

Cracking a Nut

Lúa Coderch

13.9.22-8.1.23

Fabra i Coats:
Centre d'Art
Contemporani

Ajuntament de
Barcelona



It goes like this. I hear, "Look, look. No, no, over there. Can you see him? It's Dalí." Salvador Dalí suddenly appears at a mass that's already started, and sits down on one of the front pews. Sounds like the start of a joke, doesn't it? But it isn't. Nobody there should find anything particularly odd about this, but even so there is a short silence, soon broken by an equally short burst of whispering. When it's time for the collection, Dalí slowly takes a banknote out of his jacket pocket, a large, very crumpled note. Then he puts it down on his lap and starts smoothing it with both hands, several times, very, very slowly. The man holding the collection plate waits patiently beside him, a little disconcerted but without saying anything. A feeling forms in the air that something unusual is happening, so people start to stare and whisper. Dalí goes on smoothing out the banknote until it is completely flat over his thigh. Then he takes it at the ends in both hands, holding it with his finger ends, and ceremoniously places it, completely flat, on top of the rest of the collection.

This is a completely true story, or maybe not, like all those told in the course of the exhibition. All of them have in common that they are not quite full stories. Rather they are scenes, small units of meaning that could hypothetically take their place as part of a longer story. Maybe one day, maybe some other time. I collect stories of this kind as if they were textual objects, as if they were little treasures; I've been collecting them here and there for a few years and I slip them in here and there. Some are inventions, some are finds, others are gifts or loans; I hope none of them are stolen. They attract me because of their availability to play different roles, to take on different meanings depending on the context in which I make them appear, always provisionally, always in a slightly different way. But until they find their permanent place, until they acquire the ability to speak as part of a more complex narrative, they continue to have - like Salvador Dalí's crumpled banknote - the ability to capture our attention for a short space of time, without any clear reason without their purpose or value actually becoming clear.

Seen like this, that is, as little devices to capture the attention that as yet lack a clear purpose, the scenes offer at least the chance to encounter the other, the chance to pay attention to the same thing together. Just as when a child begins to become aware of the world around them, long before they are able to say a single word, they feel the need to point to seek confirmation by others that what they perceive actually exists. That it also exists for others. And this is why they point at the cat, the stain, the cloud, the breast. They point at noise, at shadows, at crumbs, the car, an ant, the mouth, a spot. Their tiny finger calls to us. It points tirelessly here and there, every time indicating a place for us to meet, their attention

and ours coinciding at a point in space or time, until something makes sense. This is the game I propose with *Film*, the piece that takes up the first floor of the exhibition, a kind of paracinematic device in the form of a large curtain in which the audiovisual format is split into different layers: first the soundtrack, then the voice and finally the incomplete, fragmentary sequence of pictures. Here a first set of scenes is unveiled, with their expectations and their trivial dénouement, pointing precisely to the possibility of this starting point for a shared narrative.

The same possibility is pointed to in the allegory of the nutcracker that appears in a short story by Franz Kafka, entitled “Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk”. This is where I took the title of the exhibition from and also one of the stories that has kept me the best company over the years of my career. This is why the oldest piece of work presented here is a short video from 2010 showing the process of transcribing, not particularly skilfully, a fragment of its text. As it is described in this story, it is clear that the little mouse Josephine is considered an artist among her own kind, even though she has no outstanding quality to distinguish her in essence from other mice. Her whistle, because what Josephine basically does is to whistle, sounds like the whistling of all the others. Not only this, but what the others do effortlessly seems to demand a great effort from her. Can it be that what sets her apart is what she lacks, the fact that she can manage it less well than others? There is another mouse, who tells us about Josephine, comparing her singing, ordinary as it is, with the simple and also very ordinary action of cracking a nut, an art which, moreover, we are all perfectly capable of. So, if someone invites us to see how they crack a nut, we are to suppose that something more than the promise of food is offered.

