – the monochrome boards that she transported and photographed amidst nature – had two limitations: the length of the load of her van and the maximum width she was able to carry under her arm, between the palm of her hand and her armpit. Let's imagine for a moment that the size of many of the landscapes created in a specific historical period was determined only by a limitation contained in the title of this project. I retain a mental image of the materialisation of this idea thanks to a canvas by Vincent Van Gogh entitled *Painter on the Road to Tarascon* (1888) that was kept in the Kaiser-Friedrich Museum in Magdeburg and was moved to the salt mines of Stassfurt in 1942, where it is said to have been burnt in a fire caused by the allied bombing at the end of World War Two. The painter described it in a letter to his brother Theo as 'a quick sketch I made of myself laden with boxes, sticks, a canvas, on the sunny Tarascon road'. Observing the only colour photograph that survives of the work, the words that Van Gogh wrote in another letter to his brother that same summer of 1888 take on extra meaning: 'I always feel I am a traveller, going somewhere and to some destination.'[2]

Painters have often chosen to work out of doors, before motifs that couldn't possibly be transferred to their ateliers. Over and above the pre-Impressionist exercise of the two views Velázquez painted *in situ* around the year 1630 in

1 José VASCONCELOS, *Las Medidas,* in *Caballos-Velocidad*, Gato Negro Ediciones, Mexico City, 2015.

2 Vincent VAN GOGH, *The Letters*, web edition, Van Gogh Museum, vangighletter.org.

the gardens of Villa Medici in Rome, the definitive decision to take their easels out into the landscape was a much later event and led to the widespread practice of opening the doors of their studios, not only in order to move their gear every now and then – as Gustave Courbet had done when painting his self-portrait in *The Encounter*, or *Bonjour Monsieur Courbet* – but also to consolidate a radical change in the existing relationship between interior and exterior. In *The Encounter*, Courbet appeared as a wandering painter whose rambles symbolised incomprehension and the inability to find a place, as, like Van Gogh, he had set out 'somewhere and to some destination', albeit he was unaware which.

All this is perhaps just a fantasy, yet it embraces the need to move the picture out of the studio and the implication regarding its size. The work thus becomes portable, but by extending the studio and removing the architectural barriers that had previously determined its size, its geographical displacement now becomes another obstacle, and over time, this direct contact with nature will end up expanding the work to the point of making it inapprehensible, until it actually merges into the landscape itself. According to Victor Stoichita, for later generations, the image of Van Gogh loaded down by his gear has become 'a metaphoric image of life in general and of the artist's life in particular.'[3] Although I do not intend to explore this question in detail, we should not forget Francis Bacon's vision, revealed in his series of eight variations of this self-portrait, in which he analyses 'the haunted figure on the road … like a phantom of the road'.[4] Nevertheless, in the exhibition of Van Gogh portraits that the Detroit Institute of Arts staged in 2000, this sombre treatment was only attributed to Bacon's usual approach to painting. 'The Van Gogh of the letters and of literary creation has now completely taken over. The man who moves through the brightly lit landscape outside Arles in the original painting does so rather jauntily and plays the role, as figures often do in Van Gogh landscapes, of a kind of neutral staffage (although in this case the figure embodies a rather

3 Victor I. STOICHITA, *A Short History of the Shadow*, Reaktion Books, London, 1999, p. 234.

4 Ibid, p. 236.

charming degree of self-reflection as the artist sees himself setting out with his shadow for a day's work).'[5]

> Precisely seeing how most of the pictures followed easy routes, that were too straight and overhanging, he decided to assign more concrete and important routes to certain pictures by artists he especially venerated. He therefore packed a work on his back, as he used to do with his tools, and climbed up a steep terrain shaped by the painting so that the painting may obey, step by step, the actual relief along which he was carrying it. As he did so he observed a third dimension in the painting, a sculptural aspect of the finished pictures that had quite likely gone unnoticed by their makers. In view of these sculptural qualities he took a small panel painting by Giotto along the mountain ranges of Wales, and a monochromatic painting by Rodchenko along the eastern coast of the island of Corsica, and decided to surround the huge peaks of the Atlas with a landscape by Ferdinand Hodler.[6]

Far from this idyllic vision of the work in connection with the natural environment, today all artists are aware of the exceptional need to carry their works to the exhibition space, as they are of the need to produce small-size pieces or to occasionally accept the ephemeral nature of some of their creations. The occupation of a space often becomes a determining factor that ends up connecting us to places, or in the worst cases, obliging us to move the works or dispose of them when things get complicated. For this and for other reasons, some artists have chosen to reduce their spatial needs to the maximum, limiting their activity as artists to simply recording in the form of sketches, texts, photographs and films. This lightens their load and allows them to dream that old dream of transporting all their belongings in one suitcase.

5 Joseph J. RISHEL and Katherine SACHS, 'The Modern Legacy of Van Gogh's Portraits', in *Van Gogh Face to Face. The Portraits* (exh. cat.), Detroit Museum of Arts, 2000.

6 PEREJAUME, 'Parques interiores. La obra de siete despintores', in *Tres dibujos* (exh. cat.), Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea, Santiago de Compostela, 1997.

