

María Alcaide

The Pilgrimage of the Cuckolds

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It is about doing the journey on foot with a camera. Singing and dancing with the camera. Turning film into a choreography in which the body becomes a screen and a sculpture. To stir up another image that has not been seen, an intimate, fragmented and capricious image, a ballet in which nothing is hidden.

The Pilgrimage of the Cuckolds is a call to rethink our ways of inhabiting and representing the south, an invitation to drench ourselves in the stories, gestures and resistances that spring up from water and land. A song, a cry and a celebration. (María Alcaide)

Sometimes, when things affect you profoundly, or even when the thing and you are one and the same, the best way to write about this is in the first person, a testimonial relationship. Perhaps that is the reason why this text begins with the quotation you have just read from María Alcaide (Aracena, Huelva, 1992).

These two opening paragraphs condense an inquiry that is based on telluric belonging to a place, and they summarise the exhibition around two pivotal points: performativity and territory. This is where song and dance, water and land emerge. This is where homage and criticism, poetry and activism emerge.

In *The Pilgrimage of the Cuckolds*, María Alcaide invites us to cross the multiple real and symbolic landscapes that make up Doñana National Park and the pilgrimage of El Rocío, two identifying references of Andalusian roots that, because of global imprecision, also tend to refer to 'Spanishness'. The video installation is presented as a pine grove where moving image, sculpture, textile installation and sound intertwine to explore the relationships between the territory, the body, and forms of work and exploitation in the south of the Iberian Peninsula.

Based on the 1933 ballet of the same name by Federico García Lorca and Cipriano Rivas Cherif, Alcaide reinterprets this avant-garde piece from a contemporary, ecofeminist and critical perspective. In the original work, Lorca had already introduced key issues such as fertility, desire and symbolic violence. The artist now recovers and updates these motifs, extending them to the territory of Doñana and the bodies that live and work there today.

The journey is an unorthodox pilgrimage. A path that crosses settings ranging from the intensive red fruit plantations of Almonte, the pine groves of the Coto de Doñana, or the kilometres of warehouses and depots of the chemical park of Huelva, until arriving at the mass tourism of Matalascañas, with its luxury hotels and arid golf courses that border the park's natural reserve. The artist thus reveals an overflowing landscape, torn between devotion and business, where green capitalism understands the conservation of nature as a fictional representation. In this intermediate space, between the global south and the touristic north, the pilgrimage becomes a spectacle of consumption of the 'autochthonous', while at the same time reinforcing a deeply politicised sense of community.

All this occurs in the film under the gaze of five real characters who embody trades and positions in the complex ecosystem of the south, similarly drawing parallels with the original characters proposed in Lorca's libretto (Sierra, Chivato, Ventera, Solita and Sacristán): a union worker in the strawberry fields, a forester, a hotel maid, a wild horse tamer and a worshipper of the Virgen del Rocío. In short, five bodies presented as active agents circulating in a territory blurred by the overexploitation of resources, job insecurity and extractivist tourism.



And at the heart of this proposal is a symbolic figure: water. An element that is transformed into a metaphor for migratory flows, feminised labour and the exploitation of natural resources. A character embodied by a dancer who moves between spaces, erasing the boundaries between the natural and the artificial. This 'new Rocío' embodies the libidinal nature of the ecosystem. She appears pole dancing among the pines of the Coto de Doñana, rolling in the marsh sands or suspended in the empty pools of Matalascañas. Like flooding, overflowing water, her body becomes a vehicle that connects the various stories and narrative levels of the installation.

Apart from the installation concept of the audiovisual story, in which the screen assumes a sculptural and even performative role, the space is completed by scenography that reproduces elements of the pilgrimage: sleeping bags, shawls, intervened religious objects and textile pieces made of synthetic and organic materials. While references to resting and waiting areas refer to the anticipation of the pilgrimage, the use of embroidery and patchwork techniques in the textiles allude to a working-class, fragile sewing process, thereby linking it to the industrial production waste that pollutes the aquifers of Doñana and coexists with the history of the sacred and the mystical. Finally, the soundscape is composed of original music that blends Andalusian folklore with experimental electronics.

There is also a crucial detail in María Alcaide's staging, particularly in relation to the city of Barcelona. This

is the inclusion of Ocaña's *Camino del Rocío*, a series of small scenes of El Rocío drawn on cigarette paper. This set of drawings refers directly to *La primavera*, the exhibition that the artist organised at La Capella in 1982, alluding in a precious way to the Andalusian heritage that also defines an essential part of Barcelona's identity.

In this sense, *The Pilgrimage of the Cuckolds* is not just a cinematic journey or a theoretical inquiry; it is a sensory and political experience that seeks to reactivate the spiritual and collective dimension of the exhibition space. La Capella, a former church converted into an art centre, will be used as a 'cathedral of water' in a time of drought. María Alcaide reclaims the symbolic value of the space to talk about bodies that resist, remember and insist on dancing in spite of everything.

Underpinning the exhibition is a fierce critique of extractivism, not only in its ecological, but also in its cultural and affective aspects. The marsh, the aquifer that feeds the village of El Rocío, mass tourism, agricultural exploitation and religious worship are revealed as spaces from which capital extracts, consumes and exhausts. María Alcaide exposes these tensions without resorting to Manichaeism, suggesting instead a dance where desire and violence intersect, where the territory is simultaneously stage and character.

