

Reactions and Interactions

Spanish New Media Art

Curated by Txema Agiriano

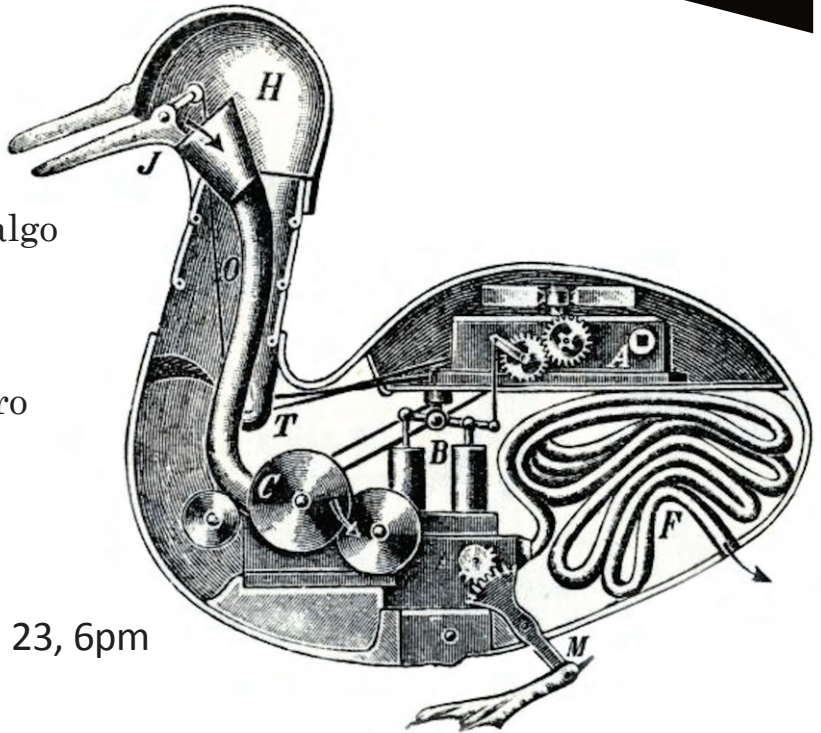
Pilar Baizán

Jai Du

Mauro Entrialgo

uh513

Daniel Romero



Opening April 23, 6pm

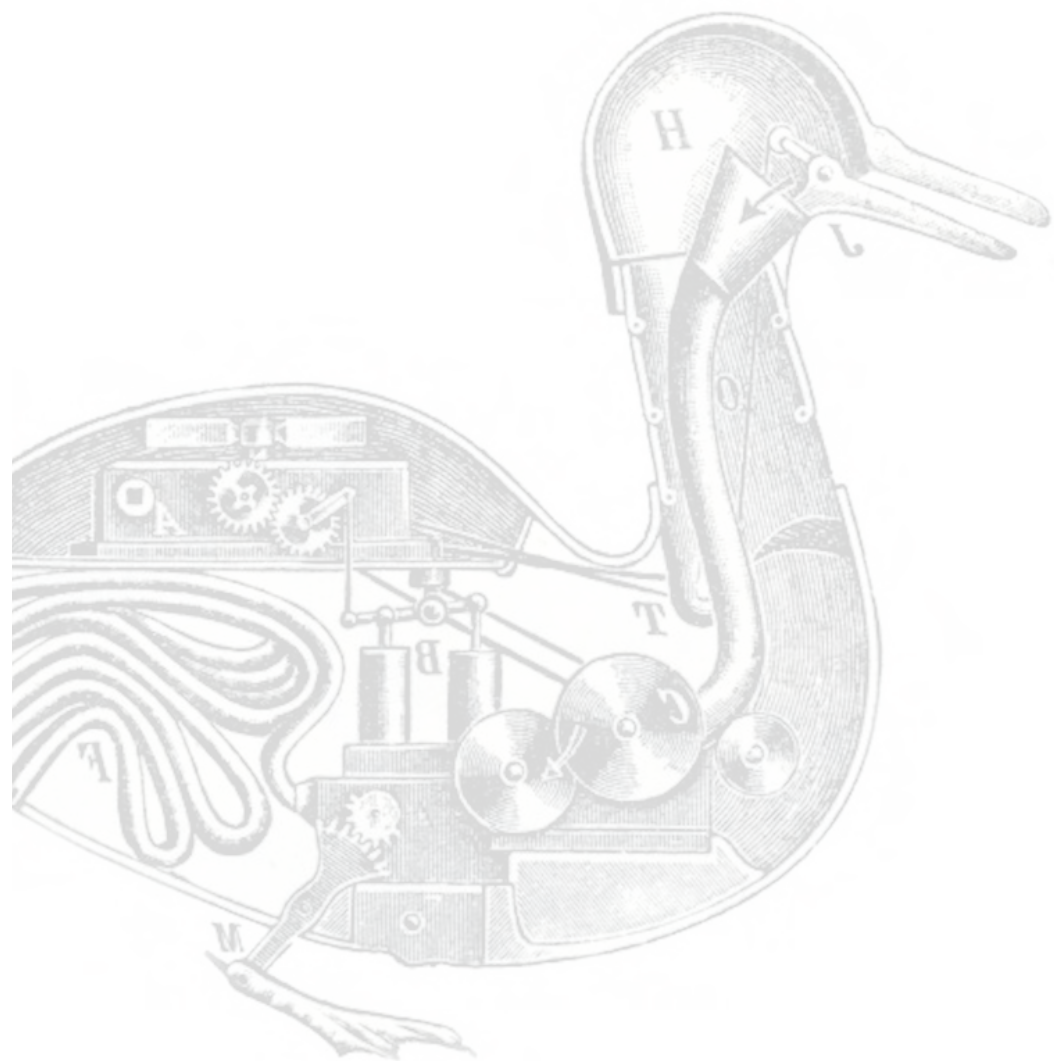
