

Cycle: White under Black

Works from the Imperceptible / 2

Mar Arza

Readings and Consumptions...

11.03—20.04.2014

MAR
ARZA

SANTAMÒNICA

White under Black

Works from the Imperceptible

The blank page has been one of the great themes of the androcentric discourse of creation, nourishing the Romantic imaginary and artistic modernity. Under the threat of nothingness and the void, the blank white sheet was a metaphor both of sterility and of creative autonomy. As such, it led modern subjectivity to the desire to conquer: to put black on white, to exploit visibility as the very core of the original artistic action.

The work of a number of women artists, having shifted away from this imaginary of creation, has investigated other images of white. They neither make it the complement of black nor reverse the terms –white and black, white *on* black – but make a symbolic invention of great political potential: white under black.

This was suggested by the curator Catherine de Zegher when, in 1996, she gave the title 'The Blank in the Page' to one of the four sections in which she articulated the exhibition *Inside the*

Visible. An Elliptical Traverse of 20th Century Art in, of, and from the Feminine.

The blank deployed by De Zegher, through works and creative processes that incorporate the ellipsis, margins, silences, voids, error, doubt, indecision, stammering, interjection, discontinuities, absences... showed that there is a way to read the artistic practice of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries that has no need to confront contradictions in order to exist.

Forms of this blank are outlined in the photographs-cum-performances of Helena Almeida, in which the artist situates herself *behind* the pictorial support; in Gego's three-dimensional network structures, or in the performances of Lili Dujourie in the seventies, in which we saw the artist naked on the white sheets of a bed in female postures recalling famous paintings of art history. Other artists have also sought ways to make us feel this blank that often remains imperceptible, inaudible, as in the drawing/performance on paper that Elena del Rivero transformed into dishcloths of large proportions, or the schema underlying all of Agnes Martin's paintings.

Patricia Bickers, referring to Avis Newman's painting installations of the eighties, wrote: 'In fact, the canvas is not empty, nor the page blank: there is no virgin territory. It is the awareness of

all that the canvas itself represents that holds the artist back.'

In this light, Marina Garcés, evoking Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life*, goes beyond thinking of the blank page as the paradigm of the project of modern autonomy to place the revolutionary space there: the space at once of birth and of politics; a space where Annarosa Butarelli writes about the *tabula rasa* in terms of a cut, a radical political movement that serves to 'make absence profitable'.

It is this creative space of creation and politics that this series of exhibitions and conferences wants to explore, starting from the revealing title of a Blanca Casas Brullet catalogue, *White under Black*. Works such as those by Blanca Casas Brullet, Mar Arza, Freya Powell, Antònia del Rio, Isabel Banal and Mireia Sallarès sketch out new spaces for thinking, as Alejandra Riera said, without guarantees, an expansion of the available fields of vision and of doing.

Assumpta Bassas i Joana Masó

Mar Arza (Castelló de la Plana, 1976) lives and works in Barcelona. She received her training in art at the Facultat de Belles Arts in Valencia, the Carnegie Mellon School of Art in Pittsburgh and the Winchester School of Art, where she took the Master's in Sculpture on a grant from the Fundació Canyada-Blanch. She has recently won the Guasch-Coranty prize *ex aequo*, awarded at the Biennial de Valls 2013, and the Arts Libris 2013 prize awarded by the Fundació Banc Sabadell.

She has exhibited at the Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center, the Palazzo delle Arti Napoli and the Villa Empain in Brussels, as well as MUVIM in Valencia, OTR in Madrid, the Fundació Vila Cases in Palafrugell, the Capella de Sant Nicolau in Girona, the Museu Molí Paperer in Capellades, the Capella de Sant Roc in Valls and within the project Col·lecció La Relació, Duoda, UB.

She works with several galleries: the Galeria Cànem in Castelló de la Plana, the Galeria Maserre in Barcelona and the Rosenfeld Porcini gallery in London. She has had one-woman shows at the Meessen DeClerq gallery in Brussels, the Galeria Sicart in Vilafranca del Penedès, Alonso Vidal in Barcelona and Horrach-Moyà in Palma de Mallorca.

Mar Arza: Readings and Consumptions...

In the works of Mar Arza we perceive a sustained concern with lines of writing on surfaces. Early on, she altered the pages and letters of old books. More recently she has intervened in the letters and the blank spaces on all kinds of printed paper – savings books, electricity bills, medical referrals, calendar pages, lottery tickets...

