

BARCELONA PRODUCCIÓ 2022-23

JAUME CLOTET

NEW YWORK

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'Do you like lots of paint as an artist?'
'Sure do, I'm full after two pots.'

You know the one about the guy who is cheated off. Pissed off, more like it. It appears he is fully dedicated to a career race that is in fact a hurdle race: he needs to apply for jobs ad infinitum, pay the rent with a currency called *visibility*, combine it all with jobs that do indeed pay the bills... This obstacle course requires perseverance and self-esteem in the face of competitiveness and the many rejections that come with this unstoppable flow. It marks the privileges of those with the financial or personal capacity to put up with such conditions. And it inevitably leads to a situation of personal exhaustion in a context that allows no nonsense, in which resistance, and not resilience, is considered the main tool: if you do not succeed, it is because you are not really trying.

'I'm fed up! Any day now I'm going for the door and walking out.'
'Oh no! What are we going to do without the door?'

As if that were not enough, this person also feels that he fits in neither here nor there. Does he belong to the world of art, where he was trained, or to the world of entertainment, where he pictures himself?

His crisis stems from this personal vagueness of wanting to be in one of these worlds when one is in the other, and vice versa. Of wanting to be valued in the field of entertainment, but not exactly complying with its rules. Of making a comedy that does not belong to the world of entertainment because its style is closer to the world of art, even if it does not quite fit in with certain standards of the art world. If you add personal, almost generational weariness to these structural factors, if you add that determination to create your own space that is a mix of art and comedy, if you season it with the difficulties of an eternal context of crisis, the most tempting result is escape.

'What did one cable say to the other?'
'This life is such a drag!'

Following a line that continues a certain tradition of humour in art, Jaume Clotet brings together familiar influences ranging from Joan Brossa to Miguel Noguera, Bestué-Vives or Cris Blanco. And he also traces a more, so to speak, transdisciplinary and transgeographical tradition of humour, based on the absurd and puns, as well as new comedy trends in fields such as podcasts or social media. His artistic practice would be framed within an indeterminate place that combines the visual and performing arts, with the feel of humour, as in the project he is co-directing with Alicia Garrido entitled *Cabaret Internet*. And he naturally acknowledges a wistful look at the tradition of American stand-up comedy.

'No hay Work en Nueva York' (Mecano, 1988)

A paradigm of success and the neoliberal dream, the capital of the world's hegemonic culture, cradle of creative/commercial success archetypes such as Andy Warhol or Jerry Seinfeld, New York is defined in this project as the goal, or almost the platform, the perfect stage to develop as a comedian and finally achieve recognition.

So recurrent, it has been almost trite ever since the Renaissance: insufficiently valued or recognised creators in their place of origin looking towards the court, towards the place where dreams are fulfilled, towards the centres of financial and symbolic power. In this neoliberal naivety, according to which your success is never shaped by external factors, New York unfolds as the perfect scenario to seek the validation that artists do not feel in their place of origin. The place where failure is left behind, where talent will finally sparkle and individual effort is always rewarded.

'Hey, do you have any books on taste?'
'Sorry, everyone has different tastes.'

Jaume Clotet's proposal, which opens the new 'Espai Rampa' space at La Capella, is an installation monologue in which the artist recounts a life journey that has made him grumpy and wanting to leave for the mecca of humour and show business. It is a story that could well be repeated by many artists without having to change more than a few

commas. Possessing the idealism of wanting to dedicate oneself to art or show business, the vicissitudes of everyday life, role models and also self-comparisons, creative paralysis, and finally a headlong rush forward.

Jaume recreates this monologue through a series of jokey pieces and visual gags, with their setups and their punchlines. Like any good comedian, he combines references in several layers: the best bad jokes, a caricature of local comedy, classical mythology, George Maciunas or Mary Poppins... The humour is transferred to the material itself and its spatial arrangement, motley kitsch, including papier-mâché, collages or small intervened objects. The production does not correspond to polished or truthful sculptural finishes, but is more reminiscent of an operetta set, or a street at the Festes de Gràcia.

'Look, a precious stone.'

'But it's just a brick!'

'Yeah, but I like it...'

Although Jaume Clotet's escape here passes through this picture postcard New York, perhaps we do not have to go that far to find a desirable horizon behind the clouds. From a mercantilist perspective, and sometimes from the perspective of self-criticism, artists who fail to cope well with the demands of a career 'race' or fail to make the grade are losers and their work is apparently of interest to no one. But it is when exhaustion and the feeling of paralysis arrives that one has perhaps enough freedom to create works that are not made either to advance in that race or to fit into a discipline or context. This is when one finds a way and a place to turn frustration and anger into humour, that excellent survival strategy. And so, what if the jobs channelling that discomfort arrive in the form of bad jokes, cries of exasperation, tiredness and grumpiness. And what if, instead of wanting to reach the goal they claim is at the end of the race, we decide that our voice is as absurd as that absurd system, which deserves no more effort than folly itself. And what if one is neither entirely an artist nor a comedian, but a fortunate combination of both. Everyone ultimately decides where his or her New Ywork is.