



screens & pills

ignasi aballí / chema alvargonzález / marcos ávila-forero / anna dot /
enric farrés duran / gonzalo elvira / dora garcía / miquel garcía /
andreas m. kaufmann / muntadas / francesc ruiz / tim youd
curated by montse badia

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Screens & Pills is an essay in exhibition format or an exhibition in an expanded book format that has a cover, prologue, index, chapters, footnotes, epilogue and back cover. The exhibition is a tribute to the novel written by Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), published for the first time in three parts in the March, April and May 1954 issues of *Playboy* magazine and proposes to place the contents of the book in the center of a current debate about control over access to knowledge, censorship, strategies of distraction and false happiness, dependence on screens and lack of critical sense.

Fahrenheit 451 is a dystopian novel that presents a future society in which books are prohibited and there are "firefighters" whose mission is to confiscate and burn them. The novel has been the subject of interpretations that allude to historical moments of repression of dissident ideas. In an interview for radio in 1956, Bradbury claimed that when he wrote the novel one of his greatest concerns was the witch-hunting climate of the McCarthy era. In later years, he completed this reading with an allusion to how the media reduce interest in literature and critical spirit. In 1966, François Truffaut shot his only film in English, based on Bradbury's story. Starring Oskar Werner, Julie Christie and Cyril Cusack, the film is set in a technological and retro future, hypnotized by screens and pills and where thinking and dissent is dangerous.

Screens & Pills starts with quotes taken from Bradbury's book, as well as the piece by **Andreas M. Kaufmann** (Zurich, 1961), *Projector's Dance* (1998). The projected image, at the left end of the wall, serves as the paging of space. The numbers of Kaufmann (from 81 to 1), paging space and at the same time are projected, imply a utopian potential, a blank page that opens to unlimited possibilities.

The first chapter of the exhibition has to do with control, censorship, limitation on access to information, the decision on "what should be read" and "what not", "what should be thought" and "how should it be done or thought". The prohibition of books is a continuum throughout history, from the French Enlightenment, to practically all dictatorships. The burning of books is a form of censorship that political or religious leaders apply against those who oppose their ideas. In this section, the exhibition focuses on artistic works that include various attempts, throughout history, to control knowledge, prohibit, destroy and burn books. In *List of books burned in Germany in 1933* (2018), **Miquel García** (Barcelona, 1975) recovers the list of books that were burnt composed of Jewish, Marxist, pacifist authors, opponents of the regime or simply not well seen by it. Miquel García prints the list with thermo-sensitive black ink that only allows to see what is written by applying heat. The fire that destroyed them is what now allows them to be remembered. **Gonzalo Elvira** (Patagonia, Argentina, 1971) is well aware of censorship and the burning of books, a totalitarian gesture that is repeated in different geographies and historical moments. During the years of dictatorship in Argentina (1976-1983), there were banned books (often from small publishers more or less combative) and burning of books. Gonzalo Elvira reproduces the images of the burning of books, as well as covers of the censored books using some habitual procedures: puncturing them patiently with a pen reproduces perfectly the images of the same, in a gesture that becomes "indelible" (taking the title of a book by Juan José Saer) what others believed they could erase and eliminate completely with fire.

In *Biblioteca II* (2002), **Ignasi Aballí** (Barcelona, 1958) shows / does not show books covered with a plastic that protects them, at the same time that it disables them and refers to the function and the transformations of libraries in a society that consumes every time more images and digital products. **Chema Alvargonzález** (Jerez de la Frontera, 1960 - Berlin, 2009) was always very aware of the importance of memory. *Almacenado en el recuerdo* (Stored in Memory, 2002) shows two suitcases with photographs of various objects from the used books and flea market of Sant Antoni. The accumulation of books, videos and colorful objects that nobody already appreciates, are not censored or persecuted, but they are relegated to oblivion.

The central chapter of *Screens & Pills* is dedicated to Ray Bradbury. The facsimile of the numbers of the *Playboy* magazine in which it was published for the first time, during the months of March, April and May of 1954, with illustrations by Ben Denison, is presented accompanied by works made by artists who have worked from said story. In *Fahrenheit 451* (2008), **Dora García** (Valladolid, 1965) reissued 2000 copies of the 1967 edition of Bradbury's novel and stacked them on a table. The books have been printed upside down and from back to front emphasizing their illegibility.