Eliding the line, scratching the line or muting it without making it disappear altogether are all ways of asking how and where to draw a line on these document pages, as in *Where to Draw the Line* (2011–2012) by Simryn Gill. This is a piece made of the accumulation of sentences without spaces – but with blanks that interrupt and cut the written fabric: a piece that at first glance seems to be the reverse of Mar Arza's interlinear ellipses. One, then, practises the over-full, the other the voided. But both formulate the question of what it is that we can read in a given text, literature or story.

This political dimension of ellipsis and the reading of received stories is deployed in spaces that today urgently demand not only to be reread but also to be reinscribed. In the series entitled

[*Savings*], between 2010 and 2011, Mar Arza went every day to the same bank branch to invest a series of words in seven savings books. Each day, she deposited a small amount of money with the intention of writing a sequence of carefully chosen words in the space reserved for the 'concept' of the operation: 27DES10 *abonament buit* [pay-in on the margin] 7.00 +, 28DES10 *abonament d'escletxa* [void pay-in] 4.00 +, 29DES10 *abonament d'escletxa* [slit pay-in] 9.50 +, 30DES10 *càrrec als dubtes* [charge to doubts] 63.00 -; 01ABR11 *abonament al detall* [retail pay-in] 8.00 +, 19ABR11 *abonament al corrent* [pay-in to the current] 9.00 + ...

She chose this almost obsolete support in a context of economic dematerialization, in which to make a daily effort *to save poetic capital*. And that saving was at the same time an *investment*, in that, by investing she was also inverting: *inverting* and *displacing* the financial space in contact with the non-economic word.

The daily pay-in and charges became a sustained action, a chosen practice, as if it were all a matter of opening the question of which word and which spaces we want to sustain. These savings books saved from dematerialisation became a kind of little notebook or diary of jottings in which the traces of the artist on the everyday world were measured. They played with and against the economisation of life, making a portrait of the

artist as she who, from deliberately continued words and actions, made her own that which supposedly – so she had been told – was not. The artist made it possible not just to write where writing had no place, but also to question of maintaining of all those bureaucratic entries and records that supposedly – they tell us – say nothing about us.

Recently, the series of savings books entitled *Important Note* (2013) has continued to engage in this action. Challenging an ‘important note’ of a well-known bank – always a footnote in small print – according to which any handwritten or typed notes on the pages of the savings book will be deemed invalid, Mar Arza placed typed script in an unauthorized space. This is a non-‘valid’ action that extracts from spaces that are at once ruled and prohibited, at once administrative and anonymous, the capacitation and the actual authorization of the word, as well as the concern for which language to sustain.

She had already addressed this question in 2011 when, participating in a group exhibition on the theme of light, she exhibited an electricity bill in her name on which the only words left intact were those in which, beyond the calculation, another language could be heard. *Estimated reading, real reading, attached sheet, level, average consumption, resolution and readings and consumptions* are among the standard formulas

used on utilities bills, in contact with the poetic word from old books, were now being read at a remove from the instrumental lexicon. Thanks to the work of juxtaposing two different words, the electricity bill, the space for the bank and, in other pieces, public health medical referrals become spaces that speak and ask to be read.

It is not a question, then, of 'poeticising' the everyday paper trail but of capacitating another language — here, the poetic alterity of verse — in order to inscribe a differential gesture in the economy both of days and of accounts, of estimated readings and consumptions. This being so, this other word often, in the work of Mar Arza, leaving a trace in a vacuum on the line, where a breach in the line, something happened.

Joana Masó

In 2010 the installation [*Trazas*] ([*Traces*]) presented a board covered with sand in which moving hands traced circles while, in parallel, the sounding of notes accentuated the passing moment. Perhaps it was the very action of time that called for an enlarging of the space on which to trace and resonate.

Now these traces and this time are no longer confined to a table but occupy a large area: the horizon of the exhibition space. In this way, in making it tend to infinity, Mar Arza has brought out a contrast between the precise itinerary of the dials and the wiped-out limitlessness of the background where the second hands relentlessly inscribe their destiny, or seek it.

Viewed from above, the symbolic texture of these forms is densified, pointing towards something hidden under the sand, not just on the surface or in the harmonious movement of distant skies. What might appear as a time *closed* on itself in the metabolic cycle of natural life, and repeated identically – what Hannah Arendt would identify as the time of *labour* – in the artist's intuition seems to emerge as *furrowed* time, rescued from monotonous indifference to become signifying ground.

If Arendt spoke of a progressive desertification of the world that she understood as the space *between* individuals, the artist's gesture can lead us to the beating hearts of the desert to dig up some of the remains of the world with Sisyphean efforts.

