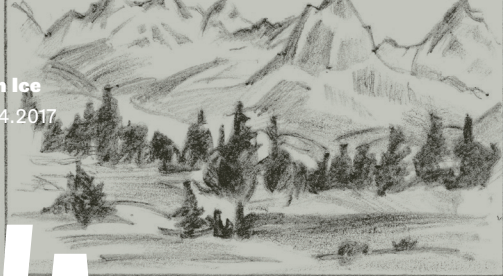


Walking in Ice

17.01 - 02.04.2017



WALKING IN ICE



Generalitat de Catalunya
Departament de Cultura

SANTAMÒNICA



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Walking in Ice

Epic and dysfunctionality in artistic practice

Pauline Bastard

Lúa Coderch

Rafel G. Bianchi

Lluís Hortalà

Fermín Jiménez Landa

Pere Llobera

Mercedes Mangrané

Àngels Ribé

Irena Visa

Curator: David Armengol

Arts Santa Mònica, Barcelona
From 17 January to 2 April 2017

When I move, a buffalo moves.

When I rest, a mountain reposes.

Werner Herzog

In the winter of 1974, a young Werner Herzog decided to walk from Munich to Paris to visit his friend, the film critic Lotte Eisner, who was very ill in hospital. Instead of travelling to the French capital quickly in order to visit Eisner, however, Herzog began a lone journey on foot that, according to him, would keep his friend alive as long as he continued walking. His adventure lasted from 23 November to 14 December 1974. Four years later, this exploit led to the publication of a short essay: *Of Walking in Ice*.

Walking in Ice is the title of a collective exhibition that takes its starting point from this feat. In his essay, the German filmmaker describes in great detail the landscapes, situations and thoughts that accompanied him on his journey. The story is now translated into the field of the visual arts, where the lack of practicality in Herzog's journey invites two possible interpretations: firstly, the activation of the landscape through performance and direct experience; and, secondly, an exploration of the dysfunctional nature of art, a context where it is possible to invest great effort and energy in enterprises alien to the conventions that shape our social environment.

Herzog's individualistic romanticism and fascination for anything that is on the edge, the limits (geographic, human, possible, necessary, etc.) suggest to us, in turn, a peculiar way of understanding the artistic practice in the present. A personal reading in which, whether from individual need or gradually growing disillusionment or disenchantment with the collective, the condition of the artist is measured by their euphoric perseverance with the challenge.

After an initial showing at the Bòlit Centre d'Art Contemporani Girona, the exhibition is now adapted to Level 1 at Arts Santa Mònica in Barcelona. Due to the characteristics of the room – a wide corridor on the first floor – this second presentation highlights the space and time connections that define Herzog's adventure: his walk in a straight line from Munich to Paris and the chronological advance of his narrative. The exhibition design turns the visit into a time sequence that is determined by the strictly linear nature of the route. From left to right, the works appear before us independently. There is no dialogue in space, but there is dialogue in time.



Àngels Ribé

Caminar sobre gel [Walking on Ice]

1984–2016

Video and drawing

Ink on paper

The exhibition itinerary opens with two works by Àngels Ribé (Barcelona, 1943): a tandem formed by a newly-produced video and a small drawing from the 1980s. Inspired by Herzog's story, the artist decides to create her own action film in a two-fold performative action. In the video, a group of people move across a place for which there are no spatial references, making a simple forward movement; a silent choreography that simulates the act of walking in ice and evokes, through the literal nature of the experience, ideas of strength and of flight. Alongside the video, the drawing represents another organic flow moving in the same direction: two brushstrokes, one black, the other water, cross the canvas in a second act of resistance.



Rafel G. Bianchi

How to Paint Mountains

2016

Installation of drawings

185 × 366 cm

National Contemporary Art Collection

Government of Catalonia

In a conceptual simile between his condition as an artist and the image of the mountain, the piece *How to Paint Mountains* (2016), by Rafel G. Bianchi (Olot, 1967), proposes an exercise in hard work, tenacity and conquest without leaving the painter's working habitat. This discursive insistence leads the artist to become engaged in a dynamic that is closer to imitation than to creativity, more sensitive to repetitive gesture than to the genuine act, which in this case entails a mechanical act of learning: following, exactly, the teachings and suggestions of Alfred Wands, a painter of mountains, and carrying out all the tasks proposed in the book from which the installation takes its title, and which was published in 1970. This is a long-drawn-out process that unapologetically reveals two anomalies: firstly, far from the usual dimensions of the canvas, Bianchi focuses on the single-page format and maintains the reduced scale of the images in the book; secondly, while also reinforcing the procedural nature of the copyist, he decides to show the project in its unfinished state.