Beneath the Arm: Between the Palm of the Hand and the Armpit draws us to these limits that have historically determined the work of artists. It is a starting point that, despite initially focusing on physical boundaries, transcends them and strives to reflect the relationship between creators and their closest circles. Such positions can be traced back to the art of Antiquity, and in our age have led to exercises of intrinsic importance that nonetheless imply a necessary beginning to articulate the proposal. In *The Gleaners and I*, filmmaker Agnès Varda declared: 'This is my project: to film one hand with the other hand'. The statement was made in the sequence in which her filmed hand conceals a self-portrait painted by Rembrandt in 1654, reproduced on a postcard. Varda addresses the power of the image or the power of decision of the filmmaker. More importantly, however, she defines her practice as a study of the distance between both hands, and assuming that in this limited space we find the story, and hence the possibility of shaping the film, we could say that she revolutionised the language of film. Moreover, Varda's statement is neither fortuitous nor solely attributable to an embellishment of the script given that, pronounced at the age of seventy-two, just when she focused her camera on her other hand, it provides us with the key to her objective as a filmmaker so far, and to the physical space in which her career has developed. Her choice of a self-portrait by Rembrandt is no coincidence either – the painter before his canvas, depicting what is found at the other end of his arm, revising in depth his idea of himself, an idea shaped by the opinion of others and that he himself wants to offer the spectator.

So, let's recap. A painter who portrays himself in an everyday scene, travelling the landscape with his gear under his arm to face a new day's work; a filmmaker who assumes that all she needs to record and generate a story are her two hands; and a second painter who portrayed himself almost obsessively, accepting too that the space between his hands contained all that was strictly necessary to shape his own narrative.

> The next stage of approach is the act of seizure. The fingers of the hand form a hollow into which they try to compress part of the creature they touch. They do this without regard to the shape and organic cohesion of the prey. Whether they injure it or not at this stage is irrelevant; it is simply that some part of its body has to be got into the space thus formed as a pledge for the whole.[7]

'TO FILM ONE HAND WITH THE OTHER HAND'

Returning to this notion of a work contained in the space that separates both hands and symbolically ascribed to the portrait typology, perhaps one of the most intimate proposals of our project is that of **JUAN USLÉ** (Santander, 1954). Since 1997 Uslé has worked continuously on a series of black paintings, the brushstrokes of which – over and above the reference to the gesture – express the painter's heart frequency in an exercise that confirms his physical relationship with the picture through a monotonous action produced by the sequence of his heartbeat.

> The system focuses on one idea: filling the surface and trying to systematically reflect the heartbeat and the pumping of the blood. In these pieces I always work by night. I close the doors. I seal the windows with plastic. I try to create a favourable atmosphere. A bit like what John Cage used to do with his famous anechoic chamber. And I start to paint. I notice my heartbeat intensely by night. I have high blood pressure and when I examine myself, I hear my heart pounding. Then I pick up the brush. I touch my pulse and begin to work following the rhythm. Now a quicker brushstroke, now a slower one. I write on the canvas until I fill it. It requires concentration and implies tension, time, and of course acceptance of the fact that the brushstrokes cannot all be the same. My pulse isn't always the same either. It speeds up and slows down.[8]

7 Elias CANETTI, *Crowds and Power*, translated by Carol Stewart, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1984, p. 204.

8 Miguel Ángel GARCÍA VEGA, 'No he aprendido a pintar; y me alegro'. Interview with Juan Uslé, *El País*, 9 July 2014.



Juan Uslé. *Soñé que revelabas VII*, 2000

In an equally intense dialogue with himself, *55* was the first creation by choreographer and dancer **RADOUAN MRIZIGA** (Marrakech, 1985), a solo performance presented in 2014 in which he suggested a game with perspective and audience expectations. *55* is a dance exercise that begins by exploring a succession of movements made by imposing a series of limitations on himself, that lead to increasingly complex situations. At the same time, he analyses the volumes and distances of his body, assuming its changes and transforming them into a new metric blueprint at each step. His body establishes the lengths and becomes the tool to create a geometric pattern that is fixed to the ground with the help of a simple piece of painter's adhesive tape. *55* thereby becomes an exploration of the body-space relationship. According to Mriziga, 'this work challenges the amount and the nature of the information that an artist, performer or player can exchange with a spectator in order to communicate, mark or confound the understanding of a given situation'.

If Mriziga's is an inventory of possible movements based on the potentialities of a body in its space, for **PERE LLOBERA** (Barcelona, 1970) *Hal* works as an analogical CPU, as another way of making his self-portrait. Llobera presented this work in 2014, in an exhibition entitled *El mal de Ensor* (Ensor's Curse). The show took as its starting point Belgian painter James Ensor (1860-1949), considered a visionary and a virtuoso who never quite managed to find his style. Llobera uses a filing cabinet as a catalogue of skills and interests. It could be a group show displayed in a minimal space, and yet it's a collection of samples of obsessions and a technical depletion that helps define its own limitations. Llobera uses *Hal* as a means for measuring his pulse as a painter.

