

(ENG)

SCENE 4

09.04.19–05.05.19

ARTISTS

Benzo, Anna Dot, Laia Estruch,
Pol Gorezje, Ariadna Guiteras + TMTMTM,
Marla Jacarilla, Daniel Jacoby + Yu Araki,
Rasmus Nilausen, Ania Nowak + Max Göran,
Julia Spínola, Jon Uriarte, Marc Vives

CURATORS

David Armengol, Sonia Fernández Pan,
Eloy Fernández Porta, Sabel Gavaldon,
Anna Manubens

A way of starting was to highlight the multiple nature of any origin. The premonition that any beginning is also nothing more than a midway point and that any story is an exercise of editing. The first scene of “Les Escenes” opened an exhibition delivered in several parts in a consciously timid manner due to the different starting points that could have led to different accounts of what we understand as an ‘art scene’. However, a scene always declines in the plural. It is a material, conceptual and vital framework of elements that are connected in very different and sometimes imperceptible ways. Our beginning proposed a kind of Jonbar point set in the present and, at the same time, capable of plotting a direction to the past and also to the future. Those different possibilities of the first scene perhaps – and unwittingly – pointed to a moment that had yet to come: playful entanglement, leaving out the preference that major narratives have for a single thread. A prefix opened the third scene, POLY-, perhaps because it continued to suggest the relationship with the future that exists in the materialisation of any in-

attention. A syntax, but more like a kind of stammering than a language codified by its own standards and rules. This fourth scene follows on with the desire to point to the future of an exhibition made of moments occurring over time, yet which inevitably have their own history, albeit short, of what was once present; something that subsequently disappears to make way for the (un) known. Despite the differences between each of these moments, the contextual nature of the works continues to prevail over the presumed autonomy of the artwork. A process of processes. Similarly, we could say that the signified of a word is simultaneously clear and blurry due to the rest of the words accompanying it in a sentence. But an exhibition is not a text, although text is one of its many conventions. Or should not be. A space, time, serendipity, material presence and conceptual vulnerability. Among many other things.

Fardo (2018) by Julia Spínola formed part of the first inaugural constellation and then became another piece –*Brazos, chorros, mismo II* (2019) – for the third scene. A huge amount of cardboard constituted by a dual

process of deletion from the memory: that of the previous life of cardboard before being pressed to acquire an almost monumental form, and that of the weighty, compact quality of that form as it slowly falls apart to extract from it each of the elements making up *Brazos, chorros, mismo II*. An entity that changes shape –breaking into fragments– and place –moving in space– yet carries its constituent materiality.

Can we understand the object as an event and not as a finalised ontological entity? Is objectuality yet another part of the accidental and transitory nature of memory? What is the necessary degree of forgetfulness for an artistic context? What elements of a scene exist in transition? What elements are there yet hardly recognised or recognisable? What elements form part of it at some moment of transition?



Like a performance that wants to break the fourth wall, *Melodramas* (1998) by Marc Vives is a book in which the intrigue of the narration is coupled with the enigma of the objects accompanying it in “Les Escenes”. In the same way as a story plots potential encounters between characters, spaces and metaphors, the piece of furniture to accommodate its reading did not stop moving during the course of scenes 2 and 3. With the materials available in La Capella, the artist almost imperceptibly changed its configuration. The physical instability of the scene also mirrored that of the story. Pencils made available to the public invited them to edit a text from which the artist now feels very distant, 23 years after it was written. The urge to correct it is therefore transferred to the public. As an object-book-story, it is a memory machine that takes us back to the Barcelona of the 1990s. To the years when Marc Vives was a Fine Arts student. A forward-looking memory machine because reading it without including any of the things that came afterwards is unavoidable. In the same way as reading it now without the comments that others have since added is unavoidable. “Sex is like sex” is one of them, tangentially leading to that tautology we sometimes employ to avoid defining what art is: art is what art says art is.

An artwork could resemble a quotation. It is taken from one context –the continuum of an artist’s production– and inserted into another– the parenthesis of an exhibition. *La bandera* (2017) by Rasmus Nilausen is a painting that alludes to this continuous process of (de)contextualisation and re-contextualisation of ideas and things, and to the need for or imposition of an outline for whatever it is that viscerally emerges. A ‘minor’ typographical form like square brackets acquires a presence, not just anthropomorphic, but architectural too. What quotations are repeated over and over again in the same artistic context? Are they recognised and are they made known? In a different way, that link between architecture and the human body also appears in *La cortina retórica* (2015). A painting that underscores the ornamental status of discourse in art through a series of successive languages making up a curtain. However, this image creates a possibility

or, at least, a desire: that of the gesture that enables all those discursive layers that end up concealing the work to be swept aside in a movement. Instead of revealing something, that information makes it more opaque. But, to what extent is the narrativity outside the work external? To what extent is discourse an imposition, a convention or an inherent part of the work? The visceral nature of languages re-emerges in *Poliglosia* (2017), a painting consciously showing its surface before it is drawn on. Because painting is not only image: it is matter. What characterises polyglots is their ability – and the effort they make – to speak different languages. A situation that a painter also deals with from the viewpoint of the link between drawing and colour in the field of painting. Historically and symbolically, the former is associated with reason and, consequently, to a certain paradoxical contention of its constituent element: colour. Each painting is potentially a new origin for forms of language and syntax that go beyond the word. Is it really possible to account for the visceral dimension of discourse through that same discourse? What happens to whatever it is words cannot hold?