Lúa Coderch

When Other Birds are Still

2017

Sound and textual intervention

When other birds are still is a sound art work by Lúa Coderch (Iquitos, Peru, 1982) that accompanies us throughout the exhibition. Using field recordings that she made at Lake Walden in Massachusetts (USA), and the descriptions of sounds from the woods that Henry David Thoreau included in his book *Walden, or Life in the Woods* (1854), Coderch generates a supposedly natural landscape, but one which is, in reality, imitated by her own voice. To do this, she manipulates the sound, slowing it, breaking it down and adapting it to her vocal register, after which she memorises it and returns it to its original speed. The result is a sound based on the strict veracity of nature, yet completely false. As a result, the sonorous memory of the landscape fuses a number of experiences: that of Thoreau in the mid-nineteenth century; that of Coderch in the summer of 2016; and, finally, our own experience as users at the exhibition from January to April 2017.



Irena Visa

Les dues antenes del repetidor de Rocacorba

2016

Installation of drawings

10,5 × 15,5 cm c/u

Les dues antenes del repetidor de Rocacorba [The two antennae of the Rocacorba repeater] (2016), by Irena Visa (Banyoles, 1985), depends for its existence on a group cooperative dynamic that explores the capacity of understanding and interpreting a landscape that has never been seen. As in a game, the artist provides a series of instructions and guidelines that the participants must follow: to imagine and draw a place where they have never been – Lake Banyoles, which Visa considers a telluric area – based only on the artist's own written description, which she mails to each. The epistolary relationship that determines the work process between Visa and the participants culminates in a collection of postcards of the lake in which the artist's personal imagery is fused with the many ideas about that landscape generated by the exchange.



Pauline Bastard

Les états de la matière

2013

Installation. HD video, wooden beams and stones

1h 40 min

A fusion of video and sculptural elements, the installation *Les états de la matière* [States of Matter] (2013), by Pauline Bastard (Paris, 1982), shows the unusual return of different building materials — stone, wood, earth, etc. — to their original state as part of nature. Having bought a house in the country, the artist gradually dismantles its wood structures and stone walls to return them to their natural state. This is a performative action of reintegration into the landscape that evokes a new, unexpected ritual. Asking for nothing in return, matter returns to its instrumental function or even acquires a new role, transformed into exhibition furniture. The discourse is completed by the inclusion in the work of the agreement between the artist and the former owner of the house.



Lluís Hortalà

453 pedres

2009

Charcoal on polymer and canvas mounted on wood

155 × 204 × 2,5 cm

453 pedres [453 Stones] (2009) is a large drawing by Lluís Hortalà (Olot, 1959) that, with hyperrealist precision, shows the roof of a rural home in the Pyrenees. In this meticulous exercise, the artist reproduces each of the slate tiles that convert the building into a sort of natural landscape. “453 Stones” is a two-dimensional piece that responds to the condition of the artist as a sculptor; that is to say, that condition of one who looks, thinks and recognises their surroundings through volume and space. From this starting-point, matter and its image enter into an interplay of multiple tensions between opposites: macro and micro, inside and outside, thought and action. In this case, an experience of proximity to the stone that always connects with what has been experienced at first-hand.



Mercedes Mangrané

Pista I, II, III, IV, V

Suelo mojado I, II, III, IV

Esterillas I, II, III

2016

Oil on linen

22 x 27 cm / 16 x 22 cm

The series of paintings by Mercedes Mangrané (Barcelona, 1988) consist of a number of free interpretations of gyms and sports facilities, places defined by complex regulations governing use, sites devoted to physical effort that establish indirect links to the idea of the natural landscape. This is a symbolic territorial configuration – don't step on the lines, don't leave your lane, set and achieve certain goals, etc. – that Mangrané transforms into an exercise in geometric and minimalist abstraction. Subtly, the literal nature of the different series – *Pista*, *Suelo mojado*, *Esterillas* [Track, Wet Floor, Mats] (2016) – reference different concepts connected to the experience in nature.



Fermín Jiménez Landa

El mal de la taiga

2016

16:9 single-channel digital video, Vespina moped

4 min

El mal de la taiga [Taiga Sickness] (2016) is a video installation by Fermín Jiménez Landa (Pamplona, 1979) that summarises a journey, a flight to nowhere. Following the popular scheme from larger to smaller, as found in Russian dolls, the artist starts out on a journey strictly defined in terms of means of transport – a lorry carrying a car that carries a motorcycle – but which, when it comes to destination, is absolutely vague, open. As the larger vehicle runs out of fuel, the smaller one takes over to continue the route. A useless but liberating gesture that, despite its evidently dysfunctional nature, ends in the most absurd and solemn manner: gratefully alone, somewhere in southern France.



Pere Llobera

Què travessa viu els anys?

2015-2017

Oil on canvas

170 x 150 cm

Què travessa viu els anys? [What Goes Through the Years Alive?] (2015-2017), by Pere Llobera (Barcelona, 1970), is an oil painting in which the construction of a dramatic moment, completely out of the ordinary, becomes the man discursive theme in the scene. A lamb – a nod to Jan van Eyck's mystic lamb – stands alone and helpless in the middle of the Montcada, a mountain stream just outside Barcelona. An unusual, tense situation that leads us to question the very essence of the work that lies behind art: who put the poor lamb here in the middle of the stream? How will it get out? Questions without answer that simply confirm the useless potential of the condition of artist; in the final analysis, a condition as indispensable as it is irrelevant. What is more, in a manner similar to Herzog, who is reluctant to reach Paris and, therefore, what awaits him there, Llobera expands his working process to convert painting into a work in a continuously unfinished state.