Here, out of time and in favour of time, it scratches. Also because we must never lose sight of the fact that for centuries the agents of that *labour*, on which *works* and *actions* feed, have reproduced life anonymously. So the resignification of cyclical time in this variation of Arza's work seems to imply that re-production produces difference, that the repetition is not repeated identically and does not exclude the clinamens of history. Thus, the hands not only mark but also plough the furrow and the groove within the furrow, with perseverance; they do not turn in the void like the shadows they project, but like fingernails arpeggiate the figure.

There also emerges under the form of the cycle the temporality shared by labour and thought: both activities *are* in the infinite movement of the making-unmaking. But the Arendtian intuition that once again guides our rapt gaze is that which points directly at the sign of the shared fragility exhibited by the products of these activities. The traces of the labour, the results of the thought, always run the risk that the wind of the times – be it natural or political – will leave no trace, blow-

ing them away or simply burying them under everyday oblivion.

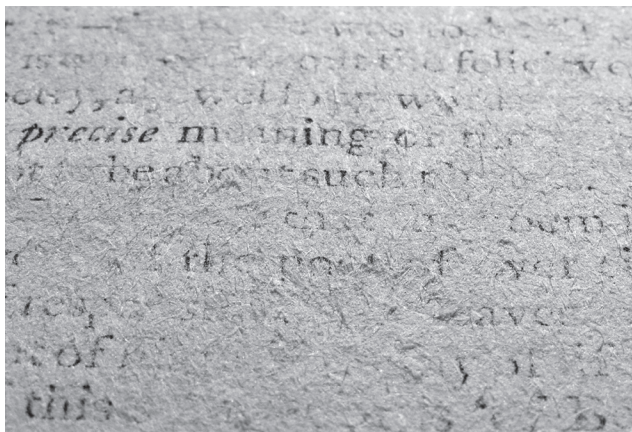
In order to persist they will have to engage in the struggle to conquer memorability, which is another way of naming recognition beyond the present moment; there must be a surplus beyond what time exhausts. And even though it exceeds this function and all functionality, the artwork also lets itself be grasped as an artefact for conserving the gesture and the trace in time, or for making its absence present. In the case of this installation by Arza, rooted in its intimacy with the thought from which all art springs, the beauty of the form may be the most immediate name – and the one most out(side) of time – of this excess that succeeds in capturing the gaze.

Àngela Lorena Fuster

Philosopher and researcher in the Art and Crisis Group of the TRAMOD Research Project. Trajectories of Modernity, and member of the Philosophy and Gender Seminar at the Universitat de Barcelona. She has published studies of various aspects of the imagination in contemporary thought, with special attention to the thought of Hannah Arendt and other thinkers of the twentieth century.



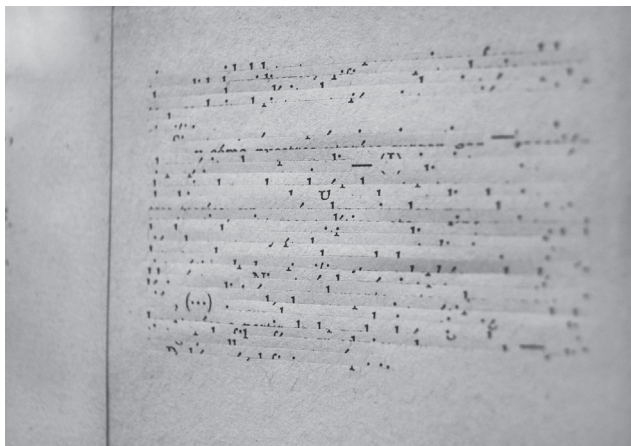
[Trazas] ([Traces]) (2010), sand book: watch mechanisms, batteries, silk, wooden board. 280 x 112 x 85 cm



Reminder... (2012), desert book with tip of text. From the book *The Spoils of Time*. Arts Libris 2013 prize. 42 x 32 x 30 cm



((.(((2008), photograph on Dibond. 24 x 15 cm



Desiertos cicatriz... VIII (Desert Scar... VIII) (2008),
interlinear marquetry. 13 pages cut out of various books. 158
x 28 x 4 cm

