

Welcome! *She Corrects Manners Laughingly* is ready to begin; or is it maybe at that point when the show has already finished?

Oriol Vilanova (Manresa, 1980) invites the viewer to a paratheatrical space. The wall that crosses the gallery looks like the lowered curtains of a theatre (1). The series of photographic works hanged on the sides show the protagonists of the story taking a break (2). In the background, we can hear somebody whistling. It is the murmur of a movie soundtrack. It could be a beginning stuttering, but also a trace of memory (3). In addition and to top it all, a show bill hangs at the entrance of the space, offering us an image that synthesizes the key concepts that will be at play (4).

Our drama, however, is not interpreted by human actors but by the crash of two different scenarios. On the one hand, there is Poble Espanyol, a synthesis of traditional Spanish architecture and craftsmanship that produced a huge impact in 1929 at the Barcelona International Exhibition. And, on the other hand, there is Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's German Pavilion, which, at the same world's fair, was presented as the expression of a renewed culture of work and modernity. The first instance belongs to the promotion of a concept of Spanish picturesqueness and ancestral customs, which tries to represent the timeless character of its idealized peoples. The second instance is established as that of a people's horizon, projecting itself to the future with a clear universal destiny, and finding, in the German culture, its most reasserting narrative.

Entreacte (1) [intermission] suggests that there is, indeed, distance between these two scenarios, but a distance as weak as the space that separates the different parts of a staged play. Poble Espanyol, set in its own medieval romantic utopia, and the German Pavilion, the onset of a new humanism and a utopia of modernity, end up becoming part of the same narrative script, which is, no more no less, that of glorifying national identities.

Therefore, more than a split, **Entreacte** is the melting of both architectures. Formally, its

shape corresponds to that of a flat layout and is guided by the surface principles of modern architecture. Its colorfulness, however, casts the work in spectacle, and imbues it with the qualities of the purposefully staged. The literal and minimal approach of the pavilion would not make sense without the explicit staginess of Poble Espanyol. Fifty years later, we can see how Poble Espanyol has definitely absorbed Mies van der Rohe's project into its own phantasmagoria. After its 1986 reconstruction, the pavilion has ceased to be a modern construction anymore. It now contributes to that nostalgia that emerges from the issuing of facsimile copies, and becomes, as a historicist simulacrum, a true epigone of Poble Espanyol.

Malgrat tot (2) [in spite of] also brings these two spaces to an equal ground by obstructing the capacity they have, even today, to act as open-air museums and touristic magnetic poles in the city. The looks of these series of works is truly Suprematist, but, if we get close to that "black on black", we will see that night is the reason for the darkness of the images. Oriol Vilanova has re-photographed Poble Espanyol and the German Pavilion following the views found in old postcards and printed materials from 1929. At night, both scenarios lose their allegorical capacity, and the remakes stop thus signifying anymore. Modern architecture vanishes when the light that allows it to take place is gone, and, as paradoxical as it might seem, the medieval-styled obscurantism of that Spanish fake architecture disappears as well with it.

Detesto el folklore oficial y organizado (4) [I hate official and organized types of folklore] is in charge of generating an adjacent relationship between these two scenarios. The glass table that Mies van der Rohe designed for the pavilion becomes, in this case, the surface on top of which different glass containers from the traditional glassblowing shop of Poble Espanyol are placed. When organizing domestic space, traditional and modern objects have shared, without any strain, the same narrative on comfort. The title for this work comes from a statement by Luis Buñuel, a critic of the

medieval Spanish mindset at the beginning of the twentieth century. The resulting image links this very same concept of Spain with that of the *glaskultur*, that use of glass that modernity associated with the concept of an open, hygienic and transparent society.

Confia poc o gens en les paraules (3) [has little or no trust in words] is the culmination of all those symmetries and reflections that are present in the exhibition, and that are established between its different ideological tenets and its corresponding formal applications. Oriol Vilanova whistles the famous soundtrack to Jacques Tati's *Mon Oncle* (1958). On that occasion, the modern house collapsed at the hands of Monsieur Hulot, a character representing the lower middle class. In our case, the ambient music is added to emphasize the theatrical effect that has been allowed to permeate some architectures of modernity, and that, in their political as well as formal dimensions, continues spreading today.

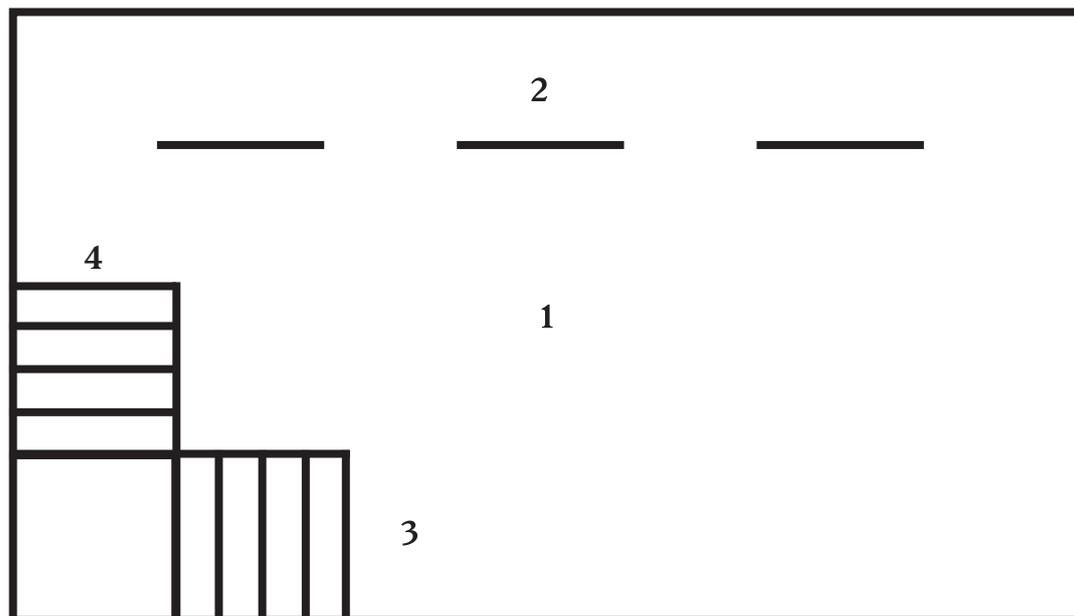
She Corrects Manners Laughingly invokes a Francis Picabia's title. Everything suggests that in a few minutes the show will be restarted (if it ever stopped running).

Oriol Fontdevila

Oriol Vilanova (Manresa, 1980) lives and works in Brussels. Recent exhibitions: MACBA, Barcelona; Nottingham Contemporary, Nottingham; Centre d'Art la Panera, Lleida; Elisa Platteau, Brussels; Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Capella Sant Roc, Valls; Parra & Romero, Madrid; FRAC Champagne-Ardenne, Reims; La Virreina Centre de la Imatge, Barcelona; MUSAC, León; among others. He is represented by Parra & Romero.

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- 1 Entreacte
- 2 Malgrat tot
- 3 *Confia poc o gens en les paraules*
- 4 Detesto el folklore oficial y organizado

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