

Polyptych Retained Actions. 4 Trends in video-performance.

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RETAINED ACTIONS. 4 TRENDS IN THE VIDEO PERFORMANCE

The roots of the art of performance can be found in avant garde early 20th century art. In movements such as futurism or Dadaism action is the focal point, based on a both social and political perspective. In the fifties and sixties, there was a boom in this manifestation thanks to authors such as John Cage, Allan Kaprow or the Zaj group, led by our own Canary Islands point of reference, Juan Hidalgo. The Canary Islands are not unaffected by these artistic manifestations and, as Franck González says in the *Radio de Acción* exhibition catalogue (CAAM, 8001) (a fundamental book about art of action in the islands), "performance reached the islands relatively early. In July 1966, there was a performance by Juan Luis Alzola and Luis Sosa in Plazuela de las Ranas. *Acciones Retenidas* is a small example of the legacy left by Juan Hidalgo, Pedro Garhel, Nacho Criado, Concha Jerez, etc. Changes not only affecting the art world but society itself, however, have changed the constants of performance and artists' motivations are not the same as they were in the seventies, eighties and nineties. In this respect, terms like ephemeral, alternative or corporal art are questioned because the use of new expression techniques have changed the very concept of performance. The moving image enhanced by the appearance of video or new video and musical composition editing programs have led to the term video-performance being used to capture and record actions. As Rodrigo Alonso says in *En los confines del cuerpo y de sus actos*, "the use of images led to the possibility of creating pieces for the sole purpose of being recorded, giving rise to photo-performance and video-performance", although this put an end to the Romantic ideal of the ephemeral. Video changes the conception and interpretation of performance; it modifies and manipulates the perspective and the spectator is steered by the camera; his or her vision is no longer free and random. On the other hand, video editing and mounting determines different meanings that, when live, are opposite, or at least different. Editing changes reality so spectators are before an experience different from performance. Ultimately, video converts situations that contradict the very definition of action into performances. Video transforms action into a non-ephemeral art of objects, where the physical becomes a screen and the contact between the artist and the spectator vanishes. In *Acciones Retenidas*, we see different approaches to the art of action through video and how it is tackled by Pedro Déniz, Óscar Hernández and Beatriz Lecuona, Guillermo Lorenzo and Nacho Ramírez. Pedro Déniz assumes the use of video as a document. His work uses the public as a part of it, and the camera becomes the documentary recording of what happens in time and form, although he subsequently edits the image while using the original audio. This was the case in *Welcome*. Few performances are designed solely to be recorded and they usually involve important social motivations and critique: Their content is inherited from the tradition of performance, where social commitment is important. His works repeatedly refer to immigration or social inequality. On the other hand, Óscar Hernández and

Beatriz Lecuona present a formal unity in nearly all their work, which is characterised by the use of a fixed perspective in a sequence plane. They therefore have to prepare a rigid *mise en scène*, their movements are calculated and there is no room for improvisation; the spectator has to contemplate the action because the artists are constantly leaving and entering the scene. They use live sound and no public. In this respect, their performances are prepared expressly to be recorded, although they tend to be of a documentary style. Guillermo Lorenzo tackles his work in different ways. He records his actions live on video and then converts them into video pieces, changing the sense of the action itself. He gives importance to the narrative resources of the moving image and plays with the time of representation. Sound is very important for the author and he usually composes the music himself. Finally, Nacho Ramírez conceives his videos as units with an autonomous value. He does not see the recording of actions as a way of recording his performances, as a way of giving them an audiovisual sense. His works are video creations with performance characteristics. They reflect the importance of the body, his obsession with textures and control of narrative time. Ultimately, he is an author whose aesthetic sensitivity takes him to produce a form of plastic beauty based on the abject, as defined by Julia Kristeva. In the words of Carlos Arenas, 'the iconography of abjection comprises the fluids and substances that are shed by the body, such as blood, dribble, semen, vomit and other viscosities that alter the ideal human body', and Nacho Ramírez approaches this image when his scenes imitate the removal of such fluids. Therefore, *Acciones Retenidas* is no more than a selection of four ways of seeing performance as a creative activity and its recording on video, following more or less conservative, but equally valid, systems where the projection is assumed as an autonomous action.

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