DATA		CONCEPTE	IMPORT	SALDO	CONTRE
1	15DES10	OBE. ABONAMENT			
2	15DES10	ABONAMENT TERRA ERMA	0,00+	0,00	0694
3	15DES10	ABONAMENT D PARAULES	9,00+	9,00	0694
4	16DES10	ABONAMENT NOU ENCÈS	10,00+	19,00	0694
5	16DES10	ABONAMENT HORITZÓ	8,50+	27,50	0694
6	16DES10	ABONAMENT ORDIT	7,50+	35,00	0694
7	16DES10	ABONAMENT A ESTONES	5,00+	40,00	0694
8	17DES10	ABONAMENT FLUENT	8,00+	48,00	0694
9	17DES10	ABONAMENT ENFILALL	6,00+	54,00	0678
10	17DES10	ABONAMENT DE PASSOS	8,00+	62,00	0678
11	17DES10	ABONAMENT PER CAHINS	8,00+	70,00	0678
12	17DES10	ABONAMENT INEDIT	9,00+	79,00	0678
			6,50+	85,50	0678
				92,50	0678
13	20DES10	ABONAMENT AL CANVI	7,00+	101,50	0678
14	20DES10	ABONAMENT BELLS MOTS	9,00+	110,00	0678
15	20DES10	ABONAMENT AMB RESSO	8,50+	118,00	0678
16	20DES10	ABONAMENT DE CONSOL	8,00+	124,50	0678
17	20DES10	ABONAMENT FRÀGIL	6,50+	129,50	0694
18	20DES10	ABONAMENT BATEC	5,00+	134,50	0694
19	21DES10	ABONAMENT SONOR	5,00+	140,50	0694
20	21DES10	ABONAMENT NOVELL	6,00+	149,00	0694
21	21DES10	ABONAMENT TREMOLAS	8,50+	154,00	0694
22	21DES10	ABONAMENT POEMA	5,00+	162,50	0694
23	21DES10	ABONAMENT A L'HIVERN	8,50+	171,50	0694
24	21DES10	ABONAMENT INCIPIENT	9,00+		

COMPROVI SI L'ANOTACIÓ CORRESPON A LA QUANTITAT LLIBRADA O REBUDA.
SI HA CANVIAT DE DOMICILI LI DEMANEM QUE ENS HO COMUNIQUI AL MES AVIAT POSSIBLE.

[Avenç] I-VII ([Savings] I-VII) (2010-2011), savings book with deposits of poetry, series from pages 1 to 7.

Guasch-Coranty prize. Valls Biennial (2013). 50 x 38 x 8 cm each





CONCEPTE

CÂRREC

ABONA

1

2

3

4



	CONCEPTE	CÀRREC	ABONAMENT	SALDO	CONTROL
1	La confiança lliurada no correspon a				
2	l'emancipació rebuda...				
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
13					
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16					
17					
18					
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21					
22					
23					
24					

Nota important
No són vàlides les anotacions efectuades a mà o màquina d'escriure.
Comprovi si l'anotació correspon a la quantitat lliurada o rebuda.
Si ha canviat de domicili li demanem que ens ho comuniqui al més aviat possible.

Nota important... IIIIII (Important Note... IIIIII) (2013),
typed savings book page. 24 x 30 x 3 cm



[De hoja caduca] ([Sheds Its Leaves]) (2011), a series of calendar pages with text grafts. 32 x 16 x 3 cm

0000529

**Lecturas y consumos en el ALMA ENCENDIDA. del 23/0**

	LLANO
Lectura REAL en su revuelto afán,	26398
Lectura ESTIMADA	- 26120
de serena alborada	
	<hr/> 278
Factor Multiplicador	x 1
	<hr/>
Consumo Medido	278
en el surco removido...	
	<hr/>
Consumo Total	278 kWh

Lectura estimada... (Estimated Reading...) (2011), electricity bill
with text grafts. 47 x 39 x 4 cm

CSB Consorci Sanitari de Barcelona



PAMEM

CAP Larrard

U.P. 02000 / U.P. 00484

DERIVACIÓ, SOL.LICITUD DE CONSULTA,

Cognoms/Nom: ARZA MONCUNILL, M MAR

NH: Car per haver delit, dolor atenc,

CIP: e la dolor no em trob en un lloc certa

Adreça: CR PROVIDÈNCIA

Localitat: BARCELONA

Codi postal: 08024

Telèfon: (LXXXVII, 203, 204, 207, 208, 319, 320)

Serve

Cte. c

Profes

Adreç

Telèfo

Derivació.

