



la Biennale di Venezia

56. Esposizione
Internazionale
d'Arte

Eventi Collaterali



Catalonia in Venice

SINGULARITY

A project of Albert Serra – Curated by Chus Martínez

Catalonia in Venice. SINGULARITY,
Collateral Event of the 56th International
Art Exhibition – la Biennale di Venezia

The Institut Ramon Llull presents a new work
from maverick filmmaker Albert Serra curated
by Chus Martínez

The Institut Ramon Llull presents *Catalonia in Venice* at the Art Biennale di Venezia for the fourth time. A film installation by filmmaker Albert Serra will be shown within the curatorial framework of Chus Martínez. The title of this project is *SINGULARITY*. Under this rubric, the artist has conceived a new piece, an immersive film installation projected onto 5 screens arranged in a dynamic structure taking up the entirety of the exhibition space. Specifically conceived for this presentation in Venice, the installation choreographs not only a wide range of views on today's world but also the visitors' movement through the space.

The singularity is the concept that mathematicians and artificial intelligence researchers use to name the moment where our relationship with the machine changes, when technology ceases to be a tool and becomes a companion to the human species.

Albert Serra poetically interweaves what look like contemporary images filmed in Lleida, Catalonia with less clearly realistic ones, thus creating a sort of ancient myth—like a fable. Some sections

of the film are composed of a flow of purely visual and beautiful material. But in others the artist Albert Serra tells us stories that for him represent “ancient” and novel ways of talking about cinema. This very special piece by Serra attempts to create a “legend”—a visual and sensory memory for the viewer based on motifs that will mark a shift in our understanding not of what cinema is able to tell but of the way cinema can transform us and prepare us for a different future of the image, man and the machine.”

This project includes a 32-page publication jointly published by the Institut Ramon Llull and *Mousse* which will be available as a free download on the project's website. The exhibition will also be accompanied by a website: <http://venezia2015.llull.cat>. Graphic design for the project was done by Omar Sosa and Ana Domínguez and Guri_Casajuana Arquitectes are the authors of the exhibition interior design.

Martínez's proposal was selected by a jury chaired by Marta Gili, Director of Jeu de Paume.



The other members of this jury were Bartomeu Marí, Director of the MACBA; Joan Minguet, President of the Associació Catalana de Crítics d'Art (ACCA); Xavier Antich, President of the Board of Trustees of the Fundació Antoni Tàpies; Martina Millà, Head of Programming and Projects at the Fundació Miró; Lluçia Homs, Director of Cultural Sector Promotion at the Institut de Cultura de Barcelona; and Damià Martínez, Head of the Creation Division at the IRL.

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SINGULARITY, like all of Albert Serra's other films, departs from the premise that cinema demands we develop an anthropology of the weather rather than an understanding of the theatrical. Cinema is the weather where human movement takes place; the group, non-actors with an open script, acts in relation to a set of conditions that gradually develops its own logic. The plot is, therefore, always quite simple. The lives of eight characters, all of them homosexual, are centered on a mine and what it produces, gold, but also desires: the desire for money, for fortune. But it is also a particular study of exploitation that goes hand in hand with the rise of a feeling much more present

today than it was a decade prior: the exposure to humiliation.

The films of Albert Serra are not based in story but in the possibility for the small community of actors and crew to embrace the situation he is proposing for them. He produces an environment where things start to happen when everyone feels they are inside something that is able to transform the way they see and perceive things. They need to abandon themselves to embrace the movie even before they know what the movie is, since cinema is just another name for life, life on an intense stage where every person speaks not in his or her own words but in the words of others—the words of Albert in this case—and acting in the will of this pantomime of power relations that coalesce around a mine.

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Why a mine? One might think that there are obvious reasons for his choice of a mine over a classic text (as on previous occasions) as a point of departure. The mine, like cinema, is a meme. The mine stands for an idea but also for behavior—economic behavior—that has spanned centuries, creating the largest and most powerful culture



we have known so far: capitalism. Looking at the beautiful images of the mine, we also get an idea of it not as a place but as a vessel: an enclosure, a ship standing still, where everyone is contained. This organic “being inside” the huge organ of production that may influence each of them for life works on all of them. The slap of first contact with the “source” impacts the different characters, as does the characters’ first contact with the relationship between the source and its owner. We are reminded of the descriptions of encounters among primitive people and sailors: here, too, we notice the lack of a common language. Everything revolves around this man, the owner of the mine, and it all very soon acquires a heavy physicality. The workers—prostitutes—the artist, all of them endeavor to articulate the inarticulable as in a collective Futurist exercise full of Dada bruitism. The story is the story of common expectations, exploitation, being humiliated and seeking humiliation. The owner is there to turn a profit, everyone starts to imitate him, and in their imitation they all become more abstract, less themselves and more the selfsame new nature of the mine. The only thing they cannot imitate is production. The mine is the organon that produces gold. For the mine production is a

transitive verb, as for Marx, as for Engels. What distinguishes human from non-human is this will to produce something rather than nothing; the mine is not nature but a tool man, the character, is using to extract a product from the core of the earth.

This makes the mine’s owner different from the rest of them, however. This is not only because they are all homosexual and interested only in intercourse that will fail to assure the continuation of the species. What makes all of them different from the mine and its owner is their very different understanding of production. For them the verb *production* is not transitive, but intransitive. Unbeknownst to them, they mark the end of capitalistic logic. If production is not, as Marx would have it, about transforming the material world but instead about participating in the world’s transformation of itself, then could we not conclude that human beings produce themselves and one another by establishing, through their actions, the conditions for their ongoing growth and development? In other words, for all of them to produce is for them to hope.

The mine’s presence also explains why the movie unfolds on five screens and remains a movie and not a film installation. Multiform and

monotonous, repeating various forms of disorder, the film seems to seek ways to move beyond the Era of Judgment, the Era of Modern Capitalism. The mine allows us to identify this “classic” center, and from there the function of the characters is to find a path that preserves life and is able to transmute our sense of gender, politics understood as a community marked by exploitation in need of a new logic and a new language. The film, almost as if following the logic of quantum physics, begins to provoke, in every scene, in every section, a million forms of human-image photosynthesis in order to imagine still unknown forms of imagining the image, of producing a different time inside and outside the movie. The different screens are there in order to multiply the viewers’ prospects of beginning to mimic the characters. Mimesis is why the movie is shown as fun in the hands of the filmmaker, unfolding before our eyes to stir a moment of biological mirroring between us and them, but also between the mine as an organ and all of these sensuous human excesses escaping the grid of the normative. The movie is all about the future: a future that we cannot even call future because is not ahead or alongside us but inside.

Chus Martínez, curator

“I make films for fun, because I love this chaos in the shooting and to break the routine of boring daily life. In some sense we achieve it, but at the same time it’s based too much on compromise with fucking bureaucratic things, because it’s a big industry and there’s a lot of money involved. There are onscreen moments of magical beauty that can even make you cry from an aesthetic point of view – a beauty that in real life is very rare. Sometimes on a Saturday night you have good company and make an impromptu party. There is some kind of collective feeling that is very moving, but it happens by chance, and only every one or two years. You know the light is coming on the Sunday and you feel this dream disappear. These moments have not the same intensity – it’s about the perception of time and space. I am not talking about psychedelic drugs, but cinema has this in a very intense way.”

“It doesn’t make any sense to worry about distribution or recognition. I do not lose a lot of time thinking about things I cannot change. I concentrate on things I can change. My only problem is that I am not a millionaire, so I have to do something to make some money but I can tell you I will not share any second of my life with





other filmmakers, that's for sure. It could be people from the street, I don't care, but not with any other filmmaker. It requires a lot of compromise always to be in the industry and you get used to this compromise. You have to be really precise and strong-willed to avoid that. Every talk and discussion is a compromise. It's like a family – it's a fact; it's not freedom."

"My process of shooting a film is quite chaotic, so what arrives at the end is a little bit by chance. When we start the edit we have over a hundred hours of footage, all this mess. It's surprising even for me, because I think that I really discover the film only when I see it. From the moment I reject communication with the actors, and even technicians in *Story of My Death*, this is like performance, as they aren't following any order they already have in mind. They all have their mystery inside. It's rejecting judgment on what they are doing, or that they could be asked to do something another way – every moment is unique."

Albert Serra

Extracts from the interview published by *Dazed* digital on 11th March 2015.

Chus Martínez

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Chus Martínez (La Coruña, 1972) is currently Head of the Art Institute of the Fachhochschule Nordwestschweiz (FHNW) in Basel, Switzerland. She holds a BA in Philosophy and History of Art from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and also completed a master's degree in curatorial studies at Bard College in New York. Over her career she has held the positions of Artistic Director at the Sala Rekalde in Bilbao (2002-2005), Director of the Frankfurter Kunstverein (2005-2008) and Chief Curator at the MACBA (2008-2011). More recently she has worked at the Museo del Barrio in New York and was a member of the curatorial team for dOCUMENTA (13) in Kassel, Germany.

In 2005, Martínez curated the National Pavilion of Cyprus for the 51st International Art Exhibition of la Biennale di Venezia, presenting a project by Panayiotis Michael and Konstantia Sofokleous. She was also a member of the advisory team for the Carnegie International exhibition in 2008 and participated as a guest curator in the 29th São Paulo Biennial in 2010. In addition, she has organized exhibitions around the world, has spoken at numerous seminars and conferences and

has served as a member of juries for a number of prestigious events. She publishes regularly in art journals.

Albert Serra

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Albert Serra (Banyoles, 1975) is a film director and producer. His first film *Crespià, the Film Not the Village* (2003) was not screened commercially. He later presented *Honor de cavalleria* (winner of the 2006 Barcelona Film Prize for Best New Director and for Best Film in Catalan) and *El cant dels ocells* (for which he won the 2009 Gaudí Prize for Best Film).

In 2009, he was chosen as the avant-garde cinema icon of the Quinzaine des Réalisateurs at the Cannes Film Festival.

In 2012, he was one of the artists selected to participate in dOCUMENTA (13) in Kassel, where he showed his film *Els tres porquets*. The following year he became the first Catalan director to win the Golden Leopard prize for Best Film for *Story of My Death* (2013) at the Locarno Film Festival.

He has recently been invited to show work at the Centre Pompidou in Paris (2013) and Bozar in Brussels (2014), where he was given carte blanche. This year, Tate Modern presented the first major survey in the UK dedicated to him.

Institut Ramon Llull

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The Institut Ramon Llull is a public consortium established in 2002 with the aim of promoting the Catalan language and culture abroad. This mission is accomplished by providing broad international exposure to writers and artists, encouraging artistic and cultural exchanges, and supporting Catalan language and literature studies in universities. Currently, the consortium is formed by the Government of Catalonia and the Barcelona City Council.

This will be the fourth time that the IRL brings *Catalonia in Venice* to the Art Biennale as part of the *eventi collaterali*, and it follows its second participation at the Architecture Biennale last year.

With the support of Sorigué

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Sorigué is a business group that was founded sixty years ago in Lleida. The group is made up of 50 companies with a total of 2,000 employees and it

operates throughout all of Spain, with sporadic projects in Europe and South America.

It carries out a comprehensive business model in the fields of construction, engineering, water technologies, services and materials.

Committed to innovation as part of its business strategy, the group has opted for research and RD&I projects with the aim of generating value in each process. In 2010, Sorigué was awarded the Emulsar International Prize for scientific research on bitumen emulsions and has received EU recognition of Project Phoenix, the largest research project carried out in Spain in the sector of asphalt paving.

Sorigué is also a pioneer in the application of corporate social responsibility policies and has the Sorigué Foundation which is responsible for carrying out welfare activities and participates in several social projects. For more than a decade, the Sorigué Foundation has had one of the most important contemporary art collections in Spain. Notable among the artists included in the collection are internationally acclaimed names such as: Anselm Kiefer, William Kentridge, Bill Viola, Chuck Close, Anish Kapoor, Antonio López, Daniel Richter, Antony Gormley, Julie Mehretu, among others.

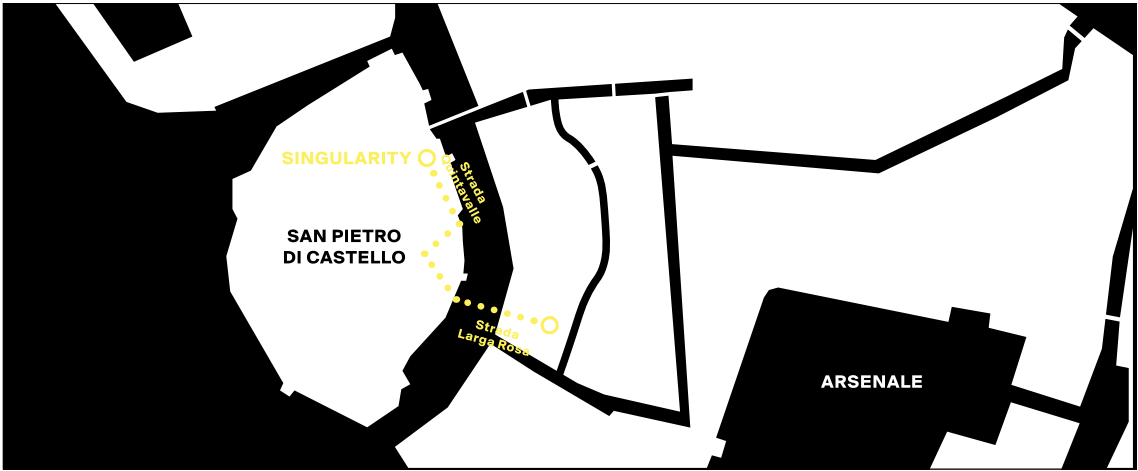
PLANTA is the intersection between Sorigué and the Sorigué Foundation. A space where art, architecture, science, innovation, talent and business come together.

PLANTA has been designed as a space for reflection, knowledge and creation where art, science, technology, social responsibility, environment and architecture are combined. Through this project, the business group will give continuity to the values that have guided its activities from the outset, based on perseverance and respect. A place to exchange and promote knowledge, where synergies between art and business will be generated. This fusion between art collection and the setting of an industrial activity is one of the differential aspects of the project.

The architect Kees Kaan, of KAAN Architecten (The Netherlands) is responsible for the architecture of the project, which was presented in June 2014 as a Collateral Event at the 14th Venice Biennale International Architecture Exhibition.

Catalonia in Venice. SINGULARITY
Opening: May 6th at 17.30 h
www.llull.cat

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Running Period: From 9 May to 22 November 2015
10h - 18h, closed Mondays (May 11th, June 1st and Nov 16th 2015)
The space: Cantieri Navali (Via Castello 40)

