



The man with the fire eyes

BERNARDÍ ROIG. Films 2000-2018

At Es Baluard we build our exhibition programme with a curatorial approach that addresses the different shades and interpretations of the art histories and the multiple modernities. Our aim is to reach the entire society and generate critical thinking as well as educational/awareness-raising tools in relation to contemporary art. That is why within the framework of our line of historiographical review of the Balearic context, we schedule an annual show that analyses and visualises renowned individualities and collectives in contemporary art practices.

Given the international significance of Bernardí Roig's career, the project "Films 2000-2018" is co-produced with the General Subdirectorate for the Promotion of the Fine Arts of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport and is conceived as an exhibition that gathers for the first time an important selection of his film works, with a total of 17 audiovisual works.

The show aims to analyse and review the complex universe of the artist based on the presentation and decoding of his audiovisual work. The pieces will be installed in an exciting scenic arrangement, emphasising the initiatory journey between appropriation and recreation of his images and visual constructions.

These works tell us about an insatiable and nonsensical Sisyphic absurd where the solitary figures of each of the videos act, caught in the repetition of gestures, in a sameness spiral. Either carrying a lamp on his back, sewing his mouth forever, spinning with a spotlight on his head without being able to get out of the claustrophobic spaces of rationalism, climbing a mountain constantly to never reach the ruins of the language philosopher's cottage, or trapped between laughter and the aponia of mute insults.

All works of art belong to the Es Baluard Museum Collection and have been created between the years 2000 and 2018, including three new and yet unseen productions.

A museum is a place to preserve our artistic heritage, a space for rigorous reflection on the past and present of art. Bernardí Roig's works, now part of the museum's collection, reveal his evolution as a multi-faceted creator of a complex density and a fascinating Baroque style that today needs to be revisited and analysed, communicated to the society of the current time and preserved for the future.

Nekane Aramburu

Director of Es Baluard and curator of the show

LIST OF WORKS IN EXHIBITION

1. **El hombre de la lámpara**, 2000

Single-channel video, colour, sound, 4' 29"

In the desolate space of a winter night, a man carries a chandelier on his back. Erratic, he wanders in circles through the infinite gardens of the Casa de Campo in Madrid. In the middle of a crushing silence we can hardly hear the petrified breath of his fatigue, like the breathing of a convict faced with his impending catastrophe. He illuminates the space he crosses, but he cannot see what he's lighting up.

Unexpectedly, from the depths of the night there appears a ghostly figure without gender or, rather, embodying several genres at the same time; or perhaps the carnality of all genders... In any case, this figure is ready to love and be loved by the dissolved rests of 'the lamp man', but, as was to be expected, is shunned and rejected by the man who, long ago, had decided to inhabit an armoured solitude as Oedipus did: gouging out his eyes in order to escape the turbulence of desire.

These are obsessive images that speak of lack of communication, sacrifice, inner dismemberment and loss of identity.

First film work by Bernardí Roig, *El hombre de la lámpara* was exhibited for the first time in the artist's solo show "Luz en las espaldas" held at Max Estrella Gallery (Madrid) in the summer of the year 2000.

2. **Leidy B.**, 2002

Single-channel video, colour / black and white, sound, 12' 07"

This genre film, whose referential base is Balzac's *Le Chef d'oeuvre inconnu* – a novel focused on the subject of the painter and the model –, was commissioned by the production company Canal X for the film series *Por(no)pulsión*. It was presented at Madrid's Círculo de Bellas Artes in the autumn of 2002.

Art critic Fernando Castro writes in the catalogue of the film: "Everything begins with a date, as in all stories, but it is not a date with a person and much less a blind date, it is an appointment with our own fears and obsessions, which will only be bearable if they are put on stage or, better still, if they are put on stage with us as performers. Even so, the main fear is always the same: what is not seen does not occur. If during masturbation, which would be the most elevated portrait, nobody sees us, there is no real orgasm, only waste. We need the viewer because the viewer is the great expropriator".