- ☐ Urgent:
☐ Preferent
☒ Ordinària

Exploració:

- ☐ Diagnòstica
☐ Control / Seguime

Sol.licitud / Exploració:

Resums Clínics:

Precisa rev. a l'esperit, segons declara

Derivació ordinària... (Ordinary Derivation...) (2013), medical referral with text grafts. 47 x 39 x 4 cm

**Excerpts from conversations between
Assumpta Bassas and Mar Arza**

Readings and Consumptions... is the title of this exhibition, which embraces a series of works you have made in the last few years, some installed now in a new way and others previously unshown. When you were starting out you intervened in the texts of old books. In contrast, in this more recent work you have used printed texts of domestic paperwork, much more ephemeral and inconsequential: bills, savings books, medical referrals... At what point did you start to find this material interesting and how do you work it?

The fact of intervening by cutting the continuity of the text of a book was a way of bringing together the sculptural aspect of my training in art and the hitherto undisclosed passion for writing. Establishing this visceral dialogue with the contents of the book articulated a concern with language and communication that, beyond the fact of reading, touches on the relationship we establish with everything that alters and transforms the perception of what there is around us.

The word is, then, the centre from which to engage with the architecture of thought. Over the years, there has been a journey towards simplicity and concision, a process of stripping away that has also addressed the void that surrounds the word, the white space that articulates its legibility and the void that this produces. That is to say, the way the text engenders a symbolic cut

and impinges on what it designates.

The fact of using everyday papers, re-inscribed with this cut, began when I was working on a series of pieces to do with time, among which there were some pages from a calendar that were torn off – fell – month after month. The numbers of the days shed thoughts [*De hoja caduca*] (*[Sheds Its Leaves]*) as well as advertisements in which to look for milestones from the very moment you take a scrap with the commitment of the word ‘now’ (*Libro de horas... [o alcaucil]*) (*Savings Book... [or nark]*).

Later, they added a specific request to participate in an exhibition with the theme of light. Faced with the proposal to use light as a raw material, I preferred to address a double sense, setting the concept of light as a consumer good and basic utility against a more metaphorical meaning, closer to lucidity. That is why I intervened in an attached sheet of my electricity bill, which supposedly clarifies how the way reading and accounting of the consumption is done, but is actually indecipherable. Rather than shedding *light* it results in bewilderment.

Fragments of poetry are inserted into this supposedly utilitarian language, transforming the incomprehensible into something more enigmatic, with a resonance of communication. Unfortunately, this work has become more relevant than ever in light of the current confusion and arbitrariness

in the calculation of prices by the electricity suppliers, with the approval of the legislature.

The technique for inserting these texts is close to marquetry. I learned the technique in order to work with wood but I've adapted it for use with paper, where the written fragment is slotted perfectly into the new sheet. The result is a patched surface on which the change of tones and textures of the papers is apparent around joins that are only just perceptible, like the reminder of a scar.

One of the phrases on the intervened bill is the one that gives the exhibition its title. The linkage of the words 'reading' and 'consumption' bears witness to this twofold aspect that circulates between the transcendent language of literature and the untranscendent language of household paperwork.

How did you manage to invest words in a savings book? You are inviting us to make politics of the symbolic; in other words, to invest in something imperceptible, such as this gesture of love and confidence in the language?

In a moment of absolute emotional poverty I asked myself the following question: if we save money for when we need it, perhaps we could save words for when we need poetry. That was how I began the routine of going to the bank to put words into a current account. The words

were inserted in line reserved for the concept with a numerical equivalent for each letter. Every time I updated the bank book I rewrote a poem on its pages, in a subtle invasion of the symbolic space of economic power that coincided with a time when the banks and their directors and managers were displaying a complete lack of humanity and made the limitations of bank code fertile soil onto which to pour out the very sharp contradictions of the present. Something immaterial, as feelings are, is inscribed right in the middle of the space reserved for numerical coldness. On one hand, it infiltrated shoots of freedom, and on the other it placed in parallel the intangibility of poetry and the volubility of bank notation.

The installation [Trazas] ([Traces]) gives centrality to time as experience. Circularity, repetition, continuity and depth cross invoke a cyclical time that is more associated with the earth, manual tasks and the life of women. Where did this work and your thinking about this circular, material writing with its sound texture come from?

The installation is based on an extended reflection on time, within the framework of a series of works entitled *De la Enciclosofía...* ['From the Encyclosophia...']. The term Encyclosophia is a reference to that wisdom of cycles, of circles, of repetitions: that is, to the wisdom of experience,

more grounded in the body. We tend to think of time as linear and progressive, while life is organized around repetition and insistence, in that the rhythms that structure our day-to-day experience are related to the care and maintenance of life. This circular time keeps the linkage alive, it is essential for evaluating our feelings, our relationships and the challenges of everyday life.

