

ivorypress

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SELECTION**

Document

Michal Rovner

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DIARY

SOMETHING IN THE AIR

March 06, 2020 • Madrid • Javier Montes around the 39th ARCOmadrid



An afterparty at ARCO. All photos unless noted: Javier Montes.

TO KISS OR NOT TO KISS: This was, at the beginning of the week of ARCOmadrid, more or less the tacit issue at hand, as the coronavirus had arrived in the capital just as the wings of the international art world were descending. But here in Spain, we are indiscriminately effusive with intimates and strangers alike, so as the fair—this year excellently led for the first time solo by Maribel López—took cruising speed, kisses and hugs and explosive laughs and close whispers in the ear won the war against demurer modes of interaction. For better or worse, each culture is born, develops itself, and self-destroys in its own particular way, and in the end us Spaniards will probably go among kisses and laughter—not the worst way to do it.

Among other forms of greeting, I knew that the week was gaining momentum when a few days ahead of the official opening, at one of the bright weekly lunches at the Center for Rural Approach, run by Amélie Aranguren and artist Fernando García-Dory, I was welcomed from the far end of the long table with slight bows by members of the Indonesian collective *ruangrupa*, curators of the next documenta, who happened to be visiting Spain.

From then on, the flow of diverse art-worlders only intensified: At the inauguration of the artist Teresa Solar's exhibition at Travesía Cuatro, an absorbed Joan Jonas—with an admirable capacity for concentration that many post-millennials would envy—contemplated the works without yielding an inch to the niceties and frivolities of any given opening, in Madrid or anywhere in the planet. Jonas was the guest of honor the next day at the Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, in whose basement TBA21, the foundation of Francesca Thyssen, opened her solo exhibition "Moving Off the Land II." At the small dinner organized by the museum's director, Carlos Urroz, I discussed with curators Chus Martínez and Sandra Antelo, and Matadero Madrid director Rosa Ferré, whether artists secretly aspire to become *machines célibataires*, free from temptations that prevent them from working. I said yes, but Chus and Rosa argued there was nothing worse than the genre of the "Thermomix artist," who chops and boils and blends anything at hand according to preprogrammed recipes. Later, it was again Jonas who proved to be the fastest holster in town. Before I could photograph her, she drew out her cellphone and photographed *me*: Her flash overcame that unequal duel.



Joan Jonas, Hans Ulrich Obrist, Francesca Thyssen, and Isabela Mora at Jonas's opening at Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza. Photo: Iván Hidalgo.

The next day, Patrizia Sandretto Re Rebaudengo orchestrated the inauguration of Ian Cheng's show in the courtyard and halls of the venerable Fundación Fernando de Castro. Isabela Mora, factotum and spin-doctor of many international art initiatives, acted as master of ceremonies, as always impeccable and almost as ubiquitous as Hans Ulrich Obrist himself, who was there to interview Cheng. True to William Blake's dictum "Exuberance is beauty," she had adorned the rooms with immense arrangements of cherry and plum blossoms. For lunch, *cocido madrileño*, a rich chickpea stew true to the city's traditions.

Slightly more restrained at ARCO proper, curator Mason Leaver-Yap had adopted the elbow-bump as a default greeting. Together with Alejandro Cesarco, they discussed the mini-show they'd cocurated with works inspired by the spirit of Félix González-Torres, who served as the guiding totem and reference for the fair this year.

Now in its thirty-ninth edition, ARCO benefits today from the numerous Latin American collectors who have been snatching up real estate and installing their winter nests in Madrid. I sensed their satisfaction in the Teresa Sapey–designed VIP room, where the last coffees and croissants of the inaugural breakfast were already commingling with the first cavas and jamón. Helga de Alvear, dean of Spanish gallerists, spoke with pride of the imminent inauguration in Cáceres, Extremadura, of the new building by Tuñón y Mansilla that will house the superb collection she has donated to the city. She mentioned that she had asked another crowned entity who was expected at the fair, the King of Spain, to contribute a new monorail to Extremadura, a petition supported by countless civil associations and which would partly remedy the isolation of a region as beautiful as it is unknown.

