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# Memory of the future

MUSAC COLLECTION

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## Exhibition Guide

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# Memory of the future<sup>1</sup>

MUSAC Collection

“The misery of great stories lies not in the fact that they were too great, but that they were not great enough.”

Peter Sloterdijk

The first volume of the MUSAC Collection was published in 2005. In it, the then director of the centre, Rafael Doctor, defined the museum as a “museum of the present” and added that by the term he was referring to “a recent history, still soft, where there is no univocal reading and where it is still possible to make new contributions”.

It was agreed to establish a time frame and, above all, a “historical” date from which this present that we would collect would begin. It was agreed to establish a double chronological starting point for the works that would form part of our Collection. Thus, for the works by international artists, the year 1989 was taken as the starting point for defining “that present”, as it was the year in which the Berlin Wall fell and also the year in which the World Wide Web was born, although we would not be fully aware of the brutal scope of this birth until later.

The fall of the Wall, and with it the end of the Cold War and the world of ideological blocs, was of such significance in terms of its political, economic, social, ideological and cultural repercussions that it was almost a new year zero in the recent history of the West, and could be seen as the ultimate trigger for the shaping of our world today.

As Susan Buck-Morss points out in *Dreamworld and Catastrophe*, the consequences of the end of the Cold War were not so much its political effects (generalisation of capitalist democracy as the only viable system) as the end of the mass utopia (the West in consumption and the East in production) as a driver of modernisation.

In the case of works by Spanish authors, the starting date determined was 1992. A year in which, through the Barcelona Olympic Games, the Universal Exhibition in Seville and the launch of the AVE high-speed train, a Spain with an international and “modern” vocation — at least in terms of image — presented itself to the world.

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1. Title taken from Radio Futura’s album *Memoria del porvenir* [Memory of the future] released by BMG/Ariola in 1998.

The MUSAC Collection wanted to capture the creative effervescence of the end of the 20th century and combine it with the promise of the year 2000; it did so by transcending both the territorial scale and the age or professional projection of the artists whose works would make up the collection. And although the time frame of our Collection has recently been extended to the 1960s in order to reflect the changes in the visual arts produced by the feeling of discontent and the desire for emancipation that crystallised in the phenomenon of May '68, even today most of the works that make up the MUSAC Collection fall within the time frame of the early 1990s and the present day, understood as a continuous present.

In any case, in the time between 1989 and 2005, many of the foundations of what we are today had already been laid. With its virtues and its sins. Thus, in its inaugural exhibition, MUSAC reflected on this world through the eyes of its own artists.

Today, once again, MUSAC wishes to highlight the indissoluble commitment between the creation of the present and the context in which it takes place, both in the concerns of its creators and in their modes of production. Therefore, through this exhibition entitled *Memoria del porvenir* [Memory of the Future], it contributes to the project entitled *El delirio de los caballos* [The Delirium of Horses]. *Visiones del apocalipsis en la instituciones culturales leonesas* [Visions of the apocalypse in Leon's cultural institutions], closing, from the point of view of historical time, this project.

*Memoria del porvenir* is a plastic and visual journey through different political and social events that have characterised the last forty years of our history and which, inevitably, connects with the pandemic situation we are currently experiencing and with the questions we are all asking ourselves about the near future.

The exhibition is structured around an introduction, five chapters and an epilogue, which are arranged in the same way in the exhibition hall.

With this introduction, we aim to contextualise the conceptual framework in which the works (especially the first acquisitions) in the Collection are integrated; heirs to the postmodern currents whose origins lie in the sixties of the previous century and which sought to put an end to the great legitimating and evolutionary narratives of the paradigm of modernity.

The first chapter includes works by artists who have wanted to contribute their own vision of the end of the world's polarisation into ideological blocs and, in some cases, to point out how capitalism has absorbed some of the insignia of communism, turning them into just another pop-cultural product.

The second chapter deals with contemporary wars. The works selected in this section deal, explicitly or latently, with the "aesthetics" of war, its representation and its new modes of execution. But it also includes works by artists who narrate aspects of the wars

on European soil that followed the fall of the Wall and their impact on the consciousness of the continent's citizens. And others emphasise the old but renewed tension and polarisation between "Islam" and "the West" in the aftermath of the attack on the Twin Towers in New York on 11 September 2001 and the reactions to it.

The third chapter includes works by artists who are interested in the changes that are taking place in cultural landscapes due to industrial and energy-related interests and the consequences that these changes are having on their environmental and social surroundings.

The fourth chapter deals with illness in terms of isolation, loneliness, incomprehension and fear, and delves in particular into AIDS, the mistrust and stigmatisation it entailed, mental illness and the recent covid-19.

The fifth chapter deserves special mention, as it is established as a MUSAC OFF that, under the title of *Paisajes oníricos* [Dream Landscapes], will take place in the Hospital de León and alludes, on the one hand, to that first awakening from the dream (pointed out by Buck-Morss) that saw in the movements and mass culture the project of a better world. And, on the other hand, it refers to reverie as a place to dwell when reality is too cold and also to that moment before awakening when it is possible to imagine other worlds.

Finally, the epilogue is built by the spectator once they leave the room to draw their own conclusions based on what the works have suggested to them.

# Ángel Mateo Charris

(Cartagena, Murcia, 1962)

*Revolución* [Revolution], 2002

Painting. Oil on canvas, 200 x 200 cm

MUSAC Collection. Deposit of the Contemporary Art Collection of the Junta de Castilla y León

Mateo Charris' work is part of a figurative pictorial line that has been called "neo-meta-physical" by some authors. His style is influenced by comics and pop art, and particularly by the work of Edward Hopper, presenting bland, grey characters in landscapes that convey an atmosphere of unbearable gravity that accentuates the loneliness in which these characters find themselves.

Charris participates in the postmodernist approach and its distrust of the great truths. In *Revolución*, he makes this distrust evident by presenting a group of people at a crossroads where all roads lead to the same "nowhere".



# Introduction

## The stories

Postmodernism is an artistic and cultural movement of the late 20th century that questions the truths taken for granted by previous generations. We could say that its awakening took place in the 1960s and in particular during the sort of “revolutionary spring” that took place in different parts of the world in May ‘68 and which, to a certain extent, was argued from the university and through the thinking of the Situationist International.

However, the term itself, as a referent for what it now implies, is “popularised” by Lyotard in his oft-cited essay *The Postmodern Condition. A report on knowledge in the most developed societies*, commissioned by the Conseil Des Universités of the Government of Quebec, in which he highlights the loss of confidence in the grand narratives (or humanist conceptions) that sought social improvement and guided the conduct of previous societies, and their “uselessness” for today’s world.

Thus, it calls into question the promise of emancipation and growth brought about by the liberal and democratic politics born of the French Revolution through greater access to education, culture, and the scientific method. On the other hand, it also questions economic progress through work, since, as it stands, it leaves out broad social and territorial sectors. Moreover, through the successive economic and employment crises, it has shown its ineffectiveness and also the ineffectiveness of the current workers’ movements. Finally, he demystifies and questions the last of the great emancipatory narratives, Marxism, which he questions for its totalitarian and policing results in the East.

