

<http://eixams.cc/>

*Eixams* is an art project, the purpose of which is to observe bees. A varied array of technical mechanisms, specially designed by the artist and his collaborators, give us insights into the phenomena that take place in the surroundings of a bee colony. The main aim of the project is to draw attention to the essential role bees play in the natural system and to encourage other ways of comprehending this insect, whose ecosystem is currently under threat. *Eixams* has instituted an observation process that seeks to reveal the real conditions of bees' lives to visitors, who are invited to connect with this species through other sources and stimuli, and with the empathy required to arrive at a greater understanding and appreciation of bees. The various sensors designed and developed for the project enable us to hear the soundscape inside the hive and place us at the heart of the colony's activity, granting privileged access to certain unusual stimuli. The mechanism created by the artist and his collaborators features a series of performative actions that connect the data gathered by sensors, cameras and microphones in the complex

panorama of the bee colony. The artist also implements a number of strategies that call into question the conventional view of the bee as a simple maker of honey, inviting us to explore its world beyond the perspective of apiculture, extending it into other types of practice and knowledge.

Despite decades of research, bees are still regarded as simple honey producers. Nevertheless, as eusocial organisms (eusocial species are those that show the highest level of social organisation) bees present a wide diversity of qualities and behaviours. Accordingly, *Eixams* proposes to overturn the conventional view and to show bee characteristics that go unnoticed. The intention of Àlex Muñoz's research is to focus in a more meaningful way on bees, their dynamics and biology, and on their importance in the chain of life. The interfaces designed by Muñoz, combined with the dynamics that will be developed during the presentation of the project, reveal new ways of acquiring knowledge about this species and foster an empathy for and special awareness of the species.

Monica Bello

**Àlex Muñoz Riera** is a video maker and photographer. He uses the audio-visual support as a tool to explore a new area of knowledge, to enter into an unexplored world and to learn what gives life its meaning, the path. Recently, he has found himself deeply immersed in the world of bees with his *Eixams* project.

Muñoz specialises in the third sector and makes audio-visual pieces for organisations that work to combat inequality and social exclusion, though his dream is for this type of endeavour to disappear because it is no longer necessary.

He developed the *Frontera Sud* project, which took place on both sides of the most unequal border in the world, the frontier between Spain and Morocco. The result of this research is five documentaries and a slide presentation that have been shown in exhibitions, archives and museums all around the world.

His connection with the rural environment over the last nine years and his chance encounter with beekeeping have opened up a new path of exploration towards the world of swarms, superorganisms that contract within the hive and expand far and wide across many square kilometres, following the rhythm of the solar cycle and the seasons.

His works have been shown and screened in numerous venues, among them the Generali Foundation (Vienna), the White Chapel Gallery (London), Fadaiat (Tarifa), La Casa Encendida (Madrid), the CECUT (Tijuana Cultural Centre), the CCMEX (Cleantech Cluster Mexico) in Mexico City, the Shedhalle (Zurich), the Casa Árabe (Madrid), the Goethe Institute in Bulgaria and the Cibeles Cultural Centre (Madrid), and in exhibitions such as OVNI at the CCCB (Barcelona) Trans-Inmigración (Zaragoza), and Space Invaders at the MACBA (Barcelona).