This exhibition often talks about difficulty. It talks about very small things, how sometimes the simplest thing can be extremely hard, and how sometimes the most everyday thing can seem extraordinary to us, precisely because it appears beyond us. Or because it is only now that we really pay attention to it, for the first time. The second floor has an open space with a set of pieces that connect with some of the scenes that appear in *Film*, as if it were a kind of gym where they invite us to exercise our attention, our gestures or our body disposition in different ways. There are some sculptures that might be furniture, like for example an exhibition bench that tips and asks us to synchronise ourselves bodily with other people who sit on it, or a sofa that invites us to take up a vaguely vulnerable position and at the same to dialogue with *Echo*, a sculpture that returns the words it has heard. There are a series of items laid out to form a rainbow with sunlight inside the room, just in case the right conditions

ever occurred for this to happen. There is a piece that simply invokes chance. Other pieces suggest gestures or ask us things. All of them are friendly pieces, often slightly comic, who speak, in their own way, of being together but without quite defining what's going on between us. The scenes continue on the third floor in the form of audiovisual and sound pieces that experiment with different ways of getting into the image and into language, and talk about finding oneself without songs to offer a baby to console them, closing a door or feeling as a bird would do.

Finally, a series of small-scale actions are planned to take place during the exhibition. This is an attempt at a genealogy between different works I have created over the years, all of them approached as invitations to come together or meet up with the excuse of an apparently trivial purpose. In *A Round Trip*, for example, the invitation is to take a trip on a sightseeing boat to get a perspective and return to the starting point. In *Acting Out* we need to agree on whether or not we want to see an image that has been hidden for a long time. In *Talk in the Dark* the invitation is to listen in the darkness and find our guiding stars in the night sky. In *Debut*, the scene that closes the exhibition and starts on the last day, the invitation is to wait in the company of others for a messenger pigeon to arrive home, like a kind of collective wish for something to come true, but also as a way of potentially prolonging the time of the exhibition. None of the things I exhibit or explain here have anything intrinsically outstanding about them in themselves. All in all, cracking a nut is an insignificant, everyday action. Who would think of entertaining us by cracking nuts?

For exhibitions to be attributed to a single person is often a fiction behind which many other names lie. This particular exhibition would not have been possible without the invaluable collaboration of Huaqian Zhang at every stage of its creation. Special thanks go to Adrià Sunyol Estadella, who continues to place his confidence in me after all these years, contributing his talent to yet another project. I would also like to thank Lázaro Construccions Metàl·liques, Ángeles Jiménez Caro, Germán Casas Poyatos, Paqui Hernández Plaza, Víctor Fernández Sanza and Raúl Chávez for their know-how. àngels Barcelona gallery for its support. And finally, Eugeni and Lluís Nacenta for supporting me in every possible way.

1.