It could be said that, from his study, Lyotard clearly shows, on the one hand, the affliction for the loss of prior models and, on the other, he generates a kind of “systematic doubt” according to which certainties have come to an end, thus making it possible to analyse society and its history from marginal discourses or discourses that have never been taken into account.

The MUSAC Collection and many of the artists who form part of it are heirs to this intellectual climate and of this conception of reality and who, through their works, have reflected on how the old legitimising narratives have lost their validity, but also on the desire and need for an updated and, perhaps, less naïve version of these narratives.

This is why the introduction to this exhibition addresses this question and includes the works of artists who, in one way or another, work or reflect on it. We include Marc Bijl's installation *Reason to Believe* which, with a "mise-en-scène" that could be reminiscent of punk aesthetics, presents a series of speeches by "essential" personalities of the 20th century: Kennedy, Gandhi, Fidel Castro, Reagan, Bin Laden, Pope John XXIII, Malcolm X or Hitler, mix their voices and speeches in a kind of dissonant chorus from which it is difficult to draw a clear conclusion. Mateo Charris's painting *Revolución* presents this term as a crossroads beset by bureaucrats.

The project *Violencias expandidas* [Expanded Violence] is a proposal by the Brumaria Art Collective. Through a phrase taken from the didactic drama *The Measures Taken*, by Bertolt Brecht, he reflects on the need for art to become truly involved if it really wants to change reality.

Fernando Sánchez Castillo's work *Vivo sin trabajar* refers to Debord's situationist slogan "Ne travaillez jamais" (never work), implying that "not working" is the only way to escape from the imposed and self-imposed productivity in all sectors of the worker's life, both work and leisure. With this piece, Sánchez Castillo questions the culture industry when it promotes a way of understanding art that is linked to mere entertainment and therefore just another form of consumption. What would be important to analyse is whether the strategies used to make these denouncements reinforce or, on the contrary, highlight what is being criticised, but that is a separate chapter.

Finally, this first section also includes Gonzalo Elvira's subtle piece *Lo imborrable*, a series of 10 ink drawings on paper which, taking their title from the book by Juan José Saer, reproduce the covers of different books banned during the Argentinean dictatorship that took place between 1976 and 1983. With this series, Elvira wants to recall the brutality of that dictatorship and its psychological consequences on several generations. But also, in the act of drawing in ink, he seems to want to record in the collective memory the contents and titles of the books. In an act full of poetry, he seems to be trying to memorise for all time those books that constituted a real breath of freedom but which were confiscated and burnt by the authoritarian regime.

# Marc Bijl

(Leerdam, Netherlands, 1973)

## *Reason to believe*, 2004

Installation consisting of 22 loudspeakers and 22 CD players

Different sizes

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Marc Bijl plays with icons of the 20th century, highlighting the fine links between flags, political speeches and wars as well as the great brands of the international industry. For *Reason to Believe*, he does not use images, but sounds. Speeches given by different politicians of the 20th century, from Fidel Castro to Reagan, Bin Laden, Malcolm X or Hitler himself, emerge from loudspeakers of different sizes, forming a sort of Tower of Babel. The artist portrays the mechanisms of power and the manipulation of political discourses. In his own words: Bijl unveils the fictitiousness of today's politics and celebrates the authenticity of art, capable of transforming and reinventing our own lives.



# Brumaria Art Collective

*Violencias expandidas / Expanded Violences (Brumaria Works #3), 2015*

Canvas

Specific location measures

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Brumaria Art Collective is a platform/publication for study, reflection and artistic proposal that in 2011 presented a specific project for MUSAC entitled *Violencias expandidas*, which should be understood as a process of reflection on the relationship between art, multifocal war and terrorism.

This canvas, which is part of this project, reproduces a phrase from the play *The Measures Taken* by Bertold Brecht, with which Brecht would initiate the so-called “didactic drama” and which would consist of an application of the principles of Marxism to the dramatic construction of social conflicts. The selected phrase alludes to the fact that, as Chiarini says, “if you want to change reality, you must not be afraid to get dirty”. This is art’s noblest endeavour, to transform reality.

**Es horrible matar.  
Pero no solo a los otros, también nosotros  
nos matamos si es necesario. Porque solo por la  
violencia puede cambiarse este mundo asesino,  
como sabe todo el que vive.**

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**Furchtbar ist es zu töten.  
Aber nicht andere nur, auch uns töten wir,  
wenn es Not tut. Da doch nur mit Gewalt diese  
tötende Welt zu ändern ist,  
wie jeder Lebende weiß.**

# Fernando Sánchez Castillo

(Madrid, Spain, 1973)

*Vivo sin trabajar*, 2002

Installation. Illuminated sign

1000 x 80 x 15 cm

Edition: 1/3 + 1 AP

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The Situationist phrase *ne travaillez jamais* and the sadly famous Nazi slogan *Arbeit macht frei* are synthesised in the artist's personal statement "Vivo sin trabajar" [I live without working]. Using the aesthetics of verbenas and local festivals, these phrases, once decontextualised and converted into a festive illuminated sign, lack the meaning which the context in which they were used endowed them with, and are now incomprehensible to us. Now, we receive the message "Never work", proclaimed by the Situationists, deactivated, we think that it is nothing more than a work of art and, as such, it is useless. The artist thus questions a certain conception of culture that considers art as mere entertainment.



# Gonzalo Elvira

(Neuquén, Argentina, 1971)

*Lo imborrable* (series), 2017

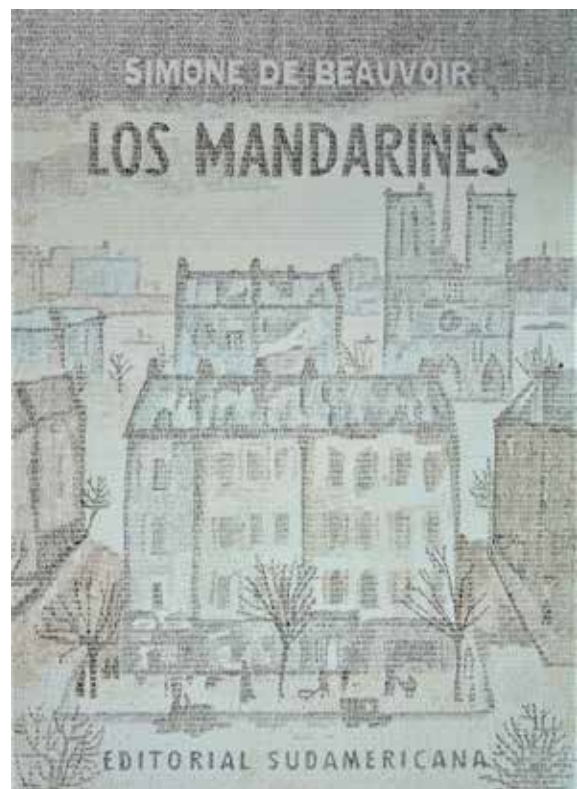
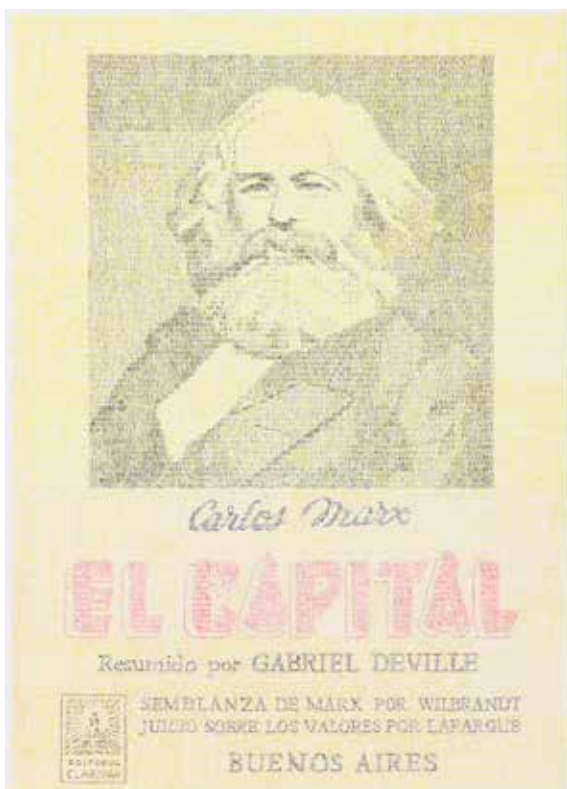
10 drawings. Ink on paper