Jingle (2011), by Laia Estruch, also speaks to us of beginnings. And of presenting oneself in public. It does so, moreover, in a literal manner: through the artist’s voice and the presence of her body. In “Les Escenes”, Laia Estruch proposes to revisit a project conceived years ago – originally for La Capella, as well – in the context of the BCN Producció call for applications for production support. At that time, *Jingle* consisted of a series of performances and a publication in the form of an album of music with which Estruch came to public attention in Barcelona. The project revolved precisely around this: becoming known as an artist, presenting oneself and representing oneself to a real or imaginary audience. In her *Jingle*, Estruch performed variations on a catchy jingle inspired by that rite of passage. The artist’s statement, her declaration of intent. Singing to oneself as a parodic exercise of resistance to the identity of the artist. What do we expose ourselves to by exhibiting? Whose voice utters the statements? The artist’s voice or the voice of institutional conventions?

The construction of an image is something that goes beyond the pho-

tograph. It is a process in which many elements interact in order to give an image. This sometimes happens through the photograph or the aggregation of many of them. Establishing a parallel between our digital condition of ‘like hunters’ and ‘autograph hunters’, Jon Uriarte devoted his time to uploading to Facebook a large number of images in which he appears beside different types of celebrities. How truthful they were was not as important as how plausible they seemed: their ‘trophy’ status or the momentary transfer of those characters’ symbolic capital to the artist. *celebriME* (2013-14) emerged from that entire image-intervention process of taking and manipulating reality. It materialises that process by printing 100 images in accordance with the number of likes they received at the time. As “evidence of an apparent life”, a phrase that Jon Uriarte uses to refer to the activity of these untiring autograph hunters, his images –from their status as an archive of self-representation– are not very far removed from the work done in art as a continuous performance in which our lives are continually exposed thanks to the fleeting gratification that the ‘like economy’ produces. What are the self-representation mechanisms of a scene? What is the legitimising potential of the ‘like’ within an artistic context?

The construction of Self, but this time from the materiality inherent to the human body and from its situation in a context with a whole series of norms and discourses that have material and psychological effects on life, is the starting point for *Sujeto benzo, procesos de autodisciplinamiento y resistencias farmacopornográficas* (2017-19) by Benzo. This fanzine covers a life process in which negotiations between one’s experience, medical diagnosis, the social habit of drugs and various strategies of resistance to the social norm are constant. The diagnosis, beyond what it claims to be, functions like a biopolitical tool to control bodies according to a supposed model and pattern of behaviour that are ideologically connoted. Furthermore, gestures of resistance to it can, in turn, often be diagnosed and questioned. It is no longer about what there is of ‘ours’ in our identity, but what there is of ‘ours’ in our bodies, as material presences that are vulnerable yet resistant to processes of (self)discipline in a pharmacopor-

nographic regime. How should a drug regime be interrupted? What alliances and divisions occur in this resistance to the norm? What degree of resistance is there to a system permitted by that same system?

The three painting by Pol Gorezje –*Agujero negro* (2018), *Polyamory's Boyfriends* (2018) and *Genital Brotherhood* (2018)– begin with photography. As in his other works, they are often images taken from the world of fashion, film and his personal environment. They serve as the basis for a process in which the acrylic covers these images while keeping certain areas where the original image can still be seen. They are fragmented bodies, not by the way they have been cropped, but by the way they form a kind of visual collage through the painting technique used. Starting with identities that produce and represent a canon of beauty, the resulting image is a body associated with masculinity that acquires an unsettling and even grotesque quality. Classic genres of painting, like the nude, are filtered here by the relevance of the genre as a technology of control –and transformation– of bodies. Is it still possible to read contemporaneity from the History of Art? How and when are the historical referents updated? How do they intervene in the present? Is it possible to transform them into spectra of the contemporary?

In this construction of a future alterity, science fiction does not include everything. Making social fiction and including elements that are currently constituent parts of our present and past are often overlooked. Among them is culture, be it art, literature, music, film or philosophy. Why are there hardly any arts, in the plural, in the majority of science-fiction stories? Or, why, when they do appear, do they do so in an almost anecdotal and irrelevant way? *Cartografías distópicas* (2017) by Marla Jacarilla tries to ascertain what the role of literature in dystopian science fiction is by selecting a representative novel of the genre from each decade of the 20th century. The result is a material report that presents fragments cut out from those novels in which there are references to literature, or texts written on recycled paper plates made from pages taken from those very same novels. Bearing in mind that science fiction is an extension of the present and not so much of the

future, is it telling us, albeit involuntarily, how the role of culture is generally perceived? And that of an art scene within a broader cultural context?

Turning stone into a metaphor for mistake based on the saying “tripping over the same stone twice”, *Les pedres del camí* (2017) by Anna Dot performs a reading of the novel *Don Quixote of La Mancha* by Miguel de Cervantes and picks up on the mistakes that the main character makes. Understood as a manifestation of the relationship between a subject's reality and expectations, the mistakes Don Quixote makes materially manifest themselves in a set of stones spread out across the space, which emerge from a particular system of measurement aimed at calculating the difference between the ideal and the real. Would it be possible to imitate this exercise of objectually translating the literary event in the artistic process? What is the material and objectual size of the mistake? What is its benefit? Continuing with this relationship –and sometimes tension– between mistake and translation, *Donar un espai a la confusió* (2017) is a banner containing a sentence in Russian that, in turn, is based on a mistake in the English translation of the sentence that appeared in the 1970s on another banner hung between two trees in the Moscow region. The moment of confusion that the first red banner intentionally sought now appears, also intentionally, with the difficulty of knowing –since it is written in Russian– whether it says what the authors actually think it says. Is the artistic gesture an exercise of translation? Can we be sure that works –and even exhibitions– say what we think or say they say?

Mountain Plain Mountain (2017) by Daniel Jacoby and Yu Araki produces a displacement of language in which the protagonism of the signified – the content, if you will – gives way to the materiality of the signifier and the non-verbal signifieds of the voice. The film, which shatters the expectation and illusion of objectivity of the documentary genre, presents without presenting the Ban'ei, an uncommon form of Japanese horse racing that only survives in Obihiro (Japan). The almost epic nature of the speech in Japanese, thanks to the voice of Maturitaro, accompanies an extremely slow visual narrative concentrating on the supposedly secondary, anecdotal or residual

aspects surrounding and enabling a sport in which attention is usually focused on how brutally the horses are treated. At a time when we are asked to be as fast as transmitted information, to repeat what we have already said so many times, or when reading any situation has become a snapshot of what is 'essential', what relationships do secondary elements allow us to have? Furthermore, could we read a scene from that place and not so much from the repetition that creates the saga from its various events? What are the forms of violence of the artistic context and what are the elements supporting it?

L.A.SΘNÀNΦU.LΛ (2019) by Ariadna Guiteras + TMTMTM is a body made up of different bodies that, in turn, contain or invoke other bodies. To mention some of them: an offline wireless network, a website with content that is only accessible by connecting to that network, five readings mediated and led by Ariadna Guiteras herself, a table for those encounters and two bottles of strong spirit infused with rue and nettle, which expand the relationship with magic and witchcraft that the project consciously conjures up in an art space whose use was formerly ecclesiastical. The performative status of the medium in spiritism and the anarchist spirit in the late 19th century are combined with the ecofeminism and transhumanism of the 21st century, or with the need for an 'outside of the network' at a time of fast-paced hyperconnection. *L.A.SΘNÀNΦU.LΛ* is still present in the room, but the shared experience of her encounters need those bodies that were present in order to be transmitted. Or not. As an organism capable of occupying several bodies at the same time, *L.A.SΘNÀNΦU.LΛ* is also a voice of voices that asks us the following question: “Where do the surroundings start, where do you end?” At what moment does a voice nourished by other voices become its 'own'? Where does the context start and where do the subjectivities that it (re)produces and (re)produce it end?

Georges Bataille says that a kiss is the beginning of cannibalism. As a form of emotional anthropophagia and of physical encounter with the Other, touch is a means of communication that is as powerful –if not more so at times– than language. But one does not constitute the other. When we touch or kiss one another, a transfer of meaning

is triggered that can only occur through contact between the surface of bodies and the porous potential of the membrane. But what meaning does the gesturality of affects have within neoliberal policies when they are part of a strategically affective ideological system?

Is it possible to combine anger with tenderness within the same rhythmic movement? *Sin Título 3* (2019) by Ania Nowak with Max Göran is a performance that is being presented on 11 April. Its attention is focused on those unfamiliar forms of caring within existing political and emotional systems. Such care, within a story about work rendered invisible by the system it sustains and enables, functions as a viscous framework in which its liberating component or its oppressive and hierarchical potential are extremely difficult to understand. Who cares for whom, and for whom or what is the care?