As a matter of fact, *it all begins before beginning*, as in the dynamics of betrayal, surrender and *voyeurism* we find in the fascinating *Laws of Hospitality* by Pierre Klossowski. *Leidy B.* starts with a close-up of a woman's feet clad in high-heeled shoes, a typical fetishist obsession of mainstream porn and provocative reformulation of the marble foot of the muse.

The protagonist's aestheticism reinforces a dreamlike feel, but also introduces a number of *alienation* effects: from the pornographic film that we see on a TV lying on its side to the *voyeuristic* presence of the artist himself. There is a deliberate projection of the pictorial gaze that, to some extent, seems self-absorbed, devoted to another type of onanism. Finally, the solitary and duplicate pleasure of female masturbation ends up producing the consecutive appearance of two faceless ghosts: first, a body that is only phallus; then, this phallus metamorphosed into a man with a bandaged face. Rather than mummification what we are witnessing is a beheading.

The artist himself writes about the importance of the spectator, about

how central it is that he identifies with the observer-voyeur to the point of merging into this role: "*Leidy B.* speaks about the guarantee of the gaze. Only the gaze guarantees that events take place. The voyeur is also the only figure able to, so to speak, activate the scene. That does not mean that someone has to be present; when we fornicate we are at the same time the one who acts and the viewer. That's what pornography has taught us".

Leidy B. has the exact duration of its soundtrack: the song "The End", last cut from The Doors' homonymous 1967 debut album.

3. **The man with the fire eyes**,

Single-channel video, colour, sound, 4' 54"

The man in *The man with the fire eyes* is the same man in *El hombre de la lámpara*, but three years later, after having absorbed the light that he was carrying on his back, and that he now expels through his incendiary eyes. On the contrary, the space is indeed new: back then we were in a transparent place – the Casa de Campo's gardens –, while now we are confronted with a non-place surrounding an essentially white wall.

The protagonist is wearing a dark suit, a white shirt and a skinny black tie – a visual legacy of *Husbands*, the movie by John Cassavetes. His face is covered by a mask (cast in bronze of a mould of his own face) and is spewing fire at the height of the eyes. Blinded and even wounded (the incandescence of the mask causes burns on his face), we know that at a certain point he departed in a circular search for an unreachable woman.

Between the years 2001 and 2003, 'men in suit spewing fire from their eyes' have been part of Bernardí Roig's standard iconography. He had found the exact appearance he wanted his figures to have, together with a way of revisiting the impossibility of the gaze with safer supports. We are witnessing an act of failed observation that is closely related to the myth of Diana and Actaeon (present in other works by the artist), inasmuch as the non-vision prevents the materialization of the desire of women. Let us not forget that the voyeur is speeding agent and trigger.

The man with the fire eyes was exhibited for the first time at the Max Estrella gallery (Madrid) in spring of the year 2003, during the show "Resurrección y halitosis". In the show, the biblical figure of Lazarus takes on a special relevance: after his return to life and with rotten breath, Lazarus's number one priority is the immediate encounter with pleasure.

4. **Father (Miscommunication Exercises)**, 2003

Single-channel video, black and white, soundless, 3' 53"

Father (Miscommunication Exercises) was presented at the Stefan Röpke Gallery in Cologne in 2004 and can be considered the first video installation by the artist.

The protagonist is a middle-aged man in judgemental attitude – the actor in this case is Bernardí Roig's father. Before him, and as only spectator of the projection, we can see a sitting life-size figure of himself that is covering his ears. We cannot hear the sound of his anger, because silence is organic and ended up rotting along the way. However, we can see the effect that the inhibition of repressed conflicts has on us.



Leidy B.

The subject of duplicity opens a new chapter in Bernardí Roig's obsessions workbook that is still in force today. The same is true for his interest for the so-called 'empty spaces', which in the case of this projection is shown through the distance created between the two men: on the one hand, a tense and screaming face that has been muted; on the other, his own physical presence, sitting down and self-deafened.

