

In June 1970, architect Ricardo Bofill (Barcelona, 1939) staged an impromptu festive happening in Moratalaz, Madrid, with the intention of promoting his forthcoming utopian housing project *La Ciudad en el Espacio* (The City in Space). The American blues musician Taj Mahal and the Catalan guitarist Toti Soler were among the performers who played on an improvised stage. The hippie nature of the three-day event amused the local residents but seemed to enrage the local conservative politicians, who ended up cancelling the housing development.

Fascinated by the inconclusive nature of the event as well as by its lack of documentation, visual artist Anna Moreno has undertaken in-depth research over the last year – involving interviews with witnesses and participants – in order to build a picture of what went on during those summer days in 1970.¹ Forty-seven years later to the month, Moreno organised a re-enactment at the very same location.² This time, rhythm-and-blues band The Downtown Alligators played on stage, followed by jam sessions and other activities. Moreno decided not to create any type of photographic or filmic record of the re-enactment, and only to document it through an audio recording.

What has resulted is a speculation on the nature of recollection, and the processes of forming memories of an event from the past that was nevertheless concerned with the idea of the future. This intricate web of

reminiscence, nostalgia, supposition and mediation takes its inspiration and its title from a disquieting 1964 short fiction story by the British novelist J.G. Ballard (1930–2009).³ In “The Drowned Giant” a huge corpse is found washed ashore, where it is progressively decaying and being scavenged by the local townsfolk. Dwelling on the impossibility of recomposing and reproducing a living entity, and the exchange between moments that are real and those that might have been imagined, Moreno’s project is, like the tale, not concerned with explanations and origins, but with the uncanny effects of a whole disintegrating into parts.

The final phase of *The Drowned Giant*, realised thanks to the Barcelona Producció grant, consists in the production of a publication in the form of a vinyl record with card sleeve and booklet insert, all designed by Moreno herself. The tracks of this ‘out-of-date’ sound storage medium intermingle some of the soundscapes of the research and re-production process. Oral testimony and ambient sound from Moratalaz overlap; asynchronous fragments of music and speech segue into each other. Among the voices are Bofill’s collaborator – and the mastermind of the first Moratalaz event – Peter Hodgkinson, as well as his then-partner Gila Dohle. There are reflections by Soler, riffs from The Downtown Alligators, and conversation from researcher Enrique Doza, amongst

other layers, all bearing witness to the 1970 happening and its echo in 2017. Throughout the 53-minute recording, the ‘then’ and ‘now’ are deliberately entwined: the listener occupies a suspended temporality that is neither a straightforward past nor an unmediated present. The accompanying booklet features still-life photographs by Laura San Segundo and newly commissioned texts by architects Paula Currás and Havi Navarro (who created the re-enactment stage), the curator María Montero and the blues expert Ramón del Solo (who witnessed the 1970 event as a teenager). On the disc sleeve and back cover Moreno has included architectural drawings of *La Ciudad en el Espacio* from Bofill’s archive.

The Drowned Giant connects with Moreno’s long-term interest in interrogating the nature of the event, or the re-enactment, as a means to renegotiate collective memory, as well as utopian and dystopian futures. In the spring of 2018, as part of the group exhibition *Beehave* at the Fundació Joan Miró in Barcelona, Moreno will repurpose elements of the Moratalaz re-enactment, creating further myths and fragmentations in the spirit of Ballard’s giant.

The publication project *The Drowned Giant* is presented on November 22, 2017 at the Architects’ Association of Catalonia.

Latitudes

¹ The research was conducted as part of the “Artistas en residencia” residency jointly organised by the Centro de Arte 2 de Mayo (Móstoles) and La Casa Encendida (Madrid), in Spring 2017.

² This became her contribution to the group exhibition *En los cantos nos diluimos* (Sala de Arte Joven, Madrid), an exhibition set out to explore the modes of display artists establish when presenting performance, workshop, happening, choreography and lecture performances in exhibition spaces. It was curated by María Montero as part of the 8th edition of *Se busca comisario* (31 May – 23 July 2017).

³ The story is included in the sci-fi book *The Terminal Beach*.

Anna Moreno (Barcelona, 1984) lives and works in Barcelona and The Hague (The Netherlands). Her artistic practice is developed through expanded events and solo exhibitions such as *D'ahir d'abans d'ahir de l'altre abans d'ahir i més d'abans encara* (Blueproject Foundation, Barcelona, 2016), *The Whole World Was Singing* (HIAP Project Space, Helsinki, 2016) and *An Awkward Game* (1646, The Hague, 2015). Collective exhibitions have included: *En los cantos nos diluimos* (Sala de Arte Joven, Madrid, 2017), *Distopía General* (Reales Atarazanas, Valencia, 2017), *CAPITALOCEAN* (W139, Amsterdam, 2016), *Lo que ha de venir ya ha llegado* (CAAC in Seville, MUSAC in León and Koldo Mitxelena in San Sebastián, all 2015) and *Generaciones* (La Casa Encendida, Madrid, 2014). Her work has been included in the framework of symposia such as "Visual Activism" (SFMOMA, San Francisco, 2014) and "United We Organize" (Stroom Den Haag, The Hague, 2013). She has participated in residencies such as "Artistas en residencia" (CA2M and La Casa Encendida, Móstoles and Madrid, 2017), Seoul Art Space Geumcheon (Seoul, 2012) and Atelierhaus Salzamt (Linz, 2011), amongst others. She teaches Artistic Research at the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague, where she is a founding member of Helicopter, an artist-run initiative for experimentation and knowledge exchange.