

## QUAN JA NO ENS ESCALFA EL SOL

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NATALIA DOMÍNGUEZ, GEORGIA VARDAROU

Curated by Zaida Trallero

It was winter and the likelihood of sunshine that would spread warmth into the rooms was diminishing. There was no heating in the building. The works were advancing and the blocks around about were taller, so much so that the low-rise houses were almost disappearing from view. *Quan ja no ens escalfa el sol* (When the Sun No Longer Warms Us) is a response to that moment of fragility. Of living with an urban transformation that has no care for the urban space, no care for the people that live in it.

One of the detrimental effects of urban transformations today is gentrification. The British sociologist Ruth Class used this term in 1964 to describe the ousting of the working class from their neighbourhoods in London by the gentry (the British rural rentier class). Nowadays, this process has become a reconversion model identified as the expulsion of people, practices and knowledge from a territory by means of the reinvestment of public or private capital and the arrival of a population with greater financial and cultural clout. The harmful consequences of this, the symbolic violence it perpetrates, are no longer limited to a particular class, as most citizens are now affected since, as a result, the 'right to the city' is lost.

Through artistic practice, *When the Sun No Longer Warms Us* looks at the effect this violence has on us. There is a considerable body of literature on urban transformation and gentrification in fields such as urban planning and development, architecture and sociology, but they are rarely addressed in contemporary art. In fact, artists are often involved in the early phases of gentrification and are even regarded as colonisers of neighbourhoods left abandoned by the displacement of light industry. This project, however, stems from prior research in which artists are not seen as playing a part in these processes but as 'passive agents', who, as argued by the artist and theorist Martha Rosler, are strategically used by municipal authorities to generate value in a process in which the real estate sector is the beneficiary. In this way, new patterns of consumption are created in which art is the driving force of a new city model. Critical of this model that exploits artists,

the Espai Rampa is offered as a space of resistance and new possibilities that entail the feminisation of these processes.

The exhibition opens with works created as the direct result of an urban change, namely the change in the Poblenou neighbourhood of Barcelona, where the process of urban revitalisation and transformation has been highly visible in recent years, as it has become the most gentrified area of the city. In the year 2000 approval was given to the 22@ plan, a new model of urban relations in which priority was accorded to buildings associated with new technology usage and production. In 2018, the plan was reviewed due to the failings of its implementation in connection with the commitment to build more social housing, to prevent the construction of more hotels, and to respect industrial heritage. Despite the new measures, the transformation has wreaked havoc. The paradox that stems from the cohabitation between new infrastructure and traces of the industrial past, together with local residents' resistance (by repositioning themselves) in response to this scenario, is addressed by Aymara Arreaza in her visual essay *Soy cuerpo, busco fachada* (I'm a Body, I'm Looking for a Façade). The images reveal the experience of the neighbourhood: 'I've had a close relationship with Poblenou for twenty-two years, almost the entire first quarter of the twenty-first century. As with every connection, it has taken me time to penetrate its many layers and stories.' The experience of the transformation shown in the images – the starting point of our tour – demands our attention.

Other ways of giving material expression to the experience of the neighbourhood are presented in the exhibition room. Though the two bodies of works displayed share the same starting point, they are different manifestations of how the consequences of repeated constructional violence are felt. The artists Natalia Domínguez and Joana Capella have spent years together, working at La Escocesa art factory, situated on Carrer de Pere IV, the epicentre of the urban transformation of Poblenou. Proposals for resistance have emerged from their artistic practice in a bid to subvert the

reality they were experiencing. Natalia Domínguez's work consists of two sound pieces and a sculptural group. The repetitive, mechanical sounds and the vibration resulting from the use of industrial machinery are turned into sound compositions that make reference to industrial and techno music. Firstly, there are two pairs of headphones, in the manner of silent disco, for listening to two sessions by the music producers PLOM and BDR. These sessions are based on a sound archive containing groups of various sounds collected by the artist in places near her studio where new residential and commercial complexes were being built. Secondly, a loudspeaker modifies the same sound vibrations to generate physical vibrations. Using sounds that vary between 30 and 60 Hz – those that make physical objects such as the floor, walls and windows vibrate and which also cause health problems related to hearing if they are listened to for long periods of time – patterns have been produced that are themselves altered by the movement of the loudspeaker when they are reproduced. The *PYL* sculptural group takes as its title the Spanish generic acronym for laminated plasterboard. The components in this material (board, plaster and aluminium) are manipulated by the artist to create new sinuous, organic, abstract and imperfect forms that nullify their functionality in construction.

Joana Capella presents *Xarxa de suport* (Support Net), in which she takes one of the most visible elements of any construction site, the safety net. Made of brightly coloured ropes braided and woven together and capable of withstanding a considerable impact force, these nets are reminiscent of crochet work. The artist suggests another kind of net different to that used in markedly male labouring environments through the use of often feminised practices regarded as being of lesser importance and based on techniques that make up what is at times identified with minor architecture and characterised by a working process generally pursued by women, one that is very slow and laborious and which demands painstaking care and patience. The outcome is the result of collaborative work done at the Crochet Club, where participants have shared various techniques – crochet, macrame, bobbin lacemaking and knitting – for making textiles used to produce nets. This experience enabled the artist to think of other ways of dwelling or making others dwell, placing at the centre practices of living in other timeframes that are often slower and more delicate and which demand attention that frequently does not fit in with the rhythms of life today.