David Armengol and Jara Rocha

- ① *Pila bautismal*
Coloured resin
85 × 72 × 35 cm
2025
- ② *Telaraña*
Textile, stones, shells, plastic, condoms, flags and other found materials
Various sizes
(500 × 500 × 250 cm)
2025
- ③ *Capa pluvial o Manto para caballo*
Cotton, polyester, wadding, horse sweat, human sweat
300 × 180 × 5 cm
2025
- ④ *Estrellas andalusíes*
Glazed ceramic
17 × 17 × 0,5 cm
2025
- ⑤ *Luna preñada de cascabeles*
Textile, aluminium, little bells
120 × 60 × 2 cm
2025
- ⑥ *Zahones*
Recycled leather, dirt and pine debris, sweat and mosquito repellents
30 × 20 × 6 cm
2025
- ⑦ *Saco (I)*
Cotton, polyester, wadding and foam
135 × 55 × 55 cm
2025
- ⑧ *Saco (II)*
Cotton, polyester, wadding and foam
135 × 55 × 55 cm
2025
- ⑨ *Colchones (Rocío del cielo / Reina de las marismas / Pastora / Blanca Paloma)*
Cotton, polyester, wadding and foam
100 × 190 × 12 cm
2025
- ⑩ *Pinar*
Installation (textile, found elements, musical instruments, various objects)
Various sizes
2025
- ⑪ *Exvoto I*
Cotton, polyester, snails
70 × 45 × 5 cm
2025
- ⑫ *Exvoto II*
Reliquary, candles, mother-of-pearl shell
Various sizes
2025
- ⑬ *Exvoto III*
Cotton, polyester, cuttlefish bone, shells
40 × 40 × 5 cm
2025
- ⑭ *Exvoto IV*
Cotton, polyester, shells
60 × 35 × 5 cm
2025
- ⑮ *Pantalla que llora*
Aluminium, irrigation system, tarpaulin
380 × 215 cm
2025
- ⑯ *La romería de los cornudos*
Video
69 min.
Playback in loop. Original version with subtitles (Catalan/English). Transcript in Spanish available.
2025
- ⑰ *Camino del Rocío*
Ocaña
Watercolours on cigarette paper with wooden and glass frame
69 × 42 cm
c. 1981
- ⑱ *Opening of Ocaña's Spring exhibition at La Capella*
Colita
Printed paper
1982
- ⑲ *José Pérez Ocaña's Spring exhibition at La Capella*
Josep Grí Espinagosa
Printed paper
1982

For accessibility reasons, the audiovisual content has been subtitled and translated into Catalan and English. The Spanish has not been subtitled on screen for political reasons of underrepresentation of the Andalusian accent, but the transcript can be found in the hall in printed format.



Baile de Sierra y Sacristán

La R

de los C

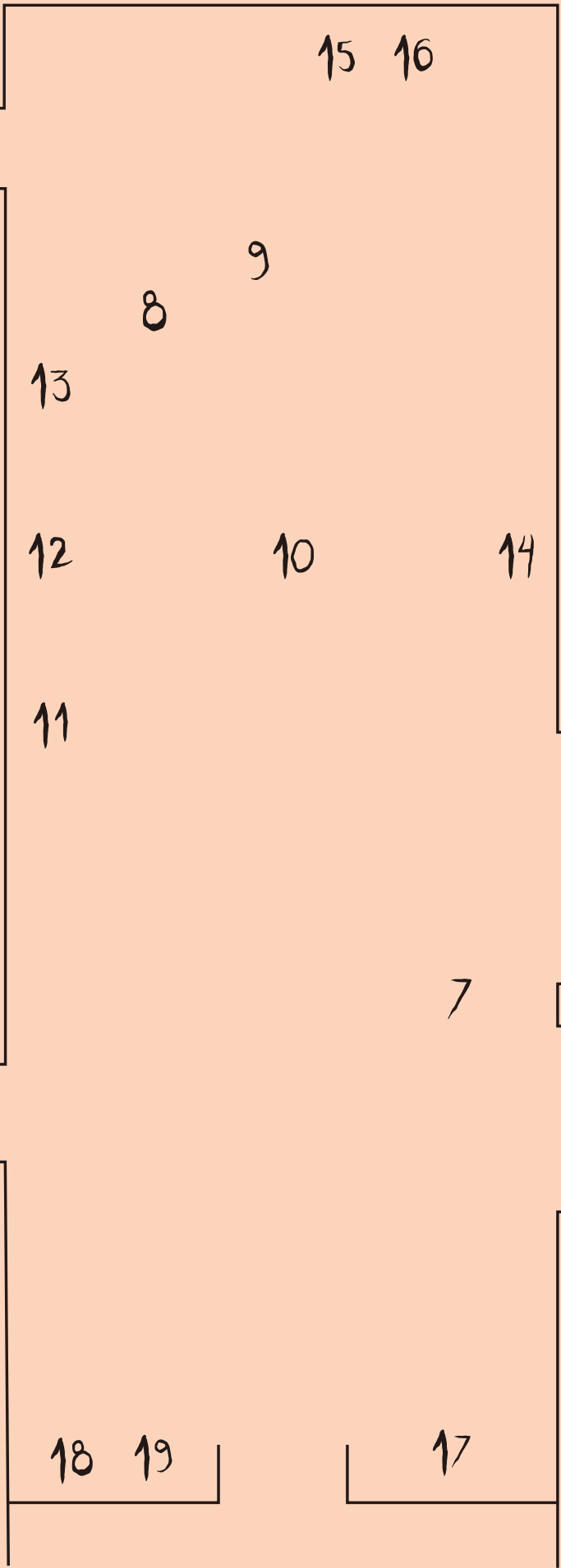
Llega

Pere

Noct

Perse

Mila



romería

cornudos

romance

de Solita

3 4 5 6

7 1 2

Uentera
Danza

La 1ª y 2ª final

Jo
ro
es