

BCN PRODUC- CIÓ '16

Espai Cub – 27.04 to 12.06

PAU MAGRANÉ DEMO

Pau Magrané's exhibition for Espai Cub transforms the 3×3 m space into an interactive audiovisual scenario in which the gallery visitor roams a virtual 3D universe – a synthetic terrain stitched together from dozens of objects that seem familiar or banal and yet are profoundly perplexing. Derived from an open source internet archive, these stubborn 'things' are fragments of files that have been created by users with software that automates the joining together of multiple photographs taken with a digital camera or mobile phone. With bluntly descriptive titles such as *Propane Tank Detail*, *Magnet Thing*, *Weird Pumpkin* or *Old Roses*, the archive's public-domain collection comprises wireframe spatial information and virtual texture surfaces of varying complexity. These can be downloaded and freely manipulated in modelling software – or, in principle, used for fabrication with a 3D printer. With a preponderance of just-at-hand domestic things – food and ornaments, pets and kitchen items – the archive resembles something of a virtual thrift store. Magrané's bizarre and banal object landscape morphs and skews its spatial information to create the terrain of a kind of digital purgatory.

In Magrané's *Demo*, one is invited to take a seat in a sculptural 'cockpit' and, by using an adapted ergonomic computer mouse and keyboard, to explore a projected representation of this landscape of things – a non linear 'film' generated on-the-fly by software programming. The gallery visitor becomes a user and a player as the graphical perspective of the projection is rendered from the point of view of a first-person game. Yet one also plays Espai Cub as if it were a sampler or electroacoustic instrument: as one's virtual presence jumps and bumps around the rendering, a series of vocal sounds and verbal noises are triggered. In an allusion to gaming's mechanisms of reward and compulsion, actions produce a chaotic composition in the spirit of the frenetic breakcore music of Magrané's alter-ego PLOM. From metallic growls to choral chants, these word samples represent the file names that underpin the things that the user walks on and around. 3D printed real-world sculptures – twisted branches, an Assyrian carving amalgamated with an acrobat, for example – morph and protrude from the surface of Espai Cub. The box-like gallery becomes a virtual workspace between the wholly imaginary, the augmented or modelled, and the merely physical.

The notion of a room as a form of software in which places and objects can be replicated or simulated has long been a staple of science fiction, from the nursery in Ray Bradbury's short story *The Veldt* (1950) to the dimensionless "Construct" in the film *The Matrix* (1999). 'Thing theory' emerged from literary studies in the early 2000s, before 3D scanning and fabrication became widespread. Its assertion that, as Bill Brown has written, "we begin to confront the thingness of objects when they stop working for us" seems peculiarly apt here. Yet the things that interest

Magrané have not only stopped working, they have ceased to be always tangible. Neither commodities, nor tools, nor artefacts, they are, rather, information with material possibility.

As the title *Demo* suggests, Magrané's project functions like a videogame prototype or a simulator in 'tutorial mode', while playing with the notion that, to the uninitiated, gaming is an impenetrable and foreign world. Furthermore, at the opening of the exhibition, Magrané staged a riotous performance demonstration of the software in the guise of PLOM. Two of the hallmarks of PLOM's previous sonic performances – performing out of sight of the audience, and the sculptural use of the metalized thermal blankets given to endurance athletes or refugees – took on a new light. The protection or absence of the body pointed to the emerging aesthetics accentuated by the 'gamification' of other media and services – military recruitment applications or Wii-style movement inputs in healthcare, for example. Yet Magrané's spatial protocols and sonic habits might also gesture at the cracks in what American architect Keller Easterling terms infrastructural space. Our very urban space increasingly defies consideration as a set of concrete things. Instead it seems to comprise an imponderable and implicitly violent global operating system.

Pau Magrané (Reus, 1984) is an artist, musician and designer. His alter ego PLOM is an amorphous entity for the production of electronic music. His music label Nyapster releases music in various physical formats. Magrané studied Fine Arts at the Kunsthochschule Berlin-Weissensee and the University of Barcelona, and has a Master in Video Game Creation from IDEC – Pompeu Fabra University. He has performed as PLOM in MACBA és viu (MACBA, 2016), OHM Gallery, (Berlin, 2015), Mercuri Splash (Fundació Miró, Barcelona, 2015), L'acció dissolvent (Centre Social Autogestionat Lo Maset, Deltebre, 2015), De Profvndis / Sessions Polivalents 2015, (Hangar, Barcelona, 2015), Halloween Death Camp (Freedonia, Barcelona, 2015) and Grand opening! (Fireplace Project, Barcelona, 2015). He has collaborated with artists including Black Tulip, Ariadna Parreu, Grosgoroth, Jose Begega, Lucía C. Pino, Antoni Hervàs, Claudia Pagès, David Bestué, Paco Chanivet and Sara Deubieta.

– Latitudes