

frieze

Daniela Ortiz

àngels

In January, Peruvian artist Daniela Ortiz posted an offer for a construction job in Peru on the Spanish website loquo.com. Eleven Spanish men between the ages of 25 and 50 accepted invitations to be interviewed by the artist in the basement of àngels barcelona. All agreed to the conditions of the interview: along with the opportunity to secure an indefinite contract with a Lima-based company, their interviews would be filmed and displayed as part of Ortiz's solo exhibition entitled 'Inversión', to open a month later. The interviewees were paid for the use of their images (photographs and video footage) and not to participate in the interviews themselves. Furthermore they were originally given the option to keep an edited copy of their interview for them to use as a video-cv or to receive 50 Euros and all the candidates chose the payment option.

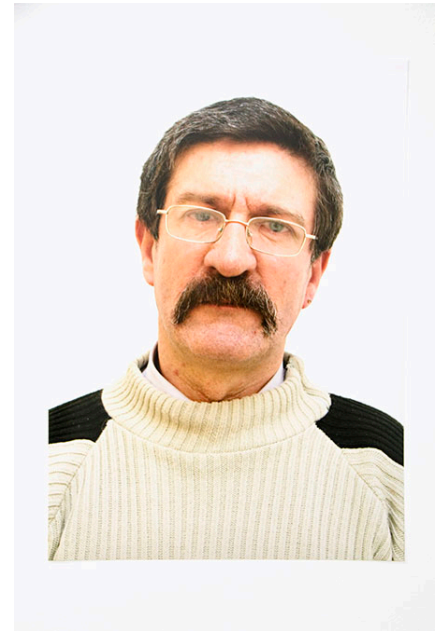
'Inversión' translates as 'reversal'. Ortiz situates this instance of emigration as a contradiction of a migratory flow which, despite a rich history of the multi-directional movement of people between the South American countries and their 15th-century colonizers, has more recently been understood as unidirectional: a 'developing' continent cast as a feeder of immigrants to a prosperous European state. This 'reversal' is bitterly ironic: the Spanish construction sector, which saw unprecedented growth from 2000 to 2007, was the main 'pulling factor' for re-locating to Spain. It was also the bubble that burst, which prompted those far from home to return and these 11 applicants to want to jump ship.

Opposite the single projection of the interview footage was a display table containing immigration laws from Peru, Colombia, Brazil, Ecuador, Argentina and Bolivia. Here, the demystification of the South American countries' own strict regulations is executed without mercy, where there is none. While the artist has previously met the violence of immigration politics with latent violence, producing sometimes accusatory works (the Spanish subtitles in the 2010 video installation *Real Decreto 2393/2004*, Royal Decree, 2393/2004, translate as 'the Spanish civilization and its representatives are responsible for colonial racism [...]

About this review

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By *Rebecca Close*



Daniela Ortiz *Untitled*, 2012, c-type print

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Every citizen of a nation is responsible for the crimes committed in the name of this nation'), 'Inversión' offers a more meditative frame to interpret the contradictions inherent to the policing of borders in the age of globalized capital.

Like a 2001 work by Madrid based activists Democracia, entitled *Wayaway*, in which a wooden shipping container was transformed into a habitable space with running water and sent (empty) between Spain and Latin American cities, Ortiz suggests that the imprint of liquid modernity on the body is precisely its objectification as transportable capital. Their distinct strategies are a marker of the significant shift which the role of the artist-activist has seen in the 11 years that separate the works. As Walter Benjamin argued in 'The Author as Producer' (1934), it is no longer enough for the artist to be an ideological patron of an exploited community, they must intervene: a theory partially institutionalized in today's 2012. At a time when 46 percent of the population in Spain fear immigration as a 'serious threat' (confirmed by a 2008 poll conducted by think-tank Real Instituto Elcano) Ortiz's 'intervention' efficiently grounds the rhetoric of those fighting this growing xenophobia, such as the international awareness campaign whose title predicates the counter position: 'Todos Somos Inmigrantes' (We Are All Immigrants).

In showing the would-be emigrants to be expressive subjects, seen actively negotiating questions of identity, hybridity and belonging throughout their interviews, there is an attempt to straddle both a Marxist and a more agent-centred post-colonial conception of migration. The dual significance of the show's title, however, suggests a fatal ambiguity in the position of the artist in her own logic, and an ultimate failing to reclaim the agency of her collaborators. 'Inversión' also means 'investment'. A gallery assistant confirmed the men were paid to participate, and yet this and various other commercial transactions, as well as the context in which a relationship was forged between the Peruvian construction company and the artist, were left opaque. That patrons could buy mug-shot-like photographs of the men, displayed in a second room, fermented a lingering doubt that perhaps this 'intervention' doubly commodified a group of precarious participants: first as human capital, and secondly as art objects.

Rebecca Close

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