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A PROJECT BY THE  
INSTITUT RAMON LLULL CURATED  
BY DAVID G. TORRES

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# MABEL PALACÍN: 180° CATALONIA AND THE BALEARIC ISLANDS AT VENICE

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MAGAZZINO DEL SALE N. 2  
DORSODURO 265, VENEZIA  
[WWW.LLULL.CAT](http://WWW.LLULL.CAT)

**MABEL PALACÍN: 180°**

David G. Torres, curator

The project for the Catalonia and the Balearic Islands pavilion at the Venice Biennale 2011 consists of presenting a new work by Mabel Palacín (Barcelona, 1965). It adopts a different approach from that of the previous edition (group/thesis exhibition) with a view to opening up formats and presentation possibilities for projects in future editions.

*180°* refers to what in cinematography is known as the 180-degree rule; according to this, the camera, as it takes shots and countershots, must never cross an imaginary line, because to do so would cause confusion regarding the spatial relationship of the characters. It is this “axis of action” that defines the position of the characters with respect to the screen so that the viewer is never left spatially disoriented. This imaginary axis defined by the 180-degree rule ensures the relation between the images and the viewer is always the right one. In short, what it emphasises and in a way exemplifies is the relation between images and viewer in the representation of reality. Mabel Palacín’s project takes this cinematographic rule as a reference point to observe how the relations between image, reality and viewer have changed.

Basically, *180°* consists of taking a large view of an indeterminate place in Venice. This view is photographed with extraordinary detail and precision. Thus, the photoshoot requires the application of cinematographic practice such as scene control and the use of extras. Afterwards, this same photograph is videoed in such a way that the video discovers things that had been hidden from view. A series of contrasts is produced between photograph and video. It is simultaneously an image in movement and a still image, eliminating the modern idea according to which each medium has its own idiosyncrasy. The idea is put in play of the image as a generator of narratives in which the viewer participates. The project is completed by another series of videos which take as a starting point the main building in the big scene and set out vanishing points for the *altani* (terraces) of Venice.

The two proposals, (the still filmed image and the videos which are at the vanishing points), reflect on the city as a setting for collectivity and a backdrop on which to develop different visions or views. The city of Venice and the setting of the Biennale itself underscore a reflection or dialogue between history (Venice as a monumental city) and contemporaneity, on the status of the image at the present moment (still or in movement, on different bases or in circulation along the vanishing lines) and everything that is urban and everything that is collective (through the narratives and the action of the persons and the *altani*, a reference to recent demonstrations on Italy’s roofs).

If the image is central to contemporaneity—because of the way it is developed, its democratisation, multimedia state, global distribution and communicative character—art, which historically has been the space in which the codes of visibility have been developed, above and beyond other discourses, may be the primordial place in which to discuss its status, its implications and to set out propositions for a new collective scenario with broad repercussions for the configuration of reality. *180°* is a propositive attempt to recover this tension and discussion within the context of art.

*Mabel Palacín: 180°* takes account of the particular idiosyncrasies of the Venice Biennale and its national pavilions. The Biennale, being one of the historic international events devoted to contemporary art, is a chance to disseminate the practice of art which is taking place in the context of Catalonia and the Balearic Islands. In comparison with the pace of

visits and consumption of the official selection, the national pavilions devoted to specific projects by artists involve another kind of consumption and a more leisurely pace of visits. They are also an ideal place to present individual projects that are significant in an artist's career. Thus, this project has taken for reference other pavilions which have been important for the significance of artist's individual proposals in previous editions of the Biennale.

Given its very nature as an event taking place in a city so charged with history and monumentality as is Venice, the Biennale is in itself a setting for dialogue between history and contemporaneity. Proposals such as the *Il Teatro del Mondo* by Aldo Rossi for the Venice Architecture and Theatre Biennale of 1979 are an example of the extent to which the tension with contemporaneity that the city is obliged to maintain was prominent, while at the same time throwing into relief its nature as a scenario where relations between viewer or public and the work are upset. *Il Teatro del Mondo* consisted of a theatre that sailed around Venice, being in itself a stage in a city of scenery in which everyone is an actor, and it was a contemporary solution based on a reflection on tradition.

Finally, the project *Mabel Palacín: 180°* takes account of the current scenario of economic recession (which underlay the rules of the competition) in setting forth a reflection on the crisis of the image and its current status in which the relation with reality has changed, affecting it profoundly as a result of its global use, its distribution and the change from a situation of emitter and receiver to one with a single emitter-receiver.

A notable feature of Mabel Palacín's work is its attempt to respond to the current crisis situation through art. It is here that its tension with contemporaneity is revealed and it is here that the work can be seen as ideally placed to seek to recover the centrality of the discussion in art: to understand the crisis in terms that go beyond the usual merely economic, as the effect of a reappraisal of the model for the circulation of information—information in which images have become a sort of universal language: everyone uses them, everyone emits and receives them, sends them, enlarges them, crops them, prints them, sees them on a screen, still or in movement. Mabel Palacín repossesses for art reflexion about the status of the image as territory which is its own, which is operating in its own field and for which art can reactivate an advanced intellectual tension. But beyond this, it's a speculation on the status of the image in the new multimedia context in which we live is broadened to reveal parallel effects on the crisis in the information distribution media and on the crisis in the uses of language.

The question of the status of images at the present time has been and continues to be an issue that is fundamental in Mabel Palacín's work. She began her artistic career in the late eighties in relation with a generation of Catalan artists who took up the conceptual tradition and who, at the same time, represented a jump or cut with the return to the painting of the eighties, and embraced practices that questioned the status of image and representation, the return of the object and their reflection on and recovery of conceptual and neo-dada practice in an international context. Very soon her work came to focus on reflection on the image, the relation between photography and cinema and the questioning of the passive position of the viewer.

In the present context of contemporary art, Mabel Palacín responds to the complexity of the means of production. She brings together cinematographic processes and elements of pop culture (music, advertising, photography, etc.) and reflects on all the elements that are involved in a project: from graphic design to the set design, which goes beyond simply contriving a display and involves a link-up with architecture. Regarding this point, *180°* is the outcome of collaborative work with Alex Gifreu, graphic design, and Mirko Meyeta, responsible for the architectural setting of the project.

180°



## DAVID G. TORRES

David G. Torres (Barcelona, 1967) is an art critic and exhibition curator. As a curator he has managed and developed several projects with a large number of participating artists and the collaboration of various public institutions.

Amongst the projects and events he has worked on in recent years are the Biennale in Pontevedra 2004; “Falsa innocència” at the Fundació Miró in Barcelona (2004); “No, Future” at the Bloomberg Space in London (2007); “Intensities...” with the Diputació de Barcelona (Barcelona Provincial Council, 2007); “Attitude!!” at the Iconoscope, Montpellier (2007) and “The Fashion Party Is Over”, with Mai Abu ElDahab, at the Objectif Exhibitions in Antwerp (2009).

These proposals are a continuation of a line of work on the recovery of the radical in art which began in 2005 with the project “David G. Torres presenta: Salir a la calle y disparar al azar” (“...go out into the street and shoot at random”), an independent event that took place over a period of hours in an Barcelona basement.

He has also been engaged in many projects with public institutions such as the Palau de la Virreina (“Qui es queda amb les plusvàlues?”, Barcelona, 2000); the Museo di Arte Contemporanea in Rome (“The Art of Mediterranean”, 2004); the Reykjavik Art Museum – Hafnarhus (“Looking Further, Thinking Through”, 2004); the Palais de Tokio in Paris (Altadis Prizes, 2005); the Museo Artium in Vitoria (“Entornos Próximos”, 2006). He also collaborated with the Centre d’Art Santa Mònica from 2002 until 2004 and with the Fundació La Caixa from 1999 until 2003.

As an art critic he has been the Barcelona correspondent of *Art Press* (Paris), *Lápiz* (Madrid) and, at present, *El Cultural* (Madrid). He has also published dozens of articles and reviews in a variety of magazines, catalogues and other publications. He has given many lectures and taken part in round tables and radio discussions (*Tot és comèdia*, on Cadena SER). He has taught at the University of Barcelona and has given many courses and workshops (QUAM’08). Since 2008 he has contributed to the journal *Bonart* with his column “Dada Sight!”.

David G. Torres is also co-director of A\*DESK (Institut Independent de Crítica i Art Contemporani) and is director of the Master’s in Today’s Art at the University of Barcelona.

In April 2011 he published his book *No más mentiras sobre algunos relatos de verdad en arte (en literatura, cine y teatro)*, which won the Art Writer’s prize of the Fundación Arte y Derecho and was published by the same foundation.