I left the fair and trekked to the headquarters of Ivorypress, the gallery/art press/bookstore established by Elena Ochoa Foster and designed by Sir Norman Foster. Obrist was there, speaking with artist Michal Rovner to a large audience with an impressive front row: professor and curator Estrella de Diego, veteran curator Carmen Giménez, Isabela Mora, and Lady Foster herself, among others.



Estrella de Diego, Isabela Mora, Elena Ochoa Foster, and Carmen Giménez at Ivorypress. Photo: Pablo Gomez Ogando.

Tired, but following the example of the incombustible Jonas, I gathered energy to go to dinner in the Andalusian restaurant La Giralda, where the gallery Parra & Romero celebrated the opening of the new exhibition of Rosa Barba. At a particularly fun table, Agustín Pérez Rubio talked about the Berlin Biennale that he is cocurating with Lisette Lagnado; curator and activist Arakis posed for a group photo with a great hat completely concealing her face; and Inti Guerrero, a curator of Latin American art at Tate Modern, expounded on a whole generation of proto-performers from the mythical Brazil of the '50s, from Elvira Pagã to the formidable Luz del Fuego.

During ARCO, it is well known, you sleep little, if at all. A dutiful early bird, Juan Várez, the former head of Christie's Spain and a discerning art collector, offered, with his partner, the designer Jan Taminiau, one more of his traditional breakfasts at their home. This time it was dedicated to showcasing the work of the Portuguese artist Ana Jotta.

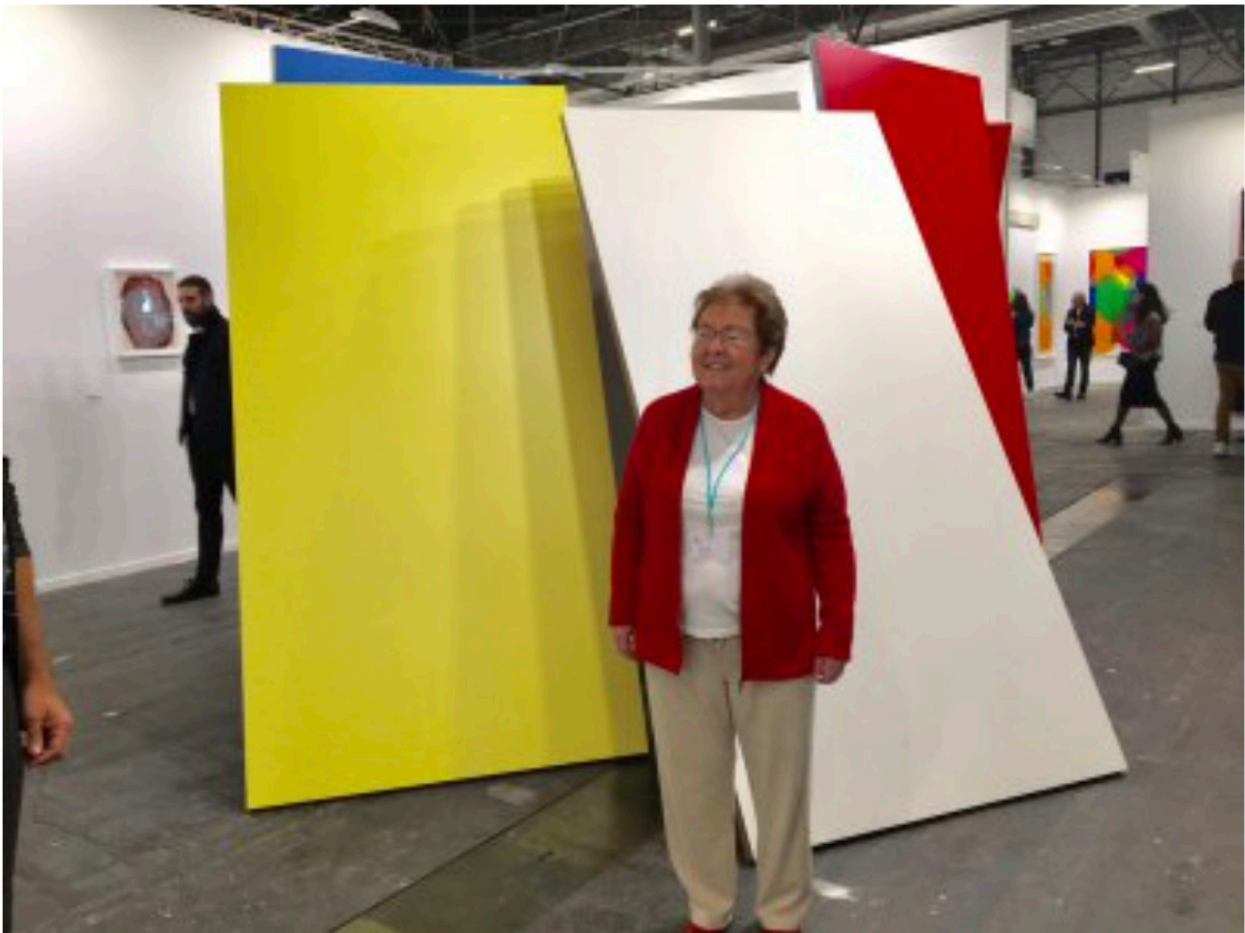
From breakfast to breakfast, oozing caffeine, I approached the arts center La Casa Encendida, where the young Alvaro Urbano inaugurated a beautiful and poetic architectural installation. Director Lucía Casani and I agreed: The mysterious and hazy atmosphere was particularly clement with us attendants, and appropriate at concealing the ravages already visible in many faces after an intense week. Urbano's partner, the Kosovan artist Petrit Halilaj, always smiling and *simpático*, shared details about his upcoming installation in the Palacio de Cristal at the Retiro Park, part of the Reina Sofía and curated by its director, Manuel Borja-Villel.



