

KUNSTHALLE  BASEL

**„A Stake in the Mud, A Hole in the Reel:
Land Art’s Expanded Field, 1968–2008‘**

A film & video programme
curated by Latitudes
www.LTTDS.org

Introduction by
Eva Scharrer, curator and art critic

Tuesday, May 27, 2008, 8pm
Presented by KUNSTHALLE BASEL in STADTKINO BASEL

THE PROGRAMME

Borrowing its title from the writings of Robert Smithson, this film programme revisits a selection of moving-image works that form part of the historical memory of Land Art, through and alongside more recent productions by contemporary artists. [1] Like other terms that are now used to designate the 'expanded field' of the artistic avant-gardes of the 1960s and 1970s—Arte Povera and Conceptual Art included—Land Art neither articulated a coherent movement, nor an agreed set of principles. [2] Yet the term now broadly embraces the monumental excavations and constructions that were realised in the deserts of America's west—works by Walter de Maria, Nancy Holt, Dennis Oppenheim, and others—as well as projects by European artists such as Richard Long, that dealt with contrasting topologies and distinct motives.

It is precisely because of Land Art's evasion of a fixed definition that allows the art of the present to expand, obfuscate or demystify the many motifs that have taken hold within it. Accordingly, there are relationships in this programme that are formed directly across time with specific artworks (most conspicuously in Cyprien Gaillard's application of Smithson's iconic *Spiral Jetty*, 1970), yet others where the magnetism is not declared, and is more remote. Indeed a concern with remoteness, together with the powerful allure of specific sites, weaves throughout the films' itinerary, which includes the sewers of New York and Vienna (Gordon Matta-Clark, Hans Schabus), the deserts of California (Mario Garcia Torres), the mountains of the Basque country (Ibon Aranberri), and the beaches of Taveuni (Nikolaj Recke).

We see territorial markings that could be read within a language of expanded sculpture (Barry Flanagan, de Maria), as well as displacements more legible as social or political actions (Francis Alÿs). Absurd gestures (Damián Ortega) meet tours of natural phenomenon (Nancy Holt and Smithson); and geometrical experiments (Jan Dibbets) meet ecological narratives (Donna Conlon). The celestial spirit of works such as Holt's *Sun Tunnels* (1973-1976) are echoed in videos including *The Sun* by Maria Thereza Alves which similarly ponder Earth's place in the Solar System.

We cannot easily ignore that this programme is an exhibition experienced in time, that deals specifically with moving images. Artists' use of the medium of film here appears as a solution to a specific problem—how to record and represent something that would otherwise be inaccessible—while apparently creating another: what (or where) is the artwork? It is worth considering how profoundly "making a film is one thing, viewing a film another." [3] What is the status of each film we might ask: informal artefact, 'making of' movie, autonomous fiction, or something quite different? The artists involved in Gerry Schum's seminal *LAND ART* broadcasts screened here, for example, conceived footage especially for television. Furthermore, how do we relate to a presentation of an event that is adrift from an 'original'? *Floating Island to Travel Around Manhattan Island* (1970/2005), for instance, records an action that was only realised more than thirty years after its conception, while Jordan Wolfson's *Landscape for Fire* re-stages a 1972 work by another artist.

Latitudes (Max Andrews & Mariana Cánepa Luna)

[1] "a [wooden] stake in the mud ... a hole in the [film] reel" is taken from Smithson's speculation on the processes at work throughout the site and film of *Spiral Jetty*: "A 'scale of centres' ... could be disentangled as follows: a) ion source in cyclotron, b) a nucleus, c) dislocation point, d) a wooden stake in the mud, e) axis of helicopter, f) James Joyce's ear channel, g) the Sun, h) a hole in the film reel." "The Spiral Jetty" (1971), in Smithson, Robert, and Jack D. Flam. 1996. Robert Smithson. The Collected Writings. The documents of twentieth-century art. Berkeley: University of California Press. p.150

[2] Rosalind Krauss, 'Sculpture in the Expanded Field', October, Vol. 8. (Spring, 1979), pp. 30-44

