

I Am All the Selves that I Have Been

Fina Miralles. On the Political Potential in the Beauty and the Poetry of the Image

Teresa Grandas

The camera follows Fina Miralles in a sequence shot as she makes her way around the city. The shoes she wears have foam soles that have been carved in such a way as to form her first name on her left shoe and her surname on the right. Filled with ink, they leave an imprint of the artist's name with each step she takes as she recites the following text: 'In the city, the characteristic traits of our capitalist society are plain to see. Power, in the sense of property, is deeply rooted in our way of life, our conduct, our organisation and our laws. Not only do we legalise our personal goods in order to acquire power, home, car, land, objects, but also the people who are under our protection: my wife, my child; naming to reaffirm that they are ours, part of our property and that they are in our power. The shoes I present with my name on the sole, like an office stamp, and the action of printing my name around all the places I pass through simply demonstrate this sense of possession, and power, appropriating things to the point of absurdity and unbelievability, saying that the place I pass through is also mine. It's mine.'¹ It is a tracking shot that Miralles had planned by photographing each of the places she proposed to take in on her urban crossing of Barcelona: the homes, the monuments and the spaces that make up the urban landscape, an artificial landscape created by humans.

The film only captures the rhythmical movement of her gait as she presses her feet firmly down on the pavement and road surface so that her repeated signature is left clearly stamped with every step she takes, in each of her footsteps. With this gesture, the artist alludes to her appropriation of what had previously been a shared space, the public space. Let us not forget, however, that in this act she is also transferring her mark of authorship: she is filming her progress and she is also signing her work. In 1968, On Kawara decided to trace the

exact itinerary he had followed that day onto a plan of Mexico City, where he happened to be at the time. Thereafter over the course of eleven consecutive years, he drew in painstaking detail the places he had been to each day. *I Went* shifts the work into the communal space, a relational space that is configured by the individual gesture. In 1973, the Grup de Treball made *Recorreguts* (Routes), which reproduces the route taken by 113 people between 28 and 31 October that year in Barcelona in a reference to the detention of 113 members of the Assemblea de Catalunya. So, here we have three different ways of measuring an itinerary on the map of a city. In the session *Contracampo 70*² this project was referred to in relation to *Petjades* (Footprints), the work mentioned at the start that consisted of Miralles' participation in *En la ciutat* (1976-1977), a collective film inspired by Eugeni Bonet and José Miguel Gómez that left possible contributions on the subject open to participants. More than twenty artists and filmmakers joined the initiative.

Where did this leave the work? There were various experiences from the late 1970s onwards that moved the artwork's centre of interest away from what had traditionally been regarded as the space of art. There was a rethinking of the meaning, purpose and materialisation of art in very different geographical and conceptual places. Art was no longer objectual in nature and the meaning of the object shifted towards what came to be termed the 'dematerialisation' of art: art as process, as experience, but also as a record or chronicle; a shifting of the object to the performative and the experiential sphere, that questions the preciseness, the delimited aspect of the traditional concept of the work of art. While these experiences connoted the space, the epistemological field expanded and opened up a hitherto unsuspected potential. The realm of art, the status of the artist, the status of the work, but also the place of the spectator were radically affected by this way of making, by another art.

In the early years of her career, Miralles' actions were strongly imbued with the need to break away from the traditional work. She had studied at the Faculty of Fine Arts, but the experience turned her against the academic, conven-

tional and anachronistic values she had learned. This was, then, the starting point of her rejection of the support and the media that had until then governed artistic languages. However, this was not a purely formal rejection. There is a conscious and deliberate disruption that emerges from her early works. *Natura morta* (Still Life, 1972) is a still life in which she shows the elements that constitute a landscape but presented as a repertoire, a catalogue of ingredients that make up the natural space. Jars of water and algae are displayed on a table, as are piles of stones or leaves, all identified by their name: she 'draws' a still life even as there is an implicit denial of the act of painting, of the very use of the gesture of the hand with the brush.

