



Daniel G. Andújar

THE THIRD ESTATE

In this exhibition Daniel G. Andújar (Almoradí, 1966) investigates those utopias that, from the field of art, aspired to construct an aesthetics of the working class, what assaults were made on the revolutionary impetus by the normalising power, and what overflows and struggles remain pending to be traversed.

14.03 – 31.05.2020

[LA VIRREINA]
CENTRE
DE LA IMATGE

Ajuntament de
Barcelona



Organized in cooperation with the Centre del Carme in Valencia and the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid, this exhibition presents a set of forty projects carried out by Daniel G. Andújar (Almoradí, 1966) from 1990 to the present, thirteen of them specifically created for La Virreina Centre de la Imatge.

There are far more similarities between the 1920s and the 2020s than would be suggested by their position in the centuries. Amid economic crises, systemic exhaustion, widening class differences, social marginalization and uncontrollable totalitarianism, history seems to be repeating itself. And it is doing so not, as Marx proclaimed, first as a tragedy and then as a farce, but rather as a loop hitting the most fragile areas of the public sphere.

In this panorama, in the field of art we must reconsider the role played by artists, the uses that we can give to their proposals and the historical contributions that we should rescue for the reinvention of popular imaginaries.

From the Soviet Proletkult to the American trade union Industrial Workers of the World, from *The Communist Manifesto* to a hypothetical People's Museum made up of reproductions of masterpieces, *The Third Estate* investigates utopias that aspired to build a working-class aesthetic. It also explores the assaults on the revolutionary drive by the authorities and the struggles between ideological grammars that left the testimony of a melting pot overflowing with bold initiatives that remained unrealized.

Room 1

The exhibition begins with a new project, in which a robot continually writes the phrase “This is not a worker”. Just as René Magritte wrote “This is not a pipe” in one of his best-known paintings, *The Betrayal of Images* (1929), Andújar proposes a new, perhaps ideologically more sibylline negation, in which the machine confesses, denouncing its working conditions and the impersonation it is carrying out.

Another part of the same area features *Pyramid of Capitalist System*, a famous drawing published in 1911 by the newspaper

of the Industrial Workers of the World, which caricatured the class hierarchies: the bourgeois, military, ecclesiastical and royal powers occupy the highest areas of the monument and are supported by working people at the bottom. Next to it we see an earlier version of 1901 by the cartoonist Nicholas Lokhoff, then a member of the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party, who established the pyramid model with a poster that is considered the first underground revolutionary pamphlet.

As if in a kinetic sequence, these two agitprop images are echoed in three other versions of the pyramid reproduced mechanically, giving them an industrial appearance. Next to them are a series of drawings of the algorithms governing the operations of the robot that reproduced the images.

Room 2

The first sentence of *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), “A spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of communism” is often parodied or eulogized. The metaphor imagined by the authors of the manifesto is extended by the project that opens this section, in which Marx “materializes” thanks to digital reproduction techniques.

The journey from the spectre to the hologram, from the printed page to the proclaiming head like the holy face of Marxism, is an odyssey in the ways of propagating what could be called the “law book”, a *The Communist Manifesto* that recovers its original status as a formative text when reproduced as a school notebook.

Accompanying Marx’s phantasmagorical diction is a facsimile score of *The Internationale*, the famous workers’ anthem set to music by Pierre De Geyter in 1888, in addition to two audio versions recorded in Valencia and Ghent in 2017 and 2018, respectively.

Finally, we find a reproduction of Victor D’Hondt’s *Système pratique et raisonné de représentation proportionnelle* (A Practical and Reasoned System for Proportional Representation, 1882), better known as the D’Hondt method, and an audiovisual work on the same subject. The method consists of an algorithm for allocating seats in proportion to the votes obtained for each candidacy and has been adopted in many countries, including Spain.

Room 3

This area is based on the institutionalization of violence, urban counter-guerrillas and iconographic struggles of art. It includes *Nature under Surveillance* (2015), a video in which the artist puts on and takes off a spectacular police suit in a contradictorily bucolic space, the ancient wool washing house of Los Barruecos, in the Museo Vostell Malpartida in Cáceres; *Erik, the Ventriloquist* (2012), a work showing the same suit inside a display cabinet, as if it were the cathedral tomb of a monk or a nobleman, perhaps the last folkloric remains of some forms of brutality; *Barricades* (2014), a group of historical engravings showing these barriers built by armed dissidents and demonstrators; and *The Battle of the Pictures* (1745), a fascinating and topical engraving by William Hogarth, in which a large number of canvases of different styles and periods engage in battle with each other as if caught in an attack of iconoclastic, fratricidal fury.

