

## Schizoscope or how to Illustrate the Inerrable

— Alex Brahim

Iván Gómez is an insatiable consumer of images. His passion for film and the idea of narrative as a space of interplay between the conscious and the unconscious have guided his interest in artistic practice. Exploring the heart of visual discourse has been his response to a desire to communicate – his grief over the impossibility of a faithful representation becoming the point of departure for a quest to find his own gaze.

The symbolic space – sometimes occupied by images –, where emotions are negotiated based on awareness of the self and the other, is the space that Iván has sought to illustrate in his work, initially inspired on Lacan's idea of the mirror stage. According to this concept, the essential rupture that is entailed in the child's first image of himself in the mirror – the recognition of his own body – lays the foundation for the future construction of meanings in terms of what one is and is not, that is, of everything that we associate with our identity.

This pooled background on which impressions are activated through impulses is the stage on which individuals cut out and paste each image, each idea and each expression so as to connect them and create the parallel, integral entity of the self that we call subjectivity. An indefinable space teeming with possible angles and collisions of the tensions between the self and others, between the factual and the fantastic, between the new and the apprehended.

Visual culture as cause and effect of the exchanges that take place in the psyche, is the tradition that Gómez draws on in order to tackle his recurring themes, metareferents of subjectivity itself: childhood, legacy, memory, emotional and moral duality, and the desires for hedonism and death. Approaching narrative as a guided concatenation that triggers mental and emotional transactions when it comes into contact with the subject, Iván's signic and conceptual research has revolved around the idea of editing and post-production, the manipulation and organisation of images in space and time, through media such as video, painting, sculpture and collage, and sources that combine his own work and appropriationism.

Compositional games that elaborately link dwelling and matter, and concepts such as refraction and asymmetry characterise his work, which mixes his natural signic instinct with a Basque artistic legacy and his ongoing implementation of his scopic drive. By attaining a fragmentation of discourse that also inscribes a reflection on the construction of images, Iván has pursued spaces of concomitance between personal feeling and the collective imaginary, positioning his gaze – and sometimes also his body – in the spaces where social symbology is constructed.

In the video "Recuerdos de un tacto" (2008), he invokes the familiar pedagogy of the everyday, bringing childhood rituals back to life from a position of adult complicity: bathing with his father, learning to wash his hands, being massaged by his mother. A record of events in which Iván played a part, but which he retains no memory of, is reconstructed in the present with naturalness and nostalgia. Its epilogue, "Éranse dos veces" (2008), creates a narrative thread out of his forgotten childhood, using the stories told by family members who reinterpret themselves in the new fiction.

"Postales" (2008) is a video dissertation on the role of the gaze and the ritualisation of the photographic record in the construction of imaginaries. The false euphoria of the tourist before the camera lens, the boring protocol of wedding photo shoots and the provoked apoteosis of the subjective gaze upon urban spaces, emphasise the clichéd nature of certain forms of creation of memory and identity, revealing their status as preconceived mechanisms that endorse social categories.

The subject's position in physical and social space and his role in the construction of the gaze became the next stage in Iván's explorations. The video "La curva" (2009) captures a group of people who have gathered near a curve to watch the cars in a rally go by – a popular custom in northern Spain –, in an ethnography that seeks the objective gaze of the invisible eye and pays homage to the filmmaker Jean Rouch. "Tiravainilla y chocolate" (2009) consist of low resolution footage of a group of artists who are discussing the effectiveness of socially committed art and the type of 'auteur' images that it generates. Reflex action, the atmosphere recreates a social-food gathering similar

to those organised by the acclaimed artist that the title is a nod to. "La voz de otro" (2009) juxtaposes the impossibility of the subjective gaze in the frame with the impossibility of success in the singing exercise that we see.

Reintroducing the idea of convergent social spaces, the fetish (the wallet) as a symbolic point of connection between two social identities – the tourist and the pickpocket – was the excuse that activated the narrative in "Qué extraño camino me ha llevado hacia ti" (2010). Iván takes to the streets of Barcelona pretending to be a tourist and is unsuccessful in his attempts to be robbed because the pickpockets assume he is an undercover policeman. The experience is described in writing and rounded off with a video in which images from films showing pickpockets alternate with a stimulating pick pocketing self-tutorial practiced by the artista at home.

