

*TOO CLOSE TO IGNORE,
TOO FAR FOR ONE TO INTERVENE**

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* From *Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror*, a poem by John Ashbery based on a painting by Parmigianino

(...) Is there anything / To be serious about beyond this otherness / That gets included in the most ordinary /
Forms of daily activity, changing everything / Slightly and profoundly, and tearing the matter / Of creation,
any creation, not just artistic creation / Out of our hands, to install it on some monstrous, near / Peak, too
close to ignore, too far / For one to intervene? This otherness, this / “Not-being-us” is all there is to look at /
In the mirror, though no one can say / How it came to be this way.

Just after finishing an exhibition, I'm always invaded by the same feeling: a hunch that it will be the last; that I have no more to give; that this is as far as I go. It's something that goes back a long way; I'd say all the way to the beginning. I should be used to it by now, and, yet, the same sense of bewilderment comes back again, each time with renewed intensity. It's a kind of disbelief, letting me know that nothing is certain, that the fact that some new works can be brought together in an exhibition (regardless of the judgment they deserve) is almost like a miracle, which, at least for me, can't be taken for granted.

Every work is a journey that starts off with a show of bravado ("this is what I want and I'm going for it") which is inevitably followed by humiliation ("you haven't a clue what you want"). After a series of negotiations, it ends up in an object that contains something of a response ("this must have been what I was really after"). Something has been precipitated (chemically speaking) and the response it might contain must be there, however partially, but that's something that can only be questioned with a new work, with another precipitate. Whatever is gained or lost in this process is uncertain, there is no way of calculating it, it's more of a life option.

Everything overwhelms us and our control is relative, barely exercised through a technique that one gradually intuitively in real time at the very moment one is applying it, which means that the possibility of going back over what's done shouldn't be discarded. Although my work is never autobiographical—in fact, it deals with the otherness that is summoned in everything I do—I would agree with Unamuno that my works are my biography and my only chance of obtaining a representation of my own life trajectory. In fact, this is seen as one of the necessary tasks, following Schopenhauer's argument that the first forty years of life provide the text, and the following thirty, the commentary. The problem is how to continue being productive from works that exclude the artist himself, for whom, inasmuch as completed, it is as if, at least for them, the artist was already dead. The works in this exhibition have come about as a commentary, as a new phase in the permanent questioning that returns to itself to try to grasp something which always eludes it. An operation that is, in the present circumstance, inflected by an obligatory process of re-examining (individually and collectively together with other artists) of the work undertaken in a little over three decades which will end up in a retrospective exhibition at Palacio de Velázquez in Madrid next fall, organised by Museo Reina Sofía. Floating in the body of work included in this exhibition are many of the themes, references, procedures, images or intuitions recurring throughout a career that explain nothing (they are not intentions or results). Rather they lay bare what is brought into play, the incomplete and fragmentary weft of signifiers in which one keeps losing and finding oneself.

The exhibition comprises five groups of work:

1. GIVEN THE ACCUMULATION OF EVIDENCE (BASTARD)

This group of four works returns to the idea of *Bastard*, a type of work conceived in the early eighties that could be seen as a starting point for many later developments. It is somehow paradoxical that a *bastard* could be an origin when, by definition, it is “something that is spurious, irregular, inferior or of questionable origin”. The *bastard* involves a pursuit of meaning in which one seeks something, like when one seeks a father. The father is the origin, but also the Law, he gives us meaning but at once he takes it away inasmuch as meaning cannot be conceived outside his governance. There are two ways of dealing with this: the classic option of parricide, and the modern alternative of procreating your own father. The accumulation of evidence enables the organisation of a narrative affording access to the origin of something initially ungraspable or incomprehensible. But this narrative can be tampered with, enabling a “misinterpretation” that could place you at the origin of your own father, the play of the *bastard*.



1 *GIVEN THE ACCUMULATION OF EVIDENCE (BASTARD) 1.*
2009-2015
76 x 45 x 35,5 cm
Wood construction painted with stucco-paint and aluminum cast



2 GIVEN THE ACCUMULATION OF EVIDENCE (BASTARD) 2
2009-2015
83 x 58 x 38 cm
Wood construction painted with stucco-paint and aluminum cast



3 GIVEN THE ACCUMULATION OF EVIDENCE (BASTARD) 3
2009-2015
75 x 45 x 34 cm
Wood construction painted with stucco-paint and aluminum cast



Detail of the work on the following page.



4 *GIVEN THE ACCUMULATION OF EVIDENCE (BASTARD) 4*
2009-2015
Wood construction painted with stucco-paint and bronze cast
122 x 90 x 30 cm

2. Comprising four sculpture-installations: *THE UNCONDITIONAL PRACTICE OF REASON*; *THE QUESTION IS WHICH IS TO BE THE MASTER*; *LE RADEU (WHAT IS THAT I DO SEE?, WHAT IS THAT YOU DON'T SEE?)* and *COUNTER-GOODVIBES-RELIEF (LET HER PAINT)*.

