

English **Paco Chanivet, SSSSSSSilix. From April 26 to July 1, 2018.**
Individual project, Sala Petita. *Barcelona Producció is an initiative of La Capella.*

Imagine you're entering a landscape that has emerged when time has halted, a landscape that places you between two dimensions of a post-digital experience. That you're making your way through a garden that is symbolically saturated after a celebration that has lasted a couple of decades of techno-existence. Imagine you can hear the echoes of a voice saying: "Imagine you are falling. But there is no ground. [...] Paradoxically, while you are falling, you will probably feel as if you are floating [...]. While falling, people may sense themselves as being things, while things may sense that they are people",¹ because "Objects that we use day in and day out are keeping tabs on our every move. Without cease, they pass along information".²

Imagine that there are brief mirages of another flat, transparent space in which it is impossible to distinguish freedom from control and where everything is self-referential. However, you soon come to a mystery, a grotto, a light and a reflection. Ruins from the Stone Age rise before you. And the mineral multiplies and the material begins to whisper and softly transforms into SSSSSSSilix. The sum of *Swag, Smile, Selfie, Soft, Sexy, Silicon* and *Silix*. Do you remember it? That stone, now known by another name, which, because it was hard and could be knapped into sharp-edged flakes, was used in prehistoric times to make cutting tools and influenced humankind's technological evolution. Maybe you recognise its contemporary version, silicon, the most 'positive' metalloid element in the periodic table (Si), ironically now the ideal raw material for manufacturing devices that are essential in this world connected in solitude and against all negativity. If you

approach a flickering corner, you will come to³ a dark stone on which remains of life in ecstasies of light rest. This stone is obsidian, used by the Aztecs to make objects that were symbols of power. Black mirrors that were of more use to the imagination than to the eye, made not to see yourself in but to lose yourself and disappear. Suddenly an inner 'shamanic' voice warns you that mirrors "devour a little light in their reflection",⁴ and that every object of power is in the end an object of slavery. Continue to imagine because in order to cross this landscape, you need more narration than information. You are weary of information and experience has shown you that more information does not necessarily lead to better decisions, because communication no longer informs, it merely accumulates.

The artist points out that "the varied nature of the elements on which this place feeds are not here by chance. They have been selected by entering concepts such as *narcissism, otherness, transparency, depression* and *positivity* in the eBay and Amazon search engines". So here chance is nothing but method. The materials become concepts, the concepts are materialised in objects and these objects in us.

This is how this network of stone,⁵ simultaneously dynamic and clashing, traps mutant narcissi with deconstructed logos of graphic accelerator cards, while a structure in the form of a fire-resistant bonfire⁶ displays personal hygiene products that smooth out singularities in order to facilitate their insertion in the capital. Simultaneously, a screen support⁷ suggests the articulations of the technical skeleton that moves us in a society in which even affective relationships become spectral.

Alongside, a knife⁸ that has emigrated from the suburbs of an online game holds down a soft copy of a leaf from the oldest tree, the *Ginkgo biloba*, which existed before our brains and which we now take in drops or capsules to help us concentrate. Because, saturated with information, our attention has become a financial asset in the achievement society. At the far end, by way of an oracle, a geological feature in the form of a fountain-mirror⁹ does not quench our thirst but lubricates our gaze. Covered in an undyed insulating material, it facilitates the process of individuation, and by distorting the correspondence with whoever looks at themselves, it makes our scopic impulse more complex. Because the fountain observes while it cries in a loop on your reflection thanks to a reservoir of artificial tears.

A primitive hand¹⁰ issues from a heap of antidepressant cashews on the ground, holding the contemporary device that best reflects an ancient problem: that which frees us also enslaves us. Don't think it is coincidence that you have to crouch down to read the hyperpoem which, through an animation standardised by the software with the most striking effects on the market, is displayed on the screen of the intelligent artefact. As we crouch, we are reminded of the way our evolutionary brothers walked. The effort made by the human race to stand upright has been so enormous, says the artist, that the tendency to bend our necks in front of screens represents an atavistic rest, and he quotes: "The hands that type at full speed on a screen are nothing more than the hands of a simian waving a stick. Hands are a fundamental element in terms of the first technical gesture. [...] By holding an object, we extract it from the flow of the future and we turn →

