

Catálogo 5ème Rencontres de la Photographie Africaine

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A CRITICAL GAZE

A new generation has burst onto the artistic landscape of the Canary Islands and should soon be moving on to Spain and the world. These artists are linked by a resolutely modern and contemporary concept of the understanding and execution of the artistic praxis. They are defined and united by the variety of the proposals and means at their disposal. Present in Bamako, Pedro Déniz and the artistic duo Pérez & Joel are eloquent examples of this generation. They have all distinguished themselves through their installations, video and performance work and the quality and importance of their photographic proposals. They are also linked by the way in which they apprehend the time and space in which they live; they produce works that involve a critical look at the problematics of today. The most cruel, immoral and dehumanised contradictions of our era fill whole swathes of their creative proposals. These artists are also united by a wide repertory of subtleties and metaphors in their art that establish open critical spaces.

Historically, the Canary Islands archipelago has always turned its back on the African continent, more willing to look towards European or American horizons. Today this situation is starting to evolve, no doubt directly due to the massive numbers of African immigrants that arrive by boat on the Canary Islands' shores. This situation has sparked much debate and polemic in Canary society. Pedro Déniz's photographic installation, *Conciencias-Confluencias* (2003) is marked by these double morals of a once emigrant, poor society that showed solidarity to visitors but has now become reticent, hostile, cautious and contradictory. Déniz's red carpets, photographed on four different beaches that coincide with the four

compass points of Gran Canaria island, represent the carpets we lay out to greet and welcome but also the mats under which we sweep our dirty conscience. Pérez & Joel present their work *Road Movies* (2003), which brims over with subtlety. An anonymous character stands alone by the side of the road, waiting in a cloud of uncertainty and fog for the magical car that will take him towards the New World he so desires... The sequence continues inside a passing vehicle while a dwarf-elf stands on the road reminding us that reality is unfortunately not a short fairytale that ends happily a few pages down the line.

Pedro Déniz and Pérez & Joel humbly accept and share the conviction that there is a need to present artistic works whose subtleties and quality are not an obstacle to a critical look at reality, one that aims to shake up our consciences.

Pedro Déniz

An interdisciplinary artist born in Gran Canaria, Spain, in 1964. His incredible versatility as a creator has enabled him to develop projects and experiments ranging from objects to installations and photography to video, while cultivating action and performance in abundance and making his projects both open and participatory. His body of work summarises his profound commitment to social and j political issues. He is featured in many exhibitions in the Canarian Islands and is starting to become known elsewhere too, on the Spanish mainland and abroad, where he has already participated in some projects.