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Opening, Saturday, July 7th | 20,30 h.

SELF-REFERENTIALITY AND OTHER NARCISSISM

ANNA BELLA GEIGER - LUIS GORDILLO - CONCHA JEREZ - FERNANDO SINAGA
PEP AGUT - JOSÉ MALDONADO - ARMANDO MIGUÉLEZ - ÁNGELES AGRELA

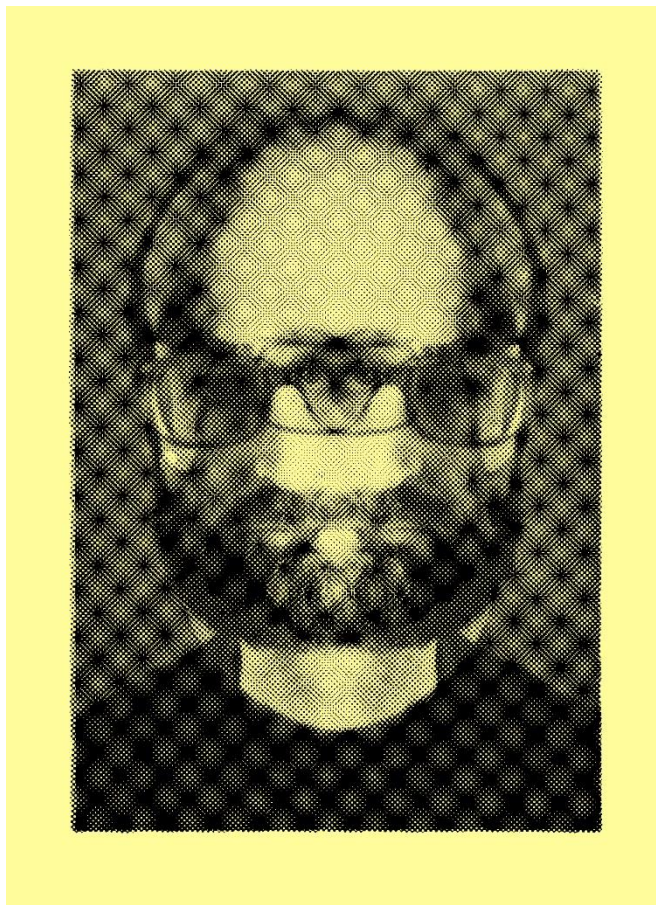
Aural Gallery presents the last exhibition of this season under the title of 'Self-Referentiality and Other Narcissisms', in which eight contemporary artists take part with their own self-portraits from different media and perspectives.

Self-representation is a transhistorical artistic genre that allows artists to reflect upon the 'self' beyond the simple autobiographic reading. Self-representative artworks do not always admit the concept of 'self-portrait' since it may result insufficient to define properly the complexity of self-representation in the artistic production. The concept of 'self-referentiality' includes and transcends self-portraiture, since the polysemic mood of many works on display is rarely exposed to closed interpretations. Historically, self-portraiture and autobiography subvert the conception of art as a transparent means of communication, disrupt the concept of "mimesis" and break with established artistic norms and conventions.

The body and the face of the artists are represented as an experimental field of critical and ironic thought that requires the beholder's decoding beyond the visual. The works demystify traditional concepts attributed to self-portraiture: identity is now studied in relation to the society the artists live in, life, death, lies, and the passage of time.

It activates what might be called the dissolution of the "self" in terms of activate the complexity that corresponds to artists capable of considering the multitude of problems and questions that questioned the human being of the twentieth century. Artists will use their physique, their faces, as an experimental field. In self-portraiture, artists frequently operate a series of coordinates, be they personal, temporal or geographical.

Faced with the risk of our face slipping from our hands in the immense cascade of memes, leaks and recreations allowed by digital world and facilitate that permit social media, it becomes more important to know how others have channeled their way of representing themselves through art. On the subject there is an inexhaustible ocean of artists, but we have chosen a small sample that allows us to explore this gender.



