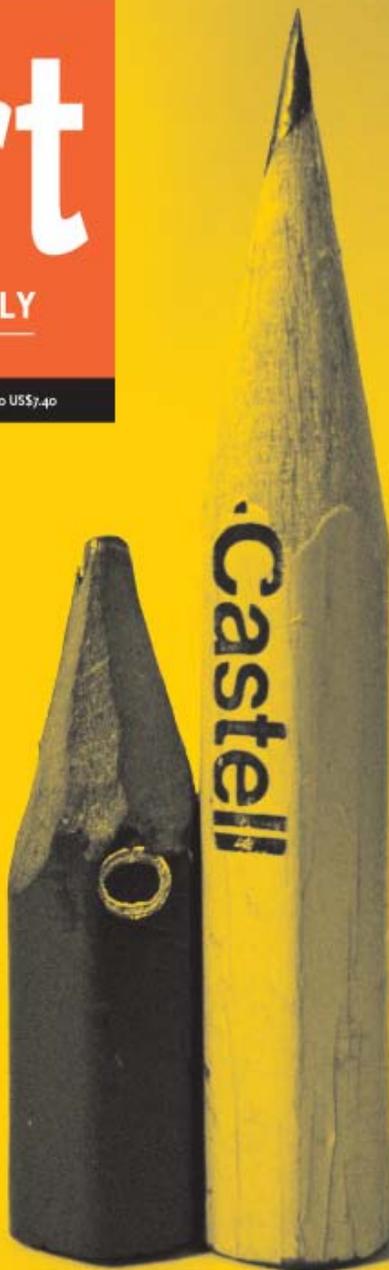


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Pavel Büchler

Interviewed by David Briers

Right Shift

Morgan Quaintance

Smithson's Legacy

Paul O'Kane

Venice Biennale

Griselda Pollock · Shama Khanna

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| Reviews |

Exhibitions

56th Venice Biennale 9 May to 22 November



Isaac Julien *Das Kapital Oratorio* 2015 performance



Lotty Rosenfeld *No, no fui feliz (No, no I was happy)* 2015 video installation

It was quiet in the Giardini early on the Tuesday before the opening rush that flooded the tranquil spaces come Wednesday. I started at the Spanish pavilion drawn in by my delight at starting the tour with the brilliant queer feminist practice of Cabello y Carceller. Inside I discovered at the pavilion's centre a jubilantly queered postmodern reading of Salvador Dalí curated by Martí Manen, while the surrounding spaces featured Pepo Salazar and the comic-based artist Francesc Ruiz alongside a video work and installation by Spain's most thoughtful gender-critique artists, Cabello y Carceller. Their Venice project, *The State of the Art*, 2015, takes as its stage the empty, pre-exhibition pavilion, haunted by the queer meeting space that is the

Giardini in winter without the art crowd, here recast into an installation with large-screen HD video that touched on the most poignant of current issues – desperate migrants from Africa making perilous journeys to Europe. But in this case self-imposed exile was not undertaken for economic gain; the African woman was driven by the danger she experienced in societies deadly hostile to her lesbian sexuality. The lonely and anxious traveller, carrying a small landscape painting hanging on a roughly tied string on her back, finds refuge in the empty building, only to awaken to encounter a lively queer and transgender group waiting to audition for an unknown performance during the course of which they explore the complex issues of menaced freedom for dissident sexual and transgender subjects, ending with a vibrant rendering of Amanda Lear's 'I'm a Mystery' in full 1980s drag.

Elegantly but astutely bringing into the play a range of radical thinkers from Hannah Arendt to Carla Lonzi and Judith Butler, Cabello y Carceller's work was unique in the entire Biennale for an aesthetic economy with which it combined a piercing critique of human vulnerability – economic and sexual – with defiance through creative solidarity. Yet it set the tone for my elliptical traverse of the rest of the offerings: I might feel at home after all, I thought. You see, people like me visit Venice in a state of anguished ambivalence. For those teaching and researching contemporary art, regular attendance at the big temporary exhibitions is a must if only to see these variously curated assemblages of current artworks and to discern curatorial politics. Yet what we encounter on site is the money-driven structure of the art world made even more visible in opening week: art assembled by means of negotiations between curators, dealers, collectors and sponsors in order for all of them to work out what to buy, sell, collect, show. The display itself becomes the occasion for new transactions where the currently massive financial investment in and profit from contemporary art itself becomes part of the spectacle.

Please do not take this comment as another tedious repetition of leftist outrage at the dirty duet of art and money. At the National Gallery of London, the first great dealer in modern art, Durand Ruel, is the focus of a well-deserved if misconfigured exhibition as 'The Inventor of Impressionism', reminding us of the fact that, in the free enterprise conditions of artistic production first developed within the capitalist system during the 19th century, artists needed dealers who dared to take the risks that followed from their convictions about the importance of new or emerging art. The history of modern art involves a concurrent appreciation of such courageous dealers as Berthe Weil, Willem Udhe, Peggy Guggenheim and Leo Castelli. When Clement Greenberg wrote his famous essay 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch' in 1939, he formulated the memorable insight that while the emerging avantgarde sought to withdraw itself from the mess of politics and ideology all the better to preserve the very possibility and purposes of art, it was still, inevitably, bound to certain fractions of the

bourgeoisie by ‘an umbilical cord of gold’. The game has changed radically. The none too-subtle slippages between art fairs, with their intellectual decoration and outreach programmes, and biennales (of which there are at least 39 taking place in 2015 alone), with their intellectual framing of curatorial projects, create new ambiguities for the relations between critical and even art-historical analysis of this beast, contemporary art, and the conditions of our encounter with it – perhaps you can see where I am going.

From my pleasurable encounter with Cabello y Carceller’s finely tuned queer feminist orchestration of questions of safety and desire in a world of economic inequality and sexual persecution defied by intellect and art, I was bound to make my way to the centrepiece of Okwui Enwezor’s central pavilion which exhibited the first half of his thematic show ‘All the World’s Futures’. Back in 2007, and funded externally, MoMA New York hosted a conference titled ‘Feminist Futures’, a phrasing which had the uncomfortable overtones of the prime field of stock market speculation in ‘futures’ that had little to do with utopian politics; naming this Biennale ‘All the World’s Futures’

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allows a tragic rescanning of the phrase from possessive to constative: ‘All the world is “futures”.’

In the space named the Arena, alongside a range of performances and events, in four 30-minute sections per day, the *Das Kapital Oratorio* directed by Isaac Julien will be performed daily for the duration. Surely Karl Marx’s great work has never been so relevant as today when the originally mysterious forms of capitalism he so brilliantly deciphered through the figures of the commodity and the fetish have become quite naked in their greedy pursuit of profit at any cost, human or planetary, no longer hiding the extreme selectivity of its benefits and its (im)moral complacency before its continuous generation of what Zygmunt Bauman names ‘wasted lives’. Supplemented by a double-screen projection of the artist in conversation with Marxist social geographer David Harvey before an invited audience that included Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy at Iniva, the oratorio seems to place at the heart of this Biennale a ‘critique of political economy’. My saddened conclusion is, however, that it merely risks affirming the spectacularisation of critical thought. Reading *Das Kapital* within this space, this exhibition, this event, empties thought and turns it into an authored

gesture of doubtful substance. However genuine the artist’s and the curator’s motivations, as I believe they are, or the hunger of audiences of artists and engaged visitors, neither have considered Marx’s text deeply enough to create a form to return us to the critical project that Marx effected in his brilliant and often humorous rhetorical play on the language. In its both deconstructive and revelatory work, *Das Kapital* played with the forms of thought that were the intellectual mode of the capitalist mode of production.

