

JAIME PITARCH

Jabón de Aleppo, 2016

27 May - 29 July 2016

Opening: 27.05.16 at 7 PM.

Jabón de Aleppo, 2014-2016.

Single-channel video HD, color, Sound 2.1.

5 h.



As the name suggests, Aleppo soap comes from the ancient city of Aleppo in Syria and its ancestral way of manufacturing dates back to over 2,000 years ago. The first soaps in history were liquid soap emulsions. In Aleppo the saponification process and the use of olive oil and laurel were introduced; thus in this way it appeared what is believed to be the first hard soap in the world or what is nowadays known as "a bar of soap". With the Crusades in the 12th century, soap production spread throughout the Mediterranean, arriving in Italy, France (Marseille's Soap) and Spain (Castille's Soap). Its producers always refer to a fact that makes it unique and gives a special mystique: in the final stage of preparation the soap dries under the sun of Syria.

Jabón de Aleppo (2014-2016) (Aleppo Soap) is Jaime Pitarch's new project for which the artist required the voluntary participation of more than 400 people coming from a wide variety backgrounds, convened by the artist to be filmed in his studio in Barcelona, over the course of five hours on the same day. The universal gesture of hand washing was filmed using an overhead sequence shot of the hands of all participants, one after the other, repeating the same action over and over again thus making the soap bar wane until its disappearance.

Through this simple action Pitarch makes converge three fundamental symbolic elements that give meaning to the project. As the artist states: "On the one hand, there is the *object*, the waning soap bar which acts as a metaphor for the city of Aleppo that is currently undergoing a fratricidal war and walks to its own extinction and that of its civil society; on the other, the hand washing *gesture* symbolizes the inhibition of the first world societies which don't act because the action takes place far from its borders, therefore limiting itself to keep informed about this event by the media. Our solidarity finishes there. Finally, the *duration*, the action on the video is long and repetitive (4 1/2 hours) so the viewer is forced to reduce the visual information displayed on a single idea thus reproducing the relational mechanisms that we have with the aforementioned reality: a fragmented understanding of conflict, made of tacked news flashes that construct an idea, the comfortable substitute for real experience, and that report a form of accomodating consciousness."

Jaime Pitarch reiterates simple actions associated with forms of unskilled labour and uses a variety of objects, retrieved from the street, from the Media or from the institutional artistic context, onto which he applies subtle interventions that allow a critical re-reading, not of themselves, but of our own proceedings in the context from which they come from. The ultimate goal of the artist is to create a sort of symbolic archeology of what in statistics is called social cost.

Jaime Pitarch (Barcelona, 1963). Lives and works in Barcelona. In 1993 he received a Fine Arts degree from the Chelsea College of Art, London, and in 1995 he obtained a master's degree from the Royal College of Art, London. In his work he uses elements manufactured by man, inhabited by humans or objects that have helped man in order to build a sense of self and what the world is. He often dismembers and reconstructs these elements and the distance between the original object and the new object, often dysfunctional, acts as a reflection of that space that is far from the original self and the individual, between collective structures and our limited adaptation or identification with them. Pitarch has held numerous solo exhibitions on a national and international level, among the most recent we find, The Ryder, London (2016), , Spencer Brownstone Gallery, New York (2014, 2009, 2006), Galería Fúcares, Madrid (2013, 2008), àngels barcelona (2013, 2009, 2004.1997); or Galerija Vartai, Lithuania, 2011. His work has been selected for group shows in galleries and institutions such as: The Spanish Cultural Centre Asunción, Paraguay, Cristina Guerra Contemporary Art, Portugal; Artium, Vitoria; MASS MoCA, Massachusetts; Manifesta; Palau Robert, Barcelona, Santa Monica Art Centre, Barcelona; Fondation Maeght, Saint Paul, France; Musée d'Art Contemporain, Lyon; Carré d'Art Contemporain, Nîmes or MACBA, Barcelona, among others. His work is part of public and private collections such as the MACBA collection, La Caixa, Artium, the Bergé collection, the Patio Herreriano Museum or the collection of the Royal College of Art in London, and many others.

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