Room 4

The post-capitalist economy has focused its data collection tools on the body, seeing it as a space for standardizing and exercising control over all forms of disagreement. However, what would happen if information disseminated by digital machinery were intercepted by the field of art? What would happen if creative processes changed the ways in which globalized cultures transmitted their codes, if they changed passive learning into knowledge in rotation? Is it feasible to hack into the mental frameworks through which the world is perceived? Is it a chimera to turn the bodies of workers into pirate broadcasters, into an atlas whose taxonomies introduce disruptions in what has been agreed, in the rigid guidelines created by standardization?

Room 5

Master Pieces. Hack the Museum – The People’s Museum (2017–2018) is a kind of exhibition within the exhibition or a museum within the museum. It is a series of low-cost masterpieces whose originals form part of the most prestigious museum collections. They are masterpieces in the most mercantile sense

of the term: canvases by artists who occupy a heroic place in the dominant narratives of art history. However, despite their over-exposure to the media, when placed together these paintings form a vast panorama of how popular emotional ideas—what we could call a history of the feelings of the people—have been shaped over the last five hundred years. These works found an aesthetic channel of expression in religious and pietist art, in bourgeois pictorial manifestations, in the bucolic dreams and politically radical works of the avant-garde, and in the moralizing scenes of Protestantism.

The film-maker and writer Alexander Kluge stated that opera is a portrait of the existential longings of the European bourgeoisie. This other popular museum, composed of reproductions of large paintings accessible free of charge on the Internet, brings up to date Benjamin's dictum that technical reproduction leads to a loss of aura. But above all it hacks (hence the title of the work) into the very foundation of the museum as a unique and exclusive repository of aesthetic memory and the sacramental notion of authorship transformed into a pecuniary commodity.

Featuring full-scale illustrious paintings captured from the internet, the central hall of La Virreina Centre de la Imatge has been converted into a gallery like those found in the Prado, the Louvre, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the National Gallery or the Hermitage. They are places for agglomeration and tourist epiphanies, in which the narrative of the audio guide is stronger than the discourse of the specialist or curator.

The antagonism between high and low culture, between masterpiece and souvenir, is brought up to date in *Master Pieces. Hack the Museum – The People's Museum*, placing at the centre of the debate the reappropriation of heritage and the production, use and accessibility of knowledge. It also questions the liturgies of the art system and the museum as a guardian of memory or as a place of symbolic and economic laundering for art history, all under the shelter of a chronology of aesthetic emotion that links Titian with Malevich, El Bosco with Van Gogh.

This space also features *Protected Canon – The Disasters of War. Trojan Horse* (2017), an ephemeral intervention carried out at the Centre del Carme Cultura Contemporània de València.



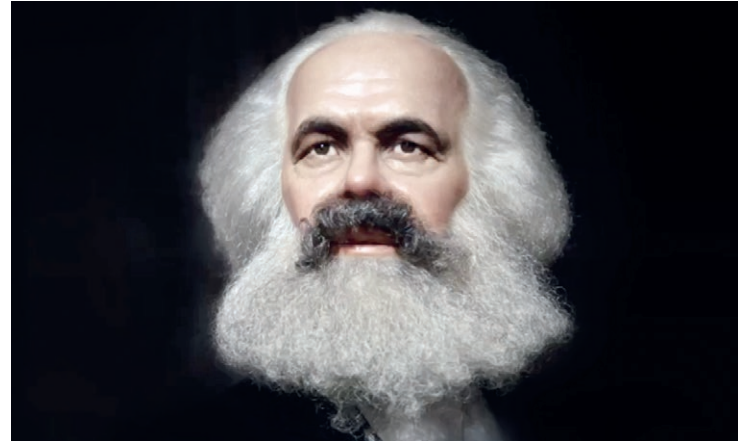
Nature under surveillance, 2015



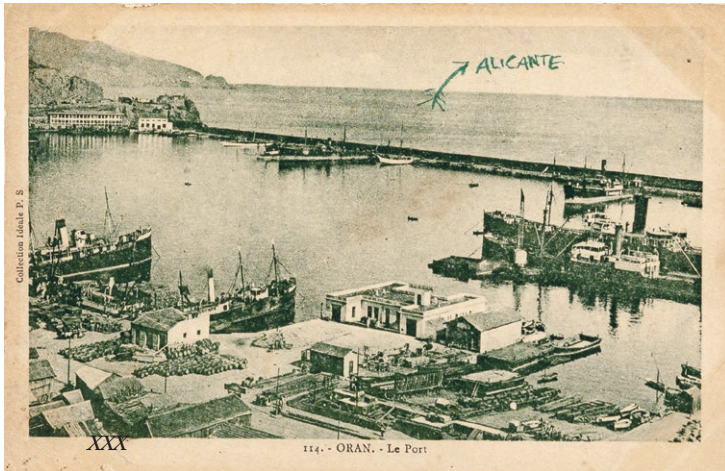
The Battle of Images, William Hogarth, 1822



