

(ENG)

# MERCÈ ORTEGA *MIS COSAS (MY THINGS)*

## LIVE PERFORMANCE

22.09.21 — 19H

Mercè Ortega's proposal is very simple: to confront her things: the objects and materials that array her life, accompany it and, to a certain extent, make it possible even as they complicate it. Ortega moves with her things, all those that she can manage on her own by hand. She moves from her home to the exhibition space, and in this intimate decontextualisation she puts on her performance, which is precisely to take up the burden of her things.

A rococo performance that is intimist and personal, as she has indicated, in the Espai Índex, where she has selected some of her things: firstly, a fine porcelain cup and, next, a hand mirror, though the monumentalism and disproportion of the gesture in their public presentation give the performance a touch of the baroque that is in sharp contrast with the space in which it takes place, La Capella, stripped totally bare, an echo of Yves Klein's exhibition *The Void* in 1958; the

'all' of her things and the 'nothing' of La Capella feed back into each other. This 'nothing' of the empty La Capella is not, of course, aseptic like the ideal white cube of modern galleries, but a dinosaurian skeleton of ashlars and vaults in which Ortega's delicate voice will project a single repeated and hypnotic phrase that will, by dint of so much repetition, perhaps end up contradicting itself.

The problem that Ortega explores is a fundamental, universal principle: matter attracts matter. We need 'things' in order to live; a roof over our head and everything that goes with it, furniture, clothing and diverse objects that constitute a *room of one's own* where we can live and develop as individuals. With the passing of the years, these things may become useless or meaningless and even an obstacle, like Marcel Duchamp's *Trébuchet*, boldly stuck to the ground, but they have established a relationship with us that transcends

practical usage and have come to form part of our memories of the various material things that we have been interacting with, in other words, they acquire another, albeit problematic, kind of use, because matter requires not just space but also care, action and energy.

Recently, at a global level, we have become worried about the harmful effect of fossil fuels on the atmosphere and we have thrown ourselves into a suicidal race to achieve renewable energies while wilfully turning a blind eye to the fact that the problem is what we do with all this energy. The things we produce steal from natural resources, they shorten our lives and they clog our space: electric cars will not solve the problem of parking but will exacerbate political and military conflicts over the minerals used to make batteries.



I do not know if this has much to do with Ortega's performance, but I mention it because 'my visual horizons' are threatened by wind farms planned to *cleanly* replace and increase the energy needed to continue making myriad items for everyone and to fly to London for fifty euros or to go to Madrid for nine.

There is every likelihood that what happened to the people of Easter Island is going to happen to us: apparently, in order to dress their colossal sculptures, they razed their forests and with them their vital resources, eventually rendering themselves extinct. This would be an extreme and pernicious example of iconophilia. The silver mirror in the Espai Índex in *advance of a landslide of things* has the same auratic and magnetic value for Ortega as Pessoa's glasses in a display case have for his readers, or as Marilyn Monroe's pleated dress blown up by air from a subway grating in the film *The Seven Year Itch* (sold at auction for 5.6 million dollars in 2011). After Ortega's

performance, will we view this mirror in the same way?

There is a performance by Esther Ferrer entitled *The Things*, in which the artist places diverse items – a hammer, an alarm clock, a glass, etc. – on her head in random order. The things that haphazardly fill our personal and planetary life are considered by Ferrer in the manner of Mondrian and by Ortega in the manner of Pollock.

Miscellaneous: This morning, I threw out twenty books, five given to me that have never interested me, five I will never read and ten I have read already. This afternoon, I bought five books, I don't know if I will ever do a 'clear-out'. All my friends, the people I went to school with, are the same, and that's without considering family inheritances; the world is inundated with things, it is an overflowing flea market! Arnau Puig, a philosopher of the 'here and now', of vital action, despite his clear-sightedness in philosophy, iconography and action (I recommend the catalogue *Pensar la Imatge* that accompanied the

exhibition of the same title at La Virreina in 2012) suffered and struggled for something that is impossible: to keep all 'his things' together... Palau i Fabre spent his last breaths when he was over ninety in keeping his things together. And citizen Kane in Orson Welles' fiction died leaving hundreds of unopened packages behind him. Rafael Tous has had better luck and while still alive has been able to give away a considerable proportion of his things, an act that is to his credit and that frees him!

Mercè Ortega has made no mention of these references to me, so I should make it clear that this is 'my drift' resulting from communication on her future performance, *Mis cosas*, which are the things of the world like the sins of the world of the Catholic liturgy.

Joan Casellas  
Teià, 29 August 2021  
with a yellow ribbon