April 24 - May 9

Monday - Friday 10am - 5pm

VERGE GALLERY



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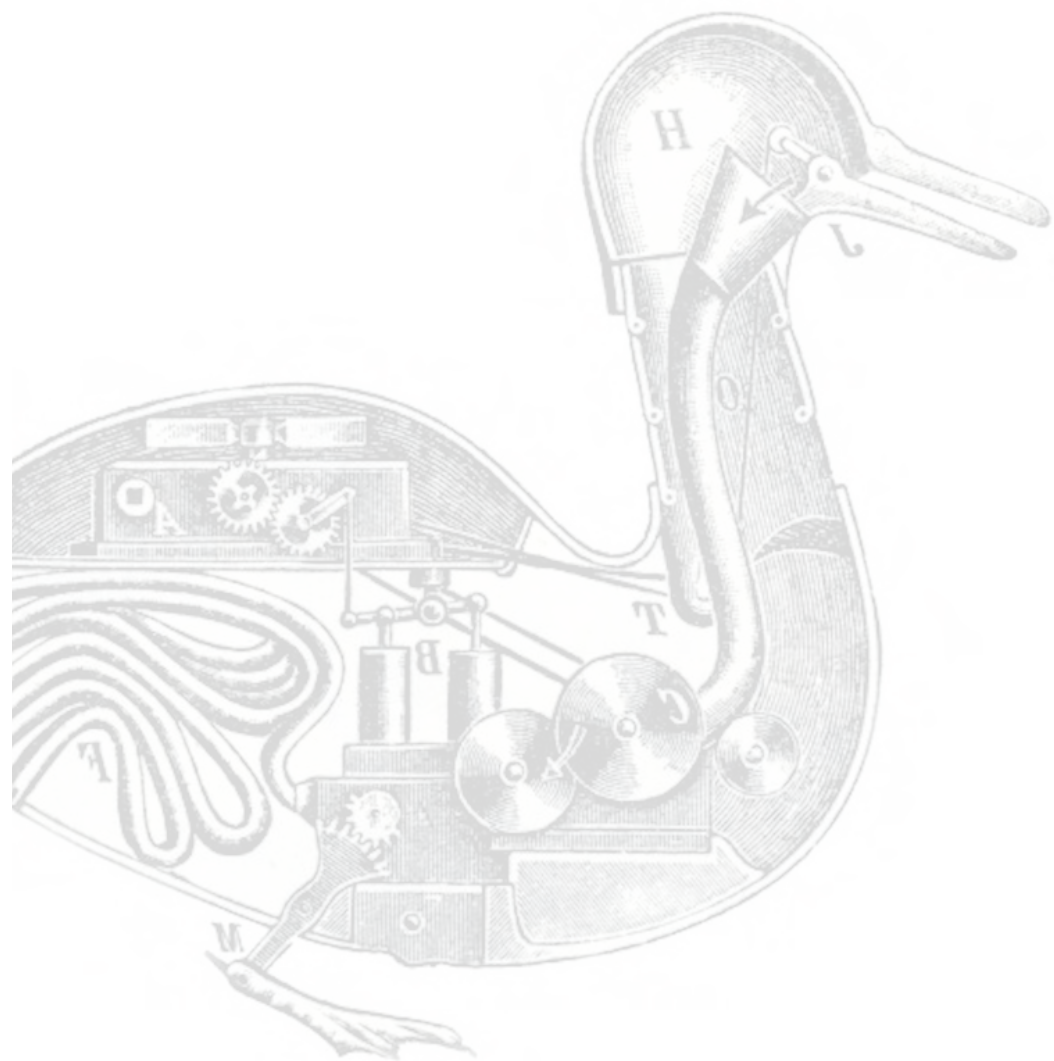
Verge gallery is pleased to present this captivating exhibition of edgy new media art direct from Spain.