Film, 2022

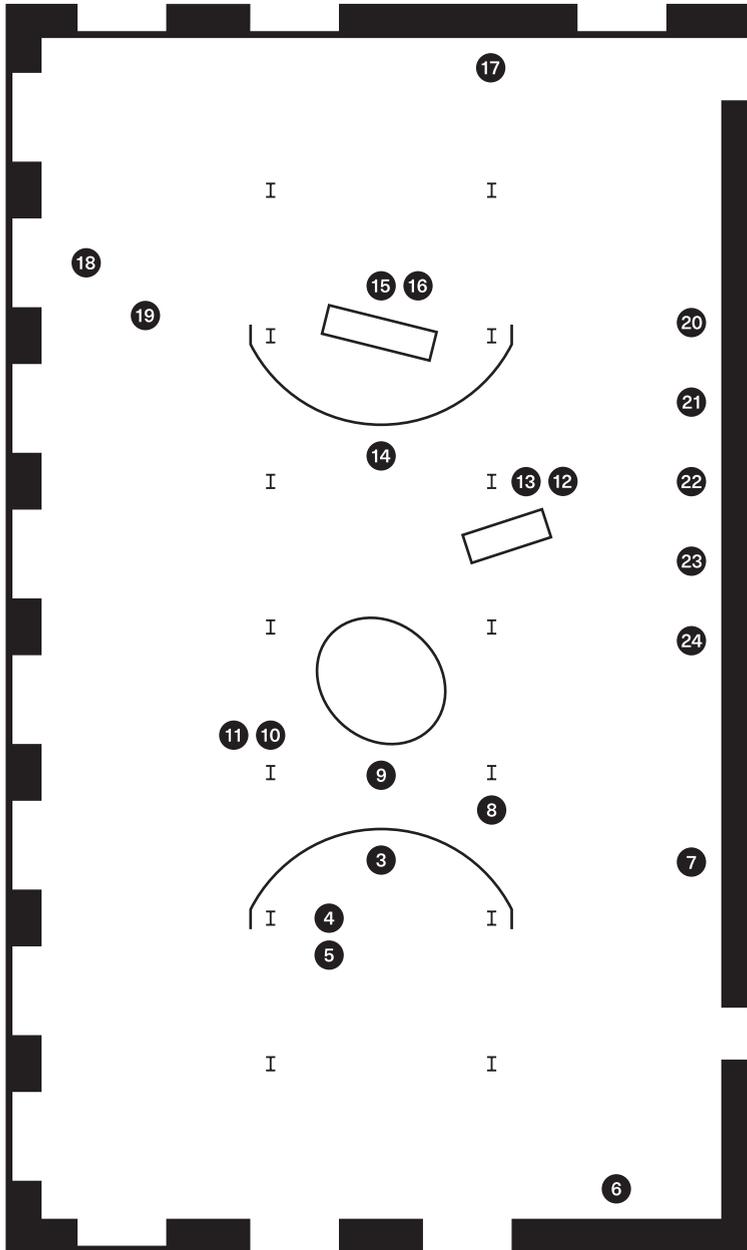
Curtain, sublimation on fabric and metal support. 22.75 m×3 m×6 m
With the collaboration of Adrià Sunyol Estadella, Eugeni Nacenta, Francesc Noy, Victor Pérez-Pallarès Setó, Emma Prats and Huaqian Zhang

2.

Film, 2022

Sound installation. 30 min
With the collaboration of Dinou
Voice of Lúa Coderch

This film is made up of six separate scenes to be (re)produced in the imagination. The set has no continuity, but it might appear to because of the resonances some stories might have for others. In fact, this film has neither beginning nor end, is presented as circular and is potentially infinite. I have chosen the scenes just as we pick up interesting stones along a path. They caught our attention, which is to say, they called to us. We don't know anything else about them, we don't know what comes before or after. We take them as a gift, we let them go again, or sometimes we keep and share them —as in this case.



2nd FLOOR

3.

Desires and Expectations, 2022

Curtain, sublimation on fabric and metal support. 6×3×2.3 m
With the collaboration of Alex Weecha

4.

Luck is a Form of Attention (golden ed.), 2022

Gilded arm mounted on a pendulum mechanism. 18×22×15 cm
With the collaboration of Marta Boan

When I say that luck is a form of attention, I am referring to a slightly hazy idea that I nevertheless stick to as if it were a great truth. But the fact is I can't explain it other than by giving an example. Such as: why do lucky cats work? Not by any spell, it isn't by any kind of conjuring or magic trick. This is what I think. I think it's because their arm moves and attracts our attention. That simple. Nor can we ignore the golden glints of the arm, its shiny flashing, like a kind of hook for the eye.

Without saying any more, the little piece that welcomes us, then, is no more than an artefact to attract the eye, so conjuring a specific kind of good luck.

5.

Hand Holding Luck, 2022

Digital printing mounted on metal support. 70×73×40 cm
With the collaboration of Eugeni Nacenta and Adrià Sunyol Estadella

6.

Orientation Exercises, 2022

Wooden sticks and metal support. 80×135 cm

This collection of sticks is a score and an instrument at the same time. The sticks contain instructions in verse form that refer to humble exercises of rehabilitation of a provisional order.

7.

Cracking a Nut, 2022

Digital printing. 70×100 cm
With the collaboration of Adrià Sunyol Estadella and Alex Weecha

8.

Cracking a Nut Is No Art, 2010

Digital video, single-channel, 16:10, colour, sound. 4 min 54 s

A text typed on a computer gradually appears on a blank screen. The writing time seems excessively long, taking much longer than it does to read and giving a slight tension to the moments of waiting, and with them to the viewer's patience. The text talks about the possibility of bringing an audience together to entertain them by cracking nuts, having first pointed out that cracking nuts is not an art at all. The fragment is taken from the Kafka short story entitled "Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk", one of his last short stories.

