

Film

Video

Information

VISUAL ORIGIN

Exhibition

29.02

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26.05.2024

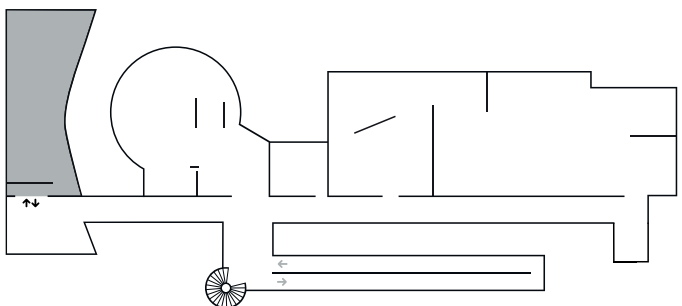
*It is important to open the eyes,
to open oneself to the new
vision. Man has closed so many
doors to himself, to his soul, to
his visions, to his mind that he
has truly locked himself out.*

Jonas Mekas

Recommended route

Meier building

Level 2



In June 1977, a group of experimental filmmakers and video artists, photographers, poets and alternative media artists founded the FVI (Film Vídeo Informació) group in Barcelona. The initial core group consisted of Eugènia Balcells, Eugeni Bonet, Juan Bufill, Carles Hac Mor, Manuel Huerga, Ignacio Julià and Luis Serra. With the exception of Balcells and Hac Mor, who were already over thirty years old, they were aged between nineteen and twenty-three years old.

The object of this exhibition is to reconnect with the attitude and the vision underlying FVI as a foundational, critical, and creative project, which was the first of its kind in a Catalan and Spanish cultural context that was still isolated from international modernity after a forty year-long dictatorship. The formation of this group gave rise to various collaborative projects for art creation and dissemination in the moving-image field, especially in the 1970s and, without the FVI acronym, in the eighties. After FVI was dissolved in 1980, its members continued to work together on collective projects, promoting avant-garde film screenings, rescuing figures such as José Val del Omar from oblivion or contributing to the founding of Metrònom and Betevé.

Visual origin presents a selection of works that allows the audience to explore some of the group's key contributions from 1976 to 1988, especially in the field of experimental film (in super-8 and 16 mm formats), video, and also television, with the show *Arsenal* (TV3, Televisió de Catalunya, 1985-1987). The exhibition also includes photographs and documentation on FVI, its project and its evolution.

FVI sought to explore and raise awareness about the possibilities of experimental film and video, especially with regards to other media, such as alternative television, photography, or installations. To this end, not only did they create artworks (both individually and collectively), but they also organised film screenings and video presentations in different venues in Barcelona and edited two issues of *Visual* magazine (1977-1978), under the coordination of Balcells, Bonet and Huerga. *Visual* was printed using photocopy machines and was available for purchase in some bookstores and by subscription. Its goal was to launch debates and reflect on the field of audiovisual art during what they perceived as seminal times: times of political

transition towards democracy, open-mindedness and sensorial emancipation.

Visual magazine featured filmmakers such as Chantal Akerman, Anthony McCall and Michael Snow, but also classics such as Carl Th. Dreyer, or reflections on the shortcomings of political, militant cinema. Antoni Padrós' *Shirley Temple Story*, starred on the cover of issue 1, while an image of *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975), by Chantal Akerman, made up the cover of issue 2, in feminist mauve or violet.

FVI's first dissemination event was the presentation, in July 1977, of *Line Describing a Cone*, a light sculpture by Anthony McCall. It took place in the home of Xefo Guasch, who was then a member of the Video-Nou collective. Another remarkable first was the screening of Philippe Garrel's *Le Bleu des origines*, with live music performed by Nico, at the Ars film theatre (summer 1978).

The experimental film work of some members of FVI made it to the international stage. Films by Balcells, Bonet, Bufill and Huerga were selected by Ceferino Moreno to represent Spain at the XVI São Paulo Biennial (1981), along with works by Iván Zulueta, Miquel Barceló, Muntadas and Zush. These four Catalan filmmakers and Zulueta were part of the *Cinéma d'avant-garde en Espagne. Une anthologie* exhibition, which was held at the Centre Georges Pompidou in 1982 alongside José Val del Omar and José Antonio Sistiaga, among others. Significantly, the first major historical exhibition on Spanish avant-garde cinema was held in Paris and without the participation of the Spanish Ministry of Culture.