[3] Smithson, 'A Cinematic Atopia' (1971). op. cit. p.138



Film still from:
HANS SCHABUS (1970 Watschig, Austria. Lives in Vienna, Austria): *Western*, 2002
11'. Colour. Sound.
Courtesy of the artist and Engholm Engelhorn, Vienna

Summary about the curators

Latitudes (www.LTTDS.org) is an independent curatorial office based in Barcelona, Spain, founded in April 2005 and directed by Max Andrews and Mariana Cánepa Luna. Latitudes collaborates with artists and institutions to produce exhibitions, commissions, publications, and research initiatives. Projects include: the group exhibitions *Extraordinary Rendition* at Nogueras Blanchard gallery, Barcelona (2007) and *Greenwashing. Environment: Perils, Promises & Perplexities*, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin (2008); editing the magazine issue UOVO#14 titled *Ecology, Luxury and Degradation* (2007) and the publication *LAND, ART: A Cultural Ecology Handbook* (2006); and organising a 3-day symposium in partnership with the Royal Society of Arts for the 8th Sharjah Biennial, UAE. They are part of the editorial board of The Bookmakers Ed., Turin and curatorial advisors for APT Intelligence.

Latitudes would like to thank the following:

The participating artists; Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zurich; Engholm Engelhorn, Vienna; Isabella Bortolozzi Galerie, Berlin; Jan Mot, Brussels; Johann König, Berlin; kurimanzutto, Mexico City; Stalke Galleri, Sãby; Thomas Rehbein Galerie, Cologne; Cosmic Galerie, Paris; Rebecca Cleman at Electronic Arts Intermix, New York; Marieke van Loenhout at the Groningen Museum, Groninger and The Netherlands Media Art Institute Montevideo/Time Based Art, Amsterdam; Neus Miró, Barcelona, Victoria Falcó, Centro de Arte y Naturaleza, Fundación Beulas, Huesca and Eva Scharer, Basel, for their advice; and particularly to the Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporáneo for their kind invitation and most specially to Tatiana Cuevas, Associate Curator, for her trust and collaboration.

Programme 1

Duration: 1h 38m



Film still from:
GERRY SCHUM (1938 Bergisch Gladbach, Germany-1973 Düsseldorf, Germany): *LAND ART*, 1969
32'. Black & white. Sound (introduction only), 16mm transferred to DVD
Courtesy Groninger Museum, Groningen

RICHARD LONG (1945 Bristol, UK. Lives in Bristol, UK):
Walking a Straight 10 Miles Line Forward and Back Shooting Every Half Mile (Dartmoor England, January 1969), 1969, 6'

GERRY SCHUM (1938 Bergisch Gladbach, Germany-1973 Düsseldorf, Germany)

LAND ART, 1969

32'. Black & white. Sound (introduction only)

16mm transferred to DVD

Courtesy Groninger Museum, Groningen

Schum pioneered art on television as a response to what he saw as the commercialisation of the art world. With his Fernsehgalerie (Television Gallery) he produced and distributed works conceived in collaboration with artists, making "television turn into a museum and the television screen into an exhibition." The first of Schum's productions to be shown on the Sender Freies Berlin TV Channel, *LAND ART* was broadcast on 15 April 1969 and subsequently included in the landmark exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form* later that year. Following short speeches by Schum and Jean Leering – the then director of the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam – we see the artists' short films with no further commentary.

RICHARD LONG (1945 Bristol, UK. Lives in Bristol, UK)

Walking a Straight 10 Miles Line Forward and Back Shooting Every Half Mile (Dartmoor England, January 1969), 1969, 6'

BARRY FLANAGAN (1941 Prestatyn, UK. Lives in Dublin, Ireland)

A Hole in the Sea, 1969, 3'45"

DENNIS OPPENHEIM (1938 Electric City, US. Lives in New York, US)

Time track, 1969, 2'05"

ROBERT SMITHSON (1938 Passaic, US-1973 Amarillo, US)

Fossil Quarry Mirror with Four Mirror Displacements, 1969, 3'05"

MARINUS BOEZEM (1934 Leerdam, The Netherlands)

Sand Fountain, 1969, 4'

JAN DIBBETS (1941 Weert, The Netherlands. Lives in Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

12 Hours Tide Object with Correction of Perspective, 1969, 7'30"

WALTER DE MARIA (1935 Albany, US. Lives in New York, US)

Two Lines Three Circles on the Desert, 1969, 4'45"

Programme 2

Duration: 1h 15min

NANCY HOLT (1938 Worcester, US. Lives in New Mexico, US) & **ROBERT SMITHSON** (1938 Passaic, US-1973 Amarillo, US)

Mono Lake, 1968/2004

19'54". Colour. Sound.