70 x 50 cm each one

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*Lo imborrable* is a project that takes as its title a book by Juan José Saer. The project focuses on the last dictatorship in Argentina between 1976 and 1983. One of the ways in which this dictatorship manifested itself was the prohibition of certain books and magazines, which were considered dangerous to the extent that their mere possession could lead to the disappearance of a person. As a result, many of these books were seized or burned.

*Lo imborrable* brings to the present those events that marked several generations. The series consists of drawings in Indian ink that reproduce the covers of some of these banned books.



# Chapter I

## The ideological blocs

Chapter I refers to the ideological blocs, and their respective areas of influence and control, into which the world was divided before the demise of the USSR. But at the same time, it addresses the ability of images to legitimise and delegitimise established power and how they are used and controlled by leaders.

Included here are the works by Alán Carrasco *Illégitime, nul et non avenu / Null und nichtig*, two digital prints based on two original stamps in which the rise and fall of the Nazi regime can be traced and how the successive re-stamping of both validates or invalidates a political regime. A seemingly banal, aseptic and practical gesture with which, bureaucratically, the past is left behind without any representation or evidence of the pain and horror it brought, and without the slightest hint of an awareness of responsibility.

The video installation *Un paso adelante dos atrás* [One step forward, two steps back] by Ramón Mateos examines the possibility of a re-actualisation of communism as an alternative to the “dictatorship” of current neoliberalism, and does so with a proposal full of humour but not without a profound reflection on the distortion of discourses and ideologies. Lenin dusts himself down in his sarcophagus, he even tries to get up, while eight people sing *The Internationale*, each in their own mother tongue, resulting in a chaotic and incomprehensible ensemble, even though all of us, as if it were a song from the top of the charts, recognise the melody.

Finally, Fiona Tan’s *Countenance* offers a collective portrait of Berliners after the reunification brought about by the fall of the Wall. With this piece, Tan pays tribute to August Sander’s work *Men of the 20th Century*, in which the photographer portrayed Berlin society — and its ideals — before the Second World War. In this updated portrait of the same society, the artist reveals the traces that the historical period between the building and the collapse of the Wall left on the city’s inhabitants.

# Alán Carrasco

(Burgos, Spain, 1986)

*Illégitime, nul et non venu / Null und nichtig*, 2020

2 prints on paper

48 x 39 cm each one

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The critical revision of the past and the present is a central part of Alán Carrasco's work.

Between 1940 and 1944, postage stamps bearing the effigy of Philippe Pétain were re-stamped with the portrait of Adolf Hitler. After 1945, the Reich stamps in annexed Austria were re-stamped according to the new circumstances. After the liberation of France, the Vichy regime was declared *illégitime, nul et non venu* (illegitimate, null and void). With the proclamation of Austria's independence, the *Anschluss* and all measures of the National Socialist administration were declared *null und nichtig* (null and void).

After recovering two original stamps, the artist presents us with a diptych that serves to reveal the mechanisms of historical narration.



# Ramón Mateos

(Madrid, Spain, 1968)

*Un paso adelante dos atrás*, 2007

A 9-channel video installation with colour video and sound

Specific installation measures

MUSAC Collection

Today's globalisation has demonstrated as never before the hegemonic power of capital around the world, and this has led many intellectuals to turn their eyes, romantically, to the communism of old. Ramón Mateos, for the tenth Istanbul Biennial in 2007, responds to this trend with a particularly complex and provocative work called *Un paso adelante, dos atrás* [One Step Forward, Two Steps Back]. Digitally reconstructing Lenin's famous mausoleum, next to the image of Lenin's body lying in his sarcophagus, eight people of different nationalities sing *The Internationale* in their mother tongues to form a cacophonous chorus. With this work, Mateos invites us to reflect on a viable alternative for today's world.



# Fiona Tan

(Pekannaru, Indonesia, 1966)

*Countenance*, 2002

4-channel black-and-white video and sound installation

Different sizes

MUSAC Collection

*Countenance* is a kind of archaeological work on the physiognomy of the German working class after the reunification, inspired by the work of the German photographer August Sander (1876-1964), *Men of the 20th Century*.

In this way, Tan pays tribute to this great product of contemporary photography. The work portrays the same society again, albeit after the great historical divide caused by the construction and subsequent fall of the Wall. *Countenance* acts as a mirror and temporal reflection of Sander's great archive, and in the chronological and physical void in between, between Tan's work and *Men of the 20th Century*, between the screen and the viewer, lies any symptom of an identity distorted by a divided country.



## Chapter II

### Wars of the present. Wars on the European continent. The “war of civilisations”

This section deals with today’s conflicts— almost endemic in some developing countries and places of high geopolitical value. But it also deals with the image of war and its use by governments and the mass media. The artists included in these sections analyse with great subtlety the consequences of war for the societies that endure it and distance themselves from any formalisation that might contribute to an aestheticisation of war or the suffering it generates. Images of war, the story of wars, have existed throughout the history of art, and their purpose has probably always been propagandistic. The hallmark of contemporary warfare is immediacy in broadcasting and the depersonalisation of its execution.

The first televised war, Vietnam, and the successive live wars; Balkans, Gulf, Iraq... highlighted the importance of the image of war and its control to predispose the “public” in a certain way.

With these premises, we introduce here Pablo Alonso’s work *Landung* as a reflection on how television, social networks, etc., in their live and instantaneous broadcasting, bring wars into our living rooms, trivialising their essence and their devastating nature, turning them into just another current issue and preventing, either through overexposure or because they might seem like the umpteenth action film, a deep empathetic reaction to the terror and devastation they entail. But, at the same time, and precisely because of the control of these news items and images, they predispose our consciences towards Manichean and simple solutions that try to position us between “good and bad”.

