
Time for the MACBA Collection

- Some 320 works by 80 artists, 250 of them seen for the first time within the context of the Collection, form the major exhibition that the Museum now devotes to new acquisitions. The show features works by, amongst many more, Constant Nieuwenhuys, Hans Haacke, Matt Mullican, Lawrence Weiner, David Lamelas, Palle Nielsen, Rita McBride, Dan Graham, Judith Barry, Ignasi Aballí and Sanja Iveković.
- The Capella MACBA presents an extensive programme of films, performances and lectures, the Museum opening hours are extended, and the MACBA Nights are brought forward to begin on May 15. Moreover, in July, the MACBA Study Centre will join in with events by presenting a selection of posters, magazines and other printed materials situated on the margins of art.

Exhibition title: *Time as Matter. MACBA Collection. New Acquisitions.* **Dates:** from 15 May to 31 August 2009. **Produced and organised by:** MACBA.

In 1967, David Lamelas aligned on the walls in a darkened gallery an array of television sets, all with one distinguishing feature: they showed no images. “The only thing you could see was the snow effect, the only thing you could hear was static”, Lamelas recalled in an interview in 1972. In this work, entitled *Situation of Time*, the Argentinian artist sought to explore the limits of temporality in art. Now, this installation is amongst the many works brought together by the Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA) as part of the exhibition *Time as Matter. MACBA Collection. New Acquisitions*. The show will feature new works acquired, donated or loaned over the last few years. The selection that has been made is by no means a random affair; quite the opposite. The time factor plays a crucial role in this show, which brings together around 320 works—250 of them seen for the first time in the context of the Collection—by 80 artists. The exhibition, which occupies all three Museum floors, covers the last fifty years in the history of art, and includes installations, paintings, sculptures, photographs, collages, models, books, etc, that use the time factor as just another material in artistic production. All these works, moreover, call on the spectator to play a decisive role in interpreting the many itineraries suggested by the exhibition. The artists represented in *Time as Matter* include by Franz Kline, Robert Motherwell, Antoni Tàpies, Gego, Pablo Palazuelo,

Constant Nieuwenhuys, Hans Haacke, Soledad Sevilla, Matt Mullican, Palle Nielsen, Richard Hamilton, Lawrence Weiner, León Ferrari, Tere Recarens, Gil J Wolman, Joan Rabascall, Jaume Xifra, Benet Rossell, Joan Jonas, Judith Barry, Dan Graham, Ignasi Aballí, Katalin Ladik, Sanja Iveković, Muntadas, Deimantas Narkevicius, Francesc Torres, Nancy Spero and Rita McBride, to name but a few.

The MACBA Collection had not featured in such an ambitious, major exhibition since 2007. Now, the Museum presents acquisitions by the Collection made since that date thanks to support, firstly, from the MACBA Foundation and, since 2008, from the Government of Catalonia and Barcelona City Council. Moreover, to mark this major presentation from the Collection, the Capella MACBA will host a parallel exhibition, *The Principle of Uncertainty*, from May 14 to June 12. *The Principle of Uncertainty* is an extensive, non-stop, four-week programme of films and videos, some of them from the MACBA Collection, as well as performances, debates and lectures. Admission to all these activities is free. Specially commissioned for the occasion, moreover, the artist **Tobias Putrih** has designed an installation resembling a grandstand. This structure, seating around 80 spectators, will turn the Capella MACBA into the most unusual amphitheatre. Finally, Museum opening hours will be extended and the MACBA Nights will be brought forward to begin on May 15, whilst the MACBA Study Centre will also join in this great initiative with the exhibition *On the Margins of Art. Creation and Political Engagement*, a wide-ranging vision of the different ways in which artists placed their creative abilities at the service of political activism over the second half of the 20th century, including magazines, books, posters, flyers, postcards and other printed materials.