Super 8 film and Instamatic slides transferred to video

Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York.

Art © Nancy Holt/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

Art © The Estate of Robert Smithson/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

This footage follows Smithson, his artist wife Nancy Holt and fellow artist Michael Heizer on an expedition to the hypersaline Mono Lake in California in July 1968. The 'home movie' presents an intimate view of these three seminal figures of Land Art as they scramble around salt and geological features; Smithson and Heizer can be heard reading from books about the lake's unusual ecosystem. Smithson and Holt planned to edit the footage together but the former's death in 1973 left the material untouched, and the film was only completed in 2004.

ROBERT SMITHSON (1938 Passaic, US-1973 Amarillo, US)

Floating Island to Travel Around Manhattan Island, 1970/2005

16'. Colour. Sound.

Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York.

Art © The Estate of Robert Smithson/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY

Floating Island... was realised posthumously in 2005, and was based on the artist's 1970 drawing of a barge-island, landscaped with earth, trees, shrubs and rocks, being towed by a tug boat. Following the fabricated island as it circles Manhattan, the video documents the trip of this "non-site" of New York's Central Park. We also see the evolution of the project, which was produced by the Whitney Museum of American Art and art organisation Minetta Brook. In Smithson's universe, nothing is solitary, isolated, or fixed: even islands move.

GORDON MATTA-CLARK (1943 New York, US-1978 New York, US)

Substrait (Underground Dailies), 1976

30'. Black & white and colour. Sound.

16mm transferred to DVD.

Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York

Matta-Clark's attraction to New York City as an contemporary archeological site is palpable throughout his sculptural, photographic and filmic work. As in several of the artist's projects, this unedited footage reveals what lies beneath the surfaces of cities. Scouting a range of sites (railway tracks, Grand Central Station, Croton Aqueduct, etc.) Matta-Clark details the variety and complexity of the subterranean life of the metropolitan area. Reptilian machinery, dank brick tunnels and blooms of mushrooms are among the discoveries of this otherworldly expedition.



Film still from:

FRANCIS ALÿS (1959 Antwerp, Belgium. Lives in Mexico City, Mexico): *When Faith Moves Mountains (Making of)*, 2002

15'. Colour. Sound. Spanish with English subtitles

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zurich

FRANCIS ALÿS (1959 Antwerp, Belgium. Lives in Mexico City, Mexico)

Cuando la fe mueve montañas / When Faith Moves Mountains (Making of), 2002-4

15'. Colour. Sound. Spanish with English subtitles.

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Peter Kilchmann, Zurich

This project of 'ecological displacement' gathered five hundred volunteers to realise a poetic and futile task. Forming a line, they displaced a huge sand dune on the periphery of Lima, Peru. This useless but heroic action, realised under the beating heat of the sun, appears almost biblical in proportions. It alludes to the desire of collective action, suggesting that if enough people get together and believe change is possible, then maybe it can actually happen.

Solo projects include: UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2007-8); Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires (2006); Artangel, London (2006). Alÿs's 2004-06 exhibition *Walking distance from the studio* was presented at the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg; Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nantes; Museu d'Art Contemporani Barcelona and Museo de San Ildefonso. Group exhibitions include: 2007 Venice Biennale, Performa 2005, 2004 Carnegie International.

DONNA CONLON (1966, Atlanta, US. Lives in Panama City, Panama)

Country Road, 2002

1'29". Colour. No sound.

Courtesy of the artist and Giorgio Persano, Turin

Here we see the artist walking diligently along the verge of a narrow highway trawling for trash and detritus—fast food containers, cans, used clothes—that have been thrown from passing cars. Conlon reconfigures the rubbish into a line in the middle of the road, a geometric displacement that brings to mind the desert scars made by artists such as Michael Heizer.