> *Hal*, a filing cabinet with thirty-five artistically intervened drawers that contain most of his aesthetic and intellectual concerns, and a direct allusion to the central computer in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), by Kubrick ... An attempt to materialise his thoughts through isolated, chaotic and scattered fragments: biographical allusions, natural landscapes, hermits, minimal gestures, absurd actions, poetic quotes, countercultural references, textual approximations ... At the end of the day, a complete collection of characters, places and



Radouan Mriziga. *55*



Pere Llobera. *Hal*, 2014

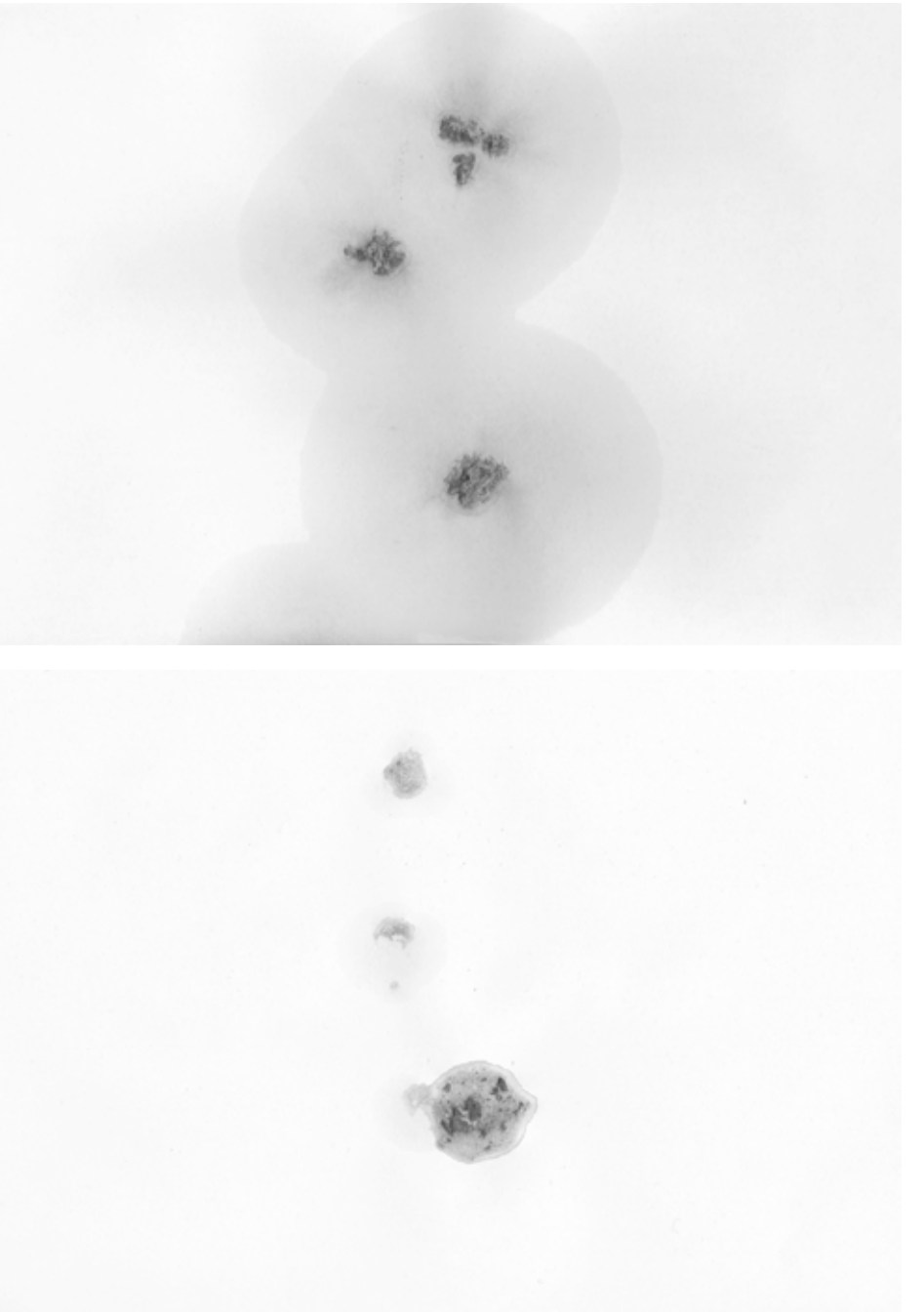
situations derived from a formal imaginary, in response to Ensor's curse, is undergoing a process of continuous stylistic transformation.[9]

Proposición. Soltar by **RODRÍGUEZ-MÉNDEZ** (As Neves, Pontevedra, 1968) also reveals a routine gesture enveloped in everyday intimacy, a gesture to which the previously mentioned artists have alluded. Rodríguez-Méndez describes this work as follows: 'A series of photographs of the pieces of paper that have collected the scraps of food that have dropped as my father transferred it from his plate to his mouth. The pieces of paper were placed, one each time, between the plate and my father, during two weeks.' *Proposición. Soltar* establishes a close relationship with the language of sculpture, that Rodríguez-Méndez tackles in different ways. Nevertheless, the series is inserted in the projects staged in the house where he was born. 'For me, 'home' is not only a conflicting concept insofar as it represents that stifling hierarchy that I find unbearable, a limitation and an influence, but also an insufferably solid material that I haven't yet managed to reconcile."[10] The notion of this mechanical gesture evokes that first story to which Agnès Varda referred when she accepted her intention of filming one hand with the other. Rodríguez-Méndez introduces the figure of the other, who inserts the dialogue in the narrative, and moves away from the idea of isolation, of work carried out in the strictest solitude.