Cecilia Gandarias, curator Pilar Soler, and artists Pereñíguez, Miki Leal, Elena Alonso, and Manuel Viturro.

That morning, in the Bermuda triangle of Madrid art—between the Prado, the Thyssen, and the Reina Sofía—in the Palacio de Neptuno, the most seasoned of the ARCO spinoff fairs in Madrid, JustMad, opened its doors. As it is often the case, the less jaded and more curious happened to be also great veterans—from pioneering gallerist Soledad Lorenzo to collector Pilar Citoler. Next door, with his effortless elegance and usual savoir faire, another living legend of Madrid cultural ecosystem, the interior designer Pascua Ortega, opened his living rooms for a massive warming-up lunch of sushi, a welcome alternative to the very Hispanic menus of previous days.

From one crystal palace to another, the night ended at the great party organized by ARCO and the creative collective ELAMOR, in the mythical glass pavilion of Florida Park, a jewel of playful modernism set in Retiro Park, which, since the '50s, has hosted legendary performances by many a great Spanish and Latin American performer, from Chavela Vargas to Lola Flores. In an atmosphere of almost Lynchian romance-*cum*-gloom, Hassan Khan warmed the atmosphere with one of his concerts. The dance floor was soon packed by aspirants to Rosalías and Rosalíos dancing to the rhythm of electrocumbias and arty deconstructed reggaetón.



Helga de Alvear at her stand at ARCO.

And it was only Thursday. Downtown, in the gallery of Helga de Alvear, with *cafés con leche* and somber under-eye circles competing in darkness and density, a large audience assembled to listen to Santiago Sierra talk with Georg Imdahl, the author of a book about Sierra's work published by This Side Up, the very sophisticated Madrileño art publishing house. "My art is a fast poison and a slow medicine," said Sierra, explaining that it first causes scandal and hate and then, over time, reflection. Sierra is, for better or worse, one of the Spanish artists who have best been able to portray a supposed intrinsic national or historical character (if such things exist, that is): picaresque, stark, coldly cynical and disillusioned, sometimes cruel and harsh. His talk with Imdahl was like seeing, face to face, each in his chair, two allegories of two approaches to art and life as a whole, from the highly idealistic to the crudely realistic. I found it instructive, if not edifying.

And then, it was time for me to call it a week. I knew that in the very dynamic arts center CA2M in the *red belt* and working-class neighboring town of Móstoles there was a show about the tradition of absurd humor in Spanish art (among whose forefathers would be the *Disparates* by Goya himself). The neighboring galleries Nogueras Blanchard were exhibiting lesser-known works of Ana Mendieta, and at García Galería was an installation by Francesc Ruiz, a complement to his retrospective at CA2M. But this diarist knew that sometimes a withdrawal in time is worth more than a thousand victories, and he carried home his bag full of books and brochures and notes, and his purely carbon-based organic memory card full of conversations and images. The plan, by now, was to take a long-overdue Spanish siesta and try to distinguish if the slight migraine and painful joints were the normal results of a week of excess or its viral coronation, heroically earned by this correspondent reporting from the first line of the battlefield.