Conlon's work has been included in the 2005 Venice Biennale, (Arsenale & Italo-Latin American Institute); Seventh Panamanian Biennial of Art (2005); Museum of Contemporary Art, Panamá (2004); *Sculptors at Work*, Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. (2001). In 2003 she was awarded the Residency Prize at the Caribbean Biennial (Dominican Republic) for her works *Country Road* and *Natural Refuge*.

HANS SCHABUS (1970 Watschig, Austria. Lives in Vienna, Austria)

Western, 2002

11'. Colour. Sound.

Courtesy of the artist and Engholm Engelhorn, Vienna

Schabus navigates through the sewers of Vienna in a self-built boat called *Forlorn*. The video navigates through several sewage tracts until reaching a canal, a one way trip through a sinister labyrinth, a dark and obscure underground world. Schabus sets up several metaphors and associations, including to Graham Green's novel *The Third Man* (1950).

Schabus represented Austria at the 2005 Venice Biennale. Solo projects include: The Curve, Barbican Gallery, London (2008); Kasseler Kunstverein, Kassel, Germany (2006); Kunsthau Bregenz, Bregenz, Austria (2004); and Secession, Vienna, Austria (1996 and 2003). Group exhibitions include Site Santa Fe, New Mexico (2007); Turin Triennial (2005); and Manifesta 4, Frankfurt (2004).

IBON ARANBERRI (1969 Itziar, Spain. Lives in Itziar, Spain)

Zuloa (Ir.T. nº513), 2004

8'. Colour. Sound.

Courtesy of the artist and Isabella Bortolozzi Galerie, Berlin

In Aranberri's extensive project *Zuloa (Ir.T. nº513)*, caves are placed at the intersection of ideology, nature and public art. This video focuses on a group excursion to a particular cave of biological and archeological interest which the artist physically sealed off, leaving only an access hole for bats and a lockable door. Aranberri connects the motif of the cave with imagined archetypes of Basque nationalism, and the embedded myth of the origins of human beings.

Aranberri participated in Documenta 12, Kassel; his 2007 solo show *Integration* was at Kunsthalle Basel, and the Galleria d'Arte Moderna di Bologna. Group shows include projects at Kunstverein Frankfurt (2007); Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Rotterdam (2005); Museu d'Art Contemporani Barcelona (2004) and Manifesta 4, Frankfurt.

MARIO GARCIA TORRES (1975, Monclova, Mexico. Lives in La Jolla, US)

Abandoned and Forgotten Land Works That Are Not Necessarily Meant To Be Seen As Art, 2004

7'. Black & white. No sound.

Courtesy of the artist and Jan Mot, Brussels

Abandoned Land Works... is a succession of Land-Art-look-alike aerial and surface images of rudimentary abandoned air strips found throughout California. This collection of slides presents an assemblage of features that will eventually disappear, just as the 1970s earthworks are being eroded. It recalls too the mysterious Nazca lines in Peru, and Erik von Däniken's infamous explanation of them as landing strips for aliens.

Projects include those at Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2007); Kadist Art Foundation, Paris (2007); Frieze Art Fair Projects, London; Jan Mot, Brussels (2006); Meyer-Riegger, Karlsruhe (2006). Recent group shows: Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2007), 52 Venice Biennale (2007), Laboratorio Arte Alameda, Mexico City (2007), ARC Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, (2005).

THIAGO ROCHA PITTA (1980 Tiradentes, Brazil. Lives in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)

Zênite invertido / Inverted Zenith, 2005

11'54". Colour. Sound.

Courtesy of the artist, Andersen_s, Copenhagen and A Gentil Carioca, Rio de Janeiro

Filmed on the shore of Lake Pampulha, the film centres on a circular vortex of water in a vessel, which diminishes in volume until it is completely sucked out and then rapidly expelled again. The work maintains formal connections to Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*, as well as the cosmic whirlpools evoked by tales such as Jules Verne's "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea" or Edgar Allan Poe's "A Descent into the Maelström", where ships are swirled down into powerful tidal currents off the coast of Norway.