9.

The Hand Method, 2022

Digital printing. 250×150 cm

The Hand Method results from me asking myself how we orient ourselves, what our points of reference are. It shows one possible method: the thumb seeking utopia as a horizon and the other fingers pointing towards an open, changing constellation of desires and expectations.

10.

The Stain (seat), 2021

Padded seat on metal support. 45×102×68 cm

11.

Stains, 2018

Digital audio. 8 min 11 s

Voice of Lúa Coderch

Stains is an audio piece in which a voice explains different ways of getting rid of difficult stains, one after another. Despite the apparent loquacity of the voice, the triviality of the subject, as well as its symbolic resonances, mean this piece also refers to the difficulty in speaking and to other forms silence can take, as if the voice were using this chatter to train for something really important.

12.

Seesaw-Bench, 2022

Tubular structure with padded surface. 180×45×105 cm

This bench springs from the idea of materialising a way of being, and also the desire not to disappear, not to be unnoticeable. As it is unstable, it demands a certain negotiation from us, a certain agreement, whether we want to sit on it alone or if we sit beside someone else.

13.

Rehearsal for a Spell, 2020

Digital video, single-channel, 16:9, colour, sound. 5 min 12 s

Written and edited by Lúa Coderch

Voice of Erica Wise and Lúa Coderch

Rehearsal for a Spell again features an idea that resonates throughout the exhibition, which is the idea of entering into the image, of going deeper inside it to find the matter of which it is made, the ground zero of its meaning and of its magic.

14.

A Completely True Story, 2022

Curtain, sublimation on fabric and metal support. 6×3×2.3 m

With the collaboration of Alex Weecha

15.

Couch, 2022

Tubular structure with padded surface. 277×45×60 cm

As with other pieces that make up this exhibition, this couch is the materialisation of an attitude, of a physical and mental gesturing. In this case, the piece obviously relates to psychoanalytical practice, reduced here to taking up a posture that shows we embrace a certain vulnerability, that we are letting our guard down, that we can talk and that we can listen.

16.

Echo (The Couch One), 2022

Upholstered structure, artificial hair, Raspberry Pi, speaker and microphone. 28 Ø×111 cm

Echo is a body that listens, a body that speaks, a body that “thinks”. *Echo* only knows and can only use the words it has heard before, paying attention to how it hears them put together. *Echo* tries out ways of recombining these words, correct forms. As correct forms it takes those it has heard before, or can deduce statistically from those it has heard before.

Echo listens to you and answers. *Echo* sometimes says incongruent or unconnected things. *Echo* sometimes says things that make sense. *Echo*, so to speak, works in company, works as a body among other bodies. It depends on what others decide to say to it to grow and to make increasingly complicated, appropriate sentences. *Echo* is an open source code sculpture, and the code can be found through this link:
www.github.com/juliajmg/ECO.

Echo (The Couch One) is the result of collaboration with Julia Múgica, Lluís Nacenta and Iván Paz, with the intervention of Huaqian Zhang.
Thanks to: galeria Dilalica, .BEEP { collection;} New Art Foundation

17.

Scale, 2022

Metal structure and digital printing. 200×305×31 cm
With the collaboration of Adrià Sunyol Estadella

18.

The Rainbow Statement, 2022

Flint prism mounted on a tubular structure, mirror. 150×140×100 cm
With the collaboration of Pep Vidal and Eduard Millat Cortes, Pol Rayo Sánchez, Ariadna Tohà Dalmau, Clàudia Platel Fanés, Guillermo Recuero Hinojosa, José Luis Reyes Calderón and other members of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona Optical Laboratory.

The Rainbow Statement is the realisation of an expectation, a calculation made to produce an effect that even so remains improbable. The “rainbow statements” are verbal tricks used by mind readers and horoscope writers, a technique that consists of saying one thing immediately followed by the opposite, so maximising the chances of getting it right. Here this technique which, while cheating, actually works, is interpreted literally. Everything is prepared to create a small rainbow inside Fabra i Coats for a few minutes every day,* by dispersing any direct sunlight that enters through the window into a red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet beam. But the result will depend on the fact that the circumstances are sometimes right. Therefore, for most of the exhibition, this piece will be inactive, in its potential form only.

