

Against time

Pep Agut

Esther Ferrer

Joan Fontcuberta

Project curated by Pep Agut

14.12.11 > 27.01.12

Opening: Wednesday, December 14th, 20:00 h.

"That is, to convey new interpretations is the same as producing a new work of art. That means, that valuable differences are relevant only when they are produced as valuable in the beginning, thus, if they are produced this way it is because they have a certain value which distinguishes them from what is merely different."

"The new is not just the other, but the other that is valuable: it is the other that is considered valuable enough to keep, research, comment it and criticize, and prevent it from fading away."

"To reach a status of value, those individual and trivial characteristics need, in the first place, to be reinterpreted and integrated into the cultural memory."

"Each occurrence of the new is, deep down, the consummation of a new comparison of something to something, a comparison that up to that moment didn't take place because no one had thought of it. Cultural memory is the recollection of those comparisons, when it is conformed as this type of comparison, the new finds an entrance to the cultural memory."

Boris Groys, *About the New. Essay of a Cultural Economy*. Valencia, Editorial Pre-Textos, 2005

When we think of the art gallery, we somehow think of that which in the art world can be perceived as new, as novelty, this seems to be a generally accepted idea. Even though the modernist concept of Avant-garde –if by avant-garde we understand that which is thought as something new and radical– is forged within a linear concept of time that has gradually been invaded in the actual phases of capitalism by forces that propel cultural transformations, almost solely as consumption products, preferably massive.

This way, the track once opened by free thought - maybe that which today should be referred with certainty and resistance spirit together with critical thinking- was developed along with individual initiatives and art collectives. Nowadays it is masked by commercial processes that are often spectacular and can even falsify the documental basis destined to produce collective memory. As we are all aware, production institutionalization that adheres to cultural practices becomes profoundly affected by museums and biennials that are belittled in their discourse and often limited by the determining forces of the market.

It could be said, therefore, that in the times of a purely mercantile perspective on art, resistance forces should somehow articulate spaces that avoid current aesthetic regimes, along with the formation of historic dynamics based on the power of money, combating the rancid concept of consumption oriented novelty on which they are built.

Even more so if the concept of present is perverted by the system until it is void of any link to its own roots, thus, freeing it from any responsibility and preventing a critical construction about its essence. These resistance spaces should fight to note it in a wider time frame than the one determined by consumption practices. This would mean, therefore, to operate within the regime of a memory charged present that can be projected with critical exigency upon the system.

This way, the fundamental knitting on an exhibition project could be constituted as the revision of that which is conditionally and critically made for which it provides a look that centers on the chosen objects to convey a time frame that would have been wishfully expired and at the same time promoted and projected a different glance upon the pure and simple present times. Surpassing the strategic needs, It should contain a certain dosage of meta-artistic reflection, a discourse force that would delve in the concept of memory itself and therefore in the definition frame of the constitutive logic of the work.

It would be convenient to rethink or redefine a gallery project engaged in the sense that we could discover that perhaps the idea of novelty that we referred to in the beginning would not be the only soul of its dynamic, but it would be, paradoxically a certain conception of memory and therefore of the old. We could value the fact that –as stated by Groys– providing new interpretations is the same as producing new works of art and that can put us in a position to create new tasks and models of understanding of a recent past that should still be with us and that is often hidden behind an impoverished sense of radical present that prevents the cultural discourses from emancipating from a nearly histrionic mercantilism.

With the change of pace, almost abducted by a dynamic that widely neutralizes the deep sense of our works and puts them in a superficial framing, we create proposals that sustain each other, making it harder for the first ones to settle in the spaces where they intended to interfere, thus, preventing them from laying a solid root – creatively speaking – in the cultural knitting.

Pep Agut, November 2011

About the exhibited works:

Pep Agut, S/T (*Exact rooms*), 1989-2000, C-Photograph, 100 x 150 cm.

"This is the title that the writer Felipe Hernández gave to one of his narratives. Here we have two photographs in which the work of art generates a possible Renaissance middle-class family space. The document fiction of conventional situations, devoid of drama, governed by the power of the anecdotal, alludes at the same time to the necessary rigour involved in elaborating the discourse of art. The work has become a backdrop

Pep Agut, *Mim (Rescue Attempt Nonsense)*, 30 x 25 x 25 cm.

The idea of imitating the gesture of the painter and the gesture of the model refers us back ironically to the routine convention of the creative act. The photograph of the artist playing the two roles at once but on opposite sides of the same support inscribes itself in the modern tradition and its awareness of the inadequacy of the same language itself. The tactic of explicit masking stimulates the dialogue with the spectator

Pep Agut, MACBA, Barcelona, 2000, p.93

Joan Miró in the vineyard of the Mas Miró, Monroig, Tarragona. Photo : Joaquim Gomis. 90x 86 cm.

Preparatory sketch for a *Une cerise rouge, une scarabée vert*, 1964/*Tragédie du chasseur de pierres*, 1964/*Preparatory sketch for a Saltimbanques à la belle étoile*, 1964/*Sea foam with fish head*, 1962-63

The country of rising sun, 1962-63/*Brigitte with a unknow gallant* 1963/*Gorilla, parrot and angel in the garden of Eden*, 1962/*Edison a un chien andalou*, 1962/*The time warp*, 1962-63. 60 x 50 cm/38 x 28 cm.

"In 1994, I conceived the idea of organizing and exhibition that showed the interventions in the photographic world by Picasso, Miró, Dalí and Tàpies, that are, in my opinion, the most important Spanish artists of this century. I thought of proposing four simultaneous samples in the Picasso Museum, the Miró Foundation, Tàpies Foundation and the Dalí Museum-Theater. People were surprised because no one had focused on their relationship with one of the most relevant type of media regarding modern aesthetics and sensibility. These four different samples were given the name of: *Diurnes: Work Notes, Monroig Suite/ Destiny Suite, Portlligat: Photodocuments and Montseny Suite: Photopaintings*.

What was done in the sample *The Artist and Photography* (to invent an occupation in this case, collector and curator, in order to give a leading role to works related to the piece itself making it more truthful) it wasn't new in my trajectory. I selected series from the seventies to provide more coherence to this quadruple presentation that allowed me to reflect the creativity with which the four artists took advantage of photographic resources and the way in which the final result contributed to the expressive development of photographic language of their time.

This initial research merely aims to be a connection between Picasso, Miró, Dalí and Tàpies within the domain of the camera and photographic chemistry that satisfies the growing interest in photography shown by art aficionados.

With these examples it becomes clear that photography in their hands would become a fabulous instrument that either intensifies the point of view or becomes the support that generates new plastic practises.

More concretely they show us once and for all that the lens, the light and photo-sensitive materials are tools, just as paintbrushes and pigments make the artists' work possible".

Joan Fontcuberta. Curator of the exhibition cycle *The artist and the photograph. The artist and the photograph*. Actar, Barcelona, 1955, pp. 7-11

Esther Ferrer, *Concert ZAJJ By the way there and back/ The thread of time/Heads and tails / Ta te ti to tu/ Canon of chairs*. 1984, Din_A4 /29,70cm x 21 cm c/u

"First of all Ferrer is a performer, her fine arts background has influenced her creation and perception of many things. Her individual trajectory is coherent and solid, action' transgressive, dynamic, provocative and lucid, worthy of a 'woman in. According to the artist, within an action, time, space and presence (not representation) intervene. These are primary elements for any performances, for instance, she normally accompanies with music influenced by John Cage. For Ferrer, the performer and the spectator realize the action. The audience participate automatically, the roles become diffuse and the spectator becomes as much of a performer as herself. Esther Ferrer, outside of fashion and revivals has continued to carry on for years the performance as she understands it: 'as a crude art, anchored in what is real and what does not admit various stylistic creations.'

She does not look for many elements, just the most meaningful and the minimum action, her main instrument is her own body".

Esther Ferrer. From the object to the action and viceversa. Diputación Foral de Guipúzcoa, 1997, pp. 13-20.

Pep Agut (Terassa, 1961) focuses his interest on the problems of representation, the role of the artist and the place of art. Agut has had solo and group exhibitions in large events such as the Venice Biennale, the Sidney Biennale or Prospekt, as well as in museums such as the Tel Aviv Museum of Contemporary Art or the MACBA Museu d'Art Contemporani, Barcelona, among others. He has coordinated and participated in seminars, conferences and debates about art and his work is represented in well-known private and public collections

Esther Ferrer (San Sebastián, 1937) is known for her individual and collective performances in ZAJ group (dissolved in 1996), and for her activity with worked photographs, installations, objects, etc. Ferrer has shown in numerous public and private institutions including: MNCARS, Circulo de Bellas Artes, Madrid; Koldo Mitxelena, San Sebastián; Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, Seville; Galerie Donguy; Galerie Lara Vinci; Galerie Satellite, Paris; Musee for Samtidskunst (Denmark); Statsalerie, Stuttgart, Germany; Museo Universitario de Ciencia y Arte MUCA, Rome, Mexico; Museu Nacional de Belas Artes, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. In her long career as a performance artist, she has realized actions in numerous festivals, both in Spain and internationally.

Joan Fontcuberta (Barcelona, 1955) has played an important role in the field of contemporary photography thanks to his multiple activities as an artist, teacher, essayist, publisher, art critic and curator. His work, which focuses on the criticism of the plausibility of images, has been awarded the *Premio Nacional de Fotografía* (1998), and the *Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* (1994). Last November he was given the National Essay Prize for his work "La cámara de Pandora". Fontcuberta has exhibited individually and collectively in many widely acknowledged centres and his work belongs to the permanent collection of Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona; Centro de Artes Reina Sofía, Madrid; Centre Pompidou, París; Museum of Modern Art, New York and Green Museum, Tokio, among others.