This recording of a fruitless insult, whose usual circuit of information transmission has been subverted – the real recipient, the son, is a phantasmal presence –, addresses the paternity theme and the resulting recovery of childhood memories as well as the depiction of a personal imaginary of constriction and too high expectations.

5. **Smokebreath (The Monologue)**, 2004

Single-channel video, colour / black and white, sound, 4' 08"

"One night, sitting at his table with his head between his hands, he saw himself get up and go". This sentence, written by Beckett in mid-1984, is the trigger of *Smokebreath (The Monologue)*.

The recording of a man firmly holding his own head and talking to himself is a specular act that cannot be but a monologue – fake dialogue with our self-image that is not recognised due to the deformation of the mirror –, or a dialectic confrontation with the *Doppelgänger*, that is, with the other that is oneself, but in which we do not recognise ourselves.

The black smoke of the protagonist's breath becomes halo of light when the film's images are converted into their negative: the smoke is light and vice versa, and their distinction depends solely on the horizon, on the point of view – here intentionally manipulated. Once again, the theme of otherness, dichotomy, chromatic Manichaeism and the inaccuracy of this duality between the white-light that illuminates, but whose blinding intensity prevents us from seeing, and the black smoke, which is the breath that gives life.

These images are inserted in a thick, milky and excessive light and accompanied by the song "Mountain of Needles" from the album *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts* (1981) by Brian Eno and David Byrne. *Smokebreath (The Monologue)* was presented for the first time in the summer of 2005 at New York's Claire Oliver Gallery during the homonymous solo exhibition.



Father (Miscommunication Exercises)

6. **Repulsion Exercises (Salome)**, 2006

Single-channel video, black and white, sound, 5' 45"

In the middle of the night, a pair of long female legs typical of a contemporary Salome, wrapped in black silk crotchless stockings and supported by *stiletto* shoes, strikes a chromed bronze head. The raking light that gives volume to the scene comes from the headlights of a Ford Capri, as in a film *noire*.

Elegant and stylish, she is the archetype of the dissatisfied and frustrated bourgeois lady. A Salome, instigator of the beheading, connected with a long lineage of murderous women who execute at their own discretion. An ill-fated woman in any case, whose firm intention to combine horror and seduction leads to a fetishism not limited only to the high heels and the stockings, but to a kind of forced subjugation to the victim's will in which she squats down and, in an impeccable exercise of golden shower, urinates on the bronze head.

Repulsión Exercises (Salome) represents the confrontation of the myth of the triumph of beauty over language and the myth of castration and aphanasis or loss of desire, a state characteristic of those who have lost the ability to exercise the heroic act of looking.

7. **Insultos al público**, 2006

Single-channel video, black and white, sound, 5' 53"

Forty years later and after a strict weight-loss plan, *Insultos al público* is the unfaithful adaptation of Peter Handke's homonymous theatre script, whose precedent is *The art of insulting* by Schopenhauer. In Handke's piece, premiered in 1966 at the Theater am Turm (Frankfurt), four actors destroy the audience's expectations by negating all the conventions and the roles typical of theatre shows. It is a dialogue with the unwary that listen to them in order to end up formally demolishing the illusion of a 'character', the last to resist in this endeavour of art demystification undertaken by Modernity.

The protagonist of *Insultos al público* is Fernando Castro – art critic and Professor of Aesthetics Theory at the Autonomous University of Madrid –, who appears insulting a uniformly meek audience: passive, servile, indoc-



Aliento de humo (el clown)

trinated, submissive, puppet-like, coy and conformist but paradoxically absent. A powerful close-up of a face that looks sometimes aggressive, and other times ironic (but keeping a modulated voice at all times), while scolding an empty seating section.

Like the characters in the Theatre of the Absurd, Bernardí Roig's are unable of any form of speech other than monologue; they withdraw into themselves, incapable of sharing or communicating. A thread of inner consciousness connects the physical and emotional extremes ranging from agony to pleasure.

It is a one-take, uncut, production, edited in a coarse-grained white and black, which makes the film visually similar to the artist's charcoal drawings on paper.

8. *L'Uomo della Luce*, 2008

Single-channel video, colour, sound, 3' 59"

This second version of *El Hombre de lámpara* (2000) is part of the project that the Triennale di Milano commissioned the artist in an open-bid competition (under the curatorship of Demetrio Paparoni) to commemorate May the 9th, anniversary of the assassination of Aldo Moro and national day of the victims of terrorism in Italy. The character represented by the sculpture, placed in the Piazzetta of Via Vivaio, is carrying on his back a light that is on throughout the whole year, except for the night of the commemoration, when *L'Uomo della Luce* is projected on the facade of Palazzo Isimbardi – the seat of the Milan provincial government.

The protagonist of the video, the same one that has served as model to cast the mould of the white-patinated bronze sculpture, walks with a fully-bandaged head – headless. He wanders at night enveloped by the chilling cold of Extremadura's pasture lands. It is a ghostly double of the sculpture.

Bernardí Roig writes: "A figure occupies an exterior space and becomes a presence, but an exterior space that is characterised by the presence of a figure becomes at the same time an interior space: a place for thought and reflection. It is the equivalent to closing our eyes and turning our head into an image, and therefore into an enclosed space from where it will only



Ejercicios de invisibilidad

be possible to come out in the form of a metaphor, not as it is thought, but only in the way it may be said".

L'Uomo della Luce is the result of an incident in the middle of our field of vision since the light it emits is not a light that illuminates but, on the contrary, a light that contributes to add to the thickness of our blindness. However, it is not blindness as absence of vision, but rather as the impossibility to represent 'that something' stolen from our sight that is our inner experience. It is the light that insults the night.

9. *Aliento de humo (el clown)*, 2008

Single-channel video, colour / black and white, sound, 3' 59"

Surrounded by Bruce Nauman's suffocating *Corridors* and the absurd gestures of his bouncing clowns, Bernardí Roig presented at *El Mundo* stand (Arco 2008, Madrid art fair) the installation "El 21, la promesa interior y la mondanura" in which *Aliento de humo (el clown)* was projected for the first time.

This installation consisted of a monitor hung on the interior wall of a corridor and located opposite the head of one of his characteristic white sculptures. On the screen, the sculpture's face, trapped in an insistent laughter (a bodiless head floating and rocking in an urn full of milk); and on the opposite side, the countenance of the character throwing puffs of smoke against his own moving reflection every fifteen seconds.

This 'laughter film' speaks of words drowned in the depths of the throat and cornered by smoke; that is, by the water vapour condensed into its *unspeakability*. In the absence of language, words come out in the form of a laughter that replaces them. This is how the mouth becomes a toothless morass that stores mountains of unspoken things, until, just before overflowing, bursting in the corrupt sound of a laughter that masks the anxiety and meaninglessness. As the 'philosopher of the hammer' stated: "From the laughing of this Dionysus arose the Olympian gods, from his tears arose mankind".

We hear laughter and the first thing we think is that someone is laughing at us, and then that maybe he is laughing at himself, although he is actually laughing at fear, since fear is much slower and much more cautious than laughter. Like Zarathustra, he laughs at those that are safe in their bounded



Otras manchas en el silencio

areas of comfort, the balanced and the serene, the tidy and the cautious; he laughs because he is the great demolisher of guarantees, the great destroyer of shelters, he who shatters everything that is in a safe place.

However, deep down, he is not laughing at men or gods. He is not laughing at anything, not even at something. He is only laughing at his own laughter, since laughter confirms our finitude. Laughter and orgasm are one and the same thing, by different means.

10. **Otras manchas en el silencio**, 2011

Single-channel video, black and white, sound, 6' 14"

Otras manchas en el silencio is a biopsy of *L'année dernière à Marienbad* (1961), film directed by Alain Resnais after an idea by Alain Robbe-Grillet, who was also the author of the dialogues. It is an example of resistance that does not only boost but also succumb to the power of interference.

Resnais's film tells the story of a character dressed in a tuxedo – and therefore elegant – and attractive – if it weren't because there is something strange about him – strolling through the corridors of a vast and sumptuous health resort – although it looks more like the inside of a crypt. Suddenly, he sees a beautiful girl climbing the stairs that he thinks he knows. He approaches her, but she denies or can't remember having met him. That is the point of departure for a game of reconstruction/denial of a memory, within a framework of absolute and absurd lack of communication among all the characters.

Bernardí Roig appropriated the first scenes of the original film – locations of the resort and the introduction of the characters – and inserted himself into the plot under the figure of a man who, without moving a single muscle of his face, sews up his mouth, not metaphorically but physically, before a silent audience who nods and claps. From this scene on, we witness a display of all the theoretical elements of the film.

Otras manchas en el silencio explicitly communicates both the content and the formal technique of his citation work in relation to the original film by Resnais, but suggests a way out. The idea that alienation manifests itself through a kind of anaesthesia of the passions (sewing the mouth) is added to the denunciation of this alienation. In fact, the display of self-torture expresses so much rejection



Wittgenstein House (Vienna)

as a failed attempt to react, since the main character does not change his facial expression in the slightest while inflicting that suffering on himself.

11. **Ejercicios de invisibilidad**, 2012

Single-channel video, black and white, sound, 7' 13"

This video was recorded in the halls of the Lázaro Galdiano Museum in Madrid on the occasion of 2012 Bernardí Roig's solo show, "El coleccionista de obsesiones", curated by José Jiménez.

One figure, the artist himself, appears dressed again in a tuxedo as image of the luxurious celebration of his own blindness. On his head, he carries a powerful light that burns his forehead and his eyes are closed – either sewn or walled-up. He starts the tour through the dark rooms of the museum as a diligent guide, showing us the works that he cannot see.

The story starts in the underground tunnel that connects the two buildings of the museum, a place where thousands of ancient copies of the Goya magazine, published by the institution, are stacked. Without any kind of shocks or jolts, we follow his tour throughout the different rooms of the museum, a store of the obsessions that Lázaro Galdiano collected. Walls, ceilings, corners and display cabinets full of a desire that has transformed itself into a great *Vanitas*. Guided by the soundtrack "Are you lonesome tonight?" in Elvis Presley's 1969 version, he becomes a contemporary Tiresias.

Ejercicios de invisibilidad is a compound of two substances that have a very intimate relationship: the stimulation of desire and memory tracing. It also speaks to us of the obsessive fixation and the passionate fight with time. Something that the collector of obsessions is very familiar with.