Luis Gordillo, Optical self-portrait, 1974-2015

'Autobiography', 'self-representationality', and 'self-portraiture' are terms that come from their etymological root from the Greek *autos*, meaning 'self'. From alterity as an audiovisual object we move to a field in which the "Self", polyphonically unfolded, is presented as "Other". The autobiography as writing of life. The self-portrait as a portrait / image ("drawing") of the self as another. Perhaps the most personal experience is the work of **Luis Gordillo** 'Optical Self-Portrait'. Made in the late seventies and following an aesthetic characteristic of the pop tradition, Gordillo's self-portrait presents a multiple figure of himself, which belongs to his series of photo-size self-portraits of 1975, in which his image is repeated indefinitely. This work of Gordillo alludes to the search of his personal identity, a recurrent theme in all his work. Fernando Castro defines his painting as a 'mask of the inner self', which requires decoding by the viewer. Thus, Gordillo's identity goes beyond the apparent and the aesthetic; the deconstruction of his work represents the difficulty on the part of the artist to define himself.

Identifications and passports, the evolution of phone cameras, the growing recognition and the visual registration by surveillance and control cameras; everything leads to the current possibility of self-determining not completely who we are and how we want to be seen. The artist Armando Miguélez participates with the project 'Aquí, Ahora' as an photography-based installation that projects the idea of self-portraiture in process.

The project of **Armando Miguélez** includes a series of card-size photographs of the artist taken in different places and dates: from Mexico City and Buenos Aires to the United States, Mumbai and Delhi. The passport photograph is used as the image for identification documents anywhere in the world to define someone's nationality and place of origin. However, the artist evidences his uprooting. He "is" his "here and now" regardless of where it is, and he is "here and now" depending on where he is. His existence is linked to the place where he is at that exact moment. It is "the being and remaining here" the human being insofar as inserted in a context of things and people, a world that precedes him and that conditions his existence, his transcending himself as a project.



ARMANDO MIGUÉLEZ, *Aquí y ahora [Here and now]*, 2018
Work in progress

Questions related to a common feeling inserted in contemporary society arise, perhaps related to the concept of the "liquid society" that Bauman warned about, that which is constantly changing, and which generates existential anguish, where it seems not to have felt when it comes to building new things, since time and modernity itself will trigger its disintegration.



JOSÉ MALDONADO, *Autodesaparición (erased Maldonado and back and forth)*, 2005

The concept of the beholder's incomprehension of the work is added to that of dissolution in **José Maldonado's** work under the title of 'Autodesaparición (erased Maldonado back and forth)'. The exploration of identity in contemporary art is represented as a topic that requires, again, decoding by the viewer. The liquid identity that provokes an idea of uncertainty of what is real and what is not, about the author's own representation, questioning his own existence.

«To be or not to be ... to be or not to be; leave and return ... in what order or what time; for what and why ??? All these are questions that the image responds by following the steps of the viewer. The image offers the expectant, and just as the order alters the product (from time to time and here and there). There is no doubt, everything is an optical-geometric question that gives us to think and places us: Hopefully! Hopefully! But God has nothing to "see" in this. Nothing! ».

José Maldonado

Maldonado defines very well the 'difficulties' of compression that characterise the contemporary self-portrait, loaded with symbolism, in which the apparent of the image is no longer enough, because all the aforementioned works go beyond the visual, giving priority to the concept of the invisible. Maldonado seems to wonder about the relationship between the image of the death and the death of the image. It could be defined as a self-portrait on the edge of impersonality, which translates the Marxist dialectic into a politics of desire-plenitude / death-annihilation of the image.

In 'Infrared Radiation' by **Fernando Sinaga**, the artist's identity appears as a spectrum. The indefinite shape, the identity faded by the imprint or light imprint is printed on the emulsion of the infrared film capturing so just the temperature of his body. The heat centered on the artist's head and hands - tools of thought and facer - is what draws his morphology, alluding to the ephemeral nature of existence, to disappearance and death.