*Desaparecidos* [Disappeared] by Gervasio Sánchez is a project carried out between 1998 and 2010 in ten countries around the world, including Spain, which attempts to recover the memory and reflect the drama derived from the forced disappearance of people as a consequence of war and political conflicts. Through the representation of the places where interrogations take place, dungeons and archives which, we sense, contain files on disappearances, Gervasio Sánchez presents us with the drama and horror of the endless search and lack of evidence of the loss without recreating the pain.

This chapter on war is completed by works by artists who deal with the wars on the European continent that followed the demise of the USSR, which once again took place on the Balkan peninsula, and also by works that deal with the everlasting wars in relation to the so-called Islamic environment.

Simeón Sáiz Ruiz with his work *Carretera entre Prizren y Djakovica cerca de Meja, 14 April 1999* [Road between Prizren and Djakovica near Meja] updates the codes of the genre of history painting and adapts them to our reality<sup>2</sup>. The image is taken from a news item on the Kosovo war obtained from television and transferred to oil on canvas, although the image, when enlarged to a large scale, appears pixelated and we are only able to see it from a distance. Perhaps Sáiz Ruiz is proposing a reflection on the way we look at war conflicts through images in the media. Perhaps the only way to face war without irreparably hurting our eyes.

Ivan Grubanov's *Stages* depicts a series of stages, now empty, which seem to be waiting to be occupied by an orchestra or musical group at a festive event. However, these stages were conceived to host political rallies, first communist, then nationalist, and finally in opposition to Milošević. In this way, Grubanov traces a part of his country's history and recovers absolutely everyday objects as another source of memory.

Ángel de la Rubia's series *BiH (Bosnia i Herzegovina)* [Bosnia and Herzegovina] photographically portrays the recovery of Bosnia after the war that put an end to the existence of Yugoslavia. Through his photographs he presents us with a country on the road to recovery, but through which the memory of the war, the massacre, the disappearances and the suffering spreads like a dark cloud.

Finally, within this block dedicated to war, we devote a chapter to the ongoing conflicts with and within the Arab world and territories under its influence. As Yayo Aznar points out, it is striking how the allusion to these conflicts, or to others in related places, is generalised with the term Islamic. In this way, a religious issue is alluded to above all others.

For Huntington - who developed the theory of the clash of civilisations according to which, after the fall of the Wall, the great confrontations will not be between states but between multi-state groups whose point of attachment is membership of a common "civilisation" — of all the objective elements that define civilisations, the most important of which is usually religion.

In this sense, once again the reference to the stigmatisation of the "other" — in this case the religious and cultural other — becomes recurrent.

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2. vv. AA., *El Fin de la Historia... y el retorno de la pintura de historia*. Curated by Paco Barragán. The exhibition took place at DA2 Domus Artium 2002 between 1st June and 6th November 2011.

In the aftermath of 9/11, George Bush called the war on terror a fight for civilisation. In this way, he circumscribed his subsequent actions within the theory of the clash of civilisations. He also noted that “defeat would mean leaving the Middle East in the hands of nuclear-armed terrorist states” and added that “America did not ask for this war” and that “the war is not over until we or the extremists are victorious.”

As a counterpoint to these words, this chapter begins with the work by Juan Pérez Agirregoikoa entitled *America Democracia Tour* in which the artist, using the aesthetics associated with rock bands, recreates what looks like the announcement of a band’s tour, with the album cover and the dates of the concerts. What it does reflect, however, are the conflicts in which the United States has been involved in beyond its borders since 1945.

Luc Delahaye’s *Jenin Refugee Camp* and *Kabul Road* denounce the frequent killing of civilians for no apparent reason, either as collateral damage or in pre-emptive strikes carried out by the Israeli or US military. In 2002, the Palestinian refugee camp of Jenin was attacked as part of the Israeli army’s operation “Defensive Shield”, resulting in the death of 53 civilians. Delahaye reflects not only on the action itself, but also on the true capacity of photography and art to denounce these kinds of issues, without them being “swallowed up” without further consideration.

Fontcuberta, in his *Googlegrama* series, uses a photomosaic programme which, by introducing a series of search criteria, makes it possible to create an image in which each “tessera” is a small image. For the creation of *ITS*, he introduced the words God, Yahweh and Allah as search criteria, and composed the image of the burning Twin Towers from the 6,000 images given by the search engines. Fontcuberta’s work pursues a critique of information and its authoritarian mechanisms, as well as the mechanisms that, in the face of reality or truth, offer verisimilitude or a solid image. In this sense, the image he proposes is plausible, but it is not real, as it is composed of the 6,000 images returned by the Google search. Likewise, the way in which things are narrated is not univocal, although governments and the media try hard to make us believe that it is.

Related to this work is the piece *Balance en blanco (pensar es olvidar las diferencias)* [White Balance (To Think is to Forget Differences)] by François Bucher, described in Volume I of the MUSAC Collection as “an audiovisual collage, to elaborate a fiction through reality, based on the September 11 attacks in New York. With a decidedly critical approach, Bucher explores the various strategies used by the different strata of American society in the transmission of information, and how it is intentionally processed and then presented to the public in such a way that the latter can assimilate it without difficulty, in a condition that is close to that of a spectacle. The perception of events is conditioned by the medium “as document or fiction” in which they are presented, thus constructing a

biased imaginary and ideological memory, determined in turn by the cultural and social context in which it takes place.<sup>3</sup>”

To conclude this section we include the work by Shirana Shabazi *Goftare Nik/Good Words* in which the artist creates a photographic portrait of the young society of Tehran, far removed from the stereotype with which we traditionally conceive of Iran, based on the broadcasts of the 1979 revolution and the restrictions that followed. In contrast, Shabazi’s images offer us everyday normality that brings us closer to ordinary people and their daily lives.

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3. C. Ordás, (2005). “Balance en blanco (pensar es olvidar diferencias) [White Balance (To Think is to Forget Differences)]”. At MUSAC, *Museum of Contemporary Art of Castilla y León. Collection Vol. I* (257) MUSAC.