In the first of her artist's notebooks, Miralles begins with what she herself describes as a 'revolutionary artistic ideology with which the objective is not to change the world ... but to change the pigeonholing of art in the social status at which it is directed (the wealthy class that can acquire it).³ The process of creating the work, its development, the action, that is the aim. But once completed, the process of destruction begins, since the work disappears and only the photographic record or video survives. The finished and definitive object is no longer the objective of artistic endeavour. Hence, the work is a process, an open process as concept and formalisation based on a proposal, often one clearly delimited and well defined by the artist. Precisely because of its unfinished, or rather its anti-finished, nature, the work no longer pursues a final result and has dematerialised. It is no longer liable to become a commodity. The open process affects its immaterial nature and transforms it into an open project achievable and accessible by all. The 'work' is not purchased or sold. The work is 'made', it is rendered performative: an ideological stance that detaches art from the bourgeois society that had hitherto been its mainstay; a transformation of the system of production of art that distances it from the media, supports, languages and fundaments that 'manipulated' its development: '... that art is not, as it has been thus far, a product

given to society, but that society is itself the bearer of this product'.⁴

The exhibition *I Am All the Selves that I Have Been* is a structural proposal that presents a substantial proportion of Fina Miralles' oeuvre. In recent years, a number of considerations of her work have addressed it as part of her life story and of her vital process, linking her personal development with her artistic experiences. Miralles herself has presented the account of her creative evolution since the mid-1980s as a process of individual growth, the construction of her own subjectivity: 'It isn't a profession, or a vocation or a devotion. It's a way of living.' From the mid-1980s, it is true that trips and personal experiences form the basis of her turn towards introspection, towards an inner search that reconstructs the subject-artist. However, despite a radically different focus, in these before and afters there are underlying guiding threads that allow us to see through the seeming antagonism in the positions adopted over the course of her career. Below epigraphs that limit the work to restrictive labels there is a series of preoccupations and interests that make up the cartographic richness of her work. The categories *preconceptual*, *conceptual* and *postconceptual* or terms such as *painting*, *even magical* more recently, but also *nature*, *feminism*, *sociological* and *political* delimit, but above all limit, the scope of many of these works. To give an example, the importance of the relationship with nature is one of the most evident aspects of her work, but by distinguishing these works (*Dona-arbre* [Woman-Tree], *El cos cobert de palla* [The Body Covered with Straw], etc.) from those that apparently involve greater social critique (such as *Emmascarats* [Masked Figures] or *Standard*), the denaturalising and subversive nature of the first is passed over and they are stripped of their political potential, which they do have.

Naturaleses naturals, *naturaleses artificials* (Natural Natures, Artificial Natures, 1973) is a decontextualised repertoire of natural elements presented with those same elements but artificial. Miralles established a dialectic relationship between these two qualities deriving from a single origin. Other artists had experimented with decontextualisation:

Sigmar Polke moved heaps of potatoes to the art gallery in 1968 in *Kartoffeln*; and Robert Smithson shifted mirrors between rocks on a mountain in *Mirror Displacement (Vertical on Rocky Bank)* in 1969, to give but two examples. Miralles goes a step further, however, and plays with the contrast between categories that our increasingly industrialised society tends to hybridise and subvert.

The *Translacions* (Translations, 1973) and *Relacions* (Relationships, 1974-75) series were to change the order of things, since they switch reality and hybridise the space of that which has already been established. In *El retorn* (The Return, 2012), the body of the artist immersed in water is once again linked with one of the natural elements. Previously, in *Imatges del zoo* (Zoo Images, 1974), she evokes the so-called ethnographic exhibitions or human sent to show the vast range of tribes and indigenous peoples from far-off lands that the great mother countries were exploiting colonially. In addition, zoos – seen as places for displaying wild animals – exhibited the supremacy of humans over other species. Here Miralles again subverts the established order and contrasts it with expectations: wild and exotic animals are presented in photographs, while the cages are occupied by animals found in home environments and by the artist herself. An exhibitionism that once again transmutes the presentation of the work and subverts its very notion, as well as the question of the artist and the issue of the spectator in a kind of alchemy of the elements of the world of art and – why not? – of life, countering them by stripping them of the values that formerly underpinned them. The durability, value or meaning of the work are supplanted, as are the values of the 'natural', 'normal' and 'artificial'. What do we put in cages and to what end? When is something/someone liable to be caged and displayed? These works present a powerful critique of the notion of authority and power. The game with the images, their displacement, generates rejection.