The *Visual origin* exhibition includes films and videos that are representative of the main aspects of Eugènia Balcells' work in those years. Among her works, *Fuga* (1979) is the one that is most closely linked to structural cinema, with overprints made on camera, whereas both her fragments in collective films *En la ciudad...* (1976-1977) and *Boy Meets Girl* (1978) and *For/Against* (1983), the latter in collaboration with Peter Van Riper, cover socio-cultural themes involving consumerism, gender stereotypes and aggression. *Flight* (1981), on the other hand, is a

video score that is reminiscent of her New York video installation *From the Center* (1982-1983).

The exhibition also features two films and one video by Eugeni Bonet which share a common thread in the fact that they are audiovisual palimpsests or (re)creations based on previous images and sounds. The works in question are *Photomatons* (1976), the medium-length film *133* (1979), co-directed by Eugènia Balcells, and the video *Mecànica (Retard digital)*, which was conceived in 1976 and shot in 2001. Bonet was also the main driving force behind the collective film *En la ciudad...* (1976-1977), which brought together different pieces by conceptual artists such as Eulàlia Grau, Miralda, Muntadas and Francesc Torres, experimental filmmakers such as Zulueta and a few members of FVI, as well as by artists who frequented both fields, such as Balcells and Benet Rossell, and even a comic artist such as Guillem Cifré.

Juan Bufill's work in the field of experimental cinema is represented by *Ver piedras/Signos de sol* (1988) and by two works from 1978: *Green* and *Frontera*. The latter two were lost after their screening in Paris in 1982, as they were shot in Super 8 without negative. However, the works were recovered in 2009 on the occasion of the *Del éxtasis al arrebató* travelling exhibition: *Green* was salvaged from a video copy that could be partially restored and *Frontera* from the abbreviated version with sound included in *Arsenal. Souvenir* (TV3, 1985).

Manuel Huerga's *Brutal Ardour* (1978) was also lost between Paris and Barcelona in 1982, along with five films by Bufill and one by Sierra Fornells. However, it was also possible to restore this rare piece by Huerga, that is both romantic and structural, from a video copy. It is based on music by Brian Eno and Gavin Bryars and on a pictorialism with Pre-Raphaelite aesthetics that ends up exploding into film-stock textures.

Music is also the starting point of Ignacio Julià's *Nomad* (1977), a medium-length film in which songs by The Velvet Underground, most of them fast, are associated with slowed-down images of three isolated characters.

Poet and essayist Carles Hac Mor (Lleida, 1940

- Sant Feliu de Guíxols, 2016) collaborated on several occasions with other members of FVI, especially Eugènia Balcells, whose book *Anar i tornar* (1978), is a compilation of correspondence between her and the poet through images and texts.

Some of Luis Serra's photographs, portraits and snapshots are exhibited in contrasting black and white, in period copies among which those starring Lindsay Kemp stand out.

Finally, two of the 44 episodes in the *Arsenal* series, created by Manuel Huerga (director and producer), Juan Bufill and Jordi Beltran (scriptwriters) for TV3, are on display. *Arsenal* tended to reinvent itself with each instalment and often changed its format. It developed the possibilities of audiovisual collage in television, a medium that is generally averse to audiovisual adventures of an avant-garde or countercultural nature. 'Arsenal d'Arsenals' (1986) is a summary of the first 32 episodes. In 'Arsenal. El viatge de Robert Wyatt' (1987), several Super 8 films by Juan Bufill gave rise to an unusual synthesis of music video and experimental cinema. It was the penultimate collaborative work by Huerga and Bufill, before the video *Buñuel* (1989), also co-directed by both and with the collaboration of Aixalà (1955-2018).

Artists:

Eugènia Balcells, Eugeni Bonet, Juan Bufill, Carles Hac Mor, Manuel Huerga, Ignacio Julià, Luis Serra, Iván Zulueta, the *En la ciudad...* collective and the *Arsenal* team.

Exhibition curated by:

Juan Bufill, poet, photographer, video and experimental film author, and co-founder of the FVI group.

Public programme

Eugènia Balcells, Eugeni Bonet and Juan Bufill. Video selection

5th March. 17 h
Filmoteca de Catalunya

Arsenal. El viatge de Robert Wyatt by Juan Bufill and Manuel Huerga

30th April. 17 h
Filmoteca de Catalunya

These screenings are part of the *Per amor a les Arts* programme of the Filmoteca de Catalunya (Catalan film archive).

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(except public holidays)

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Free admission from 4 to 8 pm

Sunday and public holidays:
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