# Pablo Alonso

(Gijón, Spain, 1969)

*Landung*, 2002

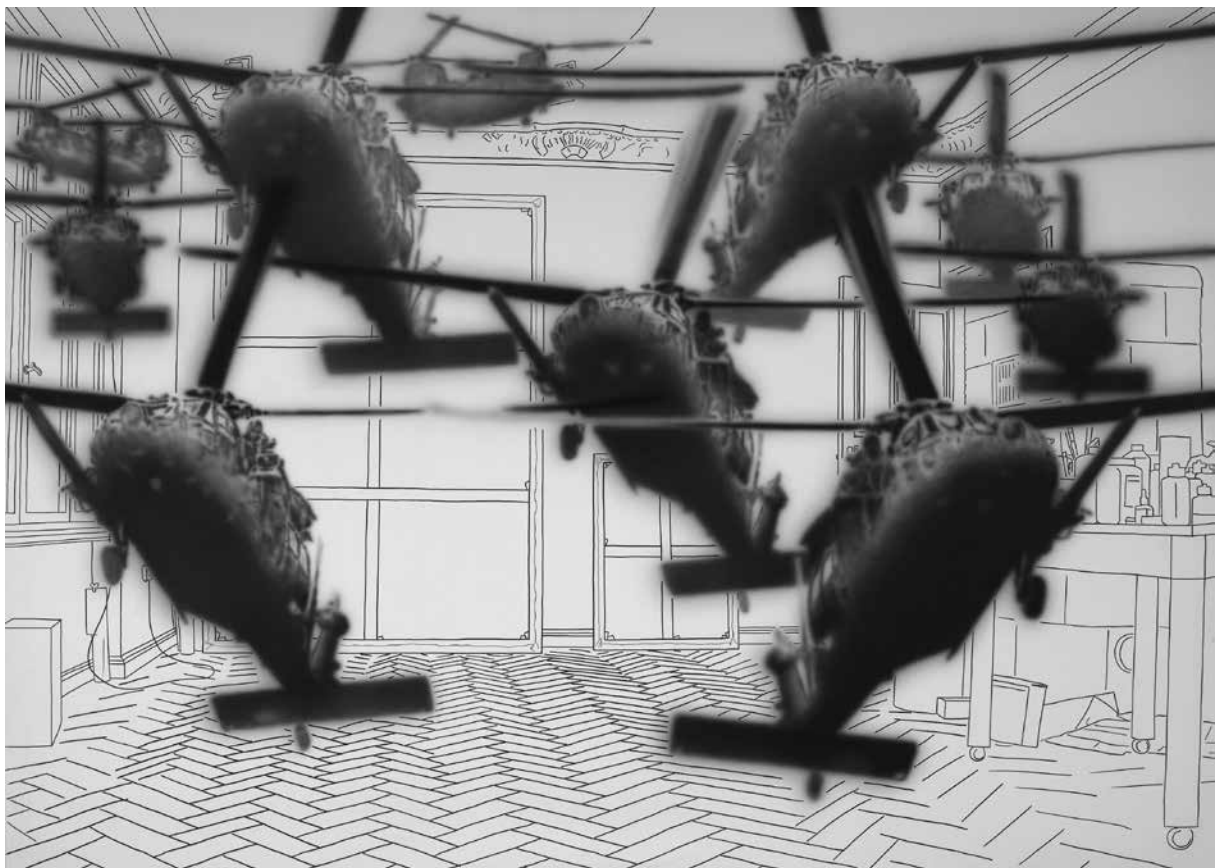
Painting. Acrylic and ink on canvas

200 x 280 cm

MUSAC Collection

*Landung* is part of a broad thematic series presented under the ironic title of *El Imparcial* [The Impartial], which depicts sinister scenes that occupy the artist's studio.

*El Imparcial* was the name of that newspaper which, under the Franco dictatorship, defined itself as an independent newspaper, while acting as one of the regime's best propaganda media. With an effective technique, using drawing and airbrush, and with a plastic art close to the graphic novel, Alonso, through *Landung*, brings us closer to the impartiality offered by the remoteness of the news we see through the mass media.



# Gervasio Sánchez

(Córdoba, Spain, 1959)

*Desaparecidos*, 2010

7 B/W photographs

Different sizes

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*Desaparecidos* [Disappeared] is a project halfway between photojournalism and documentary photography carried out by Gervasio Sánchez between 1998 and 2010 in ten countries around the world, including Spain, which attempts to recover the memory and reflect the drama derived from the forced disappearance of people as a consequence of war and political conflicts. This work stands as a forceful document against oblivion and aims to rescue the memory of people who disappeared in various armed conflicts and acts of repression.

Sánchez solves the problem of how to portray them by tracing a chronology of the spaces these people inhabited, starting with the detention centres where they were tortured and made to disappear.



# Simeón Sáiz Ruiz

(Cuenca, Spain, 1956)

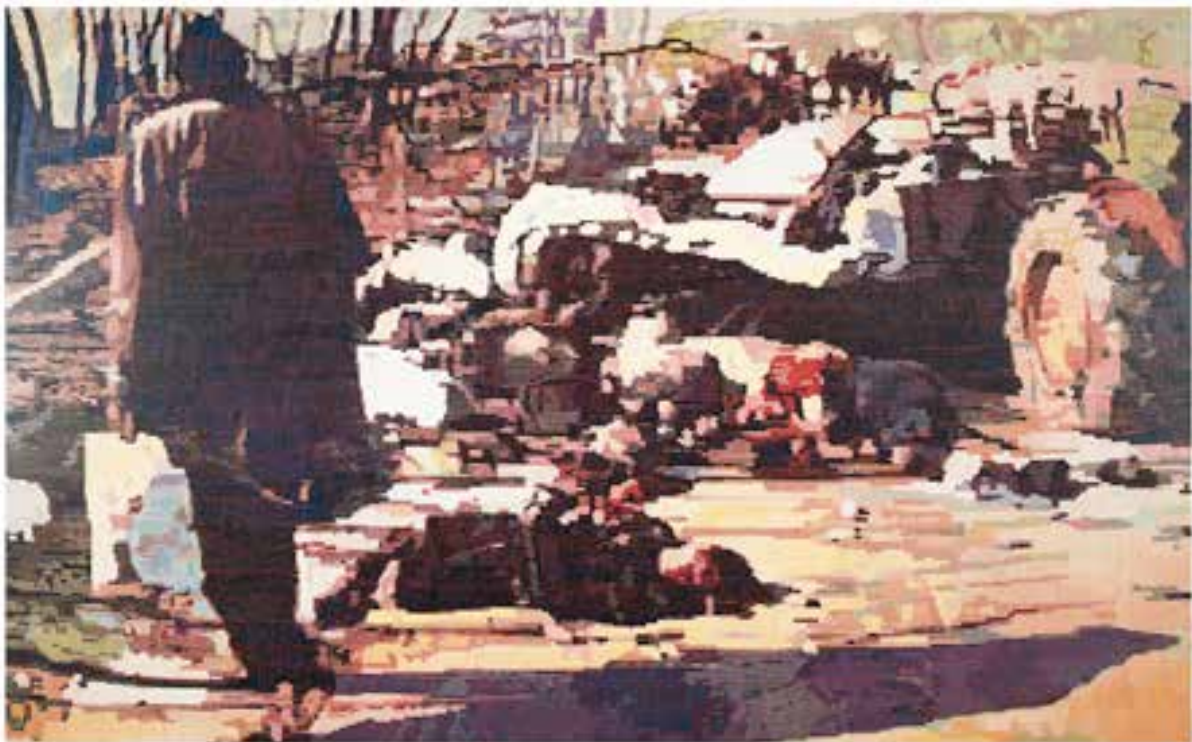
*Carretera entre Prizren y Djakovica cerca de Meja, el 14 de abril de 1999*, 2003

Painting. Oil on canvas

240 x 390 cm

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In *Carretera entre Prizren y Djakovica cerca de Meja, el 14 de abril de 1999* [Road between Prizren and Djakovica near Meja, 14 April 1999], Sáiz Ruiz adapted an image to painting from a newsreel. In this series of paintings, his gaze dwells on the most dramatic and convulsive scenes of the last wars of the 20th century. In this way, he highlights a pressing problem of our time, which is no longer war itself as a product of any era, but the fact that we do not stop to reflect on a world that generates so many images that we are unable to assimilate what is going on. Sáiz chooses a television image to question this medium, which is considered a certificate of absolute truth.