* Every sunny day from 13 September to 8 January 2023. The time will vary during the exhibition (further information on the website).

Thanks to: Latitudes (Max Andrews and Mariana Cánepa Luna)

19.

Hand Holding the Rainbow, 2022

Digital printing mounted on metal support. 100×140×70 cm

With the collaboration of Eugeni Nacenta and Adrià Sunyol Estadella

20.

The Rainbow Statement, 2022

Digital printing. 70×100 cm

With the collaboration of Adrià Sunyol Estadella and Alex Weecha

21.

Talk in the Dark, 2022

Digital printing. 70×100 cm

With the collaboration of Adrià Sunyol Estadella and Alex Weecha

22.

A Round Trip, 2022

Digital printing. 70×100 cm

With the collaboration of Adrià Sunyol Estadella and Alex Weecha

23.

Acting Out, 2022

Digital printing. 70×100 cm

With the collaboration of Adrià Sunyol Estadella and Alex Weecha

24.

Debut, 2022

Digital printing. 70×100 cm

With the collaboration of Adrià Sunyol Estadella and Alex Weecha

25.

Entering the Work, 2018

Digital video, single-channel, 16:9, colour, sound. 6 min

Voice of Mariana Cánepa Luna. Additional sounds by nickcath, drewhalasz and kimchi-shreds (freesound.org)

With *Entrare nell'opera* (1971), by Giovanni Anselmo

Entering the Work is the opening chapter of *Shelter*, a videographic essay in the form of correspondence created between 2015 and 2018, in which constructing shelters in natural settings (temporary architectures that would only serve to survive one night in a hostile or unknown environment) serves as the excuse to discuss questions like cardinality, memory or time.

This first letter is devoted to the simple gesture of pointing something out for someone else, a gesture that calls the attention, and through which we seek to show that we share a world, that what we perceive and experience also exists for others. And behind this gesture lies an invitation to enter the picture, to make yourself visible too, together with what is being pointed to.

Written and directed by Lúa Coderch. Videography and camera: Adrià Sunyol Estadella. Editors: Adrià Sunyol Estadella and Lúa Coderch. Producer: Lluís Nacenta. Production designer: Lúa Coderch. Assistant production designer: Daniel Ruiz-Giménez. Location: Lluís Nacenta and Eugeni Nacenta. Casting: Anna Ramos. Colour correction: Chema Mumford. Sound editing: Lúa Coderch. Subtitles: Chema Mumford. Translations: Translated. Work created with the Ayuda Fundación BBVA a la Creación en Videoarte 2015.

26.

A Roof for Love, 2018

Digital video, single-channel, 16:9, colour, sound. 2 min 45 s

Voice of Knut Aufermann. Additional sounds by e330, dobroide and fonotecadecanarias (freesound.org)

A Roof for Love is the penultimate chapter of *Shelter*, a letter devoted to the space we build for love. As in the previous chapters, we see here a record of the construction of a shelter, which in this case is just a roof, a roof that's like an upside-down nest. The job of constructing this simple roof points to the gesture of provisional settlement in a place, an ambivalent gesture that is at once candid and lucid, of fragility and strength.

Written and directed by Lúa Coderch. Videography and camera: Adrià Sunyol Estadella. Editors: Adrià Sunyol Estadella and Lúa Coderch. Producer: Lluís Nacenta. Production designer: Lúa Coderch. Assistant production designer: Daniel Ruiz-Giménez. Location: Lluís Nacenta and Eugeni Nacenta. Casting: Anna Ramos. Colour correction: Chema Mumford. Sound editing: Lúa Coderch. Subtitles: Chema Mumford. Translations: Translated. Work created with the Ayuda Fundación BBVA a la Creación en Videoarte 2015.

27.

