

The intimate subversion < Project < presentation

by Fernando Illana

"The aspiration of every living creature is to stay alive"

Jorge Wagensberg

"Unless you change direction you are likely to end up where you're headed"

Chinese proverb

"We see that a certain revolutionary type is not possible, but at the same time we comprehend that another revolutionary type becomes possible, not through a certain form of class struggle, but rather through a molecular revolution, which not only sets in motion social classes and individuals, but also a machinic and semiotic revolution"

Félix Guattari, *Desiderio e rivoluzione: intervista a Félix Guattari*, Squilibri, Milan, 1977

"The world is not an object such that I have in my possession the law of its making; it is the natural setting of, and field for, all my thoughts and all my explicit perceptions."

Maurice Merleau-Ponty: *Phenomenology of Perception*.

"Is the reality (the world) we live in something that is there independently of our perceptions of it? Is the world pre-configured or pre-given?"

Francisco J. Varela

The project *The Intimate Subversion* is developed from the starting point of *Non olet*, a work from 2011 which engages with the construction of the most important productive matrix of late capitalism, namely financial money. Over and above the abstraction which defines and enables the socio-political order and the legal property it establishes, the metaphor of the lack of smell and materialness is the biological, testimonial and meaningful response to a model of capitalism that, by aspiring to limitless accumulation, introduces into society a schizophrenic order that puts money above states, politics and the very economy of production itself.

From the industrial regime of the equivalence between goods and money that turned putrefaction, insofar as the result of the relationship of material with time, into an accounting entry either as cost or loss, we have shifted to a regime of equivalence between money and money: between the money of production and the money of finance, entering into a mirror-like play with itself. This capital that generates capital without directly producing any product, ultimately disconnected from human capital, is the economy of the financial markets that decides what can and what cannot be produced, rooted and legitimised in the paradigm of productivity. A form of productivity ultimately disassociated from the idea of production and profit, which is now only evaluable from a guarantee of the replacement of credit. The above situation requires a reconfiguration of categories, distributions and the subjectivity of individuations, which displaces a social order that is reproduced from the pathologies suffered by financial capitalism in the century that it has just "occupied", and gives rise to a horizon of expectations that will conform a reality imbued with values that do not expel citizens.

The world uncovered in *The Intimate Subversion* is not shown to us as a critique of the real or as a denouncement of the simulacrum or deficit of reality. What it does expose is that the world that we live in is a world reduced to the financeable. That is the real of the contemporary virtuality, and, in facing it, the artist joins many others who address their actions in the open spaces of the economy of affect.

Ángel Marcos found a precedent for this kind of situational reasoning in Vespasian's reply to his son Titus, when the latter asked his father whether he was not disgusted at the origins of the tax imposed on urine taken from public urinals in Rome. "*Pecunia non olet*", was Vespasian's answer. What interested the artist about this story, something at the very basis of the working project, is not Vespasian's reply per se but what was behind it: the process of distancing from organic material, from fluids, etc., which the dominant western civilisation began through its distancing with, displeasure and disgust at the impure body which eats, drinks, takes pleasure, falls ill and dies.

The artist places us in front of the relative novelty revealed by monetary capitalism, and in front of the distant origins of the process, inviting us to rethink what it is we understand as real. The fact that we are able to speak of the world, allows us to see to what extent reality is inextricably mixed up with the virtual. The world in which we are inscribed is the product of dreams, feelings, plans, strategies, desires, actions, intuitions, power, order...; the whole weave of the social, this is what one can understand by everyday life in a strong sense of the political and the real.

The passion of the flesh is therefore the subversive recovery that Ángel Marcos proposes in this project called *The Intimate Subversion*. A working project based on the consciousness that views a world in constant change and a reality that observes the change from the way in which we relate to one another, to nature or to the cosmos, akin to what Ervin Laszlo called a *quantum shift*. This constantly changing reality confronts us with the dilemma between the **need for change** and the randomness of a more or less effective management of the **catastrophe**, while underscoring that this political, cultural or economic management cannot overlook the fact that total collapse, even the disappearance of the species, lies within the horizon of possibilities.

What is worth underlining in the parallel between Ángel Marcos' proposal and the new scientific paradigm based on the *quantum shift*, is that for the very first time the change is not technological, which in itself is hopeful because, as Einstein said, we cannot solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.

What can be done when the subject/actor/agent is absorbed by the place of the capitalist distribution of money? What can be done when the management of politics and knowledge are constitutive factors in the new global monetary hegemony? These and other questions underpin the basic body of the project *The Intimate Subversion*.

Actions that can be undertaken to help create a sustainable civilisation should probably be associated with our intimate thoughts and feelings, those territories of creative and affective thought charged with energy and difficult to destroy. We are aware of the limits of territories dependent on belongings, and also of the replacement of moods by consumerism, and so we give affect a try, because, in any case, there is no other option left.

The intimate subversion < project < description

The Intimate Subversion, the work developed by Ángel Marcos and presented at the **55th Venice Biennale**, is rendered in two installations at Scuola di San Pasquale.

The first installation, *NON OLET*, located on the ground floor of the Scuola, emphasises the special nature of the relationship between economics and knowledge in today's world, and the degree to which economics intrudes in the field of personal relations and replaces politics in decision-taking processes. These associations condition the rules of a globalised society that has undeniably "lost its sense of smell" and, with it, a clearly human quality. The installation *Non Olet* would seem to be inspired by Leibniz's celebrated claim that this "*horrible mass of books that keeps on growing*" will lead us, not to culture, but to "*fall back into barbarism*".