As Kant said: *Sapere aude*, "dare to know", but how can one know whether the reason one applies is one's own reason and not that of another, the Other? In response to Alice's question whether he could really make words mean so many different things, Humpty Dumpty retorted: "The question is which is to be master – that's all". Géricault is one of the artists who best exemplify the overflowing of the intentional and the overcoming in practice itself of all kinds of imperatives. When he conceived *The Raft of the Medusa*, in principle just another history painting, he started out on a complex artistic process that included interviews with survivors of the shipwreck, building several scale models of the raft, viewing the flesh of the dying in hospitals and the quarter corpses of the executed in morgues, using artist friends as models (notably Delacroix) and many preparatory studies, until, in a final fit of possession, he included one last figure – the one whose head is cropped on the bottom – when the painting was already hanging in the Salon of 1819. History painting – whose remit is to confirm the foundational myths of power – in this case ended up as a political declaration that rocked the newly restored monarchy of Louis XVIII. Epochal imperative would suggest that some of Géricault's works were probably an exaltation of the romantic transcendent subject while artistic imperative declares that many are a rebuttal not only of normative or ethnocentrist humanism – in his engagement with other races, the insane and delinquents – but also of anthropocentrism – in his portraits of animals, most notably the striking *A Horse Frightened by Lightning*. There is something melancholic in this permanent struggle between intentions and results, between ideas and objects that are inclined towards a particular way of materialising formal structures and of formally organising diverse materials, in such a way that they are always underwritten by mutual resistance, which lingers in their radical illegibility. The ideal and the real in this melancholic struggle often end up becoming a *vanitas*-image. As Hamlet said in the graveyard as he points to a skull: "Let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come."





5 THE UNCONDITIONAL PRACTICE OF REASON
2015

Word construction partially painted, galvanised steel, painted steel sections, metallic electric lamp and framed photography
305 x 470 x 350 cm



6 THE QUESTION IS WHICH IS TO BE THE MASTER

2015

Painted wood construction, metal and plastic. Print on galvanised steel .

280 x 280 x 134 cm





7 LE RADEU (WHAT IS THAT I DO SEE?, WHAT IS THAT YOU DON'T SEE?)

2015

Wood construction partially painted, galvanized steel, plexiglass with aluminum frame, printed materials, and tubular chair.

150 x 261 x 185 cm





8 COUNTER-GOODVIBES-RELIEF (LET HER PAINT)
2009-2015
Wood construction, print on galvanised steel
245 x 185 x100 cm

3. The work *MYTHOLOGIES. EVERYONE OF US KNOW WHO WE ARE* is presented in resonance with another work with similar features (*MYTHOLOGIES. ATZO HAN ONDOREN BATZUK*) on view at the same time at Museo San Telmo.

Both include: 1. The historic quality of a type of image that places them on the side of the “dead”. This is a documented, fully fledged history which speaks of an artist’s group (GAUR or EAE) which “act” politically emulating artistic actions or act artistically emulating political actions. 2. An artistic-functional object (*Parete Organizzata* by Gio Ponti) which uses the stylemes of the art of its time (1950s) to organise a display of diverse “cultural” elements (books, records, sculptures, photos, and so on) within a superstructure of coexistence. The idea of “stories” insofar as “life events” (represented by their cultural vestiges) lacking in unifying meaning as opposed to History in which these vestiges become “facts of history” subject to the rule of meaning. The latency between the display case and the library. 3. Words that “negatively” (a cut-out text, sometimes empty, sometimes full) evoke a paradox: the moment to go deeper in the destruction of traditional cultural values (the work as creative-formal principle that debates the very idea of content and therefore does not offer meaning but permanently questions it) is when a nostalgia of the social communion of art and artists reappears, an anachronistic vindication of cultural values as a strategically political movement at the service of resistance. The clash between these three types of signs, and the fields of references they embrace, basically concerns the notion of History. How is the process produced by which some life events always remain in the continuum of life whilst others will become facts of history? Which part of all this corresponds to a process of mythification or mystification, and to what interests does it respond? The concepts of Culture and Art are also involved. Culture as the paroxysm of the meaning of a society and Art as the technique for handling meaninglessness. Can art fabricate meaning in any other way that is not negative, taking away meaning, remaining countercultural?



9 MYTHOLOGIES. EVERYONE OF US KNOW WHO WE ARE
2015
Wood construction on printed aluminum plate
160 x 300 x 31 cm

4. *SURMISE (BAD OBJECT)*, in two versions.

In issues pertaining to art it is critical to never lose sight of the object. The emotional investment which the artist projects onto objects transforms them into the indispensable adversaries of his ego. Objects and object relations that generate internal and external objects. Good objects, bad objects, transitional objects, partial objects, *objets petit-a*. Objects of attachment, of frustration or of rejection. Objects of love, of hate, of comfort and of fear, of desire. Rollercoasters to heaven and to hell until arriving at a certain “constancy” of the object, the point at which it can be valued over and above its function or its needs to satisfy. The point at which the object sustains itself beyond “good forms” and “good manners.”



11 *SURMISE (BAD OBJECT)*

2014-2015

Paint on paper and photography

120 x 70 cm (two items 70 x 50 cm each)





12 *SURMISE (BAD OBJECT)*
2014-2015
Wood construction, print on paper, photography
253 x 164 x 37 cm

5. The *DISORGANIZATION OF IDOLATRY* series.

This is a group of works based on photographic collages and intervened photographs that shuffle the deck of images discarded from previous works. Very often the *raison d'être* of an image lies in another image that is still to be made or, if it already exists, has never been placed alongside the former. According to Godard, two images are needed to create an image. An image would therefore always be an inbetween-image. Images are shuffled until a relationship of mutual necessity arises between two of them, akin to a crush that gives birth to a new image.



13
WHO
 2015
 Paint and collage on photography
 Three items 70 x 50 cm each



14
THAT WHICH IS CALLED SHADOW HERE
 2015
 Paint and collage on photography
 Three items 70 x 50 cm each



15
LABOR
2015
Paint and collage on photography
70 x 50 cm



16 *THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE SENSIBLE*
 2015
 Paint and collage on photography
 Two items 70 x 50 cm each



17
I DECLINE
 2015
 Paint and collage on photography
 Three items 70 x 50 cm each