Along with this interior monologue uttered by Juan Uslé, Radouan Mriziga, Pere Llobera and Rodríguez-Méndez emerges the need to strike up a dialogue with a specific context that will determine the story and act as a backdrop for it. Thus, experiences such as those of Fina Miralles, Christian García Bello, Jorge Barbi and stanley brouwn explore in greater depth this first space, the one that enables isolation and exclusively determines the movements of the body by adapting to the space formed as a 'pledge for the whole' described by Elias Canetti.

9 David ARMENGOL, *El mal de Ensor*, text for the Pere Llobera exhibition at Galería Fúcares, Madrid, 2014.

10 Carlos RODRÍGUEZ-MÉNDEZ, 'La duración en el término'. Conversation with Ángel Calvo Ulloa for *Dardo Magazine*, No. 25 (May – November 2014), Santiago de Compostela.



Rodríguez-Méndez. *Proposición. Soltar*, 2016

‘PLEDGE FOR THE WHOLE’

The work of CHRISTIAN GARCÍA BELLO (Corunna, 1986) unfolds halfway between sculpture and drawing, and in installation art approached from both fronts. Experience in the face of landscape establishes the guidelines he follows in his practice, that takes a small range of materials and relates them to their corresponding symbolic meaning. The result is an almost esoteric exercise that stands out for the simplicity of its compositions and connects the interior of the studio with the exterior through actions such as strolling and stopping to observe. Concepts such as the horizon, the journey or a tragic feeling of life determine the position of each element and its meaning in a table of correspondences linked to the past.

Tres escalones emerges from these work dynamics that García Bello proposes in the form of the stroll and its relationship with the dimensions of his body, and with the idea of solitude and the notion of shelter he is currently exploring. ‘My work is based on the relation between my own scale, landscape and the act of walking. This piece includes an exercise [in] anthropometry – the longest dimension corresponds to the measure of my own step – and incorporates new materials [such] as concrete and wood blackened with paint based on graphite powder.’

Along the lines of the relationship that García Bello establishes with the notion of isolation, in his art work of the eighties JORGE BARBI (A Guarda, Pontevedra, 1950) began to focus on drift as a mechanism for familiarising himself with his surroundings and analysing its phenomena, extracting organic and inorganic elements from the natural environment that shape an oeuvre characterised by solitude.

The feeling of isolation hovers over the work *Invernáculo. Recipiente para ausentarse* just as the need for a protective shell, for a place of retreat, is linked to Barbi’s workspace. Located in the southernmost part of the province of Pontevedra, the town of A Guarda is bathed by the Atlantic Ocean and the River Miño, and is geographically removed from the more populated areas of Galicia. More than a need, *Invernáculo. Recipiente para ausentarse*



Christian García Bello. *Tres escalones*, 2015



Jorge Barbi. *Invernáculo. Recipiente para ausentarse*, 1993

is an everyday feeling. David G. Torres describes it as 'a cut-out silhouette, a sort of place where we can seek shelter from the world huddled in a foetal position and isolated by the cork'.[11]

In the sixties, **stanley brouwn** (Paramaribo, Surinam, 1935 - Amsterdam, 2017) began to note in feet, elbows or steps the distances of each of the journeys he travelled daily when moving from one spot to another: 'never before have distances been so meaningless as nowadays. increasingly more people fly long distance several times a year. the validity of the concept of distance is becoming still further eroded. in my work distances are recharged again. they regain meaning.'[12] When the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA) asked him to produce a great retrospective show in 2005, together with past works, brouwn introduced a series of pieces related to the museum itself and to the city of Barcelona, adapting display cabinets, tables and spaces to his own measurements and covering distances by foot or asking passers-by how to reach specific places. *door opening: 209.4 x 66.7 cm (length and width of the door on carme street 62 in barcelona)* is a site-specific installation whose measurement was taken by brouwn in old barcelona feet. The installation presents the space of the door opening in the house in question in relation to the width and height of the façade that frames it. brouwn's choice was totally fortuitous and only sought to introduce the standard entrance space to a private home of his choice among those on the streets in the Raval neighbourhood surrounding MACBA.

The 'Translacions' series that **FINA MIRALLES** (Sabadell, 1950) made between 1973 and 1974 is considered a decisive step in her artistic practice. Among the works in the series, *Dona-arbre* is worthy of note. Made in Sant Llorenç del Munt (Terrassa), in this piece the artist herself acts as a natural element and buries herself up to her thighs, thereby restricting her movements.

11 David G. TORRES, *Visions de la Col·lecció d'Art Contemporani Fundació "la Caixa"*, Palma de Mallorca, 2000 (exh. cat.).

12 stanley brouwn, *stanley brouwn*, MACBA, Barcelona / Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 2005 (exhibition catalogue).