The works on the tree stem from the *Costumari català*.⁵ The references to ancient customs and practices, to the folklore collected in the *Costumari*, are nothing more than a device used by Miralles to ex-

pose 'problems in our society and in our culture today. People have always found themselves opposed and castrated by the forces and powers-that-be, whatever they may be, which have sought to use every means to negate people's ability to think, decide and govern for themselves. That's why we believe it is important and, from a certain perspective, necessary for folklore, an element of social and artistic expression, to be studied, disseminated and brought out onto the street.'⁶ Organised into three core themes – the tree and humankind; the tree with a human personality; and the tree and the natural elements – these works are a group of actions that Miralles photographed in which she endows trees with various qualities and attributes. Once again, she shifts the subject to a natural entity and displaces the construction of subjectivity to the environment, outside the individual, complementing it and attributing to it the status of political subject. In the series *Relacions. Relació del cos amb elements naturals* (Relationships. The Body's Relationship with Natural Elements, 1975), she offers her body to sand, grass, the sea or straw, among other elements, in a process of covering herself, ultimately totally. Once again there is a hybridisation of the body and element that calls to mind processes such as *Self-Burial* by Keith Arnatt (1969), *Drifts* (1970) by Vito Acconci or works by Ana Mendieta like *Feathers on a Woman* (1972) and *Flowers on Body* (1973). The silhouette endures or disappears, depending on the natural element employed, in a relationship that blends the elements into a new alloy.

Relacions. Relació del cos amb elements naturals en accions quotidianes (Relationships. The Body's Relationship with Natural Elements in Everyday Actions, 1975) examines a number of actions that fill our everyday lives as we interact with various materials and thus becomes a catalogue of daily acts selected by Miralles. What acts do we denote in our day-to-day routines? What are the everyday actions that we would connote? Let us consider Joan Brossa's *Novel·la* (1965), an exploration of the life of a person through the various official documents that make us 'visible' but are unlikely to speak of us and whose details the author leaves

uncompleted. Would breathing, looking, eating, strolling or smoking be a way of talking about our lives? This incomplete or unfinished component is also clearly present in *Translacions*, which does not aspire to offer a closed work but to show how an untransformed natural element operates out of its context and to provide evidence of the change it undergoes. Based on these projects, Miralles later produced a variation of decontextualisation in the natural environment by moving earth, grass, straw, a tree and stones into a domestic environment, again contrasting the natural and the artificial. This displacement to an extent resembles landscape painting, in which nature is transposed onto the canvas and is here transposed literally onto a table, chairs, a desk, a bed and a cupboard. There is a questioning of what belonging to something means, how the existing state of affairs is disrupted and where the limit of the status quo lies. Gestures that question what it is that governs the gaze, the order of things, how we perceive them and how we order them. What the parameters of autonomy and belonging are, what these values are subject to and how they are dislodged.

The act of signalling that occurs in *Petjades* as Miralles marks the space as she walks through it is expanded in *Standard* (1976). Through education and through social and cultural stereotypes, we are designated as individuals, we are signalled: the exercise of a mother as she dresses her daughter becomes a manoeuvre suggested by each of the attributes conferred on the child. This itinerary is interrupted sequentially by images that are familiar or drawn from the media that chart a complementary route through everything expected of this girl: values, behaviours, attitudes, ideology and beliefs. Her first communion, wedding, pregnancy and building a family; qualities such as beauty, elegance or becoming an object of desire; but also attributes like submission, compliance with authority in the family sphere, education and society... these are codes that construct a social identity, that avoid individual subjectivity. Miralles told me 'to dress the body is to dress the mind.'⁷ It is worth refuting the view of this work as solely feminist. Without losing the gender perspective, the reading of it is far more

complex and rich. Miralles describes *Standard* as '... an action that exposes the traditional values instilled in the "standard" woman, inculcated in her from childhood by her parents, teachers, husband, the law, the Church, society, etc. A woman is not allowed to be in control of her own life, to be herself; first, she is the daughter of..., then the wife of... and later the mother of...'⁸ When she showed this work for the first time at Galeria G in October 1976, Miralles was sitting in a wheelchair to which she was bound, tied at the hands and feet, and her mouth was covered with a mantilla. She remained thus in front of the projection of images, to which were added a television programme shown on a small screen and a radio broadcast that evoked the ideological overload still kept up by the media: programmes like Elena Francis's clinic, broadcast from 1947 to 1984, a radio show in which listeners received advice on relationships and the family, indoctrinating them with highly conservative and traditional standards.

Without the explicit sexual component of *Dorinas* (1940s) by Carol Rama, tied with belts to beds or wheelchairs, the figure alienated due to a supposed mental illness is here presented as alienated by a social illness. The pregnant bride by Renate Bertlmann in *Schwangere Braut im Rollstuhl* (1978) seems to move spasmodically while tied to a wheelchair, like the mad cows that Rama alludes to ('Io sono la mucca pazza'). Bertlmann's bridal veil here becomes the mantilla that women used to cover their heads with when attending Mass during the Franco years. The Catholic Church demanded that hair be covered as a sign of submission, modesty and reverence; the same was not required of men. The mantilla in the mouth gags and silences the woman, who must watch on as the girl and she herself are constructed, unable to move, prevented from responding critically to what is foisted on her. The immobility induced through education and religion, culturally, socially and politically too, forces her to see what her nature is, or what it is expected that she will be: her other artificial nature. There is a translation of the subjectivity constructed in the course of the images. The pressure to which she is subjected by

an exoskeleton, the appendage that keeps her immobile, is not caused by the wheelchair. Every image tramples over her subjectivity and is imprinted on her biopolitical construction. Being a spectator of what you are, being a spectator of what it is expected you will be, of what they do to you, of what they want you to be, in a self-inflicted and forced immobility that causes disruption to expectations, regulation, prescriptivism and normalisation. What is normal? In the case of women, are femininity, motherhood, the family, submission to men, domestic life, beauty and docility normal? This is the very picture of the puppet whose strings move, but not of her doing. The painting of the woman turned into an object: 'woman-object-bourgeoise, woman-made-bourgeoise, woman-worker-working-class.'⁹

Objectification reappears in *Emmascarats* (1978), in which Miralles covers the face of a woman with a mantilla that goes over her entire head; with belts tied around her face; with a stocking used in an unorthodox way, since it passes from the feet to the head; with a balacava; and with a hood like those worn by terrorists so that they cannot be recognised during their public appearances. In her notebook, Miralles also notes down the possibility of using a bridal veil and crown, like in Bertlmann's work, and a hooded religious figure, among others.¹⁰ The mask conceals, covers, hides, erases, blurs. In a manner similar to the action involving the dissolution of the face, these are portraits without entity, without subjectivity. Masks are a device used very often in the work of a number of artists at that time. We have examples of this in *Schubmaske* (1976), in which Birgit Jürgenssen draws a face that looks out at us through belts, and in *Isolamento* (1972) by Renate Eisenegger, who covers her mouth and eyes with cotton and then wraps tape around her entire face. Françoise Janicot in *Encoconnage* (1972) and Annegret Soltau in *Selbst* (1975) employ the same approach, whereas Elaine Shemilt masks herself while nude in *Constraint* (1976) and Margot Pilz does so while dressed in *Sekundenskulpturen* (1977/78).

Emmascarats dissolves identity, it draws the non-being, it erases the image and the very condition of being human in the same way that it