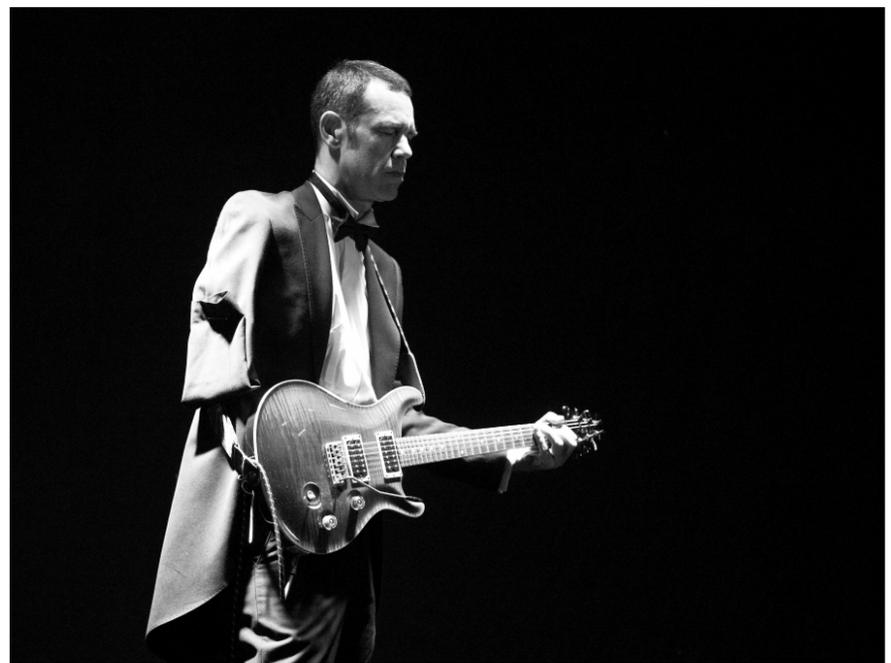
12. **POET**, 2014

Single-channel video, black and white, sound, 9' 17"

Video filmed in the Lompoul desert (Senegal) and presented for the first time at the Max Estrella Gallery as moving visual support for the photo project "POETS (99 hombres y una mujer barbuda)".



Primera Directísima a la cabaña Wittgenstein (Skjolden, Noruega)



J.F. Concierto para la mano izquierda de Ravel (a Paul Wittgenstein)

The bearded woman is Bernardí Roig's wife, and the rest are some of the 'poets' who have accompanied him in his career: writers, art critics, teachers, collectors, travelling salespeople, gallery owners, museum directors, importers-exporters, 'real' poets, and a former legionnaire. A total of one hundred people captured half-length by a large 18 x 24 format Polaroid snapshot, with no external traces but their own bags of shadows.

Played by the artist himself, the protagonist of the film is a middle-aged man, with evident signs of neglect and a blank face; an ash-coloured face in any case, to which nothing seems to adhere. He is walking in an eternal loop across the crests of the dunes in a desert – a place without borders that extends beyond the reach of the human eye – while being lashed by a wind that also batters the scarce rests of a landscape pierced by a thunderous hoarseness.

POET is a trip to the inside of our own head – an always distant and inaccessible place – and an allegory of walking: to leave the comfort zone, to venture out of the domesticated area and to hear the trembling of the air traversed by the thousand voices of our inner silence.

13. **Nafragio del rostro**, 2015

Single-channel video, black and white, sound, 24' 28"

Nafragio del rostro is the chronologically-ordered, slowed-down *morphing* of 365 incorrupt instants, to which a suffocating background sound has been added.

The work consists of 365 self-portraits of Bernardí Roig's face, taken between the 24th of June 2013 and the 24th of June 2014. For a year, once a day, the same ritual took place at the beginning of the day; front position, direct look at the camera's lens, expression of seriousness, certain melancholic air and shot. The first image shows the face when it was only a white canvas – head and face completely shaved and polished – while the final one, taken a year later, shows the moment when everything has turned into a mess.

This video, the longest to date made by the artist, proposes a rereading to the theme of the subject's loss of aura raised by Walter Benjamin. A loss that for Bernardí is not only 'a design that comes from the past in search

of an acknowledgement of receipt', but it is also linked to the unrepresentable of presence, to the rotten *telos*, a sort of indigestible memory carved into the flesh of a face captured in the moment of its appearance.

14. **Cuidado con la cabeza (El baño de Acteón)**, 2016

Single-channel video, black and white, sound, 2' 26"

In the artist's latest individual exhibition in Madrid ("Cuidado con la cabeza", Sala Alcalá 31, 2016), and in his eagerness to get out of the official exhibition space, Bernardí Roig installed a figure inside the ventilation well of the subway entrance at the junction of Alcalá and Gran Vía streets. Somehow he realised that the exhibition rooms would not suffice for his purpose, that it was necessary to take the show to the streets and make the viewer look upward, to the bright sign "CUIDADO CON LA CABEZA" [mind your head] placed at the top of the façade, and to look down, to the figure in the underground well, only glimpsed through the grille.

The figure is life-size, has deer antlers (like Actaeon), hands tied behind his back and is trying to lick the darkness of the night with the tip of his tongue. As the figure is buried in the darkness of the ventilation well and thus not visible from the point of view of passers-by, it is revealed to us through the flash of his absence. Three days before the show was taken down, the artist used the work installed in the underground's ventilation well to film *Cuidado con la cabeza (El baño de Acteón)*.