Fina Miralles. *Translacions. Dona-arbre*, 1973

The actions carried out by Fina Miralles usually implied this movement of material. In this case, however, the actual place of the work is more a state – that of her immobility – that keeps her buried in an open space and, instead of offering unlimited spatial possibilities, highlights physical limitations.

> In the two previous passages [*Herba flotant al mar* and *La duna*], the works were shaped by natural materials and the context was nature, so I left their destiny to the free choice of nature and the effects of the weather. Now, in my last passage entitled *Dona-arbre*, even though the methodology was similar to that of the other previous passages, the fact of using a natural material like a person made me change my whole discourse. As the piece couldn't remain indefinitely on display or left at the mercy of the weather, the passage ended as soon as the artist came out of the hole that connected and rooted her to the soil, the countryside, the landscape and the environment. This created even stranger relationships between spectator, work, space and time.[13]

This action by Fina Miralles establishes a connection between the spatial and physical limitations posed by the works included in the exhibition, starting from the idea of filming one hand with the other hand, as Agnès Varda does, and reaching a conflict with the space in which the tale unfolds. This explains why Van Gogh's words rekindle the controversy as regards the workplace in connection with our own weaknesses.

'A TRAVELLER GOING SOMEWHERE AND TO SOME DESTINATION'

Closely related to the physical limits of the atelier, **FERNANDO GARCÍA** (Madrid, 1975) has established a firm connection between his workspaces and the art produced during the time he has spent in each one. Since 2002 he has occupied different studios in Madrid, Berlin, Mexico City, Jyväskylä, Miraflores

13 Marta POL RIGAU, *Anàlisi de l'obra plàsticovisual i poèticotextual de Fina Miralles: l'arbre com a reflex de la seva cosmologia* (thesis), Autonomous University of Barcelona, Department of Art and Musicology, 2012.

de la Sierra, Montreal and currently Barcelona. Each of these places has decisively determined his artistic output, both as regards the dimensions and the materials of the works produced there, and their names usually remain in the titles or subtitles of many of these works or their exhibitions, generating memories that ascribe them to specific times and places in his career. In the summer of 2016, Fernando García purchased two large blue canvases that were so heavy he could barely manage to carry them on his shoulder, and he set up a routine of travelling with them to different beaches along the Costa Brava and the Costa Dorada by public transport. Wet and spread out on the sand, day after day, soaked by different fruit juices and with patches that protected certain areas from the effect of the sunrays, his hours of work were a combination of professional routine and placid summer days. After the process, the two large canvases were placed on stretchers and hung in the exhibition entitled *El curso natural de las cosas* (The Natural Course of Things) at La Casa Encendida in Madrid. The colour, the shapes and the explicit relationship with the Mediterranean were the result of a research carried out by Fernando García in Barcelona, sparked by his interest in the oeuvre of Joan Miró.

When I suggested that **IRENE GRAU** (Valencia, 1986) could once again examine the ideas of portability and the conditionings to which artists are subjected when they attempt to establish relationships with their surroundings, she posed the possibility of closing for a time the wall on which she is working in her studio in Piñeiro, in the Galician locality of Brión. In a huge monochromatic canvas measuring six hundred centimetres in length, Grau revealed the spatial limitations and the actual plane geometry of her workspace, while in fact denying the portability of the work, a premise that we come across in many of her projects. Furthermore, her decision to use the colour white emphasises her desire to create a sense of emptiness in the studio, originating a piece that could evoke both a period of pause and the possibility of working inside and outside.

Intent on posing a series of questions that affect the artist's daily life, since the late seventies, **THOMAS SCHÜTTE** (Oldenburg, Germany, 1954) has been working on homonymous series that examine a number of situations, highly charged



