

In 2015, Fundación Botín celebrates the 21st edition of *Itinerarios*, the yearly showcase of artworks by recipients of our visual arts production grant. The work of nine artists will be featured in this exhibition: five are Spanish and four, from other countries: Cuba, Portugal, The USA, and Venezuela. Many split their time between two or more countries, and most if not all maintain a peripatetic lifestyle, as do many artists and art professionals nowadays.

Itinerarios often reflects the current state of the arts, functioning like a snapshot of the trends that prevail at a given moment. This may be due to the nature of this grant, which key goal is to foster ambitious research projects that usually turn out to be an important point in the grantees' career. Hence, the experimental quality of many projects, and a certain degree of formal freedom one may decipher in the setups presented in the gallery. In this iteration, one will observe a particular interest in exploring the notion of the art object as interface.

Our living environments tend to respond increasingly to our presence and require our input; our daily routine is fitted with an ever-expanding cluster of interactive devices and feedback systems. Twenty years ago, the term of relational aesthetics was coined to describe an artistic practice that considered the viewers participation as a key element to create meaning. The work was elaborated so as to engage the visitor, and was thought as an environment, an installation; artists today further

this approach, also pondering the effects of interactivity as being a key part of contemporary culture. The notion of interface permeates their formal research, as much as it informs their interest in producing "open" works of art, which may be formally instable – evolving over the course of time. It also enables them to proceed with a conceptual research that started a few decades ago, which tends to question the notion of artwork as product, and the fact a finished form somehow conceals the intellectual and physical process of its production.

These more fluid forms may also reflect the compression of time, which has become an increasingly rare commodity, as we tend to be exposed to a constant flow of information, which in turn demand faster processing capabilities to understand the complexity of our environment. This phenomenon has affected the creative process as much as other human activities. A metaphor that can be used is the one of "rendering time": until recently, computers processing large and complex sets of data (for instance, calculations or video files) needed this "rendering time" to complete their task. As machines become more powerful, this moment of latency has gradually disappeared and computer processing has become a speed of reference, a new timekeeping measure. It seems like it is now the human mind that needs to adjust to these new conditions, and this clearly causes a tremendous challenge.

While the art exhibition may be one of the very few places left for reflection and contemplation, artists keep addressing the new state of culture. For instance, their work may take the guise of sets of documents –text, images, or relics– offered for consultation. The visitors then become researchers of sorts, drawing their own conclusions from the processing of the elements on display. One may think of how scientists proceed with their research and regularly publish or communicate papers at conferences, so as to share the state of their work, while continuing to work in their laboratories. This documentary/installation form presents thoughts and traces of an ongoing thinking process that seems hard to fix: it is a form that suggests a state of constant change, akin to the world we live in.

The formal notion of assemblage could also characterize most of the work on display in this latest edition of *Itinerarios*. Artists freely combine elements in various media –painting, sculpture, photography, video and performance– in order to create hybrid or multi-layered narrative structures. It is the combination of various elements that forms the open-ended structure, which the visitor is then encouraged to activate, by mentally associating its components, often relating them to the space they occupy – the architecture of the space becoming an integral part of the artistic proposal. The formal condition of the work may also evolve over the course of time, when it is for instance “activated” by performance.

Similarities in concerns expressed by the participating artists in this 21st iteration of *Itinerarios* are balanced by the difference in approaches and tactics used by each of them. Together, they offer a rich perspective on contemporary art practice of a new generation.

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