Tim Youd (Massachusetts, USA, 1967) makes a performance in which he patiently rewrites Bradbury's book with his typewriter, overlaying the letters on a single page, then burn the transcript and record the act with his mobile phone. **Francesc Ruiz** (Barcelona, 1971) recreates and reinvents the comic (the only possibility of publication in the world posed by Bradbury) that appears in Truffaut's film only three times in a fragmentary way. *Fahrenheit 451's Comic* (2016), Ruiz version, consists of eight pages of color illustrations in which the artist copies the parts of the comic visible in the film and also reconstructs and reinvents the story, imagining and drawing the parts that do not appear in the film.

Muntadas (Barcelona, 1942) presents in *On translation: Pills* (2014), the pills as a translation (not literal) of concepts and cultural values. Linguistic, cultural translation, and also instantaneous and aseptic translation to respond to the urgency of resolving a conflict, a misunderstanding, a knowledge that requires exchange and negotiation in a world in which the critical spirit and all that entails of non-standardization and unforeseen are not accepted, in which a problem requires a clean and instantaneous solution that leaves no trace, such as pressing a button or swallowing a pill.

Fahrenheit 451 may seem a dystopian novel but its end is not, there is a ray of hope, which comes from the resistance. In *S'amagaven darrera dels arbres* (They were hiding behind the trees, 2016), **Anna Dot** (Vic, 1991) devised a specific intervention for the Walter Benjamin Route, evoking the processes of literary censorship of the translations of works by Walter Benjamin and Hannah Arendt during the Franco era. Remaking the path of Benjamin in his flight to Portbou, a number of people evoked the book people of Bradbury's novel and quoted fragments of the works censored in addition to the translation. In *Screens & Pills*, *S'amagaven darrera dels arbres* recovers in his oral record.

In *Another version of "The Persians" by Aeschylus* (2017), **Marcos Ávila-Forero** (Paris, 1983) creates a megaphone of great dimensions, made of walnut wood that works both as a voice amplifier and a boat capable of navigating. In the exhibition *Screens & Pills*, the piece works like a megaphone, which can be activated at any time, to denounce, to criticize, to rebel or to make itself heard.

Screens & Pills has a catalog, published by the publishing house Los Cinco Delfines and with a design by Alex Gifreu. In the same way that in François Truffaut's film the initial credits do not appear written, but are recited by a voice-over, the catalog of *Screens and Pills* never came to be printed, but embodied in the artist **Enric Farrés Duran** (Barcelona, 1983) that, assuming the figure of person book, becomes its distributor and transmitter, in the voice and memory whose mission is to transmit the contents of the publication that has only been seen by its designer, Alex Gifreu. The work *To know how to find, first you have to know how to hide* (2018) by Enric Farrés Duran, takes its title from a moment of the film in which the firefighters attend a training activity, which shows them the most unexpected places where you can find the books to develop your firefighters function. Hidden places that, later, will be the hiding places that Montag himself will use to hide the books he has begun to read and question his past and the system in which he is immersed.

The epilogue of the exhibition is represented by the ENCARNA reading club, directed by Aimar Pérez Galí and Mar Medina. ENCARNA is a community that not only reads from the intellect, but also does it through the body, which "embodies" words and concepts, situations, move and contort, relax and tense, active, living and reliving the words written by Ray Bradbury.

And on the back cover of the exhibition, the story that Ray Bradbury wrote in 1953, appears again, in this case, published on 2017 by the Charles Nypels Lab of the Jan Van Eyck Maastricht Academy and designed by the French graphic design collective Super Terrain. This version of the book, printed with thermo-sensitive ink, does not allow to see written words until a source of heat, that is, fire, approaches. The fire with which Montag burned books now becomes the fire that allows you to read them.

/ Montse Badia is curator and art critic. She has contributed to different publications, like Transversal, arts.zin, Untitled (London), NU: The Nordic Art Review (Stockholm), Tema Celeste (Milano), ARCO and Bonart. She has curated exhibitions at De Appel Foundation (Amsterdam), Apex Art (New York), Künstlerhaus Bethanien (Berlin), Joan Miró Foundation, MACBA (Museum of Contemporary Art Barcelona) and "la Caixa" Foundation (Barcelona). She has been associated curator in Espai 13 of Joan Miró Foundation and Santa Monica Center for the Arts (Barcelona). Member of the advisory committee of Yaxs Foundation. She is co-founder and co-director of A*Desk. Independent Institute of Criticism and Contemporary Art and artistic director of Cal Cego. Contemporary art collection. Montse Badia is member of AICA (International Assotation of Art Critics) , ACCA (Associació Catalana de Crítics d'Art) and IKT (International Curators Association).

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Wednesday from 10am to 3pm
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