

Patricia Esquivias

Everything that is not a portion is speculation

24 June – 28 September 2009

**MUSEO NACIONAL
CENTRO DE ARTE
REINA SOFIA**

Patricia Esquivias

Everything that is not a portion is speculation

Everything that is not tradition is plagiarism

Eugenio d'Ors

In our literature, said Mairena, almost everything that is not folklore is pedantry.

Antonio Machado, *Juan de Mairena*

Intrahistory: word introduced by the Spanish writer, Miguel de Unamuno, to designate traditional life, which acts as a permanent background for changing and visible history.

Dictionary of the Spanish Royal Academy

Over the last five years, Patricia Esquivias has produced a body of works using video as her main medium that oscillates between informal essays, micro-stories and notes. The work she has produced for the *FISURAS* program at the Reina Sofia Museum is the latest piece from the *Folklore* series she began in 2006. In it Esquivias explores various aspects of Spain's history and idiosyncrasies in a heterodox manner, drawing on everyday events and phenomena from popular culture as a ground for history, micro-history and personal history.

The artist employs studies of apparently extravagant cases, such as the hypothetical relations between the Franco dictatorship, the public career of the businessman and politician, Jesús Gil, and the *Ruta del bakalao* (a weekly "pilgrimage" to Valencia from other parts of Spain where participants spend the weekend dancing non-stop in discotheques) to explain Spain's baroque character (*Folklore # 1*); or she draws parallels between King Philip II and pop singer, Julio Iglesias, in order to speak of Spain's historical relationship with the sun and the economy (*Folklore # 2*).

In *Folklore # 4*, the equally aleatory starting point is a personal anecdote: after asking her father if he had ever been to the Reina Sofia Museum, and suspecting that his affirmative answer was probably untrue, the artist launched an entire process of investigation in order to resolve what she believes to have been



Patricia Esquivias. *Sunday, September 2008, Nouvel terrace*

an incorrect question. Like all the pieces in this series, *Folklore # 4* takes the form of a dissertation: Esquivias sorts out different aspects of the problematic relationship Spain has established with modernity, and the tension between the concept and practice of the avant-garde and popular tradition over the course of the 20th century. For her, this relation can be tracked through every aspect of culture, from art to cooking.

Exhibited in a transitional space in architect Jean Nouvel's extension to the Museo Reina Sofia, *Folklore # 4* is based on a

fixed view of the museum shot from nearby. This view reveals the contrast between the 18th-century architecture of the Sabatini building and the contemporary style of the French architect. The museum-as-container becomes a metonym in Esquivias' discourse, an emblematic example of the use of supposedly advanced design as a lure and sign of modernity. Defining the site of this work, a hemp mat on the floor alludes to the role of popular architecture in the history of avant-garde architecture in Spain, for it refers to the Republican Pavilion designed by Josep Lluís Sert for the 1939 Universal Exhibition

in Paris. Through these diverse references, Esquivias counterpoints modernity's linear, progressive and escalating temporalities with her own slow and eventful manner of working.

A fundamental aspect of Esquivias' videos is their performative component. Each is made in a single session, thereby capturing in a few minutes the essence of research the artist has carried out over a long period of time. During the process of documentation that precedes the piece's making, she amasses information from interviews, the internet, and her own memory. The result is akin to a conceptual map that links, compares and contrasts the subjects she sets out to analyze: an archive of images that subtends her comments. Since the narrative in her videos is in English, this forces her to be vigilant as she translates. In turn, it generates a sense of strangeness and tension in the viewer. Unlike the extremely normalized formats used in broadcasts by the mass media, Esquivias' works include a degree of improvisation that allows her greater flexibility, and even a certain weakness in their production. Such characteristics are accepted as something positive —the artist herself speaks of “the advantages of imperfection” — as indicative of a markedly subjective resistance to the authoritarian and stereotyped interpretations of the media.

Biography

Born in Caracas, Venezuela, in 1979, Patricia Esquivias moved to Spain as an infant. “In the early eighties, my parents returned to Spain, to Madrid, and we lived in the suburbs, far from the city. At that time, Spain was beginning its democratic period and things were going well, but in the suburbs, there was nothing to do. The weekend consisted of driving to the video club, renting four films, and watching two on Saturday and two on Sunday. One of those films was *Batteries Not Included*, and I think that was what started it all for me.” (Patricia Esquivias, *The Future Was When?*, video, 2009). Trained in Central Saint Martins, London (1998-2001), Esquivias furthered her studies at California College of the Arts, United States (2005-2007). Her work has been shown in solo exhibitions in Madrid, Lisbon, San Francisco, Minneapolis and elsewhere; she also participated in numerous group shows, including the 5th Berlin Biennale (2008), the Frankfurter Kunsteverein in Frankfurt (2007) and East International 07 (Norwich). She currently lives and works in Spain and Mexico.

**Museo Nacional
Centro de Arte Reina Sofía**

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Museum hours

Mondays to Saturdays: 10.00 - 21.00
Sundays: 10.00 - 14.30
Closed Tuesdays

Exhibition galleries will be vacated
15 minutes before the museum closes

www.museoreinasofia.es

Palacio de Cristal

Parque de El Buen Retiro, Madrid
Tel: 91 574 66 14

Free admission

Timetable

October to March (included):
Mondays - Saturdays: 10.00 - 18.00
Sundays and Holidays: 11.00 - 16.00

April to September (included):
Mondays - Saturdays: 11.00 - 20.00
Sundays and Holidays: 11.00 - 18.00
Closed Tuesday

Photography

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