dissolves the artistic conventions of the portrait. And just as Miralles avoided the still life and the very notion of painting, she went on to dissolve the pigment in water so that she could paint without using her hand, as we will see later. The social, political, educational and religious context is once again a subject of interest in *Matances* (Slaughters, 1976-77), which Miralles describes as 'Photo assemblages, texts, objects and diagrams on paper. The main theme is man's manipulation of animals and himself, power and the exercise of Power.'¹¹ 'Compositions and photomontages on a support, referring to the subject of (apparent) physical death and to the psychological death caused by manipulation, power, etc. in animals and people. This work was developed in late 1975, but its realisation did not materialise until 1976 and 1977.'¹² The work consists of a number of pieces. One is a video on the slaughter of a pig, inserted into which are photographs in black and white of the route she took to school as a child and details of domestic photos of a dog locked in a flat. The slaughter of the pig was one of the most deeply rooted traditions in rural areas of Catalonia, an ancient tradition, according to Joan Amades,¹³ that combines the rite of sacrifice with the provision of household supplies. Another piece is the multiple *Diviértase matando* (Have Fun Killing), which features the silhouettes used in shooting practice sessions and which are often found in fairground stands for people to aim at, all of them with a target on their chest. Miralles here combines the playful aspect with the relationship with enforced death, play and tragedy, which have been present in the imaginary since antiquity. The games held at Roman circuses used sacrifice to please spectators, who enjoyed this kind of violence porn and were entertained by it.

Again in *Matances*, specifically in the triptych *Tres esquemes de mort artificial* (Three Schemes for Artificial Death), which Miralles presented at the Paris Biennale in 1977, there are three interrelated sequences. In the first part of the triptych is the image of *The Third of May 1808*, the painting by Goya on the execution of patriots and citizens following the uprisings in Madrid against the French occupation in 1808; below, a frieze of crosses, Christ

on the Cross and the great cross in the Valle de los Caídos. In the centre in the foreground is the recently executed figure in Goya's painting, shown in various landscapes and surroundings. Lastly, the third part of the triptych consists of the photograph of Miralles on the day of her first communion, dressed in keeping with convention as a small bride, with the fusiliers in the painting aiming at her. In front of the triptych is the silhouette of a corpse drawn on the ground, as is customary in police crime investigations.¹⁴ As we have seen, however, the work's final form was to be different. Through the metaphors that underlie each of the elements that are part of *Matances*, the symbolic potential that arises from the rhizomatic iconographic relationship is reinforced by the photo assemblages.

Lastly, the collection of photo assemblages in *Matances* warrants that we look closely at the conceptual and iconographic repertoire that they encompass. *Continuem respirant* (We Continue to Breathe) or *Sístole-diàstole* (Systole-Diastole) point to that which gives signs of life, but Miralles also comments ironically on what it is to be alive in *Veure-hi no és estar viu* (To See Is Not to Be); in *Ferits* (Wounded), the wound is a transitional state between life and death; and in *Abandonats* (Abandoned), she shows the image of the dog alone in a flat. Her irony is biting: *Entre baionetes* (Between Bayonets) presents photographs of a wedding alongside images of nurses giving the fascist salute and of the pope being borne on his gestatorial chair; or the target – signifying accurate aim in the act of killing or in play – that appears in *Dar en el blanco* (Hitting the Target) or *Fer forat* (Making a Hole), in which it could be both things, lying at a tenuous boundary between pleasure and destruction, with a clear sexual component. In some *Matances*, artificial concepts of our social imaginary appear, among them justice and the family, which ought to be protective social spaces but instead reveal their darker side and the contradictions that underpin them: the values of protection and submission, the lack of communication, fear and impunity, subjection (*Abaixar el cap* [Bow Your Head]), forced obedience (*Debo ser obediente* [I Must Be Obedient]) and religious

imposition (*Ciris* [Candles]). Death is made explicit in *Mort* (Death), and it is also symbolised in the skin of an animal (*Gat mesquer* [Mean Cat] and *Pèl i ploma* [Fur and Feather]) and the presence of dead animals, many of them run over and left lying in gutters along highways, to tell of another form of brutality in which progress and the artificial annul the natural. In *Esquela per a un lleopard* (Announcement of the Death of a Leopard), the animal is suffering a living death, locked in a cage like those in zoos, far from its natural habitat, though many of these animals were also killed for their luxuriant fur or were hunted for pleasure. Death without dying is staged in the case of the naked woman tied to a bed. The executioner and the executed in a single shot can even be confused in the ambiguous fold of the strategies of power and its symbols, like the triangle.

