

English **Camille Orny i Magda Vaz, *ARTENGO2000*. From January 24<sup>th</sup> to April 1<sup>st</sup> 2018. Individual project, Sala Petita. *Barcelona Producció is an initiative of La Capella.***

Bringing the format of the miniseries into the Sala Petita, Camille Orny and Magda Vaz have created a drama-documentary for six screens premised on the story of a group of five flatmates –including semi-fictionalized versions of themselves– who have struck a sponsorship deal with a corporation known as Artengo. In one reality, Artengo is a sub-brand of the sporting goods retailer Decathlon dedicated to racket sports, yet in another reality, it is an arcane Russian-American multinational corporation. The series begins with a dream in which a flatmate is haunted by the Artengo-branded socks that the flatmates have agreed to wear at all times as part of the sponsorship deal that in return sees them receive occasional deliveries of unbranded food and a discount on their gas bill. *Artengo2000* is a cumulative narrative: each instalment is comprehensive and distinct, while each is grafted onto the body of the series, with certain elements and plot lines that link across.

*Artengo2000* hinges on possible spiritual advancements and psychic disorders caused by shared living and by being obedient brand ambassadors. We witness the transformation of a communal flat into a laboratory-like space governed by the unwritten transactions entailed in lifestyle sponsorship and company patronage. Although the drama takes us to Montjuïc, the W Barcelona hotel and to

the Arenas shopping centre, and other branded flats, the Artengo apartment itself is the core psychological location. Yet in contrast to the breezy comedic and romantic adventures of the flat-sharing television series *Friends* (1994–2004), the Artengo apartment fills with irrational drama, distrust, deranged dreams, and doppelgängers. The flatmates become more like guinea pigs in a pioneering space station, afloat in a void at the limits of corporate ethics, loyalties and interpersonal relations. Characters include Camille and Magda's flatmates Manu and Laura, a washed-up professional tennis player, and a supposed Danish-Catalan man named Borja, who has an academic interest in the introduction to Barcelona of novel and more covert forms of whole-life sponsorship.

*Artengo2000* takes place in a familiar but twisted world in which gig economies, collaborative work and service sharing appear to have developed in even more perverse ways. A brand called Little Bits makes an appearance –a sort of mutant Deliveroo based on micro-tapas. As Orny and Vaz have suggested, their shared flat drama imagines the bizarre incompatibility of a *kommunalka* (*kommunalki* were multi-family communal apartments encouraged by Lenin as a response to the housing crisis after the Russian revolution of 1917) set in a near-future where neoliberal and Silicon-Valley logic wields even greater power. Here

the so-called 'sharing economy' of co-working, or online platforms such as BlaBlaCar and Airbnb, is evidently not representative of an altruistic fantasy of entrepreneurship or dynamic community cohesion, but is a symptom of evermore precarious socioeconomic circumstances. Giving up some personal space is part of the experience of sharing a flat, yet it allows a lower cost of living. However, the sponsorship deal that the flatmates have signed up to exacerbates their sacrifices to extremes. The work-life balance has not been blurred, but completely destroyed, as the flatmates renounce their intimacy and subjectivity in commodifying themselves for the Artengo brand.

Where the vast majority of television narrators strive for neutrality and self-effacement, as if viewers are supposed to ignore the fact that the story is coming through a mediator, Orny and Vaz's storytelling, and the *Artengo2000* world of homemade myth-making, is far from straightforward. It incorporates numerous doubtful narratives, both on-screen and off-screen. Film genres such as the Western, or the *film noir*, routinely passed through a kind of four-stage metamorphosis, media scholars have suggested.<sup>1</sup> In the first stage, conventions were established and isolated. In the second 'classic' stage, these conventions reached equilibrium and were mutually understood by makers and audiences; the third stage saw formal and →

→ stylistic embellishments. Finally in a 'baroque' stage, the embellishments were accentuated to the point where they themselves became the substance of the work. Yet whether television series have followed the same logic is moot, particularly in an age where gathering in the living room to watch the latest hit show at the scheduled time has long been a thing of the past, usurped by viewers binge-streaming multiple episodes. Moreover, is it not the case that *Artengo2000*, much like David Lynch's surreal crime drama *Twin Peaks* (1990-1991), was already born congenitally baroque?

While *Artengo2000* is steeped in cinematic theory and the study of genre, more plausible still is that it comes at us not only through a filter of American television and series that have experimented with the medium of the episodic drama in often darkly-comic and self-referential ways, such as *Seinfeld* (1989-1998), *Curb Your Enthusiasm* (2000-present), and *Louie* (2010-2015). *Artengo2000* has also filtered through many diverse influences related to what critic Jordi Costa has identified as 'post-humour' in Spain, including YouTube channels and self-made web series from the likes of Canódromo Abandonado, Pioneros Siglo XXI and Venga Monjas.<sup>2</sup> Yet why does a series 'happen' when it does? Was the fanatical following that built around the supernatural detective series *The X-Files* (1993-2002), for example, in some way a Bill-Clinton-era phenomenon, a result of psycho-historical factors at work in 1990s America? And why do we now see a return of *Twin Peaks* (2017-) just at the same time as we see *Artengo2000* emerge in Barcelona? Appropriately, asking more questions than providing answers, we offer no more closure than a typical episode of either.

Latitudes

<sup>1</sup> See Thomas Schatz, *Hollywood Genres: Formulas, Filmmaking, and The Studio System*, McGraw-Hill, 1981.

<sup>2</sup> See Miguel Iríbar, "El posthumor, la tortilla deconstruida de la risa", <http://www.jotdown.es/2014/12/el-posthumor-la-tortilla-deconstruida-de-la-risa/>.

**Magda Vaz** (Montevideo, Uruguay, 1992) graduated in Fine Arts (University of Barcelona, 2016) and took a course on the creative documentary (Espai Francesca Bonnemaison, Barcelona, 2016). Her artistic practice explores concepts of discomfort and banalisation in a socio-political context. She is currently enrolled on the MA in Cultural Management (Open University of Catalonia), specialising in cultural policies. In 2016 the Fundació Clavé in Tordera awarded her a residency to produce *Si no tienes nada mejor en lo que trabajar*, later presented at the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (CCCB). In 2016 she participated in the seminar *The ass between two chairs*, organised by the Escola Massana and Àngels Barcelona gallery, during which she made a video on the indifference caused by information overload about political events.

**Camille Orny** (Orléans, France, 1985) studied Agricultural Engineering at the National Institute for Agricultural Research in Bordeaux and dedicated a couple of years to scientific research in the field of satellite image analysis for the management of natural resources at the National Centre for Space Studies in Toulouse, before pursuing studies in humanities. She obtained a degree in Fine Arts (University of Barcelona, 2015), where her dissertation concerned the representation of social conflict in contemporary audio-visual narratives. More recently, she completed an MA in Comparative Studies in Literature, Art and Thought (Pompeu Fabra University, 2016), with a dissertation on the relationship between acting and *mise en abyme*, comparing the films *Mulholland Drive* by David Lynch and *Kynodontas* by Yorgos Lanthimos. In 2016 she participated in *Couching Fiction*, a curatorial project by Sergi Selvas for Can Felipa Visual Arts; and in 2014 her project *Bilugar* was selected for *Inter-accions. Post-Construcció*, organised by Mixité at the Barcelona Architecture School (ETSAB), Polytechnic University of Catalonia.

In 2017 Vaz and Orny were finalists in the projects category of the Concurs d'Arts Visuals Premi Miquel Casablanca. *Artengo2000* is their first collaborative endeavour.