Constant and the ultimate global utopia

The starting date for the exhibition *Time as Matter*, which casts a gaze at art history over the last fifty years through a series of itineraries that can each be seen as turning-points, is the year 1955. The choice of this date is no coincidence. It was in 1955, precisely, that the Palau de la Virreina hosted the exhibition *Modern Art in the USA*, as part of the Third Hispano-American Art Biennial. This was a period when the Franco regime was press-ganging avant-garde art in its struggle to emerge from isolation and find a place on the international stage. The presence of works by Robert Motherwell, Morris Louis and Franz Kline, amongst other representatives of American Abstract Expressionism, helped to consolidate Catalan and Spanish Informalism through a series of artists hitherto considered “anomalous” by the authorities. The first room in this new exhibition, organised by MACBA, pays tribute to the spirit of that decade, when abstraction prevailed over figuration, by featuring canvases by **Franz Kline, Morris Louis, Robert Motherwell** and **Clyfford Still** (loaned to the Museum by the Onnasch Collection), as well as works by **Antoni Tàpies, Antonio Saura, Manuel Millares, Jorge Oteiza** and **Eduardo Chillida**, amongst others.

The artist **Constant Nieuwenhuys** represents one of the turning-points illustrated in the exhibition. “What is New Babylon actually?”, the Dutch artist asked in 1966, “is it a social utopia? An urban architectural design? An artistic vision? A cultural revolution? A technical conquest? A solution to the practical problems of the industrial age?” Through a series of models, drawings, topological maps and other documents, the exhibition illustrates what was

the last global utopia of the last century, one on which the artist worked for thirty years. Along with the members of Lettrism and the Situationist International—represented later on in this exhibition by **Isidore Isou** and **Gil J Wolman**, the latter by two examples of his original *Scotch Art*, made using adhesive tape—Constant experimented with new materials, including plastics, and proposed a revolution against the banality of modern town planning, rampant consumerism and the lack of passion, producing an abundance of objects and information that, as this exhibition shows, went on to influence countless artists.

Just a few years later, **Richard Hamilton** and Lawrence Alloway coined the term Pop Art. With its cutting humour, this movement shared with the Situationists and their spirit of revolt a rejection of the anaesthetic effect that excess has on the individual, of conventionalism and of the reduction of ideas to the lowest common denominator. In Hamilton's case there was also a Catalan connection, as the artist spent several periods in Cadaqués, drawn here by his association with Marcel Duchamp, who also used to spend his summers in that seaside town near Girona. Indeed, Hamilton played a crucial role in the life of the Galeria Cadaqués, the tiny gallery that was bastion of avant-garde art in the 1960s and 70s. One of the exhibition rooms seeks to recreate that spirit, featuring a series of works by Hamilton himself, donated by the Bombelli family, including several produced in collaboration with **Dieter Roth**, and **Marcel Duchamp**. Hamilton also played a decisive role in the development of several Catalan artists. **Joan Rabascall** and **Miralda**, for example, who went to London in the early-60s and also met up in Paris with **Jaume Xifra**, **Benet Rossell** and **Dorothee Selz**. The exhibition also includes pieces by **Pere Noguera**.

The territory of speculation

Two decades after Constant, the city is no longer a scene for a new society in **Hans Haacke's** view; rather it is a place of speculation. The exhibition presents, for the first time in Spain, one of Haacke's most outstanding works: *Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971*. The piece, acquired by the MACBA Foundation and el Whitney Museum of American Art of New York, denounces huge property speculation operations perpetrated through the shady business dealings of Harry Shapolsky's real-estate firm. The work consists of 142 photographic views of buildings and typewritten texts describing the properties: address, type of building, size of site, purchase date, owner, rateable value, etc. Haacke's piece is accompanied here by another work from the same period, *City Slivers* (1971-1976), in which **Gordon Matta-Clark** provides an extraordinarily lucid and bitter view of the city's future, and *Splitting* (1974-1976).

"All art comes from anger", said **Lawrence Weiner**. In around 1960, Weiner began to experiment with new materials and structures of presentation. For example, he used dynamite to blast craters in a California park, creating sculptures in the shape of voids in the earth. However, he soon realised that he could replace the action itself by formulating the action in language, and in 1966 the North American artist made a U-turn by declaring that art rests on experience and belief: the work of art is completed in the act of "receivership," or reception. Aesthetics is no longer a quality of things; it is a condition of our behaviour as individuals. The exhibition illustrates several of Weiner's actions through books, acrylics and other pieces. One of his most outstanding works, *Some Objects of Desire* (2004), which

explores our relations with objects and things through a mathematical equation, is displayed on the walls of the Museum atrium.

