

BARCELONA PRODUCCIÓ 2022-23

IVÁN GÓMEZ INFIRMITAS

18.04 – 25.06.2023

EN

AT THE END OF THE DAY

Friday 3 March at 9.30 am

Iván normally lives in Bilbao but he's been in Barcelona for a week. He's currently in accommodation provided by one of the Fabra i Coats residencies, where he has also got a table that he uses as his centre of operations. Two of us on the curatorial team meet him there to see and welcome him and to learn about the final production phase of the exhibition he'll be showing in the Espai Rampa at La Capella. Iván has been occupied for some time now with the idea of waste and has been experimenting in a work on leftover organic materials from plants – the outer leaves of leeks – and animals of various kinds – especially molluscs, which are being kept for him at a neighbouring restaurant in the area where he's living – as well as items such as tins and glass bottles that he collects at openings. Mindful of the end of the useful life of these materials, he is trying to extend it. Research processes tend to be lengthy, erratic and full of side-tracks, with some lines that are blocked and that lead to new approaches and others that remain solid. Above all if these are based on material and aesthetic resolve. What captivated us about his proposal, beside its quality, interest and rigour, was the certain relational methodology visible in it. And this is no small thing, because the paltry communicative action that can be attained in the implementation of every call for grant applications based on honesty is in crisis.

That Friday was not by any means the first conversation we had had with Iván following his selection, but it was in that café that we were carried away by the quality and warmth of his work. The project relies on the collaboration of several or many others, in particular Michelle Lima and Manuel Christoph Horn, plus Pancho Doren & Jesús Monteagudo (Casa Protea). The last two of these joined us that morning in the café as well. In short, the wager has been placed on an experiment the outcome of which is unknown. A brave gesture that takes us back to sculpture as an element of matterist inquiry.

A third mainstay in the collaborations is the correspondence with Jordi Massó, structured in the form of three letters

resulting from three encounters in a desire for a story. Narrating as a form of relating.

First letter: THESIS

In November 2022, Iván was invited to take part in an educational programme entitled 'Immersion' in Vitoria, which involved giving groups of secondary school pupils first-hand contact with an artist's working process. In barely two intensive weeks, the artist shared materials and processes with over 200 pupils in an exercise in reflecting on death by handling waste. Despite the teenagers' aversion to touching the dead that is still alive and in spite of the adolescent vigour of life that persists as a driving force, Iván's work seems to have brought them down to earth to a present they are becoming aware of as we are destroying the world... Far more than the reclaiming of material for its useful or useless reuse, Iván's work speaks to them about the immortality of the object, of the control of material, of the natural and antinatural processes of art, and above all of the destigmatisation of the artist as someone capable of controlling the universe by means of their work. In this instance, speaking of processes as the mechanics of observation in order to understand the eternal debate between life and death helps us to think about time and the physical reality that nothing is eternal, or it is.

Second letter: ANTITHESIS

There was a group visit to the cemetery in Begoña, where bodies were exhumed from a mass grave dating from the Spanish Civil War. In addition to the human remains, a series of objects were found which, because of the date they were manufactured, are not old enough to be included in a heritage collection. These items, relocated into a kind of totemic display case, are included in an exhibition by Iván running at the Museo Arqueológico de Bilbao since 24 March. Cufflinks, a lighter, a syringe, false teeth, bullets and more are displayed as vestiges from a recent past. It is symptomatic that the importance of symbolic objectuality is determined by a chronological order or historical wording that specifies the importance of the national deed. What and who determine the historical value of an event?

Is it really the case that the official status of history should be considering what the important things are that we should be paying attention to and what not? Can art be a tool for dismantling the officiality of the discourse despite establishing others? Can we begin to think about history at the micro level and as fiction?

Third letter: SYNTHESIS

This letter is being written now, and the meeting is the result of the exhibition project in La Capella and everything that has led to it. Here there is the coming together of the reuse of leeks, mussels, bottles and mycelium that adds a second skin, a new life. A synthesis that is not an end – why should it be? – would signify taking a position against the driving force of this work: thinking that death is an abstract term that can be considered and reinterpreted as many times as there are cultures. Perhaps this is part of a longer process that even Iván did not begin and one where he has decided to pause so that he might observe and ponder on it. And this text is perhaps part of that process, which is not a beginning and end, but a part of something much greater that we do not want to control nor can we because, when all is said and done, the urge to control, define, departmentalise, order, catalogue and reduce to a set of axioms is an imposition, a burden and a compromise.

And *at the end of the day*, we come back with our own. And we have the last one before heading home. In a past life that still lives within us. A bar where all your lives meet is the context. Iván is one of a very prolific intake of artists who graduated in fine art from the University of Barcelona at the end of the noughties. And it is not at all common for so many to emerge from a single intake. Some have persisted in art and others have found more decent places. A few continue to live round here, while others who are more consistent opted for a life with fewer difficulties. A teacher, María Ruido, with whom many had a connection and subsequently worked, among them Pablo Marte and Inés García. In the Parchís, he came across the painting of Mai Blanco, Josep Dominguez, Yago Hortal, Victor Jaenada, Alan Sastre, Joan Saló, Santiago F. Mosteyrín, Carlos González Boy and Paco Chanivet. In bars too. In Berlin, he met up again with Jesús Monteagudo. Álex Brahim invited him to join the season at Caja Madrid's now closed Espai Cultural together with Mireia c. Saladrígues, Aníbal Parada and Andrea Gómez. Over there, diagonals were being made by Oriol Fontdevila at the Sala d'Art Jove and Lluç Mayol at the Sala de Estar. A veritable tour that Barcelona one that lasted from 2003 to 2011. Nothing dies!

Signed

Daniel Gasol and Marc Vives