

Exhibition 19 November 2014 - 16 March 2015
Palacio de Cristal. Parque del Retiro

Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller The Marionette Maker



Janet Cardiff & George Bures Miller, *The Marionette Maker*, 2014
Palacio de Cristal, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid

The work of Janet Cardiff (Brussels, Ontario, Canada, 1957) and George Bures Miller (Vegreville, Alberta, Canada, 1960) combines and assembles different elements, such as sound, narrative and scenography, to form a visual and audio ensemble that transports the spectator to a kind of imaginary reality. Its creators play with the senses, creating a new atmosphere in which objectivity and fiction become confused, and in which they invite the public to take part, as if in an exercise in voyeurism.

Experimentation with sound and the voice has been ever present in Janet Cardiff's work, both in her solo work of the nineteen-eighties, and the work she has done together with George Bures Miller since the start of the nineties. The "audio walks" are perhaps the format that they have reiterated the most, and the works for which they are best known. *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* (2012), presented at Documenta 13, or *Walk Münster* (1997) are examples of these audio narrations, through which the artists involve the viewer in the experience they are relating. In these audio pieces, as in their more complex installations, technology plays a fundamental part, but one used as a means for achieving personal aims and experiences. In this sense they deliberately steer away from any form of virtuosity so that the experience in itself is the real focus of attention.

The artists are presenting their work *The Marionette Maker* at the Palacio de Cristal, an installation that is in line with previous works like *The Dark Pool* (1995) and *Opera for a Small Room* (2005), in which they invite us to approach, observe and investigate—even actively participate, as is the case with *The Dark Pool*—in a scene that is alien to us. Somehow, they incite us to be voyeurs of a space, a time and a life that belong to someone else.

A solitary caravan sits in the centre of the Palacio. Above it, large speakers emit sounds and a feminine murmur that awakens the curiosity and almost subconsciously pushes the viewer to approach. We can't go in, but the windows and a door left ajar allow us to see what it happening inside. We discover a woman who seems absorbed in an eternal sleep: "Consider/ a girl who keeps slipping off/ arms limp as old carrots/ into the hypnotist's trance/ into a spirit world speaking with the gift of tongues". As in the poem *Briar Rose (Sleeping Beauty)* by the American writer Anne Sexton, this is a sleeping beauty far removed from that of the popular children's story. Here the sleeping figure is converted into a metaphor that leads us to intuit other hidden stories.

Around the woman, we find a number of marionettes and dolls in the process of being created. An old man, a marionette himself, is at a table, drawing, and like Victor Frankenstein in the novel by Mary Shelley, it seems as if he finds himself wondering about how to bring them to life. It is a scene that talks to us of the passage of time, of this commitment to relentless creation, like that of any artist to his work.

Palacio de Cristal

Parque del Retiro



Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía

Palacio de Cristal

Parque del Retiro, Madrid

Opening Hours

From April to September

Every day from

10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.

From October to March

Every day from

10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

The Palacio de Cristal will be shut on days with heavy rain.

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