Turning towards the still image, the photographic series "It's your turn" (2009) uses the figure of the fox as a metaphor of the idea of lying in wait that the previous Project dealt with. It was the first Project in the material

exploration of “El corazón me estallaba” (2009-2010), a series of assemblages, sculptures, paintings and drawings that function as an allegoric account of anti-monumentality, with nods to consumption, art, vital functions and everyday life.

Later, plastic and audiovisual arts converged in a work that returned to the theme of an intangible point of connection between identities: the void. “Lo más difícil, nada” (2010) is a philosophical inquiry into nothingness as an existential objective, in the form of an impeccable experimental short film that recounts a misunderstanding between a woman who becomes a tourist to escape a lack of love and a man who becomes homeless to surmount his apathy. For its premiere, the video was dialectically displayed with pictorial and sculptural assemblage that included a selection of relevant books and a video montage of classic films. Since this project, Iván’s work has focused around the subject and theme of film.

“Prometer el infinito” (2011) is a photographic series based on found 35 mm negatives. Iván trimmed them, assembled them and blew them up to create an entire double narrative: a subjective one told through the violent psychological sequences of images, and an objective one that reveals montage to be a communication strategy and the photographic image to be a building block of cinematic narration. This became the point of departure for the structure on which his most recent work would be based.

“El resto es historia” (2010) is an installation consisting of two videos and a ready-made that deepens his investigations into the psychological nature of the cinematic image and focuses on the notions of violence, power, solitude and life journeys. It was created expressly for the exhibition “Sans Soleil”, which was based on Chris Marker’s homonymous film and curated by Pablo Marte, who, along with Iván, is part of the collective Dobleonada. Their most recent joint project, “Ich will doch nur, daß ihr mich liebt” (2011), is a dual screen ping-pong of still images that move through seduction, historical elegy, irony and theatricality. The cadence of these visual epistles, which is produced through interaction, also reminds us that feedback is necessary for the activation of chains of meaning. This distressing need for answers and for contiguity in order to complete the story is the new symbolic place that Iván Gómez now focuses on.

The first part of a trilogy in progress that deals with the subject of montage, his intervention in “Cardinal Audiences”, entitled “Witness for Desire” (2011), is an honest and ambitious exercise in reflexive recapitulation that marks the start of a new stage in Iván’s analysis of subjectivity and the other from the perspective of the filmic gaze. A universe of images from recent Western visual culture creates dense collages on sheets of plexiglass set up in the exhibition space alongside film editing machines, a video montage based on two films and a video showing tourists taking photographs at a concentration camp. And before all of this, an aquarium with two delicate starfish built into a fake Wall welcomes visitors as a kind of stage front. This space of infinite possible connections among images through the gaze, which straddles memory and mirage, shadow and transparency, is a staging of the regime of the mirror, of how the representations and reflections that infuse our identity are innate to physical image production technologies. Family, history, nation, love, gender, comfort, war, reproduction, pleasure, solitude, faith, death... all form part of the story of stories.

In this interstitial space of desire for the witness that we all need to create our own narratives of the present, Iván Gómez insists on recovering and re-thinking time past. Given that the present in today’s society affirms itself as a patchwork of interconnected and inevitable inputs and contexts, subjectivity can only take place ‘in vino veritas’ in the temporary intimacy of language, beyond automation in the prefabricated consumption of images. In this confrontation, each person must work out his own metonymies based on the rhetoric before which he appears.

The death of the grand narrative and the fractal multiplicity of the network society impose the individual concatenation of metaphors for the subjective narrative. Conscious of this legacy, Iván Gómez bases his personal affirmation of the present on the personal synaesthesia of shared backgrounds. Navigating the ontological and hauntological dimension of images, he seeks to intellectualise their meaning from the personal to the universal. In his shift from the sensitive realms of the gaze to its political reverse lies a courageous and perhaps epic determination: to set up his lens in that invisible place where the alchemy between the individual and society takes place.