→ it into something that is problematic, into something that you have to ask yourself questions about, explore its uses and experiment with. However, the manipulation of digital objects does not generate the abstraction of time but a continuous stretching of it, an infinite scroll [...] that brushes against things but does not penetrate them”.¹¹

The individual, the self and the narcissist gesture are the other visitors to this place. Here they realise that perhaps the subject has never had so many objects, modes and structures of self-knowledge as he does now. But there is a paradox that points to this lack, this unknown and original wound, this bodily anguish that has proved impossible to ease: the fact that we can see the other but not ourselves. And in our world, “in his desire to see himself, man began to perceive himself as information that must be produced and accumulated [...] it is a

constant quantification of human life that ends up generating a reification and alienation: the transformation of the subject into a commodity-object”.¹² This is why we have had to accept that subjectivity is no longer the privileged place of emancipation. And narcissism is pointed to with scorn, forgetting that “the origin of the narcissistic gesture comes from the fact that this lack wounds us and prompts us to seek the means, beyond our physical and mental limits, to fill this void”.¹³ The subject sets off in search of images that reflect him. This is why the narcissistic gesture is natural, “because ultimately what the subject seeks is self-knowledge. What happens is that this gesture, which is essentially a human need for depth, is devalued when all it serves is vanity”.¹⁴

Between the self and the ego, between the real and the virtual, between the exhibition, the kitchen garden and the archaeological find,

each spectator will have the opportunity to tell their story of this dystopian tale. However, more than just critique, what there is here is the result of what the artist terms ‘critical fascination’. A process between magic, astonishment, alienation and fear. A critical position from within, tangled and contradictory. A satire made using that slightly subconscious sense of humour we need to survive.

Mireia Sallarès

The works have been produced in close collaboration with the artist Patricio Rivera and the thinker Alejandra López Gabrielidis, without whom this exhibition would not have been possible. The artist wishes to thank the Hangar.org production centre, and especially Pense and Marzia, for their support, as well as Yago Hortal and Ali Yerdel for their help.

Paco Chanivet (Seville, 1984) holds a degree in fine art and has also studied social and cultural anthropology, as well as film directing and scriptwriting. Some of his contributions to the local art scene have been for Tràfic Photographic Experience (CCCB), *El lugar de los hechos* (Sala d'Art Jove), *ClaResil 2012mg* (La Capella), *Audio-deriva para el Archivo J. R Plaza* (La Virreina Centre de la Imatge), *Blue Seven Phenomena* and *100% Desván* (Sant Andreu Contemporani), *F de Ficción* (Can Felipa Arts Visuals), *Constelaciones familiares* (Sala Muncunill EspaiDos), *Ne travaillez jamais* (ADN Platform, ADN Galería) and *Siga los rastros como si fuera miope* (Arts Santa Mònica). He is currently a long-term artist-in-residence at the Hangar production centre and in mid-2018 at La Escocesa.

¹ Hito Steyerl, *The Wretched of the Screen*, Sternberg Press, 2012, p. 13.

² Byung-Chul Han, *In the Swarm*, MIT Press, 2014, p. 74.

³ *ELECTRIC ICARIA / SHADOW MIRROR*.

⁴ Andrés Ibáñez, *A través del espejo*, Atalanta, 2016.

⁵ *PSYCHO-ARCHITECTURE OF FATUOUS ACCELERATION*.

⁶ *SOFTEN. CONTROL. PROTECT*.

⁷ *LA MEVA POLÍTICA M'OBLLIGA A SEPARAR L'ESPERIT DEL SILICI*.

⁸ *TARDOR COGNITIVA*.

⁹ *WE ARE NOT ALWAYS AWAKE WHEN OUR EYES ARE OPEN* (in collaboration with Patricio Rivera).

¹⁰ *ETERNAL RETURN* (the poetry is the collaborative work of the artist and Alejandra López Gabrielidis).

¹¹ Alejandra López Gabrielidis, “Una danza alrededor de lo concreto”, *La datificación*, Universitat de Barcelona and Université Rennes 2, 2018.

¹² Alejandra López Gabrielidis, “Las fronteras del cuerpo y del objeto digital en la subjetividad contemporánea”, Universidad Nacional de Cuyo, Mendoza, 2017.

¹³ Alejandra López Gabrielidis, *La présence distribuée du sujet dans les objets numériques et Internet*, Université Rennes 2, 2014.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Barcelona Producció is a cycle dedicated to the emerging creativity of the city.