*Protected Canon – The Disasters of War.
Trojan Horse, 2017*



The Communist Manifesto, 2019



Oran, Sidi el Houari/La Escalera 1939, 2018-2020



History of Workers, 2020

This installation investigates the evacuation of artworks from the Prado Museum to Valencia in autumn 1936, Spanish Republican history, and the culture of the Falles festival of Valencia and its imaginaries.

The room is completed with a guide in the form of a brochure, although it is preceded by a text written by the novelist Javier Pérez Andújar that rejects this publishing format aimed at a general audience. A magnetic board allows visitors to play at being museum conservators by arranging all the masterpieces according to their tastes and preferences. Finally, an audiovisual work shows the transfer of the *master pieces* to the exhibition hall, a procession through the city by a group of students of the Massana School, and the faces and reactions of passers-by who observe this street performance.

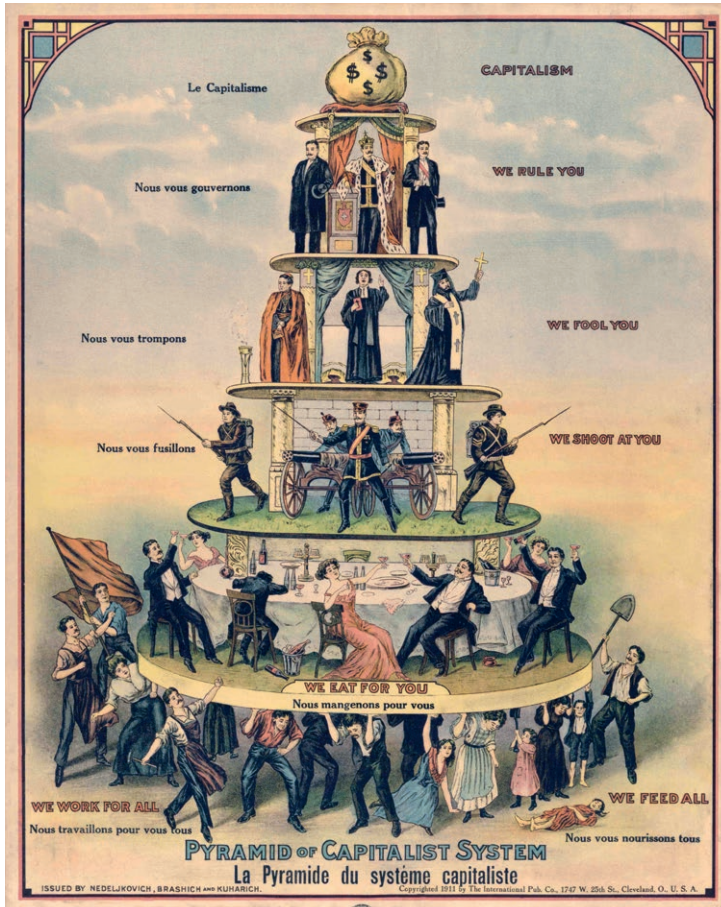
A full-scale *Guernica* of Picasso presides over the whole room, although this great manifesto of anti-war painting is presented, without the usual museographic rigour, as a trade fair poster to be displayed in town squares, perhaps as it was originally conceived.

Room 6

Many utopias were truncated after the—mostly unsuccessful—attempts to establish a working-class aesthetic during the 20th century. However, a large number of graphic documents, posters, drawings, proclamations, photographs and slogans of agitprop remain as a testimony.

Within this vast history of artists cooperating with the people or feeding on their imaginaries, the federation of Soviet associations known as Proletkult deserves special mention.

Proletkult was born at the time of the Russian Revolution. At the height of its influence, in 1920, it had three hundred studios, countless literary and theatrical clubs and a large number of cultural groups in local factories. This vast organization was in tune with the revolutionary drive for urgent social change. It also used an experimental pedagogy, aspiring to be “a laboratory of pure proletarian ideology”. The difficulties faced by its members and its final dissolution in 1932 reveal how controversial it is to establish a popular art free from control by the authorities.