The exhibition also features a series of abstract canvases by artists who, in the 1970s, rejected the principles of expressiveness in favour of mathematics and calculus, turning to basic geometric elements. The artists represented include **Pablo Palazuelo**, **Soledad Sevilla**, **Joaquim Chancho** and **Pic Adrian**, whilst, on the other side of the Atlantic, **Armando Andrade Tudela** and **Gego**, who uses the line and the cross to turn this geometry into something more organic. Unlike Floor 1 and Floor 2, the works installed on MACBA Floor 0 follow a chronological order, ending with a work by **Reimundo Patiño**.

The time factor

Situation of Time (1967), the work by **David Lamelas** which inspired the title of this exhibition and which represents another turning-point in the many different itineraries possible in the MACBA Collection, is installed on Floor 1. Whilst, traditionally, the time factor was a condition of experience, from the 1960s on it became just another material in artistic production. In consequence, the pieces described as follows are not inert, but contain their own duration.

The first room on this floor is devoted to a series of works which explore memory, censorship and repression through reference to recent violent conflicts. Cases in point are: **León Ferrari**'s piece *We Didn't Know*, a collection of newspaper stories about repression and violence under the Argentinian military dictatorship, rebutting the excuse many citizens used to justify their alleged ignorance about the vicious murders carried out by the military junta that ruled the country from 1976 to 1983; **Francesc Abad**'s installation *El camp de la Bota* (2004), a collective work aimed at restoring the memory of those executed by firing squad at the site known as El Camp de la Bota during the Spanish Civil War, and donated by the artist himself; and *Construction of the Matrix* (1976), **Francesc Torres**'s exploration of the role played by ideology in the construction of history.

In another series of works, **Muntadas**, **KP Bremer** and **Joan Rabascall** denounce media manipulation, whilst **Martha Rosler**, **Eugènia Balcells** and **Eulàlia Grau**, amongst others, explore the construction of feminine stereotypes. This latter theme is also reflected by **Sanja Iveković** in her series *Double Life*, part of which is included in the exhibition. *Double Life* is a photomontage of snapshots from different periods in the artist's life between 1943 and 1975, paired with photographs showing archetypal images of women taken from women's magazines. This section also includes a series of documents by **León Ferrari** which the artist donated to MACBA and of the experience in Argentina, **Tucumán Arde**. As well as photographs by **Philippe Thomas**, who took on the cloak of anonymity by adopting the pseudonym *Les ready-made appartiennent à tout le monde®*, and which were donated to MACBA by the artist's family.

Floor 1 features works on a range of different themes by **Santiago Cirugeda**, **Peter Downsbrough**, **Xavier Ribas**, **Antoni Llena**, **Alfons Borrell** and **Carlos Bunga**, as well as pieces by **Marine Hugonier**, **Marcel Broodthaers**, **Nancy Spero** and **Joan Brossa** that take literary experience as their starting-point. Particularly interesting is **Katalin Ladik**'s

series of collages on paper, made from cuttings from newspapers and women's magazines, sewing patterns and postage stamps featuring traditionally female themes and which, like a musical score, the artist used in her sound poetry performances.

The last room is devoted to **Judith Barry's** *In the shadow of the city... Vampirey* (1985), whose metaphoric title alludes to the myth of vampires and to the theme of insatiable desire, in this case for images. In this work, slides and films are alternately projected onto both sides of a single screen, whilst the spectator tries in vain to put together a possible narrative, moving from one side to the other in search of an explanation that simply does not exist. Finally, the tower houses the installation *Lines in the Sand* (2002), by **Joan Jonas**, a work based on the epic poem *Helen in Egypt* (1951-1955), in which Hilda Doolittle (H.D.), poet and a patient of Sigmund Freud before the Second World War, explores the myth of Helen of Troy. By juxtaposing images, texts and gestures, Jonas questions the official version.

Play, pleasure, cinema and theatre

There are two possible itineraries on Floor 2: the idea of play and pleasure as a counter-model to official education, suggested by Constant's work, and the tension between the cinema and the theatre. The landmarks along the first itinerary are provided by a series of installations and other key works from our times. One such is **Matt Mullican's** *M.I.T. Project* (1990-2009), de **Matt Mullican**, a three-dimensional piece occupying an entire room. *M.I.T. Project* invites the spectator to move around inside five interconnected compartments that reflect the artist's peculiar cosmology through different ideograms, and which are marked by different colours: green, dealing with materiality, blue for the everyday, yellow for the arts and sciences, black for language and red for the subjective side of life.