Fernando García. *Mediterráneo*, 2016



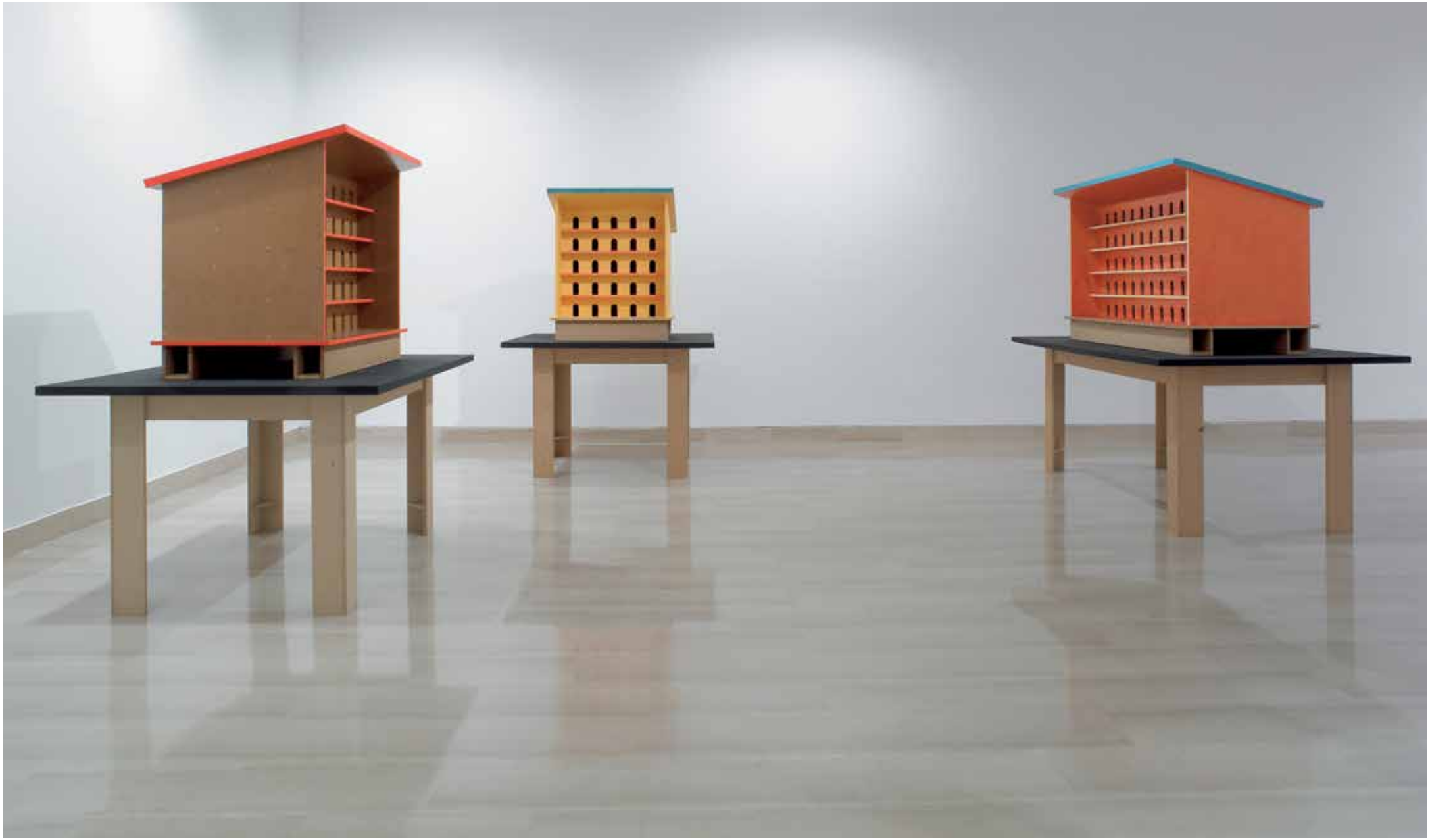
Fernando García. *Mediterráneo I*, 2016



Fernando García. *Mediterráneo II*, 2016



Irene Grau. *S*, 2017



Thomas Schütte. *For the Birds*, 1997

with irony, that address the issues of isolation, insecurity and dejection. His architectural mock-ups are one of the most important parts of his oeuvre, and start from designs simplified to the extreme that offer spectators a sense of protection and refuge. Schütte's oeuvre shows his concern with social and political themes, with the role of artists in society and with issues that condition their survival. *For the Birds* is a work that focuses on a number of ideas tackled by Schütte on previous occasions, starting from different proposals for artists' studios. 'They all share a search for an ideal situation for the artist, an isolated place for creation which is presented to us without its necessary urban environment. The maquettes are far from usual residences or workshops; they are more like palaces of creation.'[14]

Also related to the architecture of workspaces, in his oeuvre **FRANCESCO ARENA** (Torre Santa Susanna, Italy, 1978) establishes a number of links between historical data (in the public domain) and his own anthropometric data (weight, height, limb measurements or the distance between a specific point and the height of his eyes). The result of these correspondences is a series of works that address historiography through data directly associated with the artist that highlight important aspects of his work, like the connections between global and personal history, the way in which a certain vision can condition the narrative, the physicality of our relationships with historical facts, or evidence of history that can be translated into numbers.

Cabin around the studio around pillar (clockwise-counterclockwise) consists in a metal rod measuring thirty metres long (the same length of the perimeter of Ludwig Wittgenstein's cabin), folded to form a rectangle measuring 5.32 x 3.95 metres that matches the perimeter of Arena's studio. The rod is folded around one of the columns in the exhibition space, and every now and then four performers raise the structure and rotate it 360 degrees, avoiding the obstacles that interfere in the process, be they architectural elements, spectators or even other works on display. This structure's rotating movement

14 Ferran BARENBLIT, in the online catalogue of the "la Caixa" Collection of Contemporary Art. https://coleccion.caixaforum.com/en/obra/-/obra/ACF0694/Paralospajaros [Accessed: November 2017].

presents a number of difficulties that must be overcome by the performers. Due to the attention it requires and to the very weight of the sculpture, it becomes an exhausting action. In keeping with his usual procedures and dynamics, Arena connects Wittgenstein's workspace to his own thanks to this action that unfolds in the gallery.

