

(ENG)

# IMAGES WILL NOW SPRING UP LIKE FLOWERS OR JENNIFER IN PARADISE

## CICUTA (ADRIÀ APARICIO AND DAVID FONT)

### THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 7, 4-8:30PM

As a cliché of beauty, is there anything more stereotypical than a good sunset? Fellini answers this question in his film *E la nave va* (And the Ship Sails On) with a sea made of vast sheets of black plastic blown about by fans and a sunset made of papier mâché. Two excited women look at it and one exclaims "How marvellous! It looks as if it were painted!" Culture versus nature, an ancient clash with which a fresh look is taken at modern life through the Rococo that concerns itself with life rather than the history, Romanticism and, later on, realism that address personal feelings and quotidianity. Nature returns as a lost origin.

For thousands of years, human beings have striven to adapt nature to their needs. The forest beyond the walls was a dangerous place. The most explicit artistic expression of this struggle is be found in the Baroque French garden, where paths were covered with gravel to smother weeds – the *bad plants* – and shrubs were turned into geometrical mazes and trees into shaped and symmetrical figures contrary to any agronomic logic. When at last every corner of the world

is "known" and all their natural forces are tempered by machines and science, we turn our attention back to nature, now seen as a friend and intimate, original, but everything is now fatally contaminated with artifice, hence the metaphor in *E la nave va*.

Cicuta (Hemlock) address this question with the *ideal sunset* around the world using electronic and cyberspatial science. An aside regarding their name that now comes to mind: hemlock, the plant that Socrates *voluntarily* drank in a potion in order to remain loyal to his principles, and Don Cicuta (Mr Hemlock), the comic character back in the prehistoric days of television in the programme *1, 2, 3... responda otra vez* shown on TVE, a bitter character, just like hemlock, to make people laugh.

A sunset is an excuse for broadcasting some paradisiacal phenomenon, something seen live online thanks to the various webcams installed around the world for enjoying sunsets in real time. This is a readymade network with no connection to Cicuta but which Cicuta make the most of. Inevitably,

the digital environment imposes its own reality both in the equipment – cables, screens, tripods, mechanical and digital adapters – and in the way the image is 'painted'. And Cicuta subscribes to this, shifting the image from one tool to another in order to distort it and make something else, something that is real in its pictographic nature. We can see here the teaching, possibly acquired via the airwaves, of Nam June Paik and his pioneering electromagnetic distortions on CRT television sets, his use of a camera capable of scanning at 625 lines (PAL television standard), synonymous with reality that exceeds that achieved by silver chloride film, with a resolution a hundred times better in the detail but far removed from immediacy.



Cicuta capture the real image of cyberspace and transfer it from a screen to a video camera, from there to a mobile phone and from thence back to the screen. A creative degradation that calls to mind *Xerox Music* by Eugènia Balcells<sup>i</sup>. In achieving all this, the use and handling of the equipment are magnificent and sculptural in nature, and the Cicuta members overlap in their activity with the chain of digital distortion through leaps into space: the real space between the screen on the wall and the video camera and the screen of their viewer with the mobile and thus... The sunset and Jennifer disappear and we are left with the very real action of Cicuta. An action that involves *killing* the image? The title points us in that direction.

PS: Cicuta talk to us throughout of an *ideal sunset*, though at the end (or the beginning) in their lasting advertising, the printed poster, they show us a *worn* picture, a background image or *wallpaper in the manner of Windows*, namely a cheap replica. A field of plastic with cotton wool clouds at midday, which you can see has, with a little light Photoshopping, a real and precise origin in some place in the Antipodes. A semiotic joke, a tribute to Fellini...?

Joan Casellas  
Teià, 21 October 2019  
With a yellow ribbon raised high

<sup>i</sup> *E la nave va*. Film directed by Federico Fellini and released in 1983. Running time: 132 minutes.

<sup>ii</sup> *Xerox Music*, by Eugènia Balcells, 1981. Xerox was the first commercial brand of photocopiers. Unlike digital systems, which allow clones to be made without distortion, analogue electronic equipment generates a loss of information in each copy if a chain of copies of copies is made, resulting ultimately in the complete disappearance or distortion of the *original* image.