The reading I heard included the preface to the second edition, in which Marx defended himself as a true Hegelian who had merely inverted the great thinker’s system to reveal ‘the rational kernel in the mystical shell’. Rationalism, for Marx, was the work of thought that pierced the delusional appearance in which material social reality becomes veiled by spectacle and disappears into the commodity form. Whereas Cabello y Carceller have created a form, deceptively simple – four people found on the streets performing a carefully constructed fictional script – that distils the insights of our contemporary feminist philosophers (referencing Carla Lonzi’s 1970 essay ‘Let’s Spit on Hegel’), the gesture of asking actors to declaim Marx simply makes unintelligible the dense and cogent argumentation in which Marx undertook to pierce the obfuscation and to understand the system whose emergence and consolidation he witnessed.

Visiting Venice in opening week only makes clear how deeply the art world is part of that system in ways in which, far from being creatively withdrawn and only connected by the charmingly prenatal umbilical cord of gold, the central lifelines of the art world run on its oil. Yet to be a bit Hegelian, at least in a darker Adornian sense, there is still the dialectic: the curators such as Okwui Enwezor and many of his brilliant colleagues both know their predicament and resist with all their imaginative and intellectual capacity. Yet it seems they missed two things: Marx’s wonderful sardonic humour and his determination that understanding builds the engines for change even while the same forces may lead us to catastrophe. What lies between is the imaginative creation of political consciousness and will.

If the Spanish pavilion made me feel at home for starters, there were many other instances of the comforting recognition of old friends, artists not from the dealers’ galleries and the auction houses, but from my fine art courses, focusing on my contemporaries making critical, feminist, queer, postcolonial and leftist artistic interventions. That was truly strange. For instance, the British presence was pretty strong: Isaac Julien, John Akomfrah, Chris Ofili, Steve McQueen (Interview AM202) and Sonia Boyce. Given the considerable debates in recent years about the failure of British institutions to incorporate the artists of the Black Arts Movement into the history of British art, this was a vitally important gesture that complemented the often

stunning presence of African and African-American artists, including Glenn Ligon (Interview AM317), Wangechi Mutu, Lorna Simpson (Interview AM377), Coco Fusco, Ellen Gallagher and Adrian Piper, whose brilliant conceptual piece addressed to the participants on trustworthiness has been recognised with one of the highest awards given by the Biennale. I read that a quarter of the artists in the Biennale were black. Given this radical shift, I still want to question where were Lubaina Himid, Maud Sulter (Reviews p26), Claudette Rodgers and Sutapa Biswas, to complement this rather gender-skewed selection of British artists of the various postcolonial diasporas. Himid's long project *Negative Positives: Guardian Newspapers, 2007-* (recently exhibited at London's Hollybush Gardens), is a sustained analysis of the political unconscious of the UK's liberal newspaper, whose representation of black people Himid tracked and annotated in paint year-by-year, day-by-day, revealing a deeply troubling effect of exposure and negation in the recurrent alignment of photographs of black subjects with unrelated stories and screaming headlines about violence, defeat and abjection: 'Every day in Britain even the "liberal" press is simultaneously visualising and making invisible black people's lives.'

If Piper represents one of the senior American conceptual artists at Venice, video and multimedia artist Joan Jonas was finally honoured by the US pavilion at the age of 78 and, with her, the area in which she has been one of the great feminist pioneers: video and moving image installation. *They Come to Us Without a Word* is a wonderfully thoughtful and poetic work on ecological peril, human and animal vulnerability and the imaginative power of stories of otherness – called ghosts – that once haunted the natural world and gave rise to narratives Jonas asked children to perform in this entrancing and luminous interior soundscape. Jonas's deeply painterly work in new media was finely tuned to the Venice of Bellini, Titian and Carpaccio. In her address at the opening, Jonas – who first trained as a sculptor – avowed that she approached her medium in a painterly fashion, always exploring figure/ground relations, while making a sideways nod to her iconic work in/on video, *Vertical Roll*, 1970.



Cabello y Carceller *The State of Art* 2015
video

In the spirit of re-encountering old friends, I went to the Chile pavilion curated by the veteran curator and art writer Nelly Richard which featured an installation work by Lotty Rosenfeld, recalling her potent gestures of resistance in post-Allende Chile when she laid white lines across those on the roads to create a sequence of marked crosses. Orchestrating two projectors that twisted and rotated, inverted

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and returned, casting their low-definition images on every surface and occasionally on the bodies of viewers, Rosenfeld assembled the fractured memories of her country's tortured history.

What of the African continent itself? I had decided to make this a special interest although I was defeated in seeking out the Zimbabwe pavilion a day before its official opening. I spent time in the hurriedly assembled South Africa pavilion in the Arsenale which had at its heart selected sessions from the endlessly terrifying, horrifying and moving recordings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that honoured both the irreparable trauma of the country and the still urgent debt of memory work. But I also sought out an independent initiative called the Johannesburg pavilion, a shoestring project initiated by Roelof Petrus van Wyck with 12 other artists and curators for a fortnight as a programme of films, performances and studio activities in Venice. Going beyond the national representation to evoke Enwezor's erstwhile focus on African cities – the fourth platform of his 2002 Documenta 11 – and his relationship with Johannesburg from the infamous second Johannesburg Biennale, 'Trade Routes', which he curated in 1997, the group represents a range of artists in the many South African communities and languages with urgencies and experiences that fall outside the moneyed system that enables art to travel to the biennales. Financed on a hope and a prayer with the help of some collectors and sponsors, with only a selection of the artists able to travel, to get visas, to afford lodgings, and to get space to do their creative work and show their films, this was an artist-led initiative that was probably invisible to most of the visitors. It featured major artists like Senzeni Marasela, who performed on 9 May as Theodorah Hlongwane, a persona wearing the red dress that marks the married woman, made from Seshoeshoe cloth from Lesoto, who usually performs by walking into Johannesburg in search of 'her husband', thus embodying women's waiting and vulnerability. Earlier in the week, I

had enjoyed some art-historical tourism on the side, visiting the Carpaccio painting in the Accademia where I noted the prominent figure of an African gondolier in the colourful livery of his sestiere. How much more telling would be Marasela's solitary presence in African dress walking the narrow streets of Venice or on the wide fondamenta leading to the Giardini and the Arsenale, seeking to make visible a worldwide condition of women through the twin poetics of her Xhosa language and Seshoeshoe fabric, using this affecting human form to speak of her own life and world in pointed contrast to the costliness and spectacle of the stored-up-labour-plus-capital of the grand multiscreen spectacles enclosed in the darkened rooms through which we pass, ticking off another 'name', old friend or even new discovery?