Pyramid of Capitalist System, 1911

As a replica to the previous processes of collective creation, this area adds the sculptural silhouette of a walking businessman, the neoliberal subject raised above contingencies, the *homo economicus* on top of a fragile and stylized pedestal, watching over the crowds and safe from their community conspiracies.

Room 7

Continuing the notion of utopia, the following area projects a city in which the basic principle is intensity. It is an urban fantasy without the presence of the financial powers, without historicist semiotics, without shopping centres or gentrified neighbourhoods, and even without political interference: against the banalization and privatization of public space, the city sets its groupings of buildings on formal scales, its physiognomy as a huge playground for living.

A single monument breaks the proportion of this metropolis dreamed from the territory of art: a hand holding a brush that, in a way, spreads the ideas imagined one day by other hands holding hammers and sickles.

Room 8

The famous set of engravings made by Goya between 1810 and 1815, *The Disasters of War* portray the cruelties committed during the War of Spanish Independence. Here they serve as a prologue to describe two infamous episodes in contemporary history: the evacuation of thousands of Republican soldiers and civilians from the port of Alicante to Oran in 1939, and the Albatera concentration camp of the Franco regime.

The end of the Civil War was four days away, and the British coal ship SS *Stanbrook* was in the port of Alicante awaiting a cargo of oranges and saffron. However, in view of the bleak situation, with crowds at the port exhausted and terrified of the imminent occupation by Nationalist troops, Captain Archibald Dickson decided to take about three thousand refugees on an overcrowded ship to Oran. Upon arrival, many were interned in detention centres, labour camps and prisons. Despite its motto “Liberty, Equality and Fraternity”, France, which then held Algeria under the colonial yoke, seems to have shown no solidarity with the refugees.

The Albatera labour camp, located in the municipality of San Isidro in Vega Baja del Segura, was opened by the government of the Spanish Republic in 1937 and became a concentration camp of the Franco regime after the Civil War. Thousands of Republican prisoners were confined there, including most of those who failed to board the *Stanbrook*, who would suffer mistreatment, torture and death between April and October 1939, when Albatera was finally closed.

Two videos (one of them shown for the first time) and a complete document archive illustrate this tragic dissolution of the Republican dream and the international workers’ movement. The voice of the poet Miguel Hernández from Orihuela, Alicante, who recites “Song of the Soldier Poet” in one of the few recordings of the period, serves as an epilogue to this area.

Room 9

The last installation of *The Third Estate*, entitled *Battle Cry* (2019) is a collection of political slogans from a broad spectrum of ideologies. They are appeals to discrepancy, exhortations to revolution and axioms denouncing the submission of gender, class and race. Some are presented in a colouring book and others hang on the walls of the room as political onomatopoeias that are an invitation to dissent.

Daniel G. Andújar described some ideas explored in this area as follows: “In a world saturated with images, media impacts and all kinds of advertising intrusions, it is surprising how the marketing techniques of political propaganda manage to find a place among so much competition to convey their message and evoke their siren song. We must reflect how political propaganda acted on us through the concentration of media that depend on economic and political interests. It is nothing new—we need only recall the history of National Socialism. The strategy is clear and little has changed in a context of strong penetration of social networks and digital media. Far from changing, it has evolved, it has been personalized through sophisticated algorithms that allow our governments and institutions, political powers, power in general, to continue filtering their propaganda as an imposed global channel for interpellation, hegemony and homogeneity. In this idea of

a single thought, language becomes a tool of conspiracy and manipulation, an exercise in domination and domestication rather than a language of democracy, an artificial universe that seems completely real. In this series of works, I make another switch, showing the frame and the boldness of the archive that acts here as a *fascist machine*. But a fascist machine can be redirected and used against its original leader (hence the situationist strategy of *détournement*). A dissident and radical machine can be redirected against its original mechanics, perhaps by hacking into its software.

Everyone has their own particular vision of democracy, but few are fully conversant with its rules”.

Curator: Valentín Roma

DL B 5364-2020

**La Virreina Centre de la Imatge
Palau de la Virreina
La Rambla, 99. 08002 Barcelona**

**Opening hours: Tuesday to Sunday
and public holidays, 11 am to 8 pm
Free entry**



#DanielGAndújar

@lavirreinaci

barcelona.cat/lavirreina