— Javier Montes

CUSTODIO PASTOR, Madrid

Su laboratorio de ideas siempre está abierto a lo inesperado. Cualquier cosa puede ocurrir en Ivorypress, donde durante todo el año la actividad es incesante. Su fundadora, Elena Ochoa Foster, abre las puertas de su espacio tanto a la élite artística mundial como a novísimos talentos a los que aúpa con su apoyo. "La vida es un bumerán. Lo que das vuelve a ti multiplicado", cree firmemente. Esta semana Hans Ulrich Obrist, tótem entre tótems del arte actual, ha participado en una charla y Blanca Miró Skoudy ha inaugurado su primera exposición individual en Madrid. "Como sostiene Jenny Holzer, todas las cosas están delicadamente interconectadas". La frase de la artista se proyecta sobre una de las paredes en el sótano de la antigua imprenta.



Interior de la librería en la sede de Ivorypress en Madrid. / CARLOS PINA

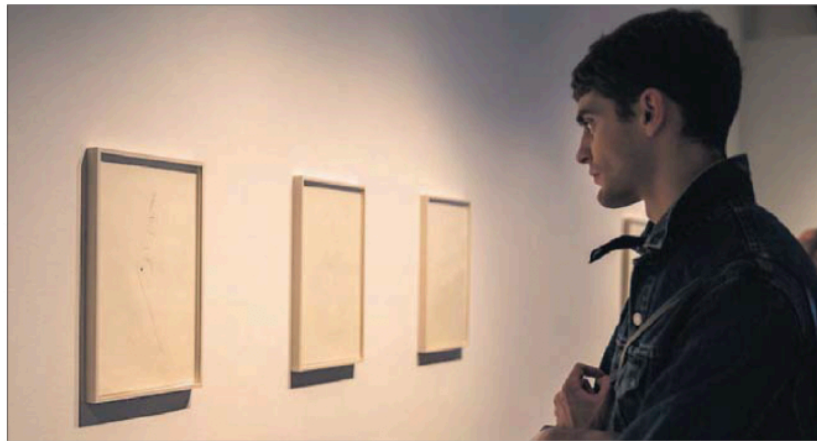
Ícónica rampa. A espaldas del complejo Azca, lejos de galerías, museos y espacios similares, en la calle del Aviador Zorita, 46-48 se encuentra este lugar que conocen bien los más relevantes protagonistas del arte contemporáneo. Artistas, comisarios, galeristas y coleccionistas lo frecuentan desde hace 12 años. Todos han bajado su ya icónica rampa, trazada por Norman Foster, que conduce a la galería de 800 metros cuadrados, Ivorypress Space, donde han expuesto Gilbert & George, Olafur Eliasson o Ai Weiwei. Otro espacio contiguo, Space II, donde se celebran numerosas actividades y se inauguró con una exposición de dibujos de Andy Warhol, y una imponente librería completan un *think tank* que podría estar en Londres, Nueva York, París o en cualquier otra gran ciudad, pero la editora y comisaria de arte siempre quiso que estuviese en Madrid. "Madrid es mi ciudad. Es donde yo estudié, es el sitio al que siempre vuelvo. Madrid es mi lugar, mi nido", compartía Ochoa en un receso en su intensa agenda de estos días.

Libros únicos. Apasionada por su trabajo, la directora de Ivorypress lidera un sólido equipo que siempre está pensando en lo siguiente. "Todavía hay muchísimas cosas por hacer. Cada proyecto es un reto nuevo. No suelo pararme a pensar en lo que ya hemos hecho, pienso en lo que vamos a hacer mañana". Todo comenzó hace casi 25 años, en una habitación en Londres, su primera oficina. "Era una pequeña habitación con un ordenador y un teléfono". Allí las horas le pasaban sin darse cuenta persiguiendo su deseo: crear una editorial especializada en libros de artista. Convenció a Eduardo Chillida para el primero. Después a Anthony Caro, Anish Kapoor, Richard Long, Cai Guo-Qiang, Isidoro Valcárcel Medina o Anselm Kiefer, entre otros inaccesibles nombres con los que ella ha logrado trabajar estrechamente. "Un privilegio". Libros únicos, en ediciones limitadísimas, que han viajado por todo

En el laboratorio de ideas coinciden los más relevantes protagonistas del arte actual gracias a Elena Ochoa Foster

AL LORO

Élite artística



Un joven contempla la obra de Blanca Miró. Abajo, Hans Ulrich Obrist y Elena Ochoa. / C. P.