# Ivan Grubanov

(Belgrade, Serbia, 1976)

*Stages*, 2004 - 2005

Painting. Oil on canvas

Triptych. 120 x 140 cm each one

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*Stages* is a triptych in oil on canvas in which Grubanov explores the memory and traces of the past by revisiting political events in his country, he explores the power of the image and its symbolism by showing a stage used for political speeches, which today has become a symbol of entertainment at popular festivals. This artist, who has already held an exhibition with the artist Ángel de la Rubia at MUSAC's Laboratorio 987 entitled *Después de todo* [After all], reflects, through his work, whether painting, drawing, video or installation, on the complexity of historical pasts and freedom of expression, as well as the power of images and their use.



# Ángel de la Rubia

(Oviedo, Spain, 1981)

*BiH*, 2005

24 colour photographs

64 x 80 cm each one

MUSAC Collection

In *BiH* (*Bosnia i Herzegovina*) [Bosnia and Herzegovina] Ángel de la Rubia photographically captures scenes of the recovery of Bosnia after the war. Working with the ICMP (International Commission on Missing Persons) he portrays the process of exhuming mass graves and the testimony of survivors of a conflict in which Yugoslavia began its dismemberment between April 1992 and October 1995. More than 10 years later, the artist dives into his memory through everyday images expressing the intimacy of a family and the movements of a country whose tension still remains unresolved.



# Juan Pérez Agirregoikoa

(San Sebastián, Spain, 1963)

*America Democracia Tour, 2005*

Painting. Acrylic on canvas

Diptych 320 x 200 cm each one

MUSAC Collection

Taking 1945 - the end of World War II, but also the beginning of the period known as the Cold War - as the starting date for the tour he describes, Agirregoikoa traces a chronological journey through many of the armed conflicts in which the US government has taken part in recent years. Simulating the contents of a rock band tour T-shirt.

*America Democracy Tour* is a large-scale prototype of a garment commemorating the “shows” put on by successive US governments in such disparate stages as China, Korea, Iraq and Sudan.



# Luc Delahaye

Luc Delahaye (Tours, France, 1962)

*Jenin Refugee Camp, 2002*

*Kabul Road, 2001*

Colour photograph

111 x 241 cm each one

Edition 3/5

MUSAC Collection

Luc Delahaye's work brings us closer to moments of pain and death. In this work, the artist confronts one of the major ethical problems of war photography, that of how to position oneself between information, pain, aesthetics and ethics. The two large-format photographs belonging to the MUSAC Collection depict scenes from the war in Afghanistan and aim to become a denunciation of our society's impassivity in the face of the atrocities we see every day in our news bulletins and newspapers, which we perceive, numbed, as just another news item or image, unable to feel the immensity of the drama.



# Joan Fontcuberta

(Barcelona, Spain, 1955)

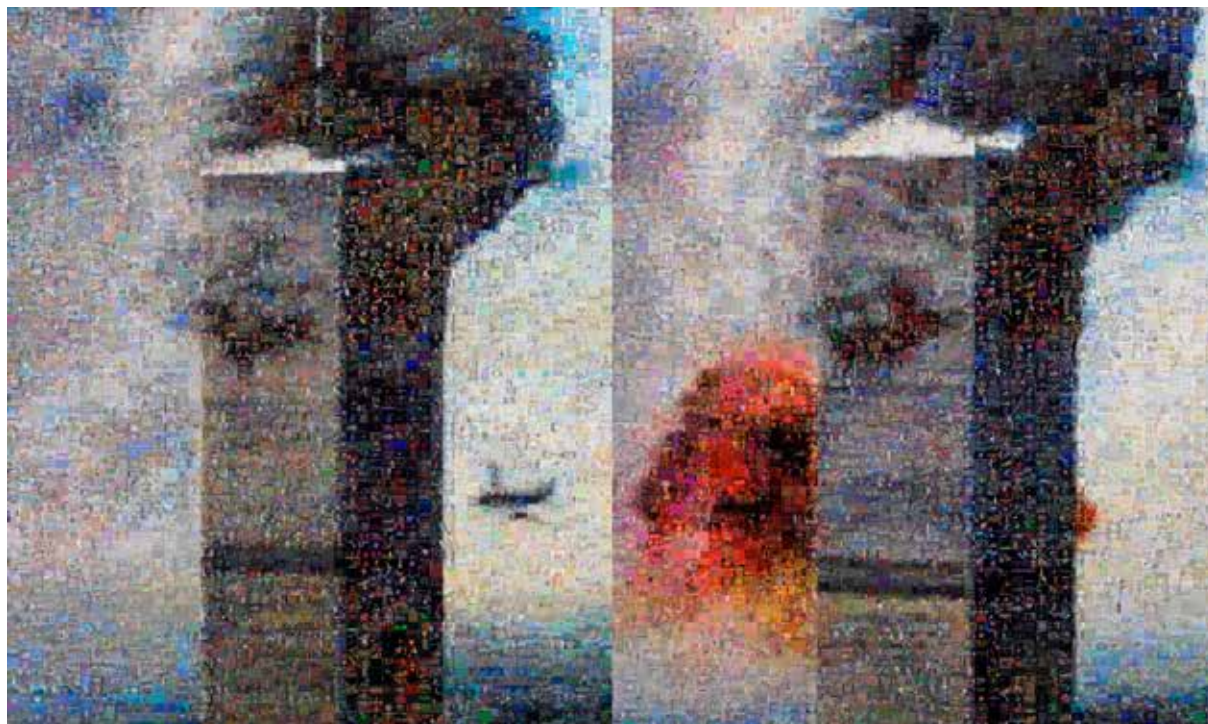
*Googlegrama: 11-S, 2005*

Digital print

123 x 192 cm

MUSAC Collection

In this work Fontcuberta uses a freeware photomosaic programme, Terragen, connected on-line to Google, to obtain the graphic sources that make up the final image of each of his works. The artist only controls the search terms or keywords entered in the search engine as criteria for retrieving the images that subsequently make up the mosaics. These terms are directly related to the theme and title of the work, establishing metaphorical games between image and word. Thus, for the composition of the work *9/11*, the words “God”, “Yahweh” and “Allah” are used to rescue the 6,000 images that reconstruct the events that took place at the twin towers in New York.



# François Bucher

(Calí, Colombia, 1972)

*Balance en blanco (pensar es olvidar diferencias)*, 2002

Colour video and sound. 32'

Edition: 1/6 + 2 AP

MUSAC Collection

*Balance en blanco (pensar es olvidar diferencias)* [White balance (thinking is forgetting differences)] is presented as an audiovisual collage, to elaborate a fiction through the real, based on the September 11 attacks in New York. With a decidedly critical approach, Bucher explores the various strategies used by the different strata of American society in the transmission of information, and how it is intentionally processed and then presented to the public in such a way that the latter can assimilate it without difficulty, in a condition that is close to that of a spectacle.