Lluís Hortalà

All the Mountains that I Have Climbed (London Version)

1999

Unfired clay

40 x 700 x 30 cm.

Next, another piece by Lluís Hortalà repeats the theme of sculpture and the mountains, two elements that play a central role in both his life and his artistic career. As the title suggests, *All the Mountains that I Have Climbed (London Version)* (1999) comprises an objectual synthesis of his experience as a climber. A fantastic, impossible mountain range that reproduces, in unfired clay, all the mountains that the artist climbed during his years as a mountaineer. A manual gesture – modelling in clay – in which, from memory, and without geographic rigour, the artist recalls all the epic quality of the conquest.



Àngels Ribé

En campo abierto

Neon

50 x 300 cm

En campo abierto [In Open Country] (2003) is an installation by Àngels Ribé in which, once more, the artifice of art – in this case in the form of a light sculpture – prolongs a fleeting, unrepeatable moment in time: a lightning bolt, a shocking, unpredictable electrical discharge capable of generating, out of nowhere, a unique landscape. The artist freezes the moment and the exceptional experience of what she sees. Strangely enough, the open country referred to in the title (nature) is now interpreted from within the enclosed space of the exhibition room.

Finally, as in a circular journey, our path ends with a documentary linked to Werner Herzog: Les Blank's film *Werner Herzog Eats His Shoe* (1980). After losing a bet with fellow filmmaker Errol Morris, Herzog keeps his word and eats his shoe while giving a lecture on film.

To summarise the work briefly, *Caminar sobre el gel* is a study of the fragility and intensity of Herzog's action – that of advancing through unstable, treacherous terrain – through a meeting among artists from different generations and backgrounds. Artists who share Herzog's symbolic and useless gesture. In this sense, the exhibition is nothing more than an homage to the dysfunctional and powerful condition of the artist. In the final analysis, it is they who are able to eat their own shoes. Incidentally, Lotte Eisner overcame her illness and did not die until 1983.

Les Blank

Werner Herzog Eats His Shoe

1980

Documentary video

20 min

Activities

— Thursday, January 26, at 7 pm

Leaving the track: on the limits between art and literature

A conversation with Donatella Iannuzzi (publisher) and Alicia Kopf (artist and writer)

Donatella Iannuzzi is a publisher and the founder of Gallo Nero, the company that published the Spanish version of Werner Herzog's essay *Of Walking in Ice* in 2015.

Alicia Kopf is an artist and writer. In 2015, she published *Germà de gel* [Ice Brother], a novel about the epic nature of polar exploration seen from an intimate, personal standpoint. In 2016, Kopf published *Hermano de hielo*, the Spanish version of the novel, which she also wrote herself.

— Thursday, March 2, at 7 pm

S'amagaven darrere els arbres* *[They Hid Behind the Trees]

A project by Anna Dot for the Walter Benjamin Route 2016

In *S'amagaven darrere els arbres*, Anna Dot revisits the process of literary censorship of the Spanish translations of works by Walter Benjamin and Hannah Arendt during the period of the Franco dictatorship. In it, she evokes, on the one hand, the Eastern Pyrenees and the Alt Empordà county of Catalonia as spaces of transit and memory and, on the other, the "bookpeople" described by Ray

Bradbury in his novel *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), as performative experiences. The presentation will also feature Edgar Díaz and Palma Lombardo, who recorded the project process on film.

— Saturday, March 4, from 11 am to 2 pm

Everyone Against Everyone – Socratic Kickboxing

A dialectic workshop with Pere Llobera

“I often have the impression that, to work in art, much more than having something to say about things, the question is about being good at taking measurements, measuring everything about our work. Too much symbol? Too much work? On what scale should our idea be manifested? Would I do this if they hadn’t given me the Botín prize? What will my mother think of what I do? Can place my hopes in this gallery? Would a gallery be good for me? Do I take too many risks with my public statements? The sea or the mountains? Beggar or emperor? Insider or outsider?” Pere Llobera

Taking his inspiration from Socratic debate, Pere Llobera suggests the question as a possible way of researching into artistic practice. The workshop is aimed at artists, curators and others interested in issues of authorship and individual or collective trajectories.

“Bruno flees, at night he breaks into an abandoned ski-lift station, it must be in November. He pulls the main lever for the cable car. All night long the ski-lift runs nonsensically, and the entire stretch is illuminated. In the morning, the police seize Bruno.”

Werner Herzog

Of Walking in Ice

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Website and social networks Luis Villalón Camacho

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Exhibition

Walking in Ice.

Epic and dysfunctionality in artistic practice

Walking in Ice is a coproduction by Bòlit Centre d'Art Contemporani, Girona, and Arts Santa Mònica, Barcelona

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Exhibition design Xavi Torrent

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Admission Free

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Closed on Monday

Guided tours - no booking necessary

Saturdays at 6pm and Sundays at 12pm

Groups

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