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800 inmigrantes	2.033 inmigrantes
153 inmigrantes	50 inmigrantes
29.000 inmigrantes	90 inmigrantes
619.598 inmigrantes	220 inmigrantes
93 inmigrantes	558 inmigrantes
Cuatro inmigrantes	70 inmigrantes
21 inmigrantes	26.000 inmigrantes
72 inmigrantes	144 inmigrantes
16 inmigrantes	1.850 inmigrantes
200.000 inmigrantes	1.000 inmigrantes
254 inmigrantes	173 inmigrantes
13 inmigrantes	15 inmigrantes
85.000 inmigrantes	280 inmigrantes
un inmigrante	11 inmigrantes
112 inmigrantes	528 inmigrantes
49 inmigrantes	400 inmigrantes
152.000 inmigrantes	cinco inmigrantes
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Ignasi Aballí

Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, Spain

Max Andrews

Brutally white and replete with architectural tics and redundant appendices, Richard Meier's 1995 MACBA building made Ignasi Aballí's works seem all the more rascally. In this partial retrospective the artist had decided to present a deliberately modest and disjointed selection in several disparate gallery spaces, walkways and public areas throughout the museum, as if scorning imagined house rules. Each of the show's two subsequent venues – it travels to the Museu Serralves, Porto, and the Ikon Gallery, Birmingham – presents a significant reconfiguration of the check-list. In Barcelona coherent groups of works conspired in clusters while others were adrift in isolated areas of the building and threatened to disappear entirely. However, on the evidence of the artist's vinyl wall texts Nothing to See Anywhere, Nothing to Hear Anywhere, Nothing that Moves Anywhere (all 1998) or the cinema installation Coming Soon (2005) – a video of the words of its title – the exhibition's trip away from Aballí's native city may even be mischievously slighter and more dispersed. Dust (Ten Years in the Studio) (1995–2005), a square of grey canvas, was hung high in the sanitary atrium, seemingly banished there in mock parental-curatorial disgust. And the waggish People (2000–5), a shoeprint-scuffed wall, made the otherwise gleaming second-floor concourse look like a neglected, vandalized part of the museum. Aballí employed further evidence of the museum's secret identity by extracting the projected video 0-24 h (2005) from more than 15 hours of time-coded nocturnal CCTV footage.

In the glass entrance rotunda a clutch of works regarded painting with a shrug. With Waste (2001) pots of white paint (large cans of industrial primer in one work, a group of smaller jars and tins of various oils and acrylics in another) had been opened and abandoned. As the artist has suggested, 'the paint has dried while I am thinking about what to do with it.' In these works Aballí plays the role of a stand-up comedian telling mother-in-law jokes about painting's endgame; the works assumed both a heavy theoretical burden and a stubborn comfort in their apparent lack of innovation. Big Mistake (1998–2005) and Correction (2001) – squares of Tipp-Ex painted to obliterate an underlying square of black paint and a mirror respectively – continued this Martin Creed-like streak of wry Minimalism and implicit critique of the building's aseptic persona.

It was in the gallery that hosted his 'Lists' (1997–2005) that the artist's nagging concern with apparently arbitrary accumulations translated most tellingly into a public space with a collective consciousness. The Wounded, Time, Immigrants and others digital prints derived from fragments snipped from newspaper articles. These two-column mantras express, for example, numbers of dead or amounts of money – statistics with no elaboration as to which disaster or deal they might have once referred to. Likewise these numbing abstractions of death or economics reveal the symptoms of our need to equate the magnitude of a disaster with a sum total of victims or to comprehend wealth solely in terms of currency.

Opposite, the 12 panels of Calendar 2004 (2005) present the front-page images from every issue of the newspaper El País for 2004, scaled down digitally as if each were the day-of-the-month squares on a wall calendar. Although not as pervasive in its analysis as Jonathan J. Harris's tenbyten.org project (which has been generating and archiving matrices of the most ubiquitous breaking news images of every hour for the last several years), it was an equally sobering account of the velocity of news. Photographs of the marriage of the heir to the Spanish throne, Prince Felipe, to the former television news anchor Letizia Ortiz Rocasolano in May here became a kind of media-will-eat-itself Ourobouros. The wordless panels were a catatonic gloss of images, and all events had become equally urgent and instantly stale – from the Madrid train bombings and domestic elections in March through the pageantry of the Athens Olympics in the summer to the US presidential race in November. Punctuated by stock photographs of grey-suited gestural diplomacy (the handshakes, hand-wringing and shoulder presses of Aznar, Zapatero, Putin, Blair, Chirac, Bush et al.), the relentless progression was nevertheless defied by singular images – of finger-wagging Saddam or of Abu Ghraib atrocities, for example – that refused to be diluted. Following in the tradition of Sarah Charlesworth's 'Modern History' series (1978), Calendar 2004 sliced through an organ of a global press that mainlines increasingly potent images while purporting to reflect national psyches.

Max Andrews



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