# Shirana Shabazi

(Teherán, Iran, 1974)

*Goftare Nik/Good Words*, 1998-2002

Installation composed of 21 colour photographs

Different sizes

MUSAC Collection

This installation, which the artist has conceived especially for MUSAC, consists of a selection from among the hundred or so photographs that make up Shirana Shahbazi's best known and most praised series, *Goftare Nik/Good Words*, taken in Iran before developing the new series in Shanghai and the United States.

In it, Shahbazi captures the uncanny in the familiarity of the images, combining the banality of everyday experience with the interpretations we draw from what is unfamiliar to us from other cultures. It shows the everyday life of Tehran, far removed from our reductionist imaginary of a place of conflict and threat, and which does not seem so different from the old "exoticism" with which we used to refer to the East.



## Chapter III

### Energy, industrial progress and cultural landscape

This chapter takes place in two different spaces, the MUSAC auditorium and the exhibition hall.

It includes works by artists who show their interest in how the issues arising from energy, urban and industrial development end up, irremediably, affecting people and the environment. Some of them also focus their attention on analysing which social groups are favoured or harmed by this development.

For its duration, the auditorium will be showing films by María Ruido *Electroclass* and by the Laboratory of Experimental Audiovisual Anthropology (LAAV) *Putá Mina*.

In *Electroclass* María Ruido makes a brilliant analysis of the Spanish industrial reconversion in the 1980s, focusing on Bilbao, highlighting the social changes brought about by the dismantling of heavy industry and the creation of the Guggenheim-Bilbao museum-franchise as a tourist attraction.

The LAAV collective is working on the dismantling of the mining industry in the town of Ciñera (León). Like the lift in the LAAV mine, it delves into different layers of analysis and offers a story about the traditional class struggle, the sense of belonging, care and the situation of women in a world traditionally limited to men.

The works of Allan Sekula and Cecylia Malik are already on view. In his series *Marea Negra (fragmentos de una ópera)* [Black Tide (fragments of an opera)] Sekula documents the actions carried out by the volunteers who came to participate in the clean-up of the Galician coasts after the sadly famous Prestige oil spill, thus giving an account of the magnitude of the ecological disaster but also constituting a document of memory for future generations.

Cecylia Malik develops the action *Polish Mothers on Tree Stumps* and the photographs shown here document what it entailed. *Polish Mothers on Tree Stumps* was an informal civic movement that emerged as a reaction to the massive felling of trees in Europe's oldest virgin forest in Poland. Their actions consisted of nursing their children in the forest, as a metaphor for the nurturing value of forests to human societies.

# María Ruido

(Orense, Spain, 1967)

*ElectroClass. Apuntes sobre la generación de imaginarios postindustriales desde la televisión (Bilbao como caso de estudio)*, 2011

Video, colour and sound

53” Ed. 1/7 + 1 AP

MUSAC Collection

Screening in MUSAC’s Auditorium:

Last Sunday every month at 11:30 a.m.

In this work, María Ruido deals with the dismantling of heavy industry in Bilbao and its social, economic and cultural consequences, as it produces not only the destruction of a basic industrial area in the local and state economy, but also the undermining of the social foundations that had shaped relations in the public sphere throughout the 20th century.

The change from the old industrial economy to a service economy would materialise with the construction of the Guggenheim-Bilbao as the spearhead, but in reality the museum-franchise was nothing more than a symptom of the change from a society of producers to one of consumers.



# LAAV,

## Laboratory of Experimental Audiovisual Anthropology

(León, Spain, 2016)

*Putá Mina*, 2018

Video, colour and sound

59´

MUSAC Collection

Screening in MUSAC's Auditorium:

Last Sunday every month at 17:30 p.m.

This work is an audiovisual excavation in the mining area of Gordón (León), affected by the dismantling of the mining industry and the ways of life associated with it.

It is conceived as a collective work through local groups, in which the latest images of the mine are intermingled with the conversations held between female miners throughout the period 2016-2017. The resulting film adds layers of complexity to an epic reading of class struggle while highlighting aspects such as care work or emotional components, usually neglected in the conventional story of the mine.

It has been developed by Laura Alonso, Raquel Balbuena, Chus Domínguez, Mari Fernández, Áurea González, Belén Sola, Cristina Turrado, Conchi Unanue, Mercedes Ordás.



# Allan Sekula

(Erie, USA., 1951 - Los Angeles, USA, 2013)

From the *Black Tide* series. *Fragments for an Opera*, 2002 - 2003

10 colour photographs

Different sizes

MUSAC Collection

In December 2002, Allan Sekula was invited by the Barcelona newspaper *La Vanguardia* to travel to the Galician coast, which had been ravaged since November by the oil slick caused by the sinking of the Prestige oil tanker. This is where the story of the *Black tide* series begins. *Fragments for an opera*, twenty images in which Sekula has reflected the consequences of the Prestige oil spill on the beaches of Galicia, showing the work of the volunteers who helped to collect the fuel oil, their exhausted faces and sorrow as a result of an ecological tragedy of such magnitude.



# Cecylia Malik

(Krakow, Poland, 1975)

## *Polish Mothers on Tree Stumps*, 2017

2 colour photographs

100 x 65 cm each one

MUSAC Collection

*Polish Mothers on Tree Stumps* is an informal civic movement that emerged as a reaction to the massive logging in Poland as a result of the liberalisation of the law known as Szyszko's Law, which is severely affecting Europe's oldest virgin forest, Bialowieza. The campaign was initiated by the protest of Cecylia Malik, during which she breastfed her 6-month-old son Ignacy for a month in different places in Krakow. Other mothers joined the campaign, the group's first performance took place on 3 March 2017 in Krakow and it has been going strong ever since.



# Andreas Gursky

(Leipzig, Germany, 1955)

*Ohne Titel XIII (Mexico)*, 2002

Colour photograph

277 x 206 cm

MUSAC Collection

*Ohne Titel XIII (Mexico)* presents a general shot of a rubbish dump on the outskirts of Mexico City. The presence of civilisation takes the form of the waste it produces, thus avoiding the explicit representation of the human being, but reflecting on the relationship it establishes with the structure in which it is immersed. The composition is directly linked to pictorial approaches, both in the contrast between two opposing fields and in the colouring produced by the random accumulation of objects. A proposal reminiscent of abstract expressionism in its production and in its result. This combination of specific meaning and an aesthetic intention that functions independently appears as a constant in his works.