Constante curiosidad.

Document, de Michal Rovner, es su último libro. Cada edición consta de 15 hojas impresas en papel reciclado sobre las que se proyecta un video. Lo presentó el miércoles la propia artista junto a Hans Ulrich Obrist, comisario y codirector de Serpentine Galleries, distinguido por *ArtReview* dos veces como la personalidad más influyente del mundo en el arte contemporáneo. Elena Ochoa Foster alabó su constante curiosidad y lo definió ante los asis-



tentes como "un extraordinario artista y un extraordinario escritor". Amigos desde hace muchos años, han trabajado juntos en diversos proyectos. Ahora tienen una relación todavía más inten-

brío a Los Carpinteros, a quienes trajo, proporcionó estudio e impulsó. Su primera exposición en Europa fue en Ivorypress y después vinieron muchas otras. Su obra actualmente forma parte de las colecciones de la Tate Gallery, el Pompidou o el MoMA. Detonadora de referencia, Elena Ochoa Foster ha promovido desde el principio a jóvenes artistas. Así hizo también en *Under 35*, una exposición colectiva que colocó en primera línea a sus participantes. Ahora, en la semana más importante del año para las galerías madrileñas, ofrece su sala principal a Blanca Miró Skoudy, nacida en 1987. "Sus dibujos tienen madurez. Tiene influencias inequívocas como Matisse, Calder y García Lorca, pero tiene un lenguaje propio".

Trazos fuertes. Ella es la primera española joven que tiene una exposición individual en Ivorypress. "Es un sueño. Me parece increíble", admitía la artista en la inauguración de Dibujos. "Mi padre dibujaba cada día en casa. Había lápices siempre en la mesa. A mí se me daban muy mal los estudios, pero encontré en el dibujo la redención". Su padre siempre le decía que si quería dibujar bien no apretase, pero ella tenía la manía de apretar. No ha dejado de hacerlo. "A veces he llegado a romper el papel. Es un trazo que siempre está a punto de romper el papel, hay mucha fuerza". Además de dibujar, Blanca Miró Skoudy explora otros campos como la escultura, el diseño y la dirección de arte. Ha participado en exposiciones colectivas en instituciones como la Royal Academy of Arts de Londres y el año pasado diseñó el vestuario y la escenografía para una pieza de ballet de la Royal Swedish Opera. Tiene más de 117.000 seguidores en Instagram.

Inspiración continua. Elena Ochoa Foster pasa todos los meses una semana en Madrid. En febrero tenía reservada esta última en la que las propuestas artísticas se multiplican, con

Arco y otras ferias celebrándose a la vez. "Estos días he visto exposiciones formidables, como la de Koo Jeong A en el callejón de Jorge Juan y la de Rodin y Giacometti en la Fundación Mapfre". Patrona del Museo del Prado y el Teatro Real, disfruta conectando a gente de distintos ámbitos. Siempre persigue de manera imparable lo que desea. Vendió su casa de Madrid para obtener el dinero necesario para empezar con Ivorypress. Robert Sainsbury fue su primer mentor. "Soy el fruto de mis mentores y de mi equipo, que me ayuda cada día". Entre sus referentes se encuentran mujeres como Tatyana Grosman, Palma Bucarelli, Inge Feltrinelli o Lucy Lippard. Tiene un profundo respeto por su trabajo. El año que viene celebrará los primeros 25 años de Ivorypress. "Quiero seguir produciendo libros y exposiciones que inspiren a cuantos más mejor".

Lenguaje propio. La editora y comisaria de arte visita estudios de artistas constantemente. "Lo hago en todo el mundo, en España también. Lo que busco siempre en los artistas es que tengan un lenguaje propio". En Cuba descu-