180°

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**MABEL PALACÍN**

Mabel Palacín (Barcelona, 1965) graduated from the University of Barcelona in History of Art and Cinema, Photography and Video. Since the beginning of her career she has made photographs, videos and installations, becoming interested in a great variety of formats in which an image can take form, as well as their unstable nature. In her works, things do not happen directly, because the reality is mediated. Her video works describe a fragmented reality, broken narratives structured in layers, in which the viewer becomes a fundamental actor. They are works with a major spatial dimension in which the question of scale and multiple screens call on the viewer, bringing image and architecture into relationship.

In recent years her work has been shown at the Salvador Dalí Museum in St. Petersburg, Florida; the Museu Coleção Berardo, Lisbon; the Museu Empordà, Figueres; the Casino Luxembourg Forum d'Art Contemporain; in the O.K. Center, Linz; the Centre d'Art Santa Mònica and the MACBA, Barcelona; the Museo Patio Herreriano, Valladolid; the Künstlerhaus Palais Thurn und Taxis, Bregenz; the Reykjavik Art Museum; the Kunstbunker Tumulka, Munich; the Norwich Gallery; the MUA in Alicante and the Lothar Albrecht Galerie, Frankfurt.

Amongst other awards, her work has been recognised with the ACCA Art Critics Prize 2009, "Art Català a l'estranger", for "Una noche sin fin" at the Salvador Dalí Museum, St Petersburg (Florida); a special mention in the City of Barcelona Fine Arts Prize 2003 for "La distància correcta" and the Altadis Fine Arts Prize (2003).

**SELECTED INDIVIDUAL EXHIBITIONS****2009**

“Una noche sin fin”, Salvador Dalí Museum, St. Petersburg, Florida.

“Hinterland”, Museu Colecção Berardo, Lisbon.

**2005**

“A parts iguals”, Museu Empordà, Figueres.

**2003**

“La distància correcta”, Centre d’Art Santa Mònica, Barcelona.

“La distancia correcta”, MUA, Alicante.

**2001**

“1, 2, 3 films”, Artothek, Cologne.

**2000**

“Sur L’Autoroute”, Galería Tomás March, Valencia.

**1999**

“Sur L’Autoroute”, Project Rooms, ARCO, Madrid.

“Sur L’Autoroute”, Galería Alejandro Sales, Barcelona.

**1998**

“Para M. (Séquence voiture/Nuit près du motel/Au petit cinéma)”, Metrònom, Barcelona.

“Para M.”, Luigi Franco Arte Contemporanea. Turin.

El Roser. Biennal d’Art Leandre Cristòfol. Lleida.

**1997**

Galería Helga de Alvear. Madrid.

“The Troublemaker (to Claude Bessy)”, The Agency. London.

“La Pelea / El Baile”, L. A. Galerie. Frankfurt.



**SELECTED RECENT GROUP EXHIBITIONS****2010**

“Ciudades bajo la mirada”. Sala Verónicas, Murcia. Curated by Neus Miró.

“Entretiempos. Instantes, intervalos, duraciones”. Teatro Fernán Gómez,  
Centro de Arte. Madrid. Curated by Sergio Mah.

**2007**

“The Screen-Eye or the New Image”. Casino Luxembourg, Forum d' Art Contemporain: Luxembourg.  
Curated by Régis Michel.

“Geografías del desorden. Migración, Alteridad y nueva esfera social”. Centro de Historia de Zaragoza.

**2006**

“Geografías del desorden. Migración, Alteridad y nueva esfera social”. La Nau, Universidad de Valencia;  
Centro de Arte Juan Ismael, Fuerteventura; Centro de Historia de Zaragoza.

“Mirador. Medienkunst aus Spanien”. O.K. Center. Linz.

“La mirada breve”, CCEBA. Buenos Aires.

“16 Proyectos de Arte Español”, ARCO'06, Madrid.

“Identidades críticas”. Museo Patio Herreriano, Valladolid.

**2005**

“Identidades críticas”, Sala Puerta Nueva, Cordoba.

“Picasso to Plensa: A century of Art from Spain”, The Albuquerque Museum, Albuquerque.

“Sessió contínua”, CCCB, Barcelona.

“Permanencias difusas”, CAB, Burgos.

“The Jafre Project”, Jafre.

“Standards of reality. Five artists from Barcelona”. Bolsky Gallery, Otis College of Art+Design. Los Angeles.