One final old friend arrested me: Chantal Akerman, who had made a sort of debut as an installation artist in Venice back in 2001. In her work *Now*, 2015, seven de rigueur suspended, frameless screens were deployed in a doubled and receding formation in a darkened room in the Arsenale. Known for long unbroken takes, for slow-moving shots, Akerman unexpectedly orchestrated a series of fast-moving films of a disembodied gaze speeding through arid, stony North African and Mediterranean landscapes. Unstill space was set against a viscerally powerful soundscape drawn from recordings of the Israeli-Hamas war in Gaza. Visitors to this alien and empty landscape felt their ears shatter and their bodies shudder with the resonant violence of bombardment, explosion and gunfire brought close through the penetrating vibrations of enveloping sound.

No visitor to this year's Biennale should miss the German pavilion, which is titled FABRIK (Factory), curated by photography curator Florian Ebner and featuring Olaf Nicolai, Hito Steyerl (Interview AM375), Tobias Zielony and the duo Jasmina Metwaly & Philip Rizk.

The artists completely redesigned the interior architecture of the grand building so that entry was via a narrow spiral staircase that brought us out onto the constructed top floor, Rooftop 1&2, from which three staircases perilously took us down into a Workshop, Print Unit and Motion Capture Studio. Having caused some consternation in Germany when these artists were announced as their nation's representatives, the spokesmen for the official sponsors (including Krupp and the Savings Bank) at the opening waxed lyrical about the installed work that was sharp and hard-hitting about the (in)human effects of neoliberal economics let loose in Cairo, and about the tragic dislocation between African migrants' reception in Europe and their own memories of home and family. Steyerl's telling piece posed the questions of power and play: who controls the internet. The Factory of the Sun is a critical play on a video game that transforms every human sentiment into light while suggesting the resistance possible through dance that, even so, remains utterly vulnerable to random drone strikes, real

or virtual. If any show got the relation between form and the political analysis of our moment, it was this one.

Marx is the ruling genius of this contradictory Biennale which called for futures but remained somewhat modernist in so gesturing, which struggled to assert critical thought and social resistance while offering all its objects to a futures market in art speculation. Marx, however, taught us about the core problematic of the capitalist system as the structural disappearance of real relations behind phenomenal appearance. His thought can still provide the theoretical tools for a political deconstruction of the illusionary and the imaginary that is now a source of considerable circulation of capital as image. Modernism lived its oblique relation through postures of resistance and dissidence that depended on the few, the enlightened bourgeoisie that sustained this curiously anachronistic activity, art. Image technology, which in Marxist terms is stored-up human labour turned into machines whose processes and hidden, often gendered labour are opaque to their worldwide users (and now dependents), has become a dominant means of artistic production, challenged here and there by older forms of making that depend on craft, economy and formulation.

If some critics have found this Biennale morose and gloomy, they may be merely protesting at the truths that the selected artists felt compelled to present. For my part, I found intelligence, humour, pathos, compassion and moments of staggering beauty amid the hard-hitting confrontations with politico-economic systems we barely comprehend in their own unbounded 'creativity'. Next stop Istanbul Biennale in September.

GRISELDA POLLOCK is an art historian and art writer.

El Estado de la Cuestión _ un ensayo performativo, 2015

Vídeo HD, color, sonido, 18'30"

Instalación site-specific en el Pabellón español de la Bienal de Venecia 2015

El Estado de la Cuestión _ un ensayo performativo ocupa dos salas del edificio del pabellón español en los Giardini durante la 56 Bienal de Venecia. Se trata de un proyecto realizado ex profeso para la exposición Los Sujetos, comisariada por Martí Manen, exposición que parte como referente de la institucionalizada, polémica y misógina figura de Salvador Dalí.

En un momento histórico de reformulación de las prácticas estéticas y políticas en las democracias europeas, El Estado de la Cuestión indaga en los retorcidos modos con que el *poder simbólico* alienta las nuevas formas de exclusión social. "El futuro nos mintió hace tiempo, en el pasado" cita a Bao Ninh (El dolor de la guerra) uno de los personajes. El futuro se está construyendo sobre capas de mentira legitimadoras de un pasado reciente; ser consciente de ello ayuda a comprender el desarraigo y desconcierto paralizantes que dominan una sociedad nutrida de falsedades y melancolía. Aislada en su egocentrismo, Europa ignora las nuevas disidencias políticas y persiste en escindir la esfera pública de la privada. En este contexto desconcertante, los cuatro personajes de El Estado de la Cuestión inquieran verbal y visualmente, desde una estratégica posición micropolítica, situados en la confluencia entre sexualidades disidentes y marginalización encubierta. Por ello coinciden en un espacio/tiempo absurdo, reflejo del espacio/tiempo absurdo de muchos disidentes en occidente, de la vida ralentizada por la espera, en una sociedad mercantilizada que nos lleva a levitar sobre el dolor.

El vídeo El Estado de la Cuestión _ un ensayo performativo se proyecta sobre una pantalla situada encima del palet en el que se *performativizó* el baile de la penúltima escena del film, recuperando por tanto en su presentación algunos de los elementos que conforman el espacio narrativo y que ayudan a compartir y de algún modo *revivir* situaciones ficcionalizadas de las que sin embargo somos también partícipes. En una sala anexa se reúnen las notas al pie que acompañan al ensayo: documentación con las citas y referencias que aparecen en pantalla, así como cuatro objetos asociados a los cuatro protagonistas y una pancarta desplegada con el lema "El Drag es Político", eje a partir del cual se desarrolla la acción.

El audiovisual se plantea como un ensayo performativo de ficción dividido en cinco actos y se desarrolla en el mismo lugar en el que se expondrá por primera vez: el interior del Pabellón español de la Bienal de Venecia. El rodaje tuvo lugar durante el periodo intersticial de abandono en el que se desmonta una exposición y se prepara la siguiente. La trama incorpora el espacio significante del pabellón como representante del territorio Schengen y también como representante de un país deprimido por una crisis económica producto de las políticas neoliberales, causantes del deseo de huida de la población joven en busca de recursos y futuro. Retomando metodologías estéticas brechtianas, feministas, queer y del cine experimental *draguedo* de serie B, e incorporando un aroma *Tropicamp*, se estructuran secuencias a través de las que transitan actantes amateurs en un despliegue de estrategias

interpretativas construidas desde lo real [como es habitual en proyectos anteriores, nuestros *actores* intervienen en cada narración aportando una conexión que parte de sus propias experiencias vitales].

Una mujer migrante cruza la frontera y se cuelga subrepticamente por las verjas que cierran el espacio español del pabellón. Este personaje inicial acarrea su historia consigo y porta un cuadro que simboliza la pesadilla de la frontera, el mar tempestuoso. Transcurrida una primera noche solitaria, encuentra a otros tres personajes que aguardan en una de las salas del pabellón (aquella que después servirá como lugar de exposición del proyecto). La espera tiene como objetivo realizar unas pruebas de selección de personal, el casting, que les conducirían a la consecución de un contrato de trabajo; una situación recurrente en la que se halla actualmente varada la población que acumula trabajos precarios y en la que se suelen exigir habilidades más cercanas al mundo del espectáculo que a la realidad laboral posterior. La espera marca también el espacio temporal durante el que se desarrollará toda la acción, ese limbo en el que habitarán los cuatro en una historia sin final.

