

Marcel·lí Antúnez Roca - Texts

EPIZOO . Mou NO palpís / Mueve NO toques / Move DON'T touch.

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EPIZOO

Installationsperformance

Marcel·lí Antúnez Roca, 1995.

Epizoo has revived the old concept of Body Art, the exhibition of the artist's body, and has adapted it to the possibilities offered by computer technologies.

The result is a hybrid of performance and installation, a work which draws on both of these disciplines without property belonging to either one. Epizoo —thanks to its interactive element— is a show which defies classification.

Epizoo represents the public with a human body covered in mechanisms which may be manipulated by some of the spectators. Pneumatic mechanisms move the nose, buttocks, mouth, breasts or ears of the artist's body.

The artist remains still, in standing position, like a living statue, on a rotating mechanical platform. All the articulated parts are linked to a computer, which is equipped with a programme that can also control the animated infography, the music and the lighting, as well as the mechanisms. It is by means of this computer that the spectator is able to interact with Epizoo.

A difference is marked between the spectators; the active spectator who plays with and manipulates the machine and the artist's body, and the passive spectator who simply watches, without taking part.

Next to the main stand, the monitor can be seen, which the spectator is using to move the body of the artist, to adjust the music and lightning, and to select the images which are being simultaneously projected.

Once the public has entered the space, the artist walks up to the stand and dresses himself, adapting the ritual form of his body to the anatomical apparatus. This is the point at which the game begins.

The spectator can move different parts of the artist placed in front of him by means of a computer equipped with an interactive programme consisting of various animated computer images combined with a soundtrack.

In the poorly-lit basement of his father's butcher's, Marcel·lí Antúnez (Moià, 1959) had a job which involved blowing with his mouth placed over the cut made in sheeps' legs so that the flesh and skin of the animal separate, making the latter easier to flay. One of many similar childhood experiences which, years later —when he'd grown up and had left the Fura dels Baus group behind— found their way into the Ripped Heads, Pleasure Machines, Love Poems exhibition, first shown at the Sala Montcada (Barcelona) in 1993, and most recently at the Galerija Sou Kapelika (Ljubjana). Most visitors to this show of tongues, heads and hearts preserved in formol —the ones that didn't cut and shake their heads knowingly— found it fascinating, but funny too.

Having discovered that flesh provokes as much fascination as amusement —and especially in this post-1986/7 period when "you fuck with a condom", as the artist himself as wished to point out —Marcel·lí Antúnez met the physicist, computer scientist and composer Sergi Jordà, and together they created "Joan" pronounced Joe-ann, a pigskin-covered robot who was computerised and sensitive: the public had only to talk or whistle for "Joan" to raise its arm, shake its head or twitch its dick. Set up in the middle of the meat section of the Boqueria Market, "Joan" fascinated people and made them laugh even more than the ripped-off "Heads" had done.

But both "Joan" as the "Heads" ran the risk of being misunderstood as curiosities, as objects that were easy to dismiss —that heart comes out of a pig, son, and that dick isn't really having a hard-on...

Perhaps to make sure that this time there would be no chance of any misunderstanding, Marcel·lí Antúnez decide to put himself in "Joan"'s shoes and thus at the mercy of the public. And this he has achieved with the help of Srgi Jordà, Roland Olbeter, Paco Corachán and the technical and musical team of seven more people, who —working with Marcel·lí's own design—ended up by strapping him into a suit that was able to make his buttocks rise, his mouth stretch and his nose turn up (like a kid pulling face), and to pump his beasts and wiggle his ears, all according to the whims of a spectator gripping a mouse and moving a cursor across images that reflect the above-mentioned fascination and amusement caused by flesh, and which together with the music —which is also interactive— serve to spice up the main story, the one about the man tied to machine, about love at distance, about dissimulated torture, about games becoming real, about fear of epidemics, about the shortness of life, about the boy raised in the butcher's, and about what William Burroughs calls "the nagging, frightened human flesh".

Marcel·lí Antúnez Roca: Visual Artist. Founder member of "La Fura dels Baus" and responsible for the artistic direction of the following shows: Accions (1984), Suz/o/Suz (1985) and Tier Mon (1990). He left the company in 1990. Member of "Los Rinos" —Art Total Group— who created, among other things, the macroperformances Rinolaxia (1991). As regards his visual work, special mention should be made of sculptures made of flesh, and the interactive robot "Joan the fleshman" (1993), produced in collaboration with Sergi Jordà.