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adrian melis

memoria selectiva

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10.02.2018—28.03.2018

ADN Galería presents *Memoria selectiva* (Selective Memory), an Adrian Melis solo show. The exhibition presents a set of artworks that reflect upon the concept of the intentional selection of memories, not only in a mentally and psychological level but also in a socio-political dimension, which finally filters and even erases those evocations, replacing them for fake memories created upon convenience. Censorship and content re-elaboration are fundamental agents of the construction of new speeches in order to generate new realities upon self interests. Works such as *Empty Page* (2016-2017) reflect upon this phenomenon, showing a methodology and manipulation of content adopted by post-truth politics.

Empty Page is a company based in Baden, Switzerland, founded by Adrian Melis. The company is dedicated to acquire and process information, data and statistics online that report other companies or Swiss banks that carry out a “questionable” activity, fiscal fraud, tax evasion, money laundering and so on. Empty Page protects the Swiss image, its financial and bank systems and its reputation by the application of a “damage control” strategy. Therefore the information is manipulated, transformed, erased and changed by the employees who apply absurd methodologies bordering on surreal office-chores task and performances. In order to advertise Empty Page’s integrity and dedication to the Swiss image the company commissioned a promotional short film to be made in which its aims and ideology are explained and communicated, through employees and employers alike, to the public and to potential clients.

Adrian Melis reminds us that corruption is a global phenomenon. Today’s hegemony of an economic system based on the accumulation brings us back constantly the characterized image, among other issues, of the systematic recount of what is in contact with it. Therefore, the cases are innumerable, the economic data indecipherable, the prejudice towards the public affairs unquantifiable and the informative misunderstandings, coped with the spectacularization of *infotainment*, it becomes imperceptible. According to Roland Barthes, an idyllic and utopic community is characterized for being a space without repression, “without listening”, where it could be heard but not listened and, by extension, it wouldn’t be possible to act consequently. So we should reflect upon our relationship with corruption from the literality of what would mean belonging to a utopic, isolated and remote community from any kind of listening.

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In *Omertà* (2018), Adrian Melis collects fragments of different trials and interrogatories to politicians and public servants imputed for corruption in Spain within the last 5 years. The moments selected are those in which the judges and the lawyers, as well as those interrogated, remain in silence. Background sounds like microphones, the spectators whispering, people taking notes, the browsing of pages and so on, are some of the sounds that can be perceived during the course of the video, with a silent background that again proves its continuity in the space that belongs to the spectators. The performativity of silence include the background sounds –whispering, interferences and other residual sounds– if we accept the conclusion made up by John Cage in his own anechoic camera, which establishes that the absolute silence doesn't exist.

We tend to imagine the act of exhibiting as a sometimes revolutionary declaration, an act made to elaborate the best possible noise within a silence that rests. Any possible revolution needs its images to resonate and to be as eloquent as possible. During the 90s, in a post-soviet Cuba marked by the lack of government's plan towards the intern economy and the lack of sources, Cuban people managed to survive the so-called "special period". *Planificación encubierta* (2018) narrates the story of Marta Teste, the artist's grandmother, and its particular world of survival composed by an important number of community micro-companies, some of them from a surrealist imaginary, applied in the neighbourhood of la Timba (Havana) where both lived after the fall of the URSS. Through this formulary, they involved themselves and managed to hack, at punctual times, the communist reality of their neighbourhood in the isle through the insertion of a system that twenty five years later holds many valid keys and could be reused.

Following these steps, *The New Man and My Father* (2015) reflects upon the events that changed the history in Cuba and its new relationship with the United States. The video consists of a silent interview with the artist's father, Antonio Melis, raised during the height of the Revolution, and his confrontation towards Adrian Melis' questions regarding the aging of the revolutionary dream and the possible arrival of capitalism. The video approaches sociopolitical issues related to the idea of a possible change in the island. His father doesn't say a word and avoids answering while the video goes by. A silent environment, discomfort and multiple ambiguous expressions complete a failed interview that shows the main character's confidence in the revolution's triumph and the materialization of a utopia.

In different doses and point of views, this very same idea is present in *Foley artists* lives of Anechoic Room* (2017), and in their Iranian, Syrian or Afghan refugee companions. These people create, through sound effects and their imagination, the soundtrack of their journey from home to their final destiny, turning the real sounds in ideal beats that never existed, creating a soundtrack of a future according to their expectations. The *Foley artists* are real acousmatic beings, in charge of codifying a sounded landscape that unites them in the tragedy of their leakage and brings them closer to the idea of a temporary community after the disaster. *Anechoic Room* is one more attempt to reconcile opposites –the mute, the sound– and make silence perceptible to the ear in a way that we can listen to the *unnamable*, as Thoreau once wrote.

Adrian Melis compiles in his work ruins of utopia, dreams and nightmares, bounded by images, lines and walls visible and invisible, marked by the economy and its social effects. He has brought them close to the cultural bustle of a space for art, apparently in an area placed in the middle of a geographic and economic spot that is denied to many people's lives. Maybe this decision has let us come closer, for an instant, to that revolutionary quote claimed, among others, by Berríos and Jakobsen, which states that the Revolutionary Exhibition is going to turn the museum's saloons into places to express real subjects in the real world.

**Foley artists* are responsible for any sound effect that is included in a movie during post-production to improve the audio's quality and create a clearer and more realistic atmosphere of the scene, filling gaps of sound that don't exist in reality throughout the reproduction of sounds from steps to heave breathing, traffic, turning pages, doors cracking and so on.

Adrian Melis, 1985

Adrian Melis takes as a starting point the socioeconomical circumstances in Cuba and Europe and reflects upon how the constantly changing *status quo* affect people's lives and the ways in which society operates in its structural frames. From unemployment situations, bureaucratic inefficiency, corruption, Adrian Melis creates mechanisms in which other's stories and experiences are integrated in the production of execution of his work, incorporating in his works ironic and absurd qualities, at the same time that allows that absence elements are manifested formal and symbolically.

Artist in residency at the Rijksakademie van Meldeende Kunsten in Amsterdam (2014-2016), Adrian Melis has exhibited solo in institutions such as Fundación Cereales Antonino y Cínia in León, Kunsthalle Basel in Switzerland (curated with Adam Szymczyk), and the Modern and Contemporary Art Museum in Santander.

He has participated in several institutional group shows such as MoMa in New York, Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art in United Kingdom, Es Baluard in Palma de Mallorca, Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, Centre d'Art Contemporain Walter Benjamin in Perpignan, Centre Pompidou in Paris, Queens Museum of Art in Nueva York, Centre d'Art La Panera in Lleida.

His works are in different institutional collections such as MACBA in Barcelona, Kadist Art Foundation in San Francisco, Collection Alain Servais in Belgium, Museum of Modern Art of Warsaw, Modern and Contemporary Art Museum in Santander, or the Bragales Collection. He has won many awards such as Art Nou Award 2013 to the best Exhibition and GAC Award 2014 to the best exhibition in a private gallery.

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Public hours:

Monday 15-20h

Tue-Fri 10-20h

Saturday 11-14h y 17-20:30h

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