



action painting
avelino sala
curated by fernando gómez de la cuesta

19.01.2019 – 18.05.2019

We are into a paradigm shift. Fewer and fewer newspapers are printed nowadays, our cell phones and computers are our permanent channels of reception and dissemination, press, radio and television have no longer credibility neither information's monopoly that has been perturbed and usurped by Internet. Most books and publications have become a digital file that can be read from screens and sent immediately anywhere around the world; Virtual network is able to host all news, lies, truth and post-truth, making us to confuse information with emotions (1), while, completely overwhelmed, we become producers and consumers of a disproportion in the middle of this maelstrom, in necessary and alienated accomplices of this unfathomable flow. The dematerialization, instantaneity and globalization in the flux of news, ideas and opinions, seems to put us on the right path to achieve a high development of our individual and collective freedoms, a first-world democratization of knowledge and information with the aesthetics of equality and progressive appearance. Maybe it is just an appearance (2). It is true that it is more and more difficult to control the immaterial because the physical cannot run away of his corporal nature, because in order to limit the tangible it is enough the barrier, the fence, the shield, the borrowed, the fire, rewriting or repainted. However, in a world dematerialized, control can no longer be simply physical; so censorship has mutated and has become as fluid as the things that fiscalized. Now, the board of inspectors are not gentlemen who dress grey and meet every Monday, it is no longer a commission or an entity, it is not a room or a government department, the new censorship is liquid and comes to us in a sibylline way in our acts and in our brain, without perceiving it, the new censorship is self-censorship, algorithms, speed, homogenization, superficiality, exclusion and post-censorship, the new censorship is invisible and depersonalized (3).

In any conflict, in any battle, resources without ownership are used by all sides, and power, from its privileged position, always employs them with the best results. Avelino Sala has spent time revealing these (infra) structures of that dominant and globalized power, their control methods and manipulation tactics, their obscene and hidden disproportion. He does it through art of action, of demolition, conflictive and belligerent, an art as frontal as subtle, as physical as intelligent. Action Painting is an extensive project that seeks for revelation through contemporary creation, appealing to painting and graffiti, facing the material faction of repression, the most notorious, to the flagrant symbols that power exercises through the forces of order at the service of institutional violence, riot shields, rubber balls, uniforms, helmets and truncheons, a coercion that comes from that fear that serves to hide the other weapons, the other springs that artist faces (4), much deeper, much more dangerous, those that hide sibilant tactics of states and corporations, of those that remain camouflaged to destroy our freedom, of those who have subjected us without knowing it. Methods written with invisible ink that aren't perceived if they do not mediate the performance of this action painting, of this disproportionate struggle of the creator against new censorship, against repression, against manipulation, against anathema, against the subtle purge (5).

Riot shield is an object which pretends to be invisible. It is made of transparent polycarbonate that cannot be seen while allows to the person that wears it to observe and monitor through it. Appears just as defense device but in fact it's an immediate response and forceful control instrument. Avelino Sala started using riot shields as support for painting interventions in his series Give me Shelter in 2016. This title anticipates a friction between opposite meanings: the coercive power of the shield and the concept of protection. Sala makes clear his intention to highlight and modify the semantics of intimidating elements by dropping paint over their surface with the same strength that an opponent would do, insurgent, rebel, demonstrator, who is situated in direct opposition to the symbol of power printed on shield's surface. These shields are put in evidence by an artistic action which is both poetic and violent. This action deepens into an investigation focused on the ambiguous contradiction between protection and surveillance, between confidence and coercion, current aspects in security forces of any state. Few months ago, in September last year, similar interventions to these ones carried out inside the limited and (un)controlled space of Avelino Sala's studio, took place in Barcelona's streets due to an action driven by Arran organization. Reality used again an artistic creation to try to achieve its purposes, in this case, the Catalan independentist collective used the resource devised by Sala with the same aim of the artist: make visible the imperceptible elements of control and repression.

Poetry strips the censorship and the physical context is transcended by the virtual as a new battlefield. Immersed in dematerialization, those pictures that documented Avelino Sala's actions are equally or even more important than the action itself. In the era of instantaneous hyper connection and viralized transmission of indiscriminate content (6), videos and photographs of those shields buried in painting become icons of the antivirus and the resistant struggle: of the constant creation and culture's combat against everything that opposes at freedom of action and thought. What we see, what we don't see and what they let us see, are the new traffic signs that structure our navigation through this massive network where we are all being permanently controlled, and which Avelino Sala proposes as a conflict zone, starting from the view of Internet as utopia of emancipation, to arrive at the dystopian reality of a device censored and censoring until exhaustion, that penetrates even in our home, in that place that should be our last redoubt of protection and privacy but, however, become the glass cage from which we exhibited ourselves (7). That is why the pieces of Avelino Sala appeal, fluctuating again between opposites, to the classic military tactics of camouflage, to the confusion of the organic stain within the same range of colours, to the opposition from ingenuity and finesse, to the hiding true intentions, in order to penetrate the enemy lines and try, first to defence, and then, detonate the liquid censorship that makes us useless and that we must avert at all costs.