Amongst his recent solo shows are: *Uma Trilogia (A Trilogy)*, Vale do Anhangabaú, São Paulo (2007), *Heritage*, ANDERSEN_S Contemporary, Copenhagen (2007), at the A Gentil Carioca gallery, Rio de Janeiro (2004) and Fonte, Museu de Arte da Pampulha, Belo Horizonte. Group shows include: *Paraísos Indómitos*, MARCO, Vigo (2008); Singapore Biennial, Singapore (2006) and Bienal do Mercosul, Porto Alegre (2005).

MARIA THEREZA ALVES (1961, São Paulo, Brazil. Lives in Rome, Italy)

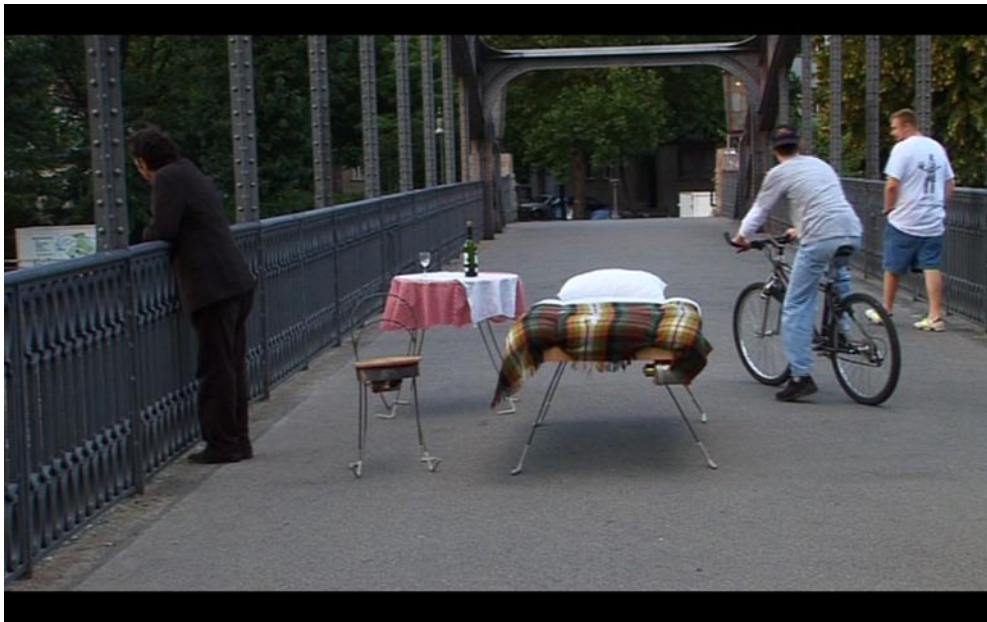
The Sun, 2006

5'03". Colour. Sound. Italian with English subtitles.

Courtesy of the artist

The 200 residents of the village of Viganella in the Italian Alps are surrounded by a very steep valley and do not receive any direct sunlight between November and February. After much deliberation, the inhabitants recently found a solution to receive sunshine by means of a large mirror placed at a strategic angle on the south-facing slope on the mountainside above. Operated by a computer, the mirror will reflect the sun onto the village's main piazza.

Recent solo shows include: Museum of Antiquities, Lisbon (2006) and Musée Portuaire, Dunkirk (2005). Group shows include: *QUAUHNAHUAC - The Straight Line is a Utopia*, Kunsthalle Basel (2006); La Chaufferie, Strasbourg (2005); Kunsthallen Nikolaj, Copenhagen (2005); Liverpool Biennial (2004); BüroFriedrich, Berlin (2001); *InSite*, Tijuana and San Diego (2000).