La casa forms a part of *La ciudad vacía* by *Archivo F.X.*, a long-standing group project directed by **PEDRO G. ROMERO** (Aracena, Huelva, 1964) since 1999, based on a vast documentary archive that reflects the anti-sacramental political iconoclasm that characterised Spain from 1845 to 1945. *La casa* poses the poetic gesture of flamenco dancer Israel Galván, at number 33 Carrer Cantàbric, flat 5 A, in Badia del Vallès, a housing estate in which only one of the homes is not a council flat. Galván's dance marks each of the rooms in the flat, creating a new map, halfway between topography and tribute. The artist conceives an ironic action that establishes the possibility of purchasing the home and transforming it into the only private property on the estate. Captive of the public, the private appears here as liberating. In essence, the flat is marked and thus delimits private property, becoming a space of freedom for a way of understanding dance that is currently giving rise to conflicts between the old and the new.

Coll de Pal - Cim del Costabona is an installation that **PEREJAUME** (Sant Pol de Mar, Barcelona, 1957) conceived for his exhibition of the same title hosted in 1990 by Joan Prats gallery in Barcelona. The project consisted in climbing Costabona Mountain and, once at the top, drawing in flour the ground plan of the art gallery, refurbished in 1976 by architect Josep Lluís Sert. According to the exhibition plan, the window display of the gallery would show a detailed photograph of the hands of the artist in action, with no reference at all to the place or the architectural design he had moved. Entering the premises, spectators would find the ground plan of Sert's design, and after walking through the empty space, in the last room would discover a huge photograph of the mountain summit with its representation of the ground plan of the gallery. Perejaume suggested a temporary move of the exhibition space, an idea that was particularly important in the nineties when he transferred his artworks to natural environments. The poetry of these proposals is stressed



Francesco Arena. *Cabin around the studio around pillar (clockwise-counterclockwise)*, 2014













Pedro G. Romero. *Archivo F.X.: Entrada: La casa*, 1999-2007



Perejaume. *Coll de Pal - Cim del Costabona*, 1990

by some of the artist's texts: 'Divert a turbulent stream or a breath of the sea to theatre pits. Build art galleries at the foot of mountains, with entrances for avalanches.'[15] Carles Guerra, reflecting on that exhibition, declared: 'However, the emptiness of the gallery became the outstanding feature of the exhibition. It was a meaningful emptiness which suggested that the gallery had been transported to a remote place. The traditional direction – importing images – was changed and the gallery – the exhibition site – went out to meet the landscape.'[16] Perhaps the possibility that this work by Perejaume be considered the closure of *Beneath the Arm: Between the Palm of the Hand and the Armpit* does not only imply the definitive move of our workspaces, our homes or ourselves, but also the place in which the works are usually shown. Perhaps it could be applied to this very exhibition, distributing each of the works throughout the geographical places to which they refer, even those that are originated in the space beneath our arm.

> Take eleven still lifes by Zurbarán to Camp Gros at can Tarrades. Reach a nearby path by lorry, and from there lower the pictures, one by one, to the middle of the field. Try to accommodate the pictures together, keeping their frames nearby, forming a flat tableau laid on the ground. Display the pictures just where the field becomes slightly undulated so that the tableau of pictures gently frames it.[17]

15 PEREJAUME, *La pintura i la boca*, Edicions de La Magrana, Barcelona, 1994.

16 Carles GUERRA in the online catalogue of the "la Caixa" Collection of Contemporary Art. https://coleccion.caixaforum.com/en/obra/-/obra/ACF0176/ColladodePalCimadelCostabona [Accessed: November 2017].

17 PEREJAUME, *La pintura i la boca*, op. cit.

The works in this exhibition proposal address the issue of the loss of power before different situations that aspire to either transcend the human scale or be reduced to it, yielding to this dimension that includes all those processes that tell our story and portray us.

The ideas and their formalisation, the materials used and the metamorphosis to which all the works appear to be subjected transform the exhibition installation into a mutable space, devoid of drama. Like the courageous examination to which Agnès Varda exposes herself, it has become a well-established investigation; perhaps an objective that, over and above the forces in each work, could be read as an attempt to bequeath something as simple as this: two hands interplaying with all else, one of them recording the other, and the distance between the two that contains everything.

LIST OF WORKS

Francesco Arena

Cabin around the studio around pillar (clockwise-counterclockwise)
2014
Installation and performance
532 × 395 × 4 cm
Courtesy of the artist, Sprovieri Gallery and Nogueras Blanchard

Jorge Barbi

Invernáculo. Recipiente para ausentarse
[Greenhouse. Container for Getting Away]
1993
Cork and paper
Container: 165 × 80 × 80 cm;
2 drawings: 162 × 86 cm each
"la Caixa" Collection of Contemporary Art

stanley brouwn

door opening: 209.4 × 66.7 cm (height and width of the door on carme street 62 in barcelona)
2005
this space is an imaginary space that measures 20 × 15 × 10 in old barcelona feet*, in which the height, the width and the space of the door opening exactly match the door opening in this wall
*an old barcelona foot is the equivalent of 25.9 cm
209.4 × 66.7 cm
macba collection. macba foundation. gift of the artist

Fernando García

Mediterráneo I
[Mediterranean I]
Mediterráneo II
[Mediterranean II]
June-September 2016
Canvases soaked in the Mediterranean and dried in the sun at different places along the Costa Brava and the Costa Daurada. Darned cloth, melon, watermelon, peach, fig, plum, mango, beetroot, orange and lemon juice, sand and other natural remains
350 × 240 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Heinrich Ehrhardt gallery