Cada personaje porta a su vez un objeto que utiliza como fetiche/amuleto y que describe su posición ideológica en la sociedad. Dos viven activamente el drag político activando en sus cuerpos lo que ellos mismos denominan como “glam proletario”, todos viven activamente la disidencia sexual. La acción se desarrollará en los espacios periféricos del pabellón durante casi toda la película, hasta que finalmente los cuatro personajes decidan *asaltar* la sala central, el lugar en el que hipotéticamente se realizarían las pruebas de selección, sin que esta acción les conduzca a obtener un fin concreto. El desenlace se produce en esa mezcla de alegría y amargor festivo que rodea los sueños juveniles, intentando resistir ante la mediocridad que les rodea.

La sala de exhibición anexa acompaña a la proyección de citas y referencias que aparecen en el vídeo. En ellas se hace visible la alusión directa a escenas de películas como Un perro andaluz (Luis Buñuel, Salvador Dalí), contestado a través del corte de un pene, o el baile de Banda Aparte (Jean-Luc Godard), incorporado a la coreografía final. También presencias como Judith Butler, Bao Ninh, Franz Kafka o Carla Lonzi sobrevuelan una historia que culmina con una celebración política centrada en la canción I'm a mystery interpretada por Amanda Lear en 1986. Lear, amante oficial de Dalí y reconocida cantante de los años 70 a quien el pintor identificara como una mujer transexual (a pesar de que ella lo niega reiteradamente), publicó esta canción refugiada en la cara B de un LP. En ella se juega con la grafía de la palabra mystery (misterio) y se escribe el término como mistry (cruce entre señor y misterio), es decir, “I'm a mister-y”. La reinterpretación de su letra por los cuatro personajes protagonistas de El Estado de la Cuestión evoca sueños y realidades en una performance que puede interpretarse como canto al misterio de unos géneros siempre indefinidos y a la ruptura de las fronteras impuestas sobre ellos.

Es a través de la música como se ha performativizado tradicionalmente la visibilidad de las disidencias de género, con el mundo del espectáculo como refugio del ‘monstruo’ y constatación de la alteridad. Pero ahora más que nunca, el drag es político.

ENG

***The State of the Art_ a performative essay*, 2015**

Video + Site-specific installation at the Spanish Pavilion, Venice Biennale 2015

The State of the Art_ a performative essay occupies two spaces at the Spanish Pavilion in the Giardini during the Venice Biennale 2015. It was purposely conceived for the exhibition *The Subjects*, curated by Martí Manen, and which uses the institutionalized, polemic and misogynous figure of Salvador Dalí as a referent.

In a moment of historic reformulation of aesthetic and political practices for European democracies, *The State of the Art* inquires into the warped manners with which *symbolic power* encourages new forms of social exclusion. “The future lied to us, there long ago in the past”, says one of its characters, quoting Bao Ninh (*The Sorrow of War*). The future is being built on layers of lies that legitimise a recent past; being conscious of it helps us to understand the estrangement and paralysing bewilderment that dominates a society fed on falsehood and melancholy. Isolated in its egocentrism, Europe ignores the new political dissidences and persists in maintaining a split between public and private spheres. In this disconcerting context, the four characters in *The State of the Art* enquire verbal and visually, from a micro-political stance, while placed in the confluence between dissident sexualities and undercover marginalization. They happen to meet in an absurd space/time, a reflection of the absurd space/time where many dissidents live in the West, of a life slowed down by an endless wait in a commercialised society that takes us to levitate over pain.

The State of the Art_ a performative essay is projected in one of the spaces of the Spanish pavilion, the screen placed over the pallet on which the dance in the penultimate scene of the film was performed. Its presentation consequently recovers some of the elements that conform the narrative space helping to share and somehow *revive* fictionalised situations in which we are in some way involved. A second annex space contains the footnotes that go with the essay: documents with the quotes and references used on the video, as well as four objects associated to the four characters and the unfolded banner with the motto “Drag is Political”, a concept around which the action is developed.

The video is set out as a fictional performative essay divided into five acts, and it takes place in the same space where it will be exhibited for the first time: the interior and immediate exterior limits of the Spanish Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. It was shot during the interstitial period of abandon when a show is taken down and the space is being prepared for the next exhibition. The plot incorporates the space of the Pavilion as a signifier for Schengen territory and also as representative of a country depressed by an economic crisis that is a product of neo-liberal politics that has fired the wish of a young population to escape in the search of resources and future. Retaking feminist, queer and Brechtian aesthetic methodologies from experimental and *in-drag* B cinema, and incorporating a *Tropicamp* scent, sequences are structured, and through them amateur performers circulate in an unfolding of interpretive strategies

brought from the real.

A migrant woman crosses the border surreptitiously traversing the fenced door that encloses the Spanish space of the pavilion. This first character carries her story with her and transports a painting that symbolises the nightmare of the border, a tempestuous sea. After an initial solitary night, she finds another three characters that wait in one of the halls in the pavilion (the same halls that will serve as exhibition space for the project). The waiting has as an objective the participation in a recruitment process, an audition which may take them to get an employment; a recurring situation for a good part of the population, currently aground in an accumulation on precarious mini-jobs, and for which it's become frequent to be asked for abilities that are closer to the show business than to subsequent labour activity. The wait also marks the temporal space during which the action will occur, that limbo the four will inhabit in a story without end.

Each character owns an object that acts as a fetish/amulet and describes their ideological position in society. Two of them actively live political drag, activating what they call 'proletarian glam' in their own bodies; all of them actively live sexual dissidence. The narrative will start unfolding around the peripheral spaces of the pavilion until the four protagonists will ultimately *assault* the central hall, the location where the final tests of the selection process would be meant to take place, although this action will not meet a concrete outcome. The ending therefore produces in them that recognisable mix of celebratory joy and bitterness that frequently surrounds youthful dreams, in an essay to resist the persistent mediocrity around them.

The second space's installation helps to support the projection of quotes and references that appear on the video screen. Direct allusions to different film scenes are made visible here: *Un Chien Andalou* (Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí), which is contested with a penis cut, and the recognisable dance scene in Jean-Luc Godard *Bande à part* that appears incorporated into the final choreography. Presences like Judith Butler, Bao Ninh, Franz Kafka or Carla Lonzi overfly a story that culminates in a political celebration orchestrated around the song *I'm a Mystery*, originally interpreted by Amanda Lear in 1986, when it was released sheltered on an LP B-side. Lear, a well known singer in the 70s and former official lover of Dalí, was identified by him as a transsexual woman (in spite of her reiterated denial). The song's title makes a play on the word *mystery*, deliberately misspelled as *mistery*, resulting in the hidden statement *I'm a Mister* (y). The reinterpretation of the song's lyrics by the four characters in *The State of the Art* recalls an array of possible dreams and realities in a performance that can be interpreted as a tribute to the mystery of vague and un-defined genders, and to the breaking of borders imposed on them.

It is through the music that gender dissidences have traditionally been performed, with the show business as a refuge for the *monster* and as ascertainment of otherness. So now, more than ever, drag is political.



Sin título (Utopía n° 2), 1998, fotografía color.