Another important section on this floor illustrates the entire documentation process behind **Palle Nielsen's** project *Modellen: En modell för ett kvalitativt samhälle* (The Model. A Model for a Qualitative Society), which the artist has now donated to MACBA. In 1968, Nielsen persuaded the director of the Moderna Museet in Stockholm to allow him to build a children's playground inside the museum. *The Model* consisted of a foam rubber basin, swings, water chutes and climbing ropes. The installation attracted 35,000 visitors, 20,000 of them children. Nielsen's proposal defied the counter-cultural dogma according to which the institutional space *per se* generates conformity and protects the *status quo*.

An Architecture of Play (1966) comprises photographs of London adventure playgrounds taken by the British architect **Nils Norman** inside a structure he invented himself, and which recreates the prototype for a children's attraction at the time, eventually banned as it did not meet safety regulations. Parallel to this, 271 images from the series *Playgrounds* (1995-2004), by **Peter Friedl**, are projected constantly onto the walls. The photographs form an inventory of the playgrounds that Friedl has documented in his visits to cities all over the world, and are taken at the height of a child's eyes, as if the artist sought to recreate the field of view of young visitors. A work by **Öyvind Fahlström** complete this section devoted to play.

Finally, the tensions generated between the theatre and the cinema are illustrated in nine works by nine artists. These include another installation by Lamelas, *Film Script (Manipulation of Meaning)*, a silent film with three slide projections produced in 1972. Moving on, in *Desaparicions II* (Disappearances II, 2005), **Ignasi Aballí** paraphrases the title of the writer and film director Georges Perec's most famous novel, *La disparition* (translated into English as *A Void*), a 300-page work written without ever using the letter "e", perhaps the most common vowel in French. Aballí's book-like work, which takes the shape of a magazine rack, enables spectators to browse through 24 posters for 24 films planned but never made by Perec. In this way, the posters reflect the absence of the films, their disappearance.

In *Attica* (2008) **Manon de Boer** takes his inspiration from the riot that took place at Attica State Prison (New York) in 1971, when inmates demanded to be "treated like human beings" and 43 people were killed in a brutal police assault to restore order. Here, too, is a series of posters for films made by Jean-Luc Godard. For its part, **Asier Mendizabal's** *Cinema* (1999) takes as its starting-point a text by the Groupe Medvedkine as the piece explores the emancipatory potential of the cinema in the context of the class struggle, from Russian avant-garde experiments to the May'68 workers' and students' movements. This section also includes videos by **Vito Acconci**, **Bruce Naumann** and **Jana Sterbak**.

Deimantas Narkevicius, who explores narrative structures through film and video, contributes *The Role of a Lifetime* (2003), an imaginary interview with Peter Watkins, the father of fictional documentary. In 1965, Watkins invented a film about nuclear war, *The War Game*, which was censored by the BBC. Narkevicius's own film ends with an impassioned and pessimistic reply by Watkins on the need to criticise the power structures that underlie media portrayals of politics and history. This exhibition of works from the MACBA Collection ends with two absolutely outstanding installations. The first of these, *Arena* (1997), by **Rita McBride**, is presented for the first time in Spain. *Arena* is imbued with an intense theatrical dimension that transforms the very nature of the exhibition space. Finally, a series of works by **Dan Graham** are projected. These go beyond the eye and the gaze to emphasise the crucial role played by the body, illustrating the relationship between performance and perception.

Capella MACBA: "The Principle of Uncertainty"

Parallel to the exhibition, from May 15 to June 12, the Capella MACBA will stage *The Principle of Uncertainty*, a non-stop, four-week programme of activities. Staged at different times over more than nine hours every day, this extensive programme will feature a series of activities aimed at exploring the many different ways of generating hypotheses and reflecting on artistic, cultural and scientific creativity. The films and art videos will be shown from 11 am to 5.30 pm every day, whilst, from 7.30 on, a platform will open for conversations between artists, performances, film and open radio featuring different themes. To further mark the occasion, the artist **Tobias Putrih** has transformed the space in the Capella MACBA. In his intervention, Putrih creates ephemeral architecture to develop ideas about the actor-spectator inherited from modernity and the avant-gardes.