_fernando gómez de la cuesta

1. "Let's not forget, in fact, that if the mimicry is characteristic of the power of conditioning of the mass-media (...) it currently leads to the standardization of behaviours and, what is worse, the synchronization of emotions". Paul Virilio, Ciudad pánico. El afuera comienza aquí, Editorial del Zorzal, Buenos Aires, 2006, p. 40.
2. "Fascism sees its salvation in that the masses get to express themselves (but without, even for a moment, assert their rights)." Walter Benjamin, Discursos interrumpidos I. Filosofía del arte y la historia, Taurus, Madrid, 1990, p. 55. [original text: 1936]
3. "But now, in a certain way, globalization and virtualization are inaugurating a global time that prefigures a new form of tyranny." Paul Virilio, "Speed and Information: Cyberspace Alarm!", Le Monde Diplomatique, Paris, August, 1995. <http://www.ctheory.net/printer.aspx?id=72>
4. "Illustrating the metamorphosis of a conflict in which the weapons of obstruction (the bunkers of Saddam) and weapons of destruction (the missiles) give their strategic priority to those weapons of mass communication aimed at hitting spirits ... Or, more precisely, the weapon of mass destruction is subjected to the mass communication that dominates it everywhere, taking into account that the audio-visual impact (in real time) is widely imposed, due to its speed of propagation on a world scale, on the material impact , which is just the target of explosive projectiles ". Paul Virilio, Ciudad pánico. El afuera comienza aquí, Editorial del Zorzal, Buenos Aires, 2006.

5. "The years of University are shortened, the discipline is relaxed, Philosophy, History and language are abandoned, language and its pronunciation are gradually neglected. Finally, completely ignored. Life is immediate, employment counts, pleasure dominates everything after work. Why learn anything, except press buttons, plug in switches, fit screws and nuts?". Ray Bradbury, Fahrenheit 451, Plaza & Janés, Barcelona, 1992, p. 68. [1st ed. 1953]. <https://unionacademy.instructure.com/courses/1386/files/7528>
6. "The leading tendency points towards the horizon of an interconnected and ahistorical space of flows, which tries to impose its logic on scattered and segmented places". Manuel Castells: La era de la información. Economía, sociedad y cultura: La sociedad red. Alianza Editorial: Madrid, 1997, Vol.1, p. 462.
7. "The difference, however, with the idea of being a shelter is that its area, unlike other times in which it behaved as the exclusive treasure island, is currently pierced by all avenues of external communication, leaky by computing and well registered as consumption unit". Vicente Verdú: "Hacia otra casa", La Casa, su idea. Consejería de Educación y Cultura de la Comunidad de Madrid: Madrid, 1997, p. 42-43.

/ Avelino Sala (Gijón, Spain, 1972)

Artist, curator (Comission) and editor (Sublime magazine) writes at Artshock and A*desk. His work as an artist is focus on questioning cultural and social reality from a socially committed perspective. Its has exhibited at multiple groups and solo shows in centers such as the Konvent Zero (Berguedà, Barcelona) and the Cultural Center Niemeyer (Avilés, Spain). His works are part of public collections such as 21c Museum, ARTIUM of Vitoria and Es Baluard de Palma among others.

/ Fernando Gómez de la Cuesta (Córdoba, Spain, 1976)

Art critic and curator. Degree in Law from the Universitat de Barcelona and Art History from the Universitat de les Illes Balears. Member of ACCAIB, Association of Curators and Art Critics of the Balearic Islands since 2009 and member since 2012, Member of the IAC since 2014 and Territorial President since 2016. He writes at ABC Cultural newspaper and is part from the Ministry of Truth to the Sublime publication.

adnplatform

c/ Victor Hugo, 1 (Nave 6) 08173
Sant Cugat del Vallès (+34) 93 451 0064

Wednesday from 10am to 3pm
Saturday from 11am to 3pm

Press & communication

Rosa A. Cruz

communication@adngaleria.com