De un lado y de otro

Algunas notas sobre la obra de

Cabello / Carceller

JUAN VICENTE ALIAGA*

La ya extensa trayectoria de Cabello/Carceller depara un conjunto de asuntos de distinto calado trabajados sobre todo mediante la fotografía y el vídeo. Sin embargo, de todos ellos puede extraerse una trabazón conceptual, un continuo que los enhebra y los dota de coherencia, sea éste el caso de las relaciones de pareja, el de la problemática de la identidad o también el de la desilusión ante la utopía fracasada. Concretamente este último surgido a partir de unas vivencias en San Francisco cuya comunidad gay y lesbica se les antojaba modélica hasta que experimentaron personalmente un sinfín de contradicciones y sinsabores¹.

Además de estos temas, ocupa en particular un lugar destacado en su producción el análisis de la idea de masculinidad y las imágenes inconformistas que de ella han generado.

Hacer hincapié en esta cuestión no es por otra parte sino una forma de apuntar (y de disparar metafóricamente) al rígido sistema de binarismo de género que anega todo el planeta sin paliativos y las sociedades humanas que en él habitan. Apuntar a dicho sistema, que es simbólico y real, y que se materializa en incontables situaciones, actos, gestos, prácticas, y también tratar de erosionarlo, es uno de los objetivos que se proponen Cabello/Carceller. Y ese propósito lo articulan a través de distintas obras a sabiendas de las innumerables resistencias que el orden social despliega para lograr que el sacrosanto principio de la feminidad y la masculinidad, como polos opuestos, se mantenga con sus opresivas formas. De modo que a un sujeto con un cuerpo que la biología y la cultura (o biología cultural, podríamos decir pues están claramente entreveradas) han adscrito a la mujer, y lo que ese cuerpo pueda hacer, se le impida encarnar los supuestos principios masculinos. Y al revés. Bien es cierto que puntualmente el pétreo sistema, y sus normas falocéntricas, se permite un resquicio de duda, sobre todo tras los años de lucha (también en el terreno de las representaciones y de las imágenes que tan influyentes resultan en la configuración de roles) de los distintos feminismos, de las demandas de gays y lesbianas, de los colectivos trans y otros sectores que brogan por subvertir las reglas hegemónicas heterocentradadas.

Probablemente sea ahora, en esta primera década del siglo XXI,

cuando hayamos alcanzado mayores cotas de libertad, si se compara con tiempos anteriores, aunque esa emancipación de las normativas sexuales no se da en la misma medida en todos los países siendo casi imposible en algunos (Arabia Saudí, Yemen, Somalia, Irán...). No deberían olvidarse las brutales discriminaciones existentes, las penalizaciones y crímenes que suceden en muchos lugares y no debería bajarse la guardia pues el retroceso y la regresión siempre son posibles en aquellos otros en que, en principio, se está a salvo. Los avances legislativos son palpables, como he esbozado, pero ello no impide que a las parejas de hombres que hoy pueden casarse se les exija en cierto modo una compostura, un decoro o expresión de respetabilidad y un "estar en sociedad" que no rompa excesivamente el principio de la masculinidad (por lo menos de modo radical). Esto no deja de resultar paradójico pues la noción de lo varonil ha sido puesta en solfa en miles de ocasiones por los discursos homófobos que declaraban en distintos medios que un gay no es un hombre de verdad pues se le supone siempre afeminado. Lo mismo podría decirse de dos mujeres cuya feminidad deberían preservar aunque los chistes e injurias sobre la camionera, la marimacho, la virago, es decir la lesbiana masculina, no han desaparecido en las conversaciones tabernarias o en la oficina. Sabemos no obstante que tampoco entre los/as heterosexuales la divisoria estricta entre un rol de varón y otro de hembra se cumple en la praxis y que hay parejas en las que las decisiones y resoluciones corren a cargo de la mujer más allá de que su apariencia física sea acorde con la tiranía de la belleza y su fortaleza corporal aparentemente frágil. Por supuesto, ejemplos de obediencia y sumisión al orden, consciente o inconscientemente, tampoco faltan y sería monótono enumerarlos.

Si la vida es más diversa y con una casuística de singularidades amplia que no se acomoda a lo que nos dicen los manuales tradicionales, las proclamas de la Iglesia católica, y la redundante y machista publicidad televisiva, por qué todavía resulta espinoso hablar de mujeres que se comportan supuestamente como hombres, de individuos que huyen de las definiciones, de sujetos que modifican su conducta y su cuerpo sin avenirse a los modelos restrictivos y frustrantes que pueblan las cadenas de televisión, que -no lo



Sin título, 1998. Vídeo VHS transferido DVD.



Prototipo nº 1: Ousages (trasmirrimta para artistas que trabajan en colaboración), 1996/97. Fotografía color.

Un beso, 1996, vídeo VHS transferido DVD.



olvidemos— es hoy el espacio que más repercute, y de lejos, en modelar las mentes de la ciudadanía.

Si nos paramos a pensar sobre dichos patrones masculinos que puedan ser tenidos en cuenta para alguien que viva en el sur de Europa, pongamos en el estado español, la oferta es reducida pues se basan en jugadores de fútbol, moteros y algún actor de Hollywood para los hombres y en las modelos de pasarela y en las actrices televisivas y cinematográficas para las mujeres.

Resulta cansino repetir que estas imágenes difundidas hasta la saciedad en poco o nada se corresponden con los sujetos reales de las poliédricas sociedades contemporáneas pero, dicho esto, es indudable que están presentes y que su poder de seducción e influjo es enorme y devastador.

Lo saben muy bien Cabello/Carceller cuando piensan principalmente en el cine y en las narraciones a él asociadas, como la esfera cultural que ha ahormado muchas conciencias, que ha prefigurado comportamientos, que ha diseñado hasta los considerados gestos inocuos, que serán imitados, reproducidos, ejecutados en distintos momentos por otros individuos en su vida cotidiana.

En la serie *Archivo: Drag Modelos*, 2007-2010, han acudido a distintas mujeres de diferentes países (Portugal, Rumanía, Alemania, Gran Bretaña...) con la finalidad de averiguar sus preferencias en lo que se refiere a modelos estéticos procedentes del cine. El resultado por ahora es una panoplia de fotografías de esas mujeres que reactivan un momento congelado en el tiempo de un personaje en una película, verbigracia el desempeñado por David Bowie en *El Ansia* (*The Hunger*), por Brad Pitt en *Thelma & Louise* o por el difunto Heath Ledger en *Brokeback Mountain*. Junto a esas imágenes hay otras, más pequeñas, de localizaciones, de lugares o sets que ayudan a contextualizar⁸ el ámbito en el que tiene lugar la escena recreada. Sin embargo, las imágenes escogidas resultan a veces desorientadoras o equivocadas si uno espera una repetición idéntica a la ambientación que rodea al personaje escogido de una película. A modo de ejemplo citaré las fotos que acompañan a Desislava que hace de Collin Farrell. Es sabido que quien encarnó a Alejandro e interpretó otros papeles estelares no es un actor de culto, sino más bien de consumo mayoritario. En una de las fotos aludidas se percibe un edificio (en concreto la Filmoteca de Sofía); en otra unas flores junto a un montón de nieve. De ambas pueden extraerse asociaciones y metáforas que aparentemente no encajan con la imagen proyectada por Farrell pero así es como lo percibe la joven Desislava.