Film still from:
DAMIÁN ORTEGA (1967 Mexico City, Mexico. Lives in Mexico City and Berlin, Germany): *Reticencia al trabajo, Segunda parte*, 2006
 5'15". Colour. Sound.
 Courtesy of the artist and kurimanzutto, Mexico City

DAMIÁN ORTEGA (1967 Mexico City, Mexico. Lives in Mexico City, Mexico and Berlin, Germany)
Reticencia al trabajo, Segunda parte, 2006
 5'15". Colour. Sound.
 Courtesy of the artist and kurimanzutto, Mexico City

The first part of *Reticencia al trabajo* (2006) was presented in a private apartment as part of the 4th Berlin Biennial. A bed, a chair and a table placed in an otherwise unremarkable setting would unexpectedly and spontaneously begin to shake. In the project's companion part in video, and with similar lack of apparent motive, we see the artist take this artwork to the 'remote' outskirts of Berlin and execute an abrupt gesture that perhaps recalls Lawrence Weiner's *Beached* (1970).

Major solo exhibitions include: DAAD Gallery, Berlin (2007); REDCAT and Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2005); Tate Modern, London (2005), Museu da Arte Pampulha, Belo Horizonte, Brazil (2005), Kunsthalle Basel (2004) and Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia (2002). Group exhibitions include: 4th Berlin Biennial (2006), São Paulo Biennial (2006), Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2003) and the 50th Venice Biennale (2003).

NIKOLAJ RECKE (1969 Copenhagen, Denmark. Lives in Copenhagen, Denmark)
Tomorrow is today, 2006
 3'. Colour. Sound.
 Originally a two-screen installation
 Courtesy of the artist, Stalke Galleri, SÅby and Thomas Rehbein Galerie, Cologne

Recke's film is set on the meridian of 180° longitude on Fijian island of Taveuni. By virtue of the International Date Line, the time zones either side of this imaginary border are 24 hours apart. The work correspondingly shows a view of 'tomorrow's' horizon on the left and a shot of 'yesterday's' horizon on the right, capturing two days simultaneously leaving out the 'today' - a time-travelling phenomenon that can only truly exist in the mind.

Recent solo shows include: *Calendar of Tomorrows*, Thomas Rehbein Galerie, Cologne (2006); *Users Club w/artnode*, Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen (2001). Group shows include: Projecte SD, Barcelona (2006); ZKM Karlsruhe (2005); Overgaden, Copenhagen (2005); AROS Museum, Århus (2004); Harbourfront Centre, Toronto (2004).

JORDAN WOLFSON (1980 New York, US. Lives in New York, US and Berlin, Germany)
Landscape for Fire, 2007
 7'. Colour. Sound.
 Courtesy of the artist, Johann König, Berlin and T293, Naples

Wolfson's work grew out of film made in 1972 by the English artist Anthony McCall in which he attempted to integrate performance, installation, sculpture and images in movement. Thirty years on, Wolfson re-staged this work of the past as though it were a ritual, the repetition of which invoked the almost mystical aura that often surrounds Conceptual, Land and Performance art from the early 1970s.

Recent solo shows include: Johann König, Berlin (2007); GAMEc, Bergamo (2007); T293 Naples, Italy (2005); Kunsthalle Zurich (2004). Groups shows include: *Learn to Read*, Tate Modern, London (2007); Whitney Biennial, New York (2006); *Uncertain States of America*, Astrup Fearnley Museum of Modern Art, Oslo, Norway (2005-touring); *None of the above*, Swiss Institute, New York (2004).

CYPRIEN GAILLARD (1980, Paris, France. Lives in Paris, France)
Real Remnants of Fictive Wars VI, 2008
 DVD, 1' 40"
 Courtesy of the artist and Cosmic Galerie, Paris

This film focusses on Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970), inserting itself into a debate about its future preservation, as well as its function as a site of artistic pilgrimage. Using industrial fire extinguishers Gaillard released a thick white fog over the Great Salt Lake, Utah. As if inciting an act of homage, vandalism or emergency, the iconic work's legacy as a visual phenomenon is temporarily denied as it is veiled in a faux-Romantic mist.

Recent shows projects include: *Homes & Graves & Gardens*, Centre d'Art et du Paysage de l'Île de Vassivière (2007); L'Atelier du Jeu de Paume, Paris (2007); Cosmic Galerie, Paris (2007); Laura Bartlett Gallery, London (2006). Groups shows include: Proyecto Arte Contemporánea, Murcia (2008); Biennale de Lyon (2007); *Bring the War Home*, Elisabeth Dee Gallery, New York (2006).