

Nacho Criado

Collaborating Agents

4 May - 1 October 2012



Nacho Criado. *A partir de Mathias Grünewald*, 2008. Photo: Rafael Suárez

The work of pioneering Spanish experimental artist, Nacho Criado (Mengíbar, Jaén, 1943 – Madrid, 2010), occupies the Reina Sofía Museum's two venues in the Retiro Park: the Velázquez Palace and the Crystal Palace. The show spans more than four decades in which Criado used a variety of media (installation, sculpture, photography, video, architecture) to reflect on concepts such as time and transformation, the contrast between idea and matter, the destiny of the artwork as part of a dialectic of construction and destruction, or the meaning of ruins and detritus. Criado's work drifts between very different poles but, generally speaking, it is inseparable from strategies of conceptual art in the broadest sense. Whatever materials were to hand could become vehicles for discourse: genres such as performance, land art and body art were not so much labels as research tools for Criado.

The exhibition's title stems from Criado's concern with delimiting the artist's involvement in the production of his work, and allowing elements in the world to complete it by acting as *collaborating agents*: atmospheric factors, accidents or microorganisms. This conviction determined his pieces as living elements: finite as objects, but unfinished as artworks.

The Velázquez Palace contains a retrospective selection of works by Criado that reveals his capacity to adopt various practices without ever associating himself with any specific movement or art group. His practice began to take shape within the discourse of Minimalism that reigned during the second half of the 1960s, responding to its basic principles in pieces such as those that make up his *Homage to Rothko*, 1970-1994. In addition, his use of humble materials can be linked to *arte povera*, which used industrial materials in its reaction against academic convention. Yet Criado's practice focused on process, connecting him directly to another leading figure of modern art—Marcel Duchamp—to whom he dedicated *Prêt-à-porter (MaDe in...)*, 1976. Duchamp and other creators to whom he paid homage, or made reference (Bruno Taut, Matthias Grünewald, Samuel Beckett), were not simply quoted or treated as sources of inspiration. Drawing on the past, Criado took on the role of a new collaborating agent, reactivating and updating those artists' ideas—which remain a part of the history of thought—not as artworks, but rather as process. All of these starting points converge in a mature work, *It Is Not the Voice That Calls Out in the Desert*, 1990, an iron and glass installation that plays a pivotal role in the show. This work's title also references another of his interests: the tension between discourse and silence, destruction and construction. This artwork explores the destiny of all human organism, which, as part of the dynamics of the biological world, contains the germs of their own destruction.

The second venue, the Crystal Palace, houses a reconstruction of *Pieces of Water and Glass*, an exhibition that Criado presented in the same space in 1991. That show, which marked the midpoint of his career, bore witness to the consistency and evolution of his interests. In *Umbra Zenobia*, the collaborating agent was the fungus farm he placed on the building's glass walls; *Decanting*, by contrast, employs glass as a found objet. This use of broken glass resonated with the space's architecture while simultaneously creating a new tension: a work "in a state of ruin", it contested the Crystal Palace's utopian architecture. Pieces like *They Cannot Come Tonight*, or *The Alpine Wound*, constitute an anti-architecture, designed from conception to be ephemeral, they explored questions relating to destiny and transformation.

Museo Nacional
Centro de Arte
Reina Sofía

Palacio de Velázquez
y Palacio de Cristal
Parque del Retiro,
Madrid

Museum Hours

From April to
September
Every day from
11:00 a.m. to
9:00 p.m.
From October to
March
Every day from
10:00 a.m. to
6:00 p.m.

The Crystal Palace will
be closed on rainy days

Images

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Depósito legal: M-16930-2012
NºPO. 036-12-005-2