La perturbación de los significados esperables no estriba sólo en los lugares sino también en la elección misma de algunos modelos masculinos como el escogido por Dina, que se atavia cual Rei Sebastião siguiendo las pistas proporcionadas por un grande de la cinematografía portuguesa, Manoel de Oliveira en *O Quinto Imperio* (2004). Dina posa delante de un edificio de ventanas manuelinas mirando circunspectamente hacia la izquierda. Dos fotos pequeñas, de un faro y un sepulcro, completan el horizonte visual imaginado por la joven portuguesa sobre un rey del que se

decía que tenía una misión divina que cumplir.

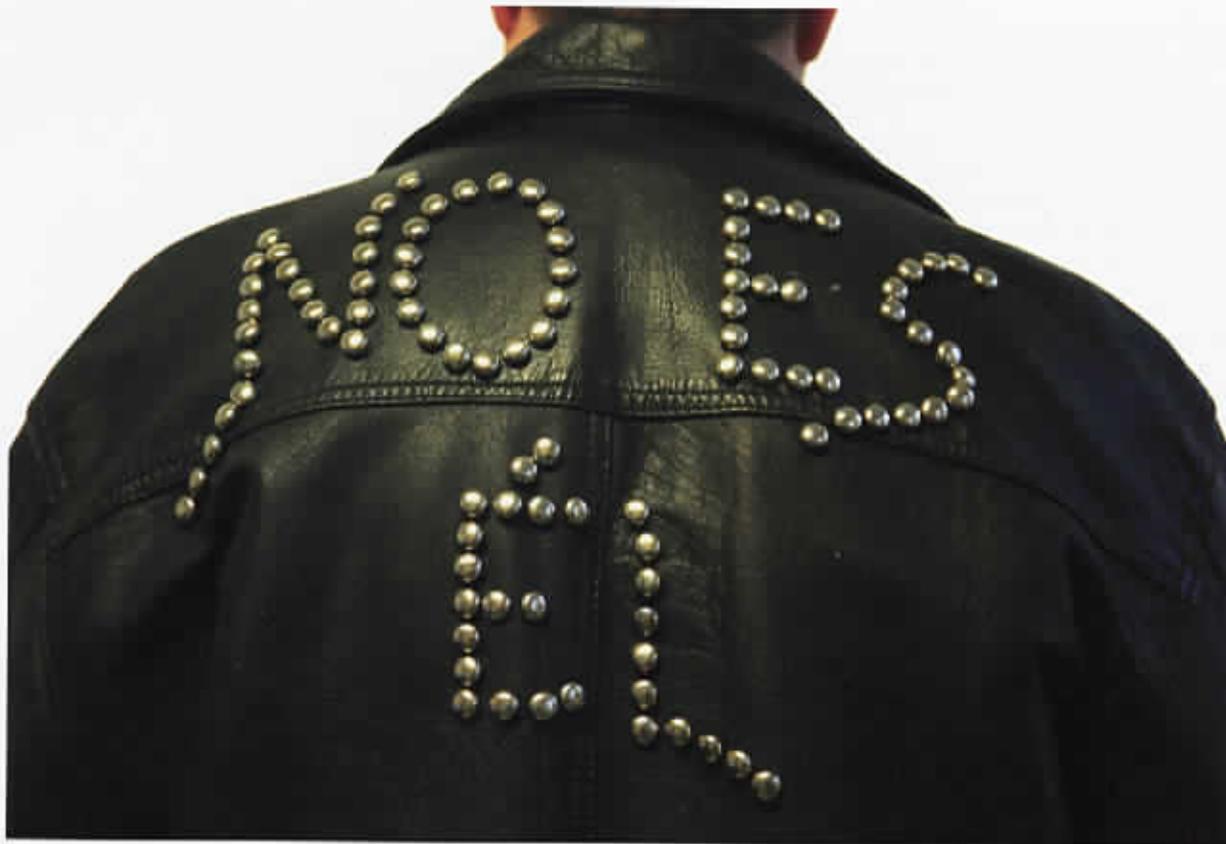
Son estos dos casos (Desislava y Dina) indicios claros de que Cabello/Carceller aspiran a desestabilizar las complejas relaciones que se desprenden de las ideas de identidad, ficción y realidad que tratan de plasmar en un archivo que nunca podrá ser completo (como otros archivos, por lo demás). Me he detenido en el caso anterior (Dina) como muestra de la multiplicidad de opciones existentes en la mente de los sujetos a la hora de traducir un pensamiento sobre la virilidad. Parece obvio que el monarca luso no pasa por ser un referente habitual de los códigos de la masculinidad hegemónica como si lo serían en el imaginario colectivo occidental algunos actores como Marlon Brando, que es objeto de la atención de otra de las modelos retratadas por Cabello/Carceller llamada Antu, que se envuelve de una parafemalia alusiva a lo que el actor americano destila en su película *The Wild One* [Salvaje], 1953, con su chupa de cuero y su moto. Masculinidades o encarnaciones performativas de la misma hay por ende bastantes, como asevera Judith Halberstam en *Female Masculinity* (1998)³. Una reflexión semejante estaba ya esbozada en uno de los trabajos más logrados de Cabello/Carceller, *Casting: James Dean*, 2004 en el que 16 muchachas interpretaban cada una a su aire un fragmento de texto dicho en la película de Nicholas Ray *Rebelde sin causa* (1955). En la parrafada actuada emerge la cuestión punzante de la cobardía, un temor que todo macho que se precie debe disipar. Esta instalación que se compone, además del video y del texto mencionado, de unos palés, fue el eje central de la exposición *En Construcción* vista en Murcia y en Lleida, en 2004. No deja de resultar significativo que Cabello/Carceller eligieran uno de los símbolos del *sex appeal* masculino, es decir, un actor atractivo, de rostro angelical, por el que suspiraban mujeres y hombres, pero que representa asimismo cierta belleza herida, quebradiza, sin carecer de energía y fortaleza, aunque lejos del papel de macho que acaba de descabalar cual John Wayne.

Además de la masculinidad como una de las piedras angulares en que se sustenta el sistema binario (asfixiante) del género, y que en los casos citados no es sino *drag*, copia, imitación de un original que no existe (Judith Butler *dixit*) Cabello/Carceller han buscado en otros lugares otras historias, en este caso más cercanas pues afectan de pleno al pasado español. Así, buceando en el siglo XVI se toparon con Eleno de Céspedes⁴.

Usando como escenario los jardines y el noble edificio del Convento de Santa María de las Cuevas, en Sevilla, Cabello/Carceller sitúan a su personaje, Alex, vestido con pantalón blanco y camisa azul, pertrechado con una cámara que emplea ávidamente y con la que



After *Apocalypse Now*: Martin Shuren (*Das Sakliro*, 2007. Video.