Christian García Bello

Tres escalones
[Three Steps]
2015
Graphite, coal, concrete and pinewood
85 × 25 × 7 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Formato Cómodo gallery

Irene Grau

S
2017
Painting: acrylic on canvas, 183.5 × 606 cm
Photograph: Ultrachrome print on 188 g Photo Rag photographic paper, made by Hahnemühle, mounted on 2 mm Dibond and framing
23 × 30 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Pere Llobera

Hal
2014
Piece of wooden furniture, metal, mixed media on board and C-print photograph
Overall dimensions: 143 × 75 × 52 cm; 35 paintings-drawers: 49 × 69 × 3 cm each
”la Caixa” Collection of Contemporary Art

Fina Miralles

Translacions. Dona-arbre [Documentació de l’acció realitzada el novembre de 1973 a Sant Llorenç del Munt, Espanya]
[Translations. Tree Woman (Documentation of the Performance Carried Out in November 1973 in Sant Llorenç del Munt, Spain)]
1973
Gelatin silver print
3 photographs: 39 × 29 × 3 cm each
MACBA Collection. On loan from the Generalitat de Catalunya

Radouan Mriziga

55
Performance
Concept and performance: Radouan Mriziga
Production: Moussem Nomadic Arts Centre (Brussels)
Co-production: C-mine (Genk), WP Zimmer (Anvers)
In collaboration with: Cultuurcentrum Berchem, Pianofabriek (Brussels), O Espaço do Tempo (Montemor-o-novo, Portugal), STUK (Leuven)

Perejaume

Coll de Pal - Cim del Costabona
[Pal Mountain Pass - Summit of the Costabona]
1990
Colour photographs and ink on tracing paper
1. Photograph: 50 × 50 cm
2. Plan: 120 × 253.5 cm
3. Photograph: 186 × 350 cm
”la Caixa” Collection of Contemporary Art

Rodríguez-Méndez

Proposición. Soltar
[Proposition. Drop]
2016
Series of 72 scanned sheets.
Colour and b/w photographs on RC photographic paper
40 × 50 cm each
Courtesy of the artist and Formato Cómodo gallery

Pedro G. Romero

Archivo F.X.: Entrada: La casa
[F.X. Archive: Entrance: The House]
1999-2007
Audiovisual recording with the collaboration of Israel Galván
Single-channel video, colour, sound, 20’ 37”
MACBA Collection. MACBA Foundation

Thomas Schütte

For the Birds
1997
Painted wood
217 × 137 × 91.5 cm; 217 × 201 × 91.5 cm and 217 × 95 × 91.5 cm
”la Caixa” Collection of Contemporary Art

Juan Uslé

Soñé que revelabas VII
[I Dreamt You Were Revealing VII]
2000
Vinyl paint and pigments on canvas
274.5 × 203.5 cm
”la Caixa” Collection of Contemporary Art

BIOGRAPHY

ÁNGEL CALVO ULLOA

Born in Lalín, Pontevedra, 1984, he lives and works in Spain and Brazil

As a curator, Ángel Calvo Ulloa considers the public intervention project *A Warning Shot* (Lalín, Pontevedra, 2011) and *Improbable Dialogues* (Espazo Non Lugar, Lalín, Pontevedra, 2012-2013) as two transcendental initiatives. Besides these projects, between the years 2011 and 2017 he has curated a number of different exhibition proposals for institutions such as the Museo de Arte Contemporánea de Vigo (MARCO), the Fundación Luis Seoane (Corunna), Tabacalera Promoción del Arte (Madrid), Centro de Arte Alcobendas (Madrid), the Fundación Granell (Santiago de Compostela), Antiguo Instituto Jovellanos (Gijón), Centro Torrente Ballester (Ferrol), Maus Hábitos (Porto) and Palexco (Corunna), and the art galleries L21 (Madrid), Rosa Santos (Valencia) and JosédelaFuente (Santander). In 2014 Calvo Ulloa received an award from La Casa Encendida, where he staged the show entitled *Learning to Fall* in the framework of the Inéditos exhibition programme. In 2015 his show *Incluso un paisaje tranquilo* won the visual arts contest organised by Can Felipa (Barcelona) and in 2016 the project *Beneath the Arm: Between the Palm of the Hand and the Armpit*, commissioned by the Comisart exhibition programme and presented in this catalogue, was distinguished with an award.

Calvo Ulloa has participated in the International Curator Residency, at Fire Station Artists' Studios (Dublin) in 2015, in the Komisario Berriak programme developed by Tabakalera, Azkuna Zentroa and ARTIUM during the Donostia-San Sebastian European Capitalof Culture year 2016, and in the Residência Paulo Reis de Ateliê Fidalga (São Paulo) in 2017.

Along with Juan Canela, he is currently working on the book *Curadora/Comisaria* to be published by Consonni in its Colección Paper; on the exhibition *Interiores*, dedicated to Fernando García, for the Centro de Arte Caja de Burgos (CAB); and on the *Habitación* (Room) project, with Nuria Enguita and Pedro G. Romero, in the framework of the *Archivo F.X.* show for the Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo (CA2M) in Móstoles, La Nau in Valencia and the Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya (MNAC) in Barcelona.


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