The second installation occupies the first floor and is the result of a body of work developed in two specific communities: Las Tudás and La Mota, two districts on the outskirts of Medina del Campo, which are inhabited by lowly-paid workers and in which the prevailing relationships among neighbours have always been communal. In the years of the economic boom in Spain these areas reached acceptable levels of wellbeing while today they are riddled with unemployment, just like many other communities, and although they still maintain bonds anchored in commonality, they have been seriously affected and are now the scene of a social climate of want. Today they are suffering from the financial crisis whose effects are felt not only in the transformation of interpersonal relations, but also in their entitlement to citizenship, now that they are only visible insofar as victims. In other words, they are no longer citizens once they enter into the category of the **vulnerable**.

Ángel Marcos spoke with the people in these communities, and they opened their doors to him, allowing him to obtain images of their living spaces and their objects. Through these photos he has created a place of affect and interrelations, where one can sense what he has said about *intimate subversion*: "that part of our thought, our affectivity and our activities that enables us to recognise ourselves in "others".

The Intimate Subversion < Non olet < installation

First version: 2011 (Artium Museum. Vitoria-Gasteiz)

Second version: 2013

55 Exposición Internacional de La Bienal de Venice

Scuola di San Pasquale, Venice

Works in the 2013 version:

– *Non olet I*. Neon lettering. 2011. Artificial grass

– *Non olet II*. Table with books

– *Las Tudas and La Mota*. Video, b&w, 55'

The intimate subversion < Non Olet < installation < Wall text for 2013 version **Scuola di San Pasquale, Venice**

Ángel Marcos addresses this work from a common Latin phrase taken from a generational interchange: money does not stink, *pecunia non olet*, Vespasian said to his son Titus when he asked his father if he was not ashamed of the origin of the money raised by taxes on urine from public urinals in Rome. This example, which can be interpreted as a metaphor of a society that tends towards an aestheticised, odourless world, opens up for us the process of distancing from organic material that disgusts present-day society.

Preoccupied with trying to sanitise all aspects of reality with a sweetening aesthetic, our present-day civilisation has chosen to exclude—politically, socially and urbanistically—from this process of hygienisation all those neighbourhoods still inhabited by realities that, like the proletariat, are perceived as organic. A lot of literature addresses these themes embracing social division, the individual, power and economic logic. As if in an attempt to deploy a map of these thoughts, the artist presents us with a collection of books to be consulted, which, by presenting them without their covers and therefore without any attractiveness, become an open flux of words and thoughts with which Ángel Marcos accompanies his own images. From Foucault to Derrida, and from Ramonet to Fernández Durán, the artist guides us with the aid of the themes in his images through issues such as globalisation, resistance, social order, respect and despise for the masses, sociology of territories, landscape, urbanisation and inhabitability.

Exploring the whole of the occupied space, we come across the nocturnal, silent images of a video that emblematically bears the same title as the installation. It returns to and shows to the gaze of the beholder those areas in which the presence of different social classes entails an intense and continuous civil and urbanistic development that, though following a quasi-germinative and natural rhythm, presents an apparently anonymous external form.

The Intimate Subversion < **Las Tudas and La Mota** < installation

First version: 2013 / Exposizione Internazionale d'Arte. Eventi Collaterali. Biennale di Venezia / Scuola di San Pasquale. Venezia

132 images, 120 x 80 cm each. Inkjet on polypropylene

Wood structure / used rugs / fluorescent lights

Objects: chair, calendar and bird cage

Sound archive

Dimensions variable

The intimate subversion < Las Tudas and La Mota < installation < Wall text for the 2013 version.2013 < **Scuola di San Pasquale**. Venezia

The themes of this large installation, located on the first floor of the Scuola, are the internal dynamics of Las Tudas and La Mota, two poor neighbourhoods on the outskirts of Medina del Campo (Valladolid). These working-class areas, separated from the old quarters of the town by physical and social barriers, came about as urban settlements occupying and using available space in a germinative fashion. Las Tudas originally grew up around the caves excavated in the rock of a low-lying hill and then later incorporated more stable buildings made from simple, everyday materials like wood, brick and adobe. La Mota is located in the same area as the castle from which it takes its name, and is separated from the town by the railway line and the river bed that runs along it. The first dwellings were built by people who used to live in the caves in the area, and little by little it took shape until reaching its present layout.

These urban areas, connoted from the outset by a certain incapacity to address the needs for change and the urgency called for by the idea of development, respond to situations that strengthen the system of relationships between members of the community.

Ángel Marcos entered the houses in these neighbourhoods to photograph and make visible a social alteration which is “invisible” for the majority of people, and the result of constant interchanges which are marked, among other things, by a strong sense of ritual that can also be seen in visual terms. An example of this ritual is Our Lady of Henar, which rotates from one house to another so that they can all express their own personal devotion in the presence of a unique copy of the sacred icon.

Each image, created in an equally neutral and personal manner, is a constructive element in this labyrinth presented to visitors. And so the public can gain access, in the same way as the artist, to a world made of intimacy, atmosphere, and a visual and objectual context.

In these more than one hundred images, Ángel Marcos captures the most meaningful elements which characterise these communities, from objects of worship to everyday objects, some of which also appear in the installation, combined with the popular music culture that gives rise to the sounds we hear.