# Máximo González

(Paraná, Argentina, 1971)

From the series *Proyecto para la reutilización de vehículos obsoletos después de la extinción del petróleo* [Project for the re-use of obsolete vehicles after the end of oil]

*Citröen Ami8 / Pera* (2002) 112 x 77 cm

*Fiath Abath / Kiwi* (2007) 74,5 x 55 cm

*Helicoptero / Uva* (2007) 134 x 196 cm

Drawing, charcoal, watercolour and coloured pencils on paper

MUSAC Collection

*Fiath Abarth/Kiwi*, *Citröen Ami 8/Pera* and *Helicopter/Uva* are three works created by the artist as part of the series *Proyecto para la reutilización de vehículos obsoletos después de la extinción del petróleo* [Project for the reuse of obsolete vehicles after the extinction of oil] in 2007. In this work, the artist reflects on one of the major concerns of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries: the oil crisis resulting from the scarcity of world reserves and the sharp rise in the price of crude oil on the market.

The artist plays with the re-use of motor vehicles as flowerpots or containers for lush fruit trees. Formerly icons of the Argentine consumer and welfare society.



## Chapter IV

### Disease and stigma

The year 2020 will be remembered (or perhaps not) as the year that covid-19, the first pandemic of the 21st century, wreaked havoc and, moreover, had the potential to strike indiscriminately at any population group. This awareness of the pandemic situation and, in a certain way, of the promise of a future or new beginning where we conduct ourselves in a more delicate way is what motivated this multi-site exhibition project of which this exhibition is a part. For this reason, we would like to introduce a final section that shows how some of the artists in the Collection have been interested in the disease, and in some of its manifestations in particular.

Given the chronology of the Collection, AIDS is the disease on which our artists have worked the most. In contrast to covid-19, AIDS (apparently) did not affect the entire population equally, but seemed to prey particularly on heroin addicts and homosexuals. In addition to the dread of contracting a disease with no cure, there was the stigma attached to it, as some sectors of society saw the disease as a kind of punishment for non-normative behaviour.

In 2019, MUSAC's Documentation Centre inaugurated the HIV/Aids archive, which brings together documentation of exhibitions and performances that constitute "an urgent response to the opprobrium, guilt, indifference and silence of power in the face of the pandemic", in the words of Manuel Oliveira, the driving force behind the archive.

In this chapter of *Memoria del porvenir* [Memory of the Future] we include some documents from this archive and we add Pepe Espaliú's work *Carrying XI*, which is an allegory of the exclusion to which AIDS sufferers were subjected. Espaliú conceived a palanquin for carrying people, built into a wall, as a way of separating the sick person from the rest of society, but also to spare him from prying, inquisitive glances. At the same time, and playing with the pronunciation of the title in English, it refers to the care and love of the people close to the sick person who "carry" them.

*Carrying* also responds to the title of a series of actions that Espaliú carried out in San Sebastián and Madrid, in which the artist was carried by different people and joined a political and a cultural space, thus reflecting on the involvement of institutions with AIDS.

There is another group of illnesses, mental illnesses, to which MUSAC has paid special attention. And it has done so with Foucault<sup>4</sup> in mind, believing that it is power which establishes normality and thus creates the divisive practices of subjects who depart from it. In this line of thought, MUSAC, among other initiatives, has hosted the creation and work of La Rara Troupe, a group working on mental health through audiovisual creation. In this section of the exhibition, we include different materials from the Documentation Centre that bring us closer to the reality of people living with mental illness and different associations.

As it could not be otherwise, we also include material from the recently inaugurated covid-19 Archive to highlight how we begin to build memory for the future from the present moment, and also to review the confinement we have lived through, even though we almost seem to have forgotten it.

We conclude the chapter with the work by Eulàlia Valldosera *Estantería para un lavabo de hospital* [Shelf for a hospital washbasin] in which, with intense poetry, Valldosera reflects the loneliness of hospital stays and the attempt at everyday life through the objects we carry with us.

As we pointed out at the beginning, there is a separate chapter consisting of a MUSAC OFF that takes place in the Hospital de León, but which is designed to allow the works to coexist with the ordinary activity of the hospital and is not conceived as an exhibition “room.” With the title *Paisajes oníricos* [Dream Landscapes], we want the MUSAC Collection to contribute to alleviating moments of waiting and situations that might appreciate a little lightness.

The allusion to the epilogue is not trivial, we consider that any understanding of the exhibition and the works presented here are completed by the experience that each visitor brings and that this experience of the work is as necessary as that of the person who has created it as that of the person writing these words.

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4. M. Foucault, “The Subject and Power.”

# Pepe Espaliú

(Córdoba, Spain, 1955 - Córdoba, Spain, 1993)

*Carrying XI*, 1992

Sculpture. Iron

149 x 52 x 140 cm

MUSAC Collection

*Carrying Project* is a project carried out by Pepe Espaliú after his return from the USA, when he was already ill with AIDS. It alludes to the need to carry, transfer or transport AIDS patients who, in the terminal phase, were unable to look after themselves.

Espaliú formalised the project in a series of performative acts in collaboration with a few people who carried the artist through the streets of San Sebastián and Madrid in 1992, linking two axes (a political and cultural space, for example, the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía and the Congress) and which enjoyed enormous coverage in the newspapers and on television. And also with a series of sculptures such as this *Carrying XI*, with which the artist wanted to emphasise the exclusion and marginalisation of the sick, who almost had to levitate so as not to “infect” others, as if they were absent from the real world from which they were repudiated like the plague of medieval times.



# Eulàlia Valldosera

(Vilafranca del Penedès, Barcelona, Spain, 1963)

*Estantería para un lavabo de hospital* [Shelf for a hospital washbasin],

1992

Installation consisting of slide projector, washbasin cabinet, mirrors, shelves and various objects

230 x 450 cm

MUSAC Collection

Created specifically for *Hospital Human Material*, a collective art project in collaboration with M. Theunissen in the city of Amsterdam, this installation represents the objects that could be found in a hospital room, although the organisation of the space, the light, the shadows, create an unreal atmosphere and the objects lose their meaning and functionality. However, they still refer to the idea of illness and loneliness associated with the hospital, and therefore give the piece a feeling of disturbance that permeates the very act of perception.



# Credits

## Artists

Pablo Alonso, Marc Bijl, Brumaria Art Collective, François Bucher, Alán Carrasco, Ángel Mateo Charris, Luc Delahaye, Gonzalo Elvira, Pepe Espaliú, Joan Fontcuberta, Máximo González, Ivan Grubanov, Andreas Gursky, LAAV\_ Laboratorio de Antropología Audiovisual Experimental, Cecilya Malyk, Ramón Mateos, Juan Pérez Agirregoi-koa, Ángel de la Rubia, María Ruido, Simeón Sáiz Ruiz, Fernando Sánchez Castillo, Gervasio Sánchez, Allan Sekula, Shirana Shabazi, Fiona Tan, Eulalia Valldosera, and various materials belonging to the Documentation Center of MUSAC

## Curatorship

Koré Escobar Zamora

## Coordination and Registrar

Raquel Álvarez Rodríguez y Pablo Bernabé Castañón

## MUSAC Documentation

Unium, S. L.

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Ibanoz Álvarez Gutiérrez  
Miguel Santiago Alonso  
Jose María de la Torre Ramos

## Installation

Vinílica Producciones

## Press and communication

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## Graphic design

menoslobos S. L.

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