Which brings us to *El triangle com a simbologia de poder i mort* (Triangle as Symbolology of Power and Death, 1976), an action that considers the various ways an image can be read depending on the way it is presented to the spectator by employing the triangle as a symbol of power, manipulation and death. The triangle may be used to symbolise the godhead, a religion, the masculine, victory or Francoism, in other words, social, political or religious aspects. Signs are managed by a magician who hybridises the playful and magical with power and death. Along the same lines is the work Miralles showed in the Spanish Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 1978, *Mediterrani t'estim* (Mediterranean, I Love You), on the theme 'On nature in art and on art in nature'. Miralles' intervention was displayed alongside works by Nacho Criado, José María Iturralde and Pilar Palomer, with photographs of bridges by the engineers Martínez Calzón and Fernández Ordóñez. Santiago Amón described her installation as a 'metaphor, one more literary than plastic, on the death threat that hangs (and there is now no remedy or recourse) over the Mediterranean Sea'.¹⁵ The space was covered by mosquito netting of the type found in tents, which, according to Miralles,¹⁶ represented the womb of our culture, and the ground was strewn with sand on which rested a slab in the manner of gravestone

bearing the inscription 'Vuela gaviota / estate alerta / que ya está aquí el hombre' (Fly seagull / be alert / for man is now here) in front of a fox skin with a bullet hole through it.

With this group of works, Miralles charts a course through those aspects of the natural nature of humankind and those that our artificial nature constructs, which denote our more savage and destructive side. She again reflects on the status of the natural and artifice in a proposal which, unsurprisingly, contains a social and political critique, a response to the conditions that society imposes on women, but also on men, on everybody regardless of their gender. The core is structured around the natural and artificial aspects of beings and things, but also of art. Indeed, the rethinking of what is artistic, of the values that sustain art and shape its meaning, and the revision of the roles of the agents involved remain latent in her work and emerge in the works she made later.

In 1979, she returned to painting, a language whose fundamentals she had already altered: the still life in *Natura morta* and the portrait in *Emmascarats*, in which the photographic image hides the face. Perhaps it is a language she has never forsaken. *Paisatge* (Landscape) and *Doble horitzó* (Double Horizon) are landscape paintings that Miralles treats as montages based on a cloth and a stretcher. The cloth is not the support for the painting. The cloth and the stretcher are conceived as a kind of mesentery: folds, turns, absences, openings and voids. The artist talks of these works as if they were constructions: 'By separating the two components of the painting, the stretcher and canvas and using them as elements of expression and construction, I made structures which, together with the natural elements, did not reproduce landscapes but were landscapes in themselves.'¹⁷ She perforates and deforms the cloth, she incorporates the wall as an element in the work, she paints the stretcher, on occasions even the elements in the painting are not subjected to paint and the painting itself becomes a flat object. Jordi Pablo would say that the return to the classic support of the stretcher and canvas is the result of Miralles' continuing interest in understanding the stereotype of the landscape in paint-

ing.¹⁸ I regard *Relacions* and *Translacions* as belonging to this line of work. She also 'paints' the landscape by adding to the cloth a heap of earth, a sprig of thyme or a stone. Another approach is her immersion of the cloth or paper in water containing coloured anilines, allowing the support to gradually be impregnated due to capillary action. Interestingly, a sense of manufactured dispossession of the aura has been attributed to these works: Miralles even highlights the fact that her hand plays no part, unlike what was to occur later in her drawings in her travel journals from the mid-1980s onwards and in the paintings she was to make afterwards: 'After so many years denying the gaze, the hand and feeling, that summer in 1983 I went back to drawing with my hand what I saw with my eyes.'¹⁹ In 1984, after a trip around Latin America, Miralles set off on a practice of 'art open to feelings and the emotions, and to symbolic language and magical thinking'.²⁰ Her own need to grow and understand life, and herself, seems to distance her from everything that had gone before this moment when she set off on a path of inner knowledge that permeates her attitude in life and her activity as an individual and as an artist. Miralles talks of the lack of emotion and of neutrality in these works, though they address us in such a way that it is impossible to avoid the emotion and sensuality they stir, or the political commitment they convey. This observation might to a certain extent be surprising were it not for the fact that it was determined by a change in her life (a radical change, I would say) that made her understand her work thereafter in a very different way. Leaving aside introspective and magical considerations, it is important to emphasise the coherence and unity of her oeuvre.

As mentioned at the start, the purpose of this project is to look back at a part of Miralles' oeuvre but not to dwell on the taxonomic principles attributed to her by art historians and which many readings of her work have emphasised in recent years. It is hoped that this review of this aspect of her art will contribute to new accounts and interpretations that will enhance the artist's already rich, complex and extremely beautiful body of

work. Consequently, this publication has been envisaged as an opportunity to present other critical di-scourses. The selection of authors was the subject of considerable thought and stems from proposals put forward some time ago that remain valid.

Towards the end of 2007, the Girona-based magazine *Papers d'Art* published a special issue on Conceptual Art entitled *Vivid Radical Memory*. Valentín Roma contributed an article on the historical and aesthetic context of the Grup de Treball in which he formulated an idea that to me seems fundamental as a starting point for taking a fresh look at Conceptual Art, particularly framed within the practices that emerged in Catalonia in the 1970s: 'If we analyse the successive overviews of Spanish conceptual art that have been carried out in the last fifteen years, we perceive a number of paradoxical aspects that are repeated in a symptomatic way and somehow outline a certain stereotypical "model" of interpretation when it comes to framing these same art practices in historical discourse.'²¹ In his diagnosis, Roma refers to the museification of Conceptual Art as a 'revisitation, at times isolated and not very complex' in which, he believes, lies one of the greatest problems: 'the reconstruction of those same activities as a confrontation with the contexts that fostered them; that is to say, their representation as a phenomenon that confronted a particular time and particular conditions – social, economic, political, ideological... – rather than as an "archaeology" or a set of artistic forms or styles.'²²

The article prompted considerations regarding the Grup de Treball that this is not the place to discuss, but it proved successful in focussing the debate on ways of analysing Conceptual Art. In the same issue, Jesús Carrillo referred to the "reifying" and "trivialising" programmes devised by the art history institutions²³ concerning the historiography of Conceptual Art in Spain. Shortly after the publication of that issue of *Papers d'Art*, the *Where the Political Was (Or Went Astray)* seminar was held as part of the *Art after Feminism* course organised in the context of

the MACBA's Independent Studies Programme (PEI), with a session entitled 'Between conceptualism and feminism: the case of Fina Miralles' in which Assumpta Bassas, Jesús Carrillo and Pilar Parcerisas took part. The workshop was run by a team of participants in the second edition of the PEI, consisting of Julianne Debeusscher, Tamara Díaz Bringas, Fernanda Nogueira and Linda Valdés. The event was posited as a questioning of a number of historicist and critical practices that had advocated the neutralisation of the conflict and the elimination of any differences and which had stripped it of any political aspect. Despite the years that have passed since *Papers d'Art* was published and since the PEI seminar was held, some of the questions formulated in them still remain valid. Hence the invitation to Valentín Roma, Tamara Díaz Bringas and Maite Garbayo-Maeztu, who have addressed Miralles' work most recently.

The authors responded generously to the invitation and it is our hope that this project will make it possible to access those realms that Miralles' work addresses. *I Am All the Selves that I Have Been* seeks to avoid spaces of comfort, epistemological biases and even approaches that legitimise a discourse based on an innocuousness that we believe is alien to her work. The idea is to understand the mechanisms whereby her work speaks to us and to analyse what she proposes today. It is a question, then, of opening up new interpretational spaces.

1 The quotation is a translation of Fina Miralles' voiceover in the video of her *Petjades* action (1976).

2 The workshop took place from 3 to 6 March 2010. The research team consisted of Julianne Debeusscher, Tamara Díaz Bringas, Fernanda Nogueira and Linda Valdés, participants in the Independent Studies Programme (PEI) run by the MACBA (2008-2009).

3 Fina Miralles, Notebook, no. 1, p. 22.

4 Ibid., NN.

5 *Costumari català: usos i costums de bon pagès sobre boscos i arbredes* is a document published in 1920 by the Mancomunitat de Catalunya, an assembly of the four provinces of Catalonia, that

gives credit to the tree-woman relationship. An important part was compiled in the *Costumari català* by Joan Amades, published in 1952.

- 6 Agustí Hurtado Giner, 'De les idees a la vida', *Fina Miralles. De les idees a la vida*. Sabadell: Ajuntament de Sabadell and Museu d'Art de Sabadell, 2001, pp. 59-60 (exh. cat.), which indicates as a reference that it is attached to the notebook, no. 1), also on p. 22. However, I have been unable to find the quotation used.
- 7 Conversation between Teresa Grandas and Fina Miralles in Cadaqués, 25 September 2018.
- 8 Fina Miralles, *Testament vital*. Sabadell: Edicions de Gràfic Set, 2008, p. 17. Also available on Fina Miralles' website ('Publicacions' section).
- 9 Fina Miralles', Notebook, no. 1, p. 33.
- 10 Ibid., p. 42.
- 11 *Testament vital*, op. cit., p. 17.
- 12 Archive of the Museu d'Art de Sabadell.
- 13 Amades mentions it in 1952 in his compilation on the *Costumari català* in volume v, which deals with autumn.
- 14 In her notebook, Miralles had noted down another composition of different figures: in the first part, the photograph of a suicide and the photo of the tomb of Gabriel Ferrater, the writer and poet who committed suicide after announcing he would do so (27 April 1972). In the second part, there is the photograph of an execution and the grave of Txiki, the ETA member executed by firing squad on 27 September 1975, shortly before the death of the dictator. And lastly, the third part, which consists of a photograph of an accident and another of the grave of Miralles' mother. In her journal, the artist also indicates the presence of the outline of a corpse on the ground, bearing traces of blood, and she also mentions the video. Fina Miralles, Notebook, no. 1, p. 37.
- 15 'La Bienal y la ciudad de Venecia', *El País* (13 July 1978).
- 16 Conversation between Teresa Grandas and Fina Miralles in Cadaqués, 11 July 2019.
- 17 *Testament vital*, op. cit., p. 20.
- 18 *Paisatge*. Barcelona: Fundació Joan Miró, January 1979 (exh. cat.).
- 19 *Testament vital*, op. cit., p. 23.
- 20 Conversation between Teresa Grandas and Fina Miralles in Cadaqués, 12 March 2020.
- 21 Valentín Roma, 'Some "De-Considerations" Regarding the Grup de Treball And Its Historico-Aesthetic Context', *Papers d'Art*, no. 93 (second half of 2007), p. 92.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 Jesús Carrillo, 'Conceptual Art Historiography in Spain', *Papers d'Art*, no. 93 (second half of 2007), p. 46.

Fina-Tree, Fina-Stone, Fina-Earth

Maite Garbayo-Maeztu

The difficulty of having a body

I have always thought that the figures Fina Miralles presents are shot through with a latent violence, a kind of pain, a violence that the body perpetrates repeatedly against itself, as if attempting to darn an open hole or to repair a hollow within. A violence that cites other types and acts of violence, perhaps committed against the body itself, or perhaps conveyed via a historical network that extends from body to body. Even though there would be no trauma without a second event that triggered it, there is something of it that seems to be ever present, like a shadow, when the image of her body appears.

This violence becomes more explicit in the period from 1975 to 1977, with works such as *Matances* (Slaughters), *Standard* and *Emmascarats* (Masked Figures), in which there is a clear determination to render visible the Franco dictatorship's ravaging of the social body in general and of her own body (as a female body) in particular. But the pain, and a certain acceptance of the power of performance to assuage it, was already present in *Relacions. Relacions del cos amb elements naturals* (1974-75). They have often been regarded as local examples of land art but in fact they lend themselves to more complex readings that take into account certain contextual particularities, such as her position as a woman artist or the fact that these actions took place in the closing years of the Franco regime.

In a number of these actions, the artist starts to cover her body with various materials (stone, sand or earth), gradually concealing it until it eventually disappears completely under a mound, the sole evidence of her presence. The stillness of her body is a key question for understanding this series; relationships with nature based not on exploitation or extractivism but on the encounter, intersubjectivity and mutual affection. It is the quietude that soothes and enfolds the body. Moreover, remaining