Tam ta tan tam, 2020

Digital audio. 4 min 20 s

Written and edited by Lúa Coderch

Voice of Lúa Coderch

When your child arrives, they find you without songs. This is how this sound piece begins, recognising one of the many things you suddenly find you lack when you find yourself with a newborn baby in your arms. It refers to the process of recalling, or reconstructing fragment by fragment the songs we have forgotten, the songs we remember when we need them to offer to another.

28.

What Do You See?, 2022

Digital audio. 1 min 50 s

Written and edited by Lúa Coderch

Voice of Lúa Coderch and Eugeni Nacenta

29.

Before Closing, 2020

Digital audio. 4 min 38 s

Written and edited by Lúa Coderch

Voice of Lúa Coderch

In the form of an exploration in sound and words, this voice piece takes a detailed look at the mental and sensory landscapes that appear the moment before closing a door. Just before leaving and closing it behind you.

Talk in the Dark, 2016–2022
15 October, 20.00–21.00, place to be confirmed *

This is first of all a talk without images. There are still some images, of course, but they are images that each of the listeners will have to form by their own means, by imagining them. We are in the dark and, as we won't see, it will be a good time to explore, through little stories told in a low voice, some possible ways of orienting ourselves, to think about memory and its supports, to inhabit the link with someone else that comes with shared attention, coinciding in space or in time.

With the collaboration of Ricard Casas and Ignasi Ribas Canudas (Institut d'Estudis Espacials de Catalunya). Thanks to: Pilar Cortada

A Round Trip, 2017–2022
22 October, 11.15–12.00, port of Barcelona, Drassanes dock *

A Round Trip is an invitation to take short trip together on a *golondrina*, the old sightseeing boats in the port of Barcelona. The trip offers a while in the sun, if there is any, and a few stories along the way that talk about a series of journeys, with the common thread that all these little stories include a return of one kind or another. There might also be a quiet conversation, broken by some silences, journey and voice woven together, as we gaze at something. In any case, this return journey is a time lapse suspended between two moments, from when we leave the dock until we return, with the excuse of seeing the city in a unique way, as if we were leaving it —except that our journey, like those of migratory birds, is a return journey.

Thanks to: Joana Hurtado Matheu

Acting Out, 2014–2022

5 November, 10.00–14.00, 2nd floor Fabra i Coats *

The starting point for this scene is an undeveloped roll of film that supposedly comes from a Soviet space mission of the early 1980s. I got it in an Ebay auction in October 2013 and I've kept it intact until 2022. The pictures in it may not be recoverable, or they may in fact be less valuable than the mere fact of their potential existence. Or developing the roll might perhaps offer us a little moment of wonder. As if it were a trial, we'll listen to some arguments against opening it to discover what's inside and others in favour. Faced with the dilemma of whether to develop this roll or not, the invitation is to take a decision together. The only thing I can assure is that whatever decision we take, it will be acted on immediately.

Thanks to: Sonia Fernández Pan, Miquel Cabal Guarro
and Tatiana Kourochkina

Debut, 2016–2022

8 January 2023, 12.00–14.00, entrance, Fabra i Coats *

A voice on the other end of the phone says, “Do you know how fast messenger pigeons fly?” The answer —and I know because I did a quick search beforehand— is that an adult bird in favourable conditions can cover over 800 km in a single day, flying at an average of 90 km/h. These are not just any street pigeons, as they say to me, but are chosen for their physical strength and their resistance to fatigue. That's how I understood it, right.

As the last day of the exhibition is also the first day of what comes next, the invitation here is to enter the future by releasing a messenger pigeon carrying a secret message for us that we might see or we might not, if the bird reaches its destination. This inaugural event will be the excuse to meet up and wait together, and maybe extend the time of the exhibition for a while —or forever.

With the message of Ann Cotten. Thanks to: Sabel Gavaldon

*

Limited places

Registration: activitats-centredart@bcn.cat

Opening times

Tuesdays to Saturdays, 12.00 to 20.00
Sundays and Holidays, 11.00 to 15.00

Guided tours. More information at:
barcelona.cat/fabraicoats/centredart

Sant Adrià, 20
08030 Barcelona
+34 932 566 155
centredart@bcn.cat
barcelona.cat/fabraicoats/centredart