One way of evidencing the unperceived circular path was to lay out clocks horizontally, with curved hands tracing the outline of the circle on a bed of sand. The muted sound of the heartbeat moves the hands, which plough a path of continuity second after second, so that the passage of time can be seen in all its slowness, expanding the present moment. The present is transfigured into a huge task.

The length of the furrow, imperceptibly deeper every time around, it advances – the steady progress and at the same time the most fragile of gestures. There is no disposition more perishable than writing in sand, in which the line is erased so easily. Writing in sand is perhaps the image that best reflects the most absolute vulnerability of the human being.

In the series of works called Desierto cicatriz... (Desert Scar) the notion of white under black that we aim to deploy in this cycle is made evident

through elision. What are interlinear spaces for you?

Musing on elision and the blank spaces of a text, not as neutral silences but as one of the articulating elements that necessarily contribute meaning to the text, I centred my attention on the figure of the interlinear space and its deep poetics of the innards exposed to view. In this way I ended up interweaving interlinear spaces consecutively in the space of a page. The result was a fabric of interlinear spaces that take the metaphor to literality: you can only read the *sub-text*, it can only be interpreted in uncertainty.

The armature of cut-off signs formulates a horizon of events; in other words, by analogy with that extreme point at the edge of the black hole that absorbs light particles, we have here a point of no return of the written sign that, in contrast, leaves language and its communicative intention intact. Beneath the apparent desert of the word there appears the fertile subsoil.

Exhibition Programme

White under Black.

Works from the Imperceptible

Blanca Casas Brullet

28 January – 2 March 2014

Mar Arza

11 March – 20 April 2014

Freya Powell

6 May – 22 June 2014

Antònia del Rio

1 July – 14 September 2014

Isabel Banal

23 September – 2 November 2014

Mireia Sallarès

11 November 2014 – 11 January 2015

Activities

Tuesday 11 March, 7.00 p.m.
Opening

Saturday 29 March,
11.00 a.m.
Guided visit with the artist

Saturday 29 March,
11.00 a.m.–6.00 p.m.
**Entremestres workshop
with the artist**

This get-together is in the form of a seminar-workshop. After a presentation of the lines of work and a screening of the work of Mar Arza, the artist will propose a creative exercise to get us to think with our hands.

Free registration from 11 to 27 March by email to entremestres@gmail.com

Limited number of places: group of 25 people

More information at: <http://entremestres.blogspot.com.es>

Tuesday 15 April, 7.00 p.m.
A talk by Itziar González Virós: 'Subversion and Politics'

In this talk, the architect, a former city councillor who lives in the Ciutat Vella district of central Barcelona and is one of the promoters of the Citizens Parliament initiative, will speak about the genuinely subversive potential of a politics grounded in the struggle in favour of all that we have in common.

The series of talks and workshops will take place in the Sala d'actes at Arts Santa Mònica, La Rambla 7, 08002 Barcelona.

Course: Els Juliols de la UB

White under Black.
Unfolding the political significance of the blank in female creation.

Course registration from 19 May at www.ub.edu/juliols

White under Black. Works from the Imperceptible

is a programme of exhibitions and talks directed by Assumpta Bassas and Joana Masó.

In conjunction with María José González and Montse Romaní.

The **Corrent altern / Alternate Current** cycle is a series of get-togethers, resonances and overflows related to the exhibitions which will be announced over the course of the programme.

The **Entremestres: Tallers d'artistes visuals i professores** cycle is run by the participating artists especially for teachers.

With the support of:

Centre dona i literatura

UNESCO Chair in Women, Development and Cultures at the Universitat de Barcelona

DUODA – Women's research centre at the Universitat de Barcelona

IFB – Institut Francès de Barcelona

Xarxa de Biblioteques de la Generalitat de Catalunya Catalan libraries

Consorci de Biblioteques de Barcelona libraries consortium

Els Juliols, UB

La Bonne – Centre de cultura de dones Francesca Bonnemaïson

With the participation of:

Galeria Cànem (Castelló)

+R Galeria (Barcelona)

Thanks:

Josep Cerdà, Professor of Sculpture at the Universitat de Barcelona, coordinator of the Laboratori d'Art Sonor, UB

Josep Gómez, ceramist

Arts Santa Mònica

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Free admission

Tuesday to Saturday from 11 h to 21 h

Sunday and holidays from 11 h to 17 h

Closed Mondays

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