During the night, while the ground is receiving the fleeting flashes of night lights after a heavy rain, a woman in high-heeled shoes covered with Swarovski crystals – a modern Diana the Huntress – walks determinedly towards the fatal meeting with her victim. When she gets to the grille, exactly in the middle of it, she crouches, pulls her transparent satin panties aside and urinates on Actaeon's face. As soon as the action is finished, she turns around and is swallowed by the urban night.

This figure occupying the public space is not a presence, not even a ghost. It is a reverse monument that commemorates our insecurities and forces us to look down into the bowels of our repressed impulses.

All the work Bernardí Roig has developed in recent years has been produced keeping in mind two essential issues: how to face the legacy of ico-

nographic repertoires and how to create, even today, a persistent image in a world full of blinded images.

15. Wittgenstein House (Vienna), 2017

Single-channel video, black and white, sound, 9' 02"

Finally, Ludwig Wittgenstein understood that he couldn't work as an elementary school teacher due to his unstable temper and decided to work as a gardener in the Convent of the Brothers of Charity in Hutterldorf, where he pondered the idea of becoming a friar.

The later death of his mother and some occasional Tiberian behaviour led him to a deep personal and moral crisis. In 1926, in these strange circumstances, his sister Margarethe asked him to join, together with his friend architect Paul Engelmann, the project of building and designing a house for her eternal happiness.

Based on the formal language that Adolf Loos used to build the *House Steiner* in 1910, Wittgenstein planned a framework of cubic forms devoid of all ornaments reducing architecture to straight and undisturbed lines that run parallel or perpendicular to each other. Emboldened by his aeronautical engineering studies, he also designed all the mechanical parts, such as the doorknobs, locks, ventilation grilles, doorframes, switches and radiators... He even designed the air, although he chose to have naked light bulbs as lighting fixtures. The beauty of this house lies in its precision and its mathematical rigor. It is the embodiment of Logic in reinforced concrete.

Wittgenstein House (Vienna) was shot at night in 2017 inside the original house on the Kundmannngasse in Vienna. In it we witness the narrative of a man, philosopher Fernando Castro, dressed in a white tunic and carrying a powerful halogen light above his head. The house is completely in the dark and we can hardly see its sober architecture at the anxious pace of this character. On the tunic we can read the number that corresponds to the 6.421 proposition of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*: "Ethics and aesthetics are one and the same".

Claustrophobic diagram of someone who cannot find the exit of a building that is the exact replica of a world built with the bricks of Logic and the limits of language. One cannot escape from such a building.

Film produced with the sponsorship of The Dosal Family Foundation, Miami.

16. Primera Directísima a la cabaña Wittgenstein (Skjolden, Noruega), 2017

Single-channel video, black and white, sound, 5' 43"

Between 1913 and 1914 Ludwig Wittgenstein, overwhelmed by the suffocating academic life at Cambridge, escapes to Skjolden, Norway, where, in extreme solitude, he builds a cabin to think. That remote and isolated place next to a cliff overlooking a lake is where he lays the foundations of his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.

This film, produced and edited by Bernardí Roig and shot and played by writer Agustín Fernández Mallo, is a film of climbing, where we see Fernández Mallo tracing the first *direttissima* to the ruins of Wittgenstein's cabin, a route that is done for the first time. In the language of climbers, the *direttissima* is "the ascent along the line that a drop of water falling directly from the summit would follow".

In this work, filmed in black and white to emphasize its dramatic effect, we can see the obsessive and persistent efforts of a man climbing a mountain over and over again in a straight line in order to surmount the ruins of what once was Wittgenstein's cabin. A failed attempt to reach the ruins of the philosopher's brain.

A crazy, repetitive and strenuous action that never ends.