"...between banks and slavery, between women who aim to be Merkel and primitive men with suits and ties, between the empty rooms of full hotels, among communist train stations of high-speed trains..."

– artist, Jai Du

'Reactions and Interactions' is an exploration of the process of dislocation. The focus of the exhibition is on the creation of 'the foreigner' – a being forged by unfamiliar surrounds and situations. It concerns reactions against the unfamiliar and interactions with perceived commonalities. It is inevitably voyeuristic, but is as much about being watched (scrutinised, suspected, pigeonholed) as watching. This exhibition, curated by Txema Agiriano, presents work by Pilar Baizán, Jai Du, Mauro Entrialgo, uh513 and Daniel Romero.





The social contract, relational art and autómatas: Reactions and Interactions

Although we may consider ourselves tolerant people, when our neighbors seem to transgress certain social norms, we may see a break that leads us to call for our rights. If the neighbors are from another culture, or “tribe”, their rules are probably different from ours.

When I was 12, my favorite TV show was “Las reglas del juego” (The Rules of the Game) (TVE, National Spanish Televisión, 1977) a series of anthropological documentaries that analyzed the principles by which modern societies are governed. Directed and presented by José Antonio Jáuregui, Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Oxford, he thought that the behavioral mechanisms related to social life, such as shame, language, social norms and even religion, are innate and universal in the human species.

Many years later, during a visit to London in 2000, I attended the exhibition “Intelligence: New British Art 2000” at the Tate Gallery. I discovered with surprise a project called “The Folk Archive”, a visual account of contemporary popular British culture that artists Jeremy Deller and Alan Kane had begun the previous year. This project culminated in 2007 with its acquisition by the British Council and the creation of a virtual museum.

Deller and Kane had transformed their own artistic work into something which could be labelled an anthropological study of British customs.

Deller is considered one of the main figures of “relational art”. This art practice places greater emphasis on the relationships established between, and with, the audience of the artistic dynamic rather than on any artistic object. Works that are identified with this artistic movement tend to be situated in everyday activities and contexts.

The first uses of the term “relational art” are attributed to Nicolas Bourriaud, former co-director of the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, who used it in the title of his book, *Relationelle Esthétique* (Relational Aesthetics) (Les presses du réel, 1998) and in 1996, in the exhibition catalog “Traffic” curated by himself.

Bourriaud posited that the close relationships that the city generates have transformed the conception of artistic activity. For him, the presence of the relational factor in artistic practice responds to a pressing need to encourage the recovery and reconstruction of social nets in a society of split subjects, isolated and reduced to the status of mere passive consumers.

Luckily, for the viewers of our exhibition we do not ask him or her for any action, so the critics of this art form, led by Stephen Wright, can relax. Nothing is needed beyond a reflection upon our behaviors. Or not even that: mere contemplation is also worthwhile.

One of the things we may choose to contemplate are the terms of the “social contract” that structures some of our relations. In 1762, Jean-Jacques Rousseau published *Of The Social Contract, Or Principles of Political Right* (*Du contrat social ou Principes du droit politique*), a work on political philosophy that primarily speaks about the freedom and equality of “men” living under a State established by a social contract. To live in this society, so the theory goes, human beings agree to an implicit social contract that gives them certain rights

in exchange for giving up the freedom that would otherwise be available in the state of nature. As such, the rights and duties of individuals constitute the terms of the social contract, while the State is the entity created to enforce the contract. But the rights and duties are not immutable or natural. And a greater number of rights implies greater duties, whilst fewer rights means fewer duties. This is a very contentious area of discourse in Europe at present

Mauro Entrialgo's profound knowledge of human relationships, as seen through his comics – we have a little sample in the exhibition – presents the vision, “From my windows”, of what happens around him. For him, these “reactions/interactions” are just “little moments of my life”. Situations and attitudes that clash and that he reveals, seeking our complicity in a shared laugh.

Pilar Baizán has similar concerns, but to analyze the quarter (or “community”) where she lives, she prefers to rely on sociological studies to support her thesis. Both Baizan and Entrialgo live in neighborhoods that being gentrified. They analyze this process with compassion and without bitterness.

In the exhibition we also present a fanzine, “Sanfranzine” made in this neighbourhood during a workshop designed to empower a local community under pressure. