

English **Dani Montlleó Alsina, *The Jinx and the Revolution*. From January 24<sup>th</sup> to April 1<sup>st</sup> 2018. Individual project, Sala Gran. *Barcelona Producció is an initiative of La Capella.***

In October 1967, the Franco-Belgian comic *Spirou* – which published cartoon strips of such popular characters as Gaston Lagaffe, The Smurfs and Lucky Luke – organised a competition among its readers for a self-built musical instrument that till then had only existed in fiction, the gaffophone, one of the numerous madcap devices invented and made by the comic character Gaston Lagaffe (created by the Belgian cartoonist André Franquin in 1957). Lagaffe's gaffophone was a rudimentary-looking, wooden string instrument that made onomatopoeic noises not pleasing to the ear. Apparently, Franquin designed it inspired by an African harp held in the collection of the Royal Museum for Central Africa in Tervuren, which made a noise that imitated thunder. Consequently, the challenge presented by the competition was not only to construct the gaffophone but also to reproduce the sounds that the instrument supposedly made. The competition was held and the winners were announced in the April issue of the magazine. Third prize went to Yves and Luc Lebrun, two brothers from Neuilly-sur-Seine. In order to transport the gaffophone they had made from their home to the *Spirou* offices in Paris, where the jury was due to examine it, they put the instrument on top of their car and filmed the entire journey using a Super-8 camera.

Dani Montlleó's project *The Jinx and the Revolution* (*The Jinxed Revolution*)

began with the discovery of the Lebruns' original film and of the fact that the brothers' car ride through Paris took place one or two months before May 1968. This proximity in time between the gaffophone's journey and the outbreak of the French May emboldened the artist to speculate on the possibility that the revolutionary outbreak had been induced by the vibrations of the gaffophone, by its jinxed waves, which would have been picked up by the Gaston Lagaffes of the city, by those excluded from the system and social misfits. With a utopian urge to stir up a new revolutionary wave, Montlleó produced his own version of the gaffophone and, just like the Lebrun brothers in 1968, he drove it around the streets of Barcelona on top of a car. The documentation of this performative action, which we could doubtless describe as a re-enactment, is a film which, despite the differences in place and time, fairly closely reproduces that of the French brothers, which provides a referent that is both nostalgic and empowering. The original film footage and that shot by the artist are shown alongside each other at the rear of a large central structure where Montlleó's gaffophone is displayed. The device, far from being exhibited with fetishist zeal as a cult object, is placed within visitors' reach, and they can play it as they see fit and thereby contribute to this new contemporary propagation of revolutionary vibrations. In addition to the reproduction of the gaffophone, the

exhibition space also features a model of the car that Montlleó used to drive the instrument around Barcelona, a Renault 4CV, as well as models of other sound devices. One of these other models is of the organ used by the Aaron & König music group, which was intended to make the low-frequency sounds that only animals can hear audible to humans as well, and to function at the same time as a means to convey the musicians' thinking as they performed live. Another exhibit is a model of the prototype of the sound artefact that the far-left organisation Weather Underground designed for the purpose of propagating revolutionary energy by means of subsonic mechanical waves.

The gaffophone and the models are all evidence of Montlleó's interest in the object and in aspects to do with the ideas of iteration, seriality and the miniature. The artist also offers documentation related to the character Gaston Lagaffe and the socio-political context of the spring of 1968. However, the Lebruns' gaffophone and its hypothetical connection with the revolutionary spring serve above all to enable the artist to construct, using assorted written material and a large quantity of images and visual references, a stimulating interdisciplinary narrative concerning issues related to the use of sound as a tool for social manipulation, and regarding the effects of sound vibrations on human behaviour, while at the same time drawing interesting →

→ links between certain historical events and referents belonging to the realm of fiction or to creative fields such as music or the arts. The artist is especially interested in the distorting nature of the sound of the gaffophone, the fact that it is a device that produces noise, one of those “instruments of darkness” that Claude Lévi-Strauss talks of and which he associates with death, decomposition, social disorder and cosmic disruption. In the socio-political context of the spring of 1968, as well as in the present day, when the artist reactivates the gaffophone, the instrument operates as a device capable of foreseeing, anticipating and at the same time of provoking a disruption, an anomaly in the system.

In his artistic practice, Montlleó is interested, among other issues, in the concept of utopia and in the contemporary legacy of modernity, as well as its visual and conceptual kinships, which he analyses through areas of knowledge such as music, film and television, architecture and the comic. His unconventional research delves into incidents, occurrences and stances that have often gone ignored in official accounts, and materialises in complex narratives that blend historical events, theoretical sources, countercultural referents and elements of fiction.

By looking back at events as important as those of that May in France and considering them on the basis of a hypothesis that they were nothing more than an indirect consequence of an incidental action, Montlleó suggests that chance and accidental occurrences can often give rise, in an unwitting or collateral manner, to momentous happenings, to historic changes. Even though Montlleó’s hypothesis is clearly formulated in a fictional tone, it acquires a political connotation by inviting us to rethink the construction of history from non-dominant positions and by conferring value and agency to everything that is seemingly marginal and secondary.

Alexandra Laudo

**Dani Montlleó** (Mataró, 1966) lives and works in Mataró.

His work focuses on the concept of identity through references and dialogues that extend, for example, towards the world of architecture, music, fashion, industry and the universe of the object and fetishism. As his working material, he often takes real people and moments as the basis for creating the piece. He intertwines fiction and reality with ideas such as utopia, comfort, the iteration, B series and the constant dialectic between standardisation and uniqueness.

Selected exhibitions: *Muzak* (Can Palauet, Mataró, 2004), *The versionist* (Sala Petita at La Capella, Barcelona, 2005), *Trastocaments* (Centre de Lectura, Reus, 1997), *Pitbull* (Can Felipa, Barcelona, 1998), *Brian's Brain* (Stand by) (Laboratorio de Arte Alameda, Mexico City, 2003), *Rodalies* (Imatra Art Museum, Finland, 2004), *Samurai (Le secret)* (Jeune création, Grand Palais, Paris, 2003), *Plagiarismo* (La Casa Encendida, Madrid, 2005; Caja Madrid, Barcelona, 2006), *Merchandpromos-Yves* (Arts Santa Mònica, Barcelona, 2007), *The Gray a Gray n° 2* (EspaiZero1, Olot, 2010), *From Page to Space* (Weserburg, Bremen; Fundação Serralves, Oporto, 2011; Leopold-Hoesch-Museum, Düren; Gallery Murska Sobota, Slovenia, 2012), *The Stuarts* (video and vinyl, 2009-2011), *Doppelgänger Goldfinger* (exhibition, artist's book and video, 2011-2012), *Al portal de casa i els constructors* (project by Jordi Canudas, collaboration, 2012), *Otto-Block* (la Camisa Townsend) (multiple produced by Artscoming, Barcelona, 2012), *Fresh! (Loop)* (The Private Space, Barcelona, 2012), *Pepeta Tolrà "dibujo fuerza fluidica"* (research team, Can Palauet, Mataró, 2013), *Modernitat amagada* (Casa Capell, Mataró, 2013), *CAPS.A. 13* (Mataró, 2013), *Futurs abandonats* (Fabra i Coats, Barcelona, 2014), *El desig de creure* (M/A/C, Mataró, 2015), Valls Biennial (2015), *TITO, The Phantom Monk* (piece in documentary format, released on DVD, 2015, with presentations in 2016 at the MACBA, the Filmoteca de Catalunya, the Arts Santa Mònica and the Amposta Art School, and in 2017 at the French Institute in Barcelona), Amposta Biennial (2016), *Body & Games* (Lleida School of Art, 2017), *Caminar sobre el gel* (Can Palauet, Mataró, 2017), *Matèria Primera* (Fabra i Coats, Barcelona) and *The Little Match Girl* (Hans & Fritz Contemporary, Barcelona).

Montlleó is a founding member of the ACM (Associació per a la Cultura i l'Art Contemporani) and ran the LACOSA art space and showcase between 2000 and 2009. Together with Quim Tarrida, he created Subcutanspoon (Toy Operators) in 2004-2005, and in conjunction with Susana Rodríguez, he set up AKA Perruquers. In addition, he is a founding member of the AJT (Associació Cultural Josefa Tolrà, 2016).

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