This is a site-specific project, a space for dialogue, a choreography. Because gentrification is movement and displacement, it is a close relationship with a space that is breaking up, with a territory. The dancer Georgia Vardadou presents a free exercise in which her movement is directly affected by the other pieces in a kind of alliance between all of them. An exploratory march in which the subjects (women) become political agents. These pieces 'are more a call to action than a warning' and they serve as a trigger in a collective process in which the exhibition becomes an installation, sound and dance. The body that moves is a body formed by other bodies, by other communities, as Jérôme Bel reminds us. *When the Sun No Longer Warms Us* posits another kind of approach, another possibility for facing a problem that affects our cities.

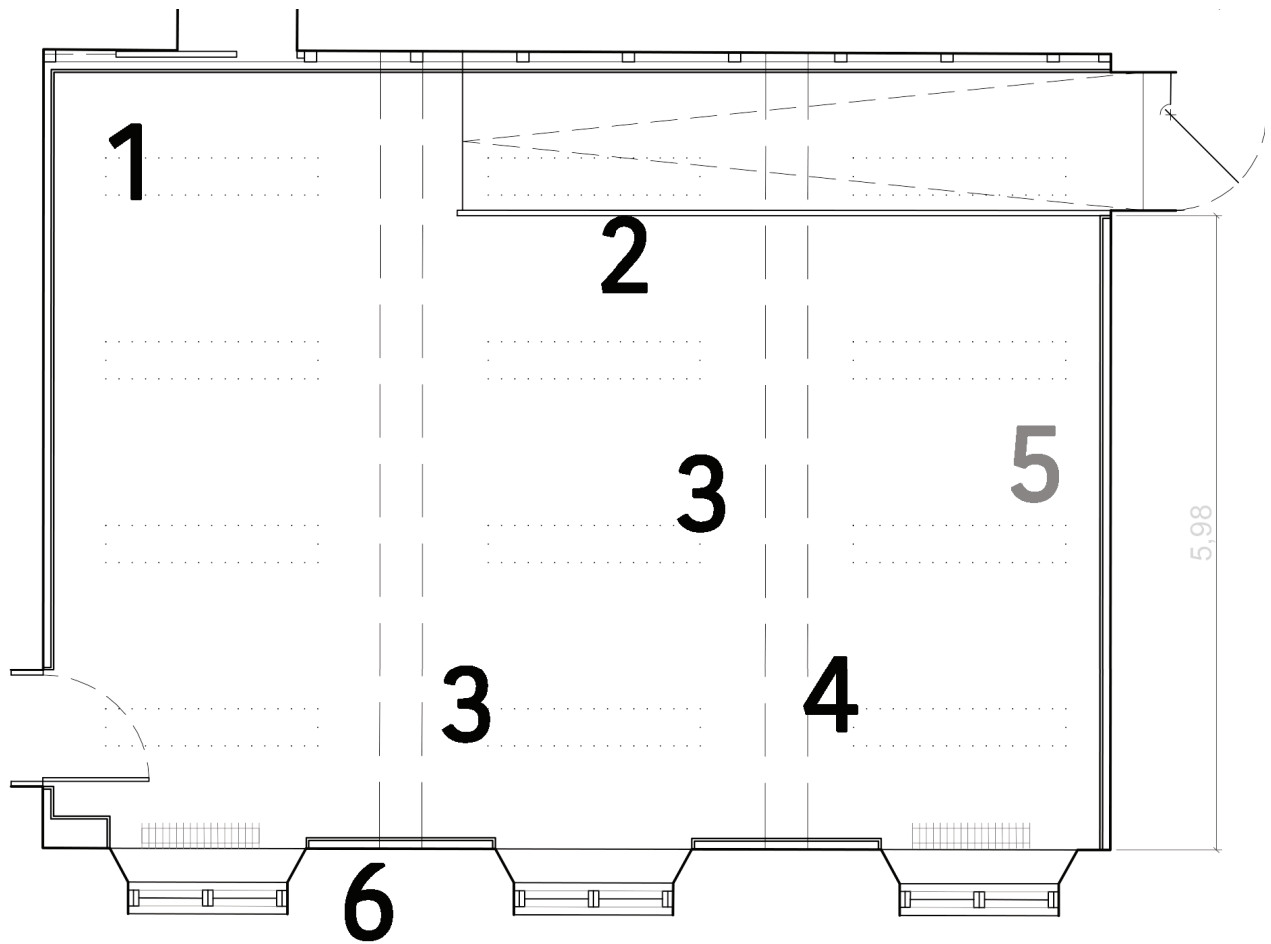
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1 Aymara Arreaza R  
*Soy cuerpo, busco fachada* (I'm a Body, I'm Looking for a Façade) 2023.  
 Video HD 2min 52 sec.

2 Joana Capella Buendia  
*Xarxa de suport* (Support Net), 2023.  
 Various textile-making and handicraft techniques. Support net made at the Crochet Club, a series of gatherings held at La Capella during which participants experimented with a range of techniques such as crochet, macrame, knitting and other knowledge that they brought to the activity.

3 Natalia Domínguez  
*PYL I*, 2023  
 Aluminium, plaster and cardboard.

3 Natalia Domínguez  
*PYL II*, 2023  
 Aluminium, plasterboard, plaster and cardboard.

4 Natalia Domínguez  
*Technoconstructivismo*, 2021  
 Three audio tracks played through a speaker and two wireless headphones.

5 Recording of free dancing in the room by the dancer Georgia Vardarou.

6 Aymara Arreaza  
*Fábrica de desalojos* (Eviction Factory), 2023.  
 Intervened photograph.