

Text by Nekane Aramburu, director of Es Baluard and curator of the exhibition

Bernardí Roig is an intense artist who alternates artistic production from parameters that are habitual in contemporary art, which include the old division between writing, painting, sculptures, installations and audiovisual work. Thus, his career is characterised by having shaped a personal creation system charged with highly-recognisable codes peculiar to him. The exercise of images and gestures based on which he constructs his discourse is rooted in the Baroque Vanitas, mythology, the visual tradition linked to Judeo-Christian religion and the codes of literature and contemporary film.

Bernardí's audiovisual work is the surface on which the fundamental lines of his creative process solidify in movement, a process based on drawing and which produces three-dimensional effects in his sculptures and installations. It is the synthesis of a faceted universe, of a Baroque style of cultured metaphors which uses a certain narrative to reveal his obsessions and an obstinacy for combating the lack of communication of the human being in the face of a destiny condemned to extinction.

His images are the same image. Be it himself, or his alter egos.

Aby Warburg practised a history of images like a history of ghosts for adults. Thus, his texts on the portrait allude to the fact that "these ghosts are a matter of persistence, of the survival of a post-death state"¹.

In *Pierrot le fou* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1965) the main character, played by Jean Paul Belmondo, wraps two rolls of dynamite around his head and lights the fuse almost blindly. The camera changes its shot, moving and filming the explosion from afar, and afterwards comes a long travelling shot of the horizon line. It is an equivocal last will as a Dadaist gesture towards a flight with no return. The sublime act and the voice off camera, the fall into the abyss towards absolute isolation.

The characters generated by Bernardí irreversibly tend towards sacrifice and immolation and, like Ferdinand "Pierrot" Griffon they are alienated beings who extend their inner bankruptcy to the audience, but without needing their feedback or compassion. When the artist himself sews up his mouth in front of the spectators of *L'année dernière à Marienbad*, he exhibits to them and to us, without any demand whatsoever, an absurd duel of pain for redemption. Sealing one's mouth or falling into blindness are the consequences of the challenge of social and existential autism in the face of hyper-visibility.

Thus, children of tragedy, his characters are defective automatons, cyborgs without light who, like that of Pierrot, ritualize movements of failure, exposing themselves to the irretrievable nature of destiny, a fatum of incomprehension, a summit they will never reach.

With this exhibition project based on his films, we propose a review of the creator's work through a reading of his work centred on their performative force and the attempt to decode his cosmogony.

Whilst Roig has always defined himself as a painter (insisting on this idea above all after the 1994 work with the pivotal work *La muerte del pintor*) his work with video, initially in an almost recreational fashion, and afterwards introducing it alternately into his installations, gradually acquires a more prominent role. He is not interested so much in video art as in the force of film and the integration of his conceptual discourses into it. His moving pieces, fundamentally after the start of the 2000s, are still clearly drawings lived and expanded, the reflection of an urge that speaks of painting as defeat, and the need to interpret the representation of the defunctness of the body in real scenes.

Faced with death, there will always be failure. The categorical nature of failure implies that the erratic route, or ascent to a summit, are condemned to an eternal repetition in an infinite loop. The story is a path on which the characters collide amidst errors, orientation mistakes, defects of vision or their own autism. We see that, although the narrative in his films evolves in linear fashion, time and time again the characters move in circles over their body, over the reiteration of gestures or in the narration that interweaves in a single, unique story. The actors who perform these films are nearly always people he

¹ Levinas, Emmanuel. *La realidad y su sombra. Libertad y mandato. Trascendencia y altura*. Editorial Trotta. Madrid 2001 pp. 18 [English title: "Reality and its shadow. Freedom and command"]

knows or who come from his immediate environment, becoming mythological characters, alter egos of the creator himself who wander in the space of representation without any sense of reality.

Exactly the same occurs in his sculptural pieces or installations which conceal performative actions, intuited or dreamed, trapped in the time of a non-landscape which, unlike the others, those who live in the films in the dynamics of their movements, only reveal the inevitability of their destiny.

Mutilation, decapitation or physical cruelty are always a pact to gain some time. Now, based on the loop repetition in technological devices in the room, dramatizations, rituals and performative actions are shadows that intermingle. Emmanuel Levinas wrote that, "The trace of the shadow that appears at the edges of the apprehended being turns out to be an announcement of an infinite outpouring of the being into the creature"².

The scenes from these works resolved according to the hetero-dominant codes and archetypes allude to an inversion of roles, in the midst of a narrative whose metamorphosis and construction will depend on the force of the spectator and her or his power to neutralize the psychic and physical violence their power struggle emanates.

In Bernardí Roig, the archetypal figures of stereotypical patriarchal representation or grotesque, anachronistic men are always masculine. They show themselves to be vulnerable to the passage of exterminating time, disoriented they seem to call out for the sacrifice for redemption. In contrast to them, the woman is active, and not passive. Exhibitionism and fetishism as a means of control over the situation and the other. Salome, Diana, Leidy B, Catherine Lescault, transcend the pornographic impulse and that which is obscene to reveal that, whilst the gaze is the erection of the eye (as Bernardí Roig himself says), only one who feels free will be able to subvert the system order and narrative. Desire is fear, is another of the creator's key sentences. A reflection that could well be contrasted with the patent security in *Ejercicios de ascensión*, 2002-2003, where the prostitute Leidy B goes up some stairs in the very purest Duchampian style. With the standardization of the gaze, voyeuristic insinuations exercise control of the situation and the delay of desire, codifying gestures that are affirmation and doubt. The trans-apparent behind each sequence may manifest a change in the visible, the reversion of situations that were already in the ancient myths and which now acquire significance as a whole.

The configuration of the presentation of most of the artist's videos in the exhibition space is intended to orchestrate a visual hypertext as one big story, through museography - a system of transformation of the narratives which together lend a new meaning to the works, exhibitions and publications of Bernardí Roig.

² Didi-Huberman, Georges. La imagen superviviente. Historia del arte y tiempo de los fantasmas según Aby Warburg Edit. Abada. 2009 pp. 79 [English title: "The surviving image: phantoms of time and time of phantoms: Aby Warburg"]