In 1969, the artist **James Lee Byars** created the performance entitled *The World Question Center*. The original idea was to lock one hundred thinkers, scientists and artists into a room and invite them to ask each other questions that they had already put to themselves. The version that finally took place, produced by Belgian TV, was a performance in which Byars contacted them all by telephone. The starting-point for this project was the same idea about the importance of providing a space for asking questions and developing hypotheses. The titles for the three episodes that form the structure of the programme now presented at the Capella MACBA are taken from Byars's work, acquired recently by the MACBA Collection. These titles are: *What are you thinking about?* (May 14-24); *Is self-consciousness a sufficient option?* (May 25-31); *Why is it so difficult to make useful mistakes?* (June 1-7) and *How fast does an idea travel?* (June 8-14).

The film and video sessions will feature works by: **Adrian Piper, Jurgen Leth, Babette Mangolte, Antoni Padrós, Samuel Beckett** and **Alan Schneider, John Baldessari, Johan Grimonprez, Susan Hiller, Michael Snow, Bruce Nauman, Dan Graham, Martha Rosler, Robert Fillou, Ernesto Giménez Caballero, Ann Lislegaard, Craig Baldwin, Matt Mullican, Jordan Wolfson, Neil Cummings & Marysia Lewandowska, Chris Marker, Marjolijn Dijkman, Mariana Castillo, Roberto Coughi, Susan Philipsz, Olaf Breuning, Luke Fowler, Raymond Pettibon, Paul Sharits** and **James Lee Byars**. Those taking part in the activities include: **Rita McBride, Discoteca Flaming Star, Mat Mullican, Miguel Noguera, Gabriel Acebedo, Johan Grimonprez, Harun Farocki, Anselm Franke, Dora García, Antonio Acín** and **Deimantas Narkevicius**.

MACBA Study Centre: “On the Margins of Art”
--

Complementary to *Time as Matter. MACBA Collection. New Acquisitions*, the MACBA Study Centre MACBA will host the exhibition *On the Margins of Art. Creation and Political Engagement*. Curated by Guy Schraenen, this show, which opens on July 9, will feature materials from the Centre's collections, illustrating a wide-ranging vision of the different ways in which artists placed their creative abilities at the service of political activism over the second half of the 20th century. The pieces selected for the exhibition include magazines, books, posters, flyers, postcards and other printed materials that occupy points somewhere along the broad spectrum that ranges from the purest art to the most direct political statement. The artists represented in this exhibition include **Joseph Beuys, Mirtha Dermisache, Antonio Dias, Guerrilla Girls, Alfredo Jaar, Barbara Kruger, Jenny Holzer, Muntadas, Mauricio Nannucci, Joan Rabascall, Ben Vautier** and **Edgardo Antonio Vigo**, along with such collectives as **Provo** and **Art in Ruins**, amongst others.

Time as Matter

MACBA Collection. New Acquisitions

From 15 May to 31 August 2009

Official opening: Thursday, May 14, at 7.30 pm

■ **MUSEU D'ART CONTEMPORANI DE BARCELONA (MACBA).** Plaça dels Àngels, 1. 08001 Barcelona

■ **CAPELLA MACBA.** Carrer dels Àngels, 7. Activities: From May 15 to June 12. Four programmes of film and video projections, from 11 am to 5.30 pm. Platform of activities, from 7.30 pm

■ **MACBA STUDY AND DOCUMENTATION CENTRE** (opposite the main Museum building). Exhibition *On the Margins of Art*. From July 9

■ **MACBA NIGHTS.** May 15 to September 18, every Thursday and Friday, from 8 pm to midnight

■ **DAILY GUIDED TOURS** (included in admission price)

■ **TIMES.** Mondays and Wednesdays, from 11 am to 7.30 pm (8 pm from June 24). Thursdays and Fridays, from 11 am to midnight. Sundays and holidays, from 10 am to 3 pm.

Further information and graphic material:

MACBA Press Service and Public Relations

Tel.: 93 481 33 56 / 93 481 47 17 – Email: press@macba.cat