No es él, 2007-2008; fotografía color.

fotografía todo aquello que despierta su curiosidad después de recibir el encargo de buscar exteriores e interiores para una película. Entretanto en este *A/O (Caso Céspedes)*, 2010, una voz en *off* va narrando las tribulaciones y persecuciones de un individuo que la sociedad (y la Inquisición) no sabía como clasificar pues rompía el esquema antitético de varón o hembra. Una persona bautizada con nombre de niña, que fue esclava de origen, que era mulata y que se travestía para poder huir de las presiones sociales. Y que fue soldado, cirujano y tuvo relaciones con hombres y mujeres, y que probablemente fue hermafrodita, como se decía entonces, o un sujeto intersexo² como diríamos en terminología actual.

En el sucederse de las imágenes y de la cámara que sigue al personaje vemos a Alex mientras camina y va de un lado a otro, observando a su alrededor y escrutando entre los árboles, a la vez que se mira a sí mismo, como hurgando en su interior al contemplar su propio reflejo en el agua. Al final y al llegar a un palacete de estética arabizante decide tumbarse y mirar hacia arriba. Uno de los hallazgos de este trabajo consiste en ver cómo se entrecruzan y entrevoran la imagen de Alex echado en el suelo con la del mismo Alex que desde

la galería mira hacia abajo, en un desdoblamiento hipnotizante que se acopla y funde hasta que una voz seca pronuncia un ¡corta! Alex ya estaba en la película. ¿Dónde está por tanto la verdad, dónde la mentira? ¿Importa realmente? ¿Hay acaso necesidad de un sexo verdadero como se preguntaba Foucault³?

Hasta que esta imperiosa y construida necesidad no se desvanezca, proponen a mi juicio Cabello/Carceller, los individuos parecen condenados a vagar entre cadenas.

² Juan Vicente Aliaga es profesor en la Universidad Politécnica de Valencia y autor de *Orden fálico. Androcentrismo y violencia de género en las prácticas artísticas del siglo XX*, 2007.

³ La obra de Cabello/Carceller tiene en los primeros meses de 2011 algunas citas señaladas: un proyecto para Abierto X Obras, en Matadero Madrid, y en la misma ciudad una muestra en la galería Elba Benítez.

⁴ Todas las imágenes son cortesía de Cabello/Carceller.



Alguna parte nº 5, 2000, fotografía color.

Notas

- 1.- La reflexión suscitada sobre la experiencia en California, en un lugar mitificado como espacio de libertad para las comunidades LGBT, estimuló la producción de la exposición en La Galería, Valencia, 1999
- 2.- Así se expusieron en la galería Joan Prats de Barcelona, septiembre-octubre, 2010.
- 3.- Disponible en castellano como *Masculinidad femenina*, Madrid/Barcelona, Egales, 2008.
- 4.- Sobre Eleno de Céspedes ha escrito un espléndido artículo, todavía inédito,

Maná José Belbel Bullejos "Anadiendo Delicto a Delicto: la pesadumbre de Eleno de Céspedes", 2010.

5.- Mauro Cabral, activista intersexo argentino, insiste en el uso del término intersex o intersexo pues conviene no confundirlo con una práctica u opción sexual que el concepto de "intersexualidad" podría acarrear. Ver: <http://www.pagma12.com.ar/diano/suplementos/radar/9-1216-2004-03-21.html>, Última consulta 1 de diciembre de 2010.

6.- "Le vrai sexe", *Arcade*, nº 321, noviembre 1980, Reeditado en Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits*, Vol 4, Paris, Gallimard, 1994.



Ejercicios de poder nº 6, 2005. Photo bñ



Ejercicios de poder: casos Liam Neeson (La lista de Schindler), Fred MacMurray, Jack Lemmon (El Apartamento), 2005. Video.

On One Side and Another

Some Notes on the Work of Cabello / Carceller

JUAN VICENTE ALIAGA*

The already long career of Cabello/Carceller delves into a wide range of issues, explored mostly through photography and video. However, all of them offer a conceptual coherence, a guiding thread that lends them consistency, whether they have to do with personal relationships, or with the problems arising from identity or from the sense of disappointment in the face of failed Utopia. This last issue emerged from a series of experiences in San Francisco, whose gay and lesbian community seemed exemplary to the artists until they personally experienced countless contradictions and a certain unpleasantness¹.

In addition to these issues, the analysis of the idea of masculinity and the non-conformist images generated around it has enjoyed a special place in their production.

Emphasising this issue, on the other hand, is nothing if not another way of pointing out (and metaphorically shooting at) the rigid system of gender binarism which floods the planet, and the human societies which inhabit it. Highlighting this system, which is both symbolic and real, and which materialises in countless situations, acts, gestures and practices, as well as attempting to erode it, is one of the aims of Cabello/Carceller. This aim is articulated through a series of works, aware of the countless forms of resistance which the social order deploys to maintain the oppressive forms of the sacrosanct principle of femininity and masculinity, as poles apart. Therefore, an individual with a body which biology and culture (or cultural biology, we could say, as they are clearly intermingled) have assigned to women, and what their body can do, prevents it from embodying supposedly masculine principles. And vice versa. It is true that on occasion the unmovable system, and its phallogocentric rules, allows itself a sliver of doubt, especially after the years of struggle (also in the field of representations and images, which have been so influential in the configuration of roles) of various feminisms, the demands of gays and lesbians, trans collectives and other sectors which began to subvert heterocentric hegemonic rules.

It is probably now, during the first decade of the 21st century, that we have reached the highest levels of freedom, if we compare it to past times, although that emancipation of sexual legislations does not take place to the same degree in all countries, and is impossible in

some (Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Somalia, Iran, etc.). We must not forget the brutal acts of discrimination and penalisation and crimes which take place in many places, and we must not lower our guard, as regression is always possible in those other places where, in theory, one is safe. Legislative progress can be felt, as I have mentioned, but this does not mean that male couples, which are now allowed to marry, are not required to offer a certain sense of composure, decorum or respectability, a "being in society" which does not excessively damage the principle of masculinity (at least in a radical way). This is paradoxical, as our notion of what is manly has been questioned on thousands of occasions, in homophobic discourses which stated, in a range of contexts, that a gay man is not a real man, as he is always expected to be effeminate. The same could be said about two women whose femininity should be preserved, despite the fact that jokes and insults about truck-drivers, she-males, mannish women, i.e. masculine lesbians, have not disappeared from work or leisure conversations. We are aware, however, that the unmovable dividing line between female and male heterosexuals is always maintained, and that there are couples where decisions and resolutions are carried out by the woman, despite the fact that her physical appearance may fit the tyranny of beauty, and that her body may be apparently fragile. Of course, there are many examples of conscious and unconscious obedience and submission to order, although it would be monotonous to enumerate them.

If life is more diverse, and offers a wide range of singularities' casuistry which does not accommodate what we are told by traditional manuals, the proclamations of the Catholic Church, and the redundant and *machista* TV commercials, where it is still a thorny issue to speak about women who supposedly behave like men, about individuals who flee definitions, about people who modify their behaviour and their body without following the restrictive and frustrating models which populate television, which, we must not forget, is the medium which currently plays a greater role in the moulding of the minds of citizens.

If we stop to think about the masculine patterns which might be kept in mind by anyone living in Southern Europe, in Spain, for example,



Agata como Brad Pitt, 2008. Photo color.



Emily como Ennis del Mar, 2008. Photo color.



Desislava como Colin Farrell, 2010. Photo color.

the choice is limited, as it is based on football players, motorcyclists and a couple of Hollywood actors, in the men's case, and, in the women's case, on catwalk models and TV and film actresses.

It is tiresome to repeat that these images, broadcast ad infinitum, have little or nothing to do with the real individuals in polyhedral contemporary societies, but, having said this, it is beyond doubt that they enjoy a great visibility and that their power of seduction and influence is huge and devastating.

Cabello/Carceller are very aware of this when they think about cinema and the narratives associated to it, as a cultural sphere which has shaped many awarenesses, which has prefigured behaviours, designing even those gestures which are seen as innocuous, which will be imitated, reproduced and executed, at different times, by other individuals in their daily life.

For the series *Archivo: Drag Modelos*, 2007-2010, they have contacted many different women from different countries (Portugal, Romania, Germany, the United Kingdom, etc.) with the aim of learning

about their preferences regarding aesthetic models from the realm of cinema. The result, for now, is a panoply of photographs of those women who reactivate a moment frozen in time of a character in a film, such as those played by David Bowie in *The Hunger*, Brad Pitt in *Thelma & Louise* and the late Heath Ledger in *Brokeback Mountain*. Along with these images we find other smaller ones, of locations, places or sets which contribute to contextualising² the realm in which the recreated scene takes place. However, the chosen images are sometimes disorientating or misleading if one expects an identical

repetition of the setting surrounding the chosen film character. As an example, I will mention the photographs which accompany Desislava, who plays Colin Farrell. It is well known that this actor, who played Alexander the Great and other starring roles, is not an obscure actor, but a mainstream figure. In one of the photos in question, we can see a building (the Film Archive of Sofia); in other, some flowers next to a pile of snow. Both pictures are open to associations and metaphors which do not seem to fit with the image presented by Farrell, but that is the way he is perceived by the young Desislava.

The perturbing nature of expected meanings does not lie only in the locations, but in the choice of certain male models, such as that selected by Dina, dressed in the style of Rei Sebastião, following the clues offered by one of the main figures in Portuguese cinema Manoel de Oliveira in *O Quinto Império* (2004). Dina poses in front of a building with *manuelino* windows, looking circumspectly to the left. Two small photographs, of a lighthouse and a sepulchre, complete the visual horizon imaged by the young Portuguese woman, about a king of whom it was said that he had a divine mission to fulfil.

These two cases (Desislava and Dina) are clear indications of the fact that Cabello/Carceller aspire to destabilise the complex relationships emerging from the ideas of identity, fiction and reality, which they attempt to convey in an archive which will never be complete (like other archives, of course). I have highlighted the case above (Dina) to reveal the wide range of existing options in the minds of individuals when translating a thought regarding virility. It seems obvious that the Portuguese monarch is not a frequent reference point in the codes of hegemonic masculinity in the collective western imagery, as would be Marlon Brando, for example, the object of the attention of another of the models portrayed by Cabello/Carceller. Antu, for that is her name, surrounds herself in a paraphernalia which refers to the attitude of the American actor in his film *The Wild One* (1953), with his leather jacket and his motorcycle. It is not hard to find masculinities and performative incarnations of this film, as stated by Judith Halberstam in *Female Masculinity* (1998)³. A similar reflection could already be glimpsed in one of the best works by Cabello/Carceller, *Casting: James Dean* (2004), where 16 young girls played, in whichever way they wished, a fragment from the script of the film by Nicholas Ray, *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955). The performed *spiel* gives rise to the thorny issue of cowardice, a fear that any self-respecting *macho* will strive to dissipate. This installation, which, in addition to the video and the script, was also made up of some pallets, was the focal point of the exhibition *En Construcción*, on display in Murcia and Lleida in 2004. It is significant, to say the least, that Cabello/Carceller chose one of the symbols of male sex appeal, i.e., an attractive actor with a baby-faced beauty, who was appealing to both men and women, but who also represents a certain broken and brittle beauty, without losing any of his energy and power, although far from the *macho* role played by John Wayne.

In addition to presenting masculinity as one of the angular stones on which the (suffocating) binary order of gender is founded, and which, in the cases mentioned above, is simply drag, a copy or an imitation of a non-existent original (Judith Butler *dixit*), Cabello/Carceller have

looked for other stories in other places, which are closer to us, as they deal entirely with Spain's past. In this way, delving into the 16th century, they came across Eleno de Céspedes⁴.

Using as their setting the gardens and the noble building of the Convento de Santa María de las Cuevas, in Seville, Cabello/Carceller equipped their character, Alex, dressed in white trousers and a blue shirt, with a camera he uses avidly, photographing anything which arouses his curiosity, after receiving the commission of looking for interior and exterior locations for a film. -Meanwhile, in this A/O (*Caso Céspedes*), 2010, a voice-over narrates the tribulations and persecutions of an individual which society (and the Inquisition) was unable to classify, as he/she broke the antithetical order for males and females. A person christened with a girl's name, who was born a mixed-race slave, and who cross-dressed to escape social pressures. He/she became a soldier and a surgeon, and had relationships with men and women. He/she was probably a hermaphrodite; the term used then, or an intersex⁵, the term used at present.

In the continuum of images and the camera which follows the character, we see Alex as he wanders around, observing his surroundings and gazing at the trees, at the same time as he looks at himself, as if he were searching inside himself by contemplating his reflection in the water. Finally, he reaches a small Arab-style palace, where he decides to lie down and look up. One of the discoveries of this work consists in seeing the way in which the image of Alex on the floor and the image of him looking down are intermingled and interspersed, in a hypnotic unfolding which comes together, melting into itself, until a harsh voice says "Cut!" Alex was already in the film. Where is, therefore, truth, and where is its opposite? Does it really matter? Is there a need for a true sex, as Foucault wondered⁶?

Until this imperious and constructed need is satisfied, I believe Cabello/Carceller are saying, individuals are condemned to wander in chains.

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** The work of Cabello / Carceller will be on display in early 2011 with a project for Abierto X Obras, at Matadero Madrid, and at the Galería Elba Bonitez, also in Madrid.

*** All images courtesy of Cabello / Carceller.



A/O (*Caso Céspedes*), 2009-10, video.

NOTES

- 1.- The reflection which emerged from the experience in California, a mythical space of freedom for LGBT, stimulated the production of the show in La Gallera, Valencia, 1999.
- 2.- This was the way they were displayed at the Joan Prats Gallery in Barcelona, September-October, 2010.
- 3.- Available in Spanish as *Masculinidad femenina*, Madrid/Barcelona, Egales, 2008.
- 4.- Eleno de Céspedes is the subject of a splendid, yet to be published article, by María José Belbel Bullejos, "Añadiendo Delicto a Delicto: la pesadumbre de Eleno de Céspedes", 2010.
- 5.- Mauro Cabral, an Argentinean intersex artist, insists on the use of the term intersex, as it is important not to mistake it for a sexual choice or practice, as would be suggested by the notion of "intersexuality". See: <http://www.pagina12.com.ar/diario/suplementos/radar/9-1316-2004-03-21.html>. Latest view, 1st of December, 2010.
- 6.- "Le vrai sexe", *Arcadie*, no. 323, November 1980. Republished in Michel Foucault, *Dits et écrits*, Vol 4, Paris, Gallimard, 1994.