



Espai Cub

JONATHAN MILLÁN

EXPOSICIÓ AL SEGLE XIX

03/07 – 24/09

Jonathan Millán (Barcelona, 1979) studied Fine Arts and has devoted much of his career to working in the media. Through drawing, illustration, text and, more recently, sculpture and video, he comments on everyday life, human nature, relationships, the collective imaginary and the role of art. Perceptive and ironic, his reflections and complex analogies offer a direct and somewhat disconcerting poetics, nourished by satire, parody, fiction and the absurd.

Exposició al segle XIX (Exhibition in the Nineteenth Century), the installation presented by Jonathan Millán in the Espai Cub, is conceived as an interaction of different elements in which time and the history of art become the organising principle. Different characters belonging to different worlds and temporal realities – Miró and Picasso as symbols of relatively recent history of art; Carlota, the artist's girlfriend, as a present-day being; the grandmother, the only character whose life covers all the periods and who, as an aging nexus, links the two artists with Carlota; and, finally, ever-present death – invite the viewer to embark on a journey in which the aesthetics of 1980s video art and terror (a combination of the ghost train and Bergman films) come together to generate a story that will lead him or her to reflect upon the construction of meanings and constant change.

The installation consists of a series of brief visual stories printed on black cloth, spatiotemporal fantasies which probe the idea of timelessness in the absence of any apparent space, while also establishing relations among themselves and shaping a complex narrative with different levels of reading in which all the elements are interlinked. The first item one finds on entering the Espai Cub is a lit-up sculpture in the form of a rock. This constitutes the centre of the space and refers to a non-human time scale, something ancient that has always been there and that we are unable to grasp. Perhaps the only figure in this story who might understand the temporal dimension is death, represented by Carlota in her Halloween disguise but who, when placed next to the grandmother, becomes a much less innocuous presence. Miró and Picasso, illustrious artists of the last century, represented very tenuously by two friends of the artist, move through this timeless space in which they come upon Carlota (dressed in bright colours that seem to highlight the notion of a new and fresh present) and, socially speaking, interact with her in a very elementary way, almost like something out of a guide to good manners or a clown's manual. The twentieth century is represented by one of the artist's uncles (Ramón), who imitates Lucio Fontana in a gesture that has become epic in the history of art: slashing the canvas. This is an act which, if carried out in our times and by an anonymous person, makes no sense

and verges on the ridiculous. Jonathan Millán emphasises that all of this is being narrated through videos recorded in present time with the latest high definition camera which, however, reproduces video art from the 1980s, as if the camera, too, is disguised in the past.

Exposició al segle XIX alludes to change and the constant aging of things and meanings. One of the videos, in which improvised sculptures in different forms and colours are endlessly replacing each other, seems to be trying to get to the core of this idea. In another video, Carlota, Miró and Picasso are sleepwalking through time, cohabiting in a non-existent, imagined temporal reality which sustains the other ways of playing with time. These are videos where humour and the accessibility of their resources counterbalance their conceptual weight.

The installation includes a small publication which is halfway between visual explanation of the installation and development of all these questions in other formats and as other possibilities. This, in combination with the remaining elements, sets up a specific context that raises for the viewer a number of possible interpretations concerning the meaning and relevance of things. If the original proposition set out from research into expanding the sculptural form into more narrative formats, it would seem that, with this new step, sculpture has (literally) disappeared from our reality to confine itself to a fictional world, a micro-context with its own laws and values which seek to flee the burden of the history of art.