FERNANDO SINAGA, *Infrared radiation*, 2009

These concepts of disappearance and transformation are also explored in **Pep Agut's** video 'Naixement de la Forma (Birth of Form)', in which the artists becomes part of the object, not only as a maker but also as a physical part of it. The objects created by the artist, the workplace, belong to his own body as an another extremity. It is all an exercise of transformation of form that, through an optical game, helps the viewer understand or question the idea of permanence.



Pep Agut, *Naixement de la forma* ['The Birth of form'], 2014 HD video, color, sound. 3 minutes 12 seconds Ed. 3
Cortesy of the artist and Àngels Barcelona gallery.

'Naixement de la Forma (Birth of Form)', is a video about the created object and the consequent disappearance of the artist. Agut is related to the only object available to him, his work table. He ties his leg to the table with packing tape. Through a mirror effect, the artist's rotating movement tied to his table generates the appearance of infinite possible shapes. Agut chooses not so much a new object but one which will allows his disappearance: the same table with which he works. The place of the artist is based, then, for Agut in his own impression, in the creation of something that remains open forever to the gaze and thought of the other.

On the other hand, the work of **Concha Jerez** consists of a photograph made exprofeso for what she calls her photoperformance 'Dialogue Between', in the Círculo de Bellas Artes in 2015. In 'Dialogue Between' she uses her own body and elements such as paper, the sound of the movement of paper, writing, time intervals, spaces of architecture, etc., as instruments to deal with critical issues that concern her. One of these is the concept of self-censorship, a constant in her work since the beginning of her artistic production. Self-censorship is reflected, in this case, through her writing on a large roll of paper where the texts are only readable by the artist herself, a cryptic idea of the textual. The impossibility of reading, the invisible "between", the musical interval, the silence, the unity of time of John Cage, are questions that arise in many of the performances of the artist.



CONCHA JEREZ, *Dialogue "BETWEEN"*, 2015

With a very subtle sense of humor, a trait that enables her to speak of crucial topics through parody, **Anna Bella Geiger**, in her series of collages 'Arte y Decoração', employs photo collage as an experimental medium to generate a new mode of self-representation. In her piece, the critical and ironic visions are determined by her presence on the image through poses that look apparently natural. The body of the artist does no longer embody a personal 'self' but her identity as an artist, linked to her profession. The concept of self-portraiture in this work is far from autobiographical or documentary. Instead, the work is nothing but fiction, a stage in which the artist disguises and inserts herself in a scene that never took place. Geiger represents herself in several stages and reveals a restricted atmosphere where she becomes visual noise and conflict with the masculine, hegemonic role in the arts.



Anna Bella Geiger, *Arte y Decoração* ['Art and Decoration'], 1975

The use of photo collage enables the artist to fusion her own image with an atmosphere typical of the art world. For this reason, the selection of images becomes relevant, since it is their iconographical content what provides the work's critical character. As a manifesto, the artist communicates through her presence in space her desire to frequent places that are considered to be worthy of artists. Like the Guerrilla Girls' 'Get Naked' (1989-2002), Anna Bella Geiger made these images under the motto *ambiente 'ideal' de crecimiento intelectual e cultural da artista*, and the irony of the subtitle is exhaustive: *O artista deve ser criado em ambiente cultural elevado* (The artist must be educated in an elevated cultural environment).

For thinkers like Raymond Bellour, video, because of its characteristics and technological specificities, constitutes the privileged medium of self-portraiture. This is the case of the work "Interview" by **Ángeles Agrela**. It is a subjective reflection on the image and the documentary staging, proceeding to the reprocessing of the television format that presents very well the concept of 'mask'. The work consists of a false documentary in which the artist is the main character of an interview, where the viewer is not able to distinguish reality from fiction, since truth and lies are intermingled from a story line that revolves around the purpose and reasoning of art and her personal experience as an artist. Again in her work, the artist establishes a scenario of fiction to talk about ideas such as the alter ego, the identity and commitment of art, and the role of the artist.



ÁNGELES AGRELA, *Interview* 2007 Video installation with two screens 5 minutes 50 seconds