A metaphor for the futile and constant effort to access the absurdity of knowledge. Like a modern Sisyphus condemned pushing the rock to the top of the mountain for eternity, our protagonist will never reach the top of these ruins, which are nothing more than the ruins that gave birth to the foundations of a theory of knowledge as a critique of language. After that, only mystical silence will remain.

Film made in collaboration with climbers Rafa Roca and Javier Suárez, and produced with the sponsorship of KELLS College, Santander.

17. J.F. Concierto para la mano izquierda de Ravel (a Paul Wittgenstein), 2018

Single-channel video, black and white, sound, 14' 13"

Vienna, *fin de siècle*. 'he research laboratory for world destruction', says Karl Kraus. The city where Nazism, Zionism, atonal music, psychoanalysis and the ornament as a crime were born.

1915. Winter. In the frozen trenches of the Polish front more artillery shells than frightened snowflakes fell from the sky. One of those projectiles tore up the right arm of the illustrious pianist Paul Wittgenstein, the only brother of the philosopher who had not yet committed suicide. He was taken prisoner by the Russians, who sent him to Siberia, one-armed.

Once released, in 1919, he returned to his native Vienna, which was also mutilated after the collapse of the two-headed Empire. Far from resigned, and with the help of his blind teacher Joseph Labour, he tried to go back to music building a sound imaginary tailored to his amputation, and invited the best composers of his time to write works to be performed only with the left hand.

The video shows Joan Feliu – the other half of the band Vacabou, along with Pascale Saravelli – playing an electric guitar cover of the beautiful piece that Ravel composed in 1930 for the one-armed pianist: 'The Piano Concerto for the Left Hand in D major'. Eighty-eight years later, the ferocious artillery shells have stop falling over the heads of the Central European intelligence, but there is a powerful spotlight falling zenithally on the head of the musician while he tears fierce notes from the metal strings so that they can be heard today. Alone, without his right arm (how could it be otherwise?), dressed in a black morning coat and tied to a 2003 Paul Red Smith.

Joan Feliu writes: "Unlike the piano, the guitar is an entirely asymmetric instrument where each hand plays a perfectly differentiated role: one hand selects combinations and the other gives them intensity. You can play the piano with one hand, and with four hands, but to play the guitar both are needed, as the work of one is what gives sense to the work of the other, including rhythm. When I heard the piece for the first time it seemed to me as cool as impossible. I remember it as full of rhythmic swings, with hardly any repetition and practically devoid of retainable passages. That was and remains my impression, because I only listened to the full composition once again, with the intention of choosing the essential fragments that were indispensable for me. Once located, I marked each of those parts and maimed the recording, although I kept them separated from each other because at that point in the process, they should be treated as isolated parts. The last step was to transcribe the whole to a distorted electric guitar, which forced me to rebuild each of the parts with the help of a musical notation only I could understand. The transformation had occurred and I could free myself from the original piece, to which I never went back".

This film, shot at Palm Pictures' studio facilities and carried out with the support of Ana Serratosa Arte (Valencia) and Javier Morueco (Madrid), is dedicated to the composer Paul Wittgenstein. Not to be confused with Wittgenstein's and Thomas Bernhard's 'nephew': this is the son of Dr. Karl Paul Wittgenstein, Ludwig's first cousin.



Dates of exhibition: 21/04/2018 – 2/09/2018

Museum Opening Hours

Tuesday to Saturday: 10 – 20 h.

Sunday: 10 – 15 h.

Monday closed.

ESBALUARD | museu d'art modern
i contemporani de palma



Ajuntament de Palma

Fundació d'Art Serra

In coproduction with:



PROMOCIÓN DEL ARTE

Curator: Nekane Aramburu. **Registry:** Soad Houman, Rosa Espinosa. **Coordination:** Catalina Joy, Irene Llàcer. **Exhibition design:** Leona.

Installation and audiovisuals: Creamos Technology, Es Baluard Team. **Videos edition:** Factoria Audiovisual. **Graphic design:** Pep Seguí. **Translation:** Teresa Martín.

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