

(ENG)

ON REVOLUTION

LAURA TORRES IN COLLABORATION WITH SERGI ÀLVAREZ RIOSALIDO AND GUILLEM PÉREZ SÁNCHEZ

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Every revolution has its iconography, visual codes and slogans. They are images bearing a thousand words that “explain everything” at a glance; this is why they are so popular and at the same time persecuted by the power they call into question. Here and now we have the yellow ribbons, grotesquely repressed and persecuted by all of the institutions of the Spanish State which cannot tolerate this clamour: freedom for the political prisoners of the Catalan independence movement (an entire government imprisoned or in exile). According to the Spanish government this does not exist and the demands are therefore malevolent.

Laura Torres deals with this iconographic fact from a unique perspective: the journey of these symbols from the world of fiction to that of political struggle and vice versa as well as their “inevitable mutation into objects of consumption” and subsequent industrial production. I am admittedly a consumer of yellow ribbons in all of their forms and materials; metal, plastic, rubber, fabric, paint... At this point in the text I would like to put the WhatsApp frog

emoticon that I strongly identify with. I will put the original smiley :-) (a colon, hyphen and right parenthesis). Every day we read more pictographically, perhaps because the margin for interpretation is broader and more persistent in memory.

Images imply a text and slogans an “image”. There is often a dark background hiding behind the industrial production of these things in relation to their activist content. Laura Torres points out one example: Mango’s “Yes, I’m a feminist” T-shirt is manufactured in factories that exploit thousands of women. The form ignores the background and even contradicts it; it is a semiotic short circuit.

The image that somehow motivated Laura Torres towards this research action was the multiple-use Anonymous mask because it constantly shifts back and forth between fiction and reality. All of us have the image in our heads: the white mask of a sneering anachronistic character with a 17th-century style moustache and goatee. Its visual origin comes from the graphic novel *V for Vendetta* by Alan Moore and David Lloyd popularized by the 2005

film of the same name directed by James McTeigue, however the historical origin of the character, Guy Fawkes, is the so-called Gunpowder Plot against King James I of England on 5 November 1605, hence the anachronism of the mask. Hackers from around the world have taken up the name and image of this character for the anticapitalist cyber struggle, giving visibility to cracks in the cyber control to which we are increasingly exposed every day. Inevitably, however, the mask is manufactured by thousands upon thousands, and Time Warner, which produced the film version of *V for Vendetta*, collects a licensing fee for the image rights. Perhaps this is why the Anonymous Catalonia Telegram channel does not use this image.



The paradox is that we can all identify with some protest and its symbols and be consumers of these symbols in the form of objects, memento images and so on; how many hundreds of thousands of *Estelada* flags (starred flags often used by Catalan independence supporters) have we bought from China, a centralist country among centralists and at the forefront of the oxymoron in politics with a communist government and capitalist economy?

Laura Torres collects all of these iconographic relationships with objects, mementos and links to websites to display a round trip map between the historical and contemporary references of the political event and its mirror in literary and cinematic fiction and on networks as well as with its commercial and emotional degradation and mutation. She does this through a lecture-performanceⁱⁱⁱ. A voice behind the audience explains what they see before them projected on a large screen, the acousmatic voice that guides an invisible hand, the hand of the video cyber DJ that brings it all together. The poster shows a monochrome red ink drawing of a Scout^{iv} in uniform saluting. It is a paranoid-critical image. Where do we picture the young man? In the Nordic countries, the United States, Mussolini's Italy, the Germany of the film *Cabaret* – or Catalonia, where the Scouts were an alternative to the Falangist Spanish Youth Organization (OJE)? He is the missing link in the relationship between characters' use of this salute in the film series *The Hunger Games* premiering in 2012 and its use by Bangkok protesters against the military in 2014.

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

- ⁱ Yellow ribbons have a long history in protests around the world. Francisco Antonio Fernández de Velasco y Tovar, Viceroy of Catalonia under King Philip V, prohibited them in Catalonia in 1704 under the pretext that they created discord among families. A number of executions by firing squad were carried out for this reason.
- ⁱⁱ Multiple-use names: pseudonymous identities that can be used by anyone, usually for activist purposes. In the art world, Luther Blissett was one of the most-used identities of the appropriationists and the 2000 Art Strike. Here it was widely popularized by Merz Mail's fanzine *P.O.BOX*.
- ⁱⁱⁱ The lecture-performance had a forerunner in Salvador Dalí with his talk "The Moral Stance of Surrealism" at the Ateneu Barcelonès in 1930. In it he described Àngel Guimerà, then darling of Catalan letters, as a "hairy putrescence". The lecture-performance was also enthusiastically practised in the Fluxus movement, particularly by Zaj artist Esther Ferrer.
- ^{iv} The Scout movement created in 1907 by English soldier Robert Baden-Powell promoted educating young people in a love for nature through military aesthetics and discipline. Scouting spread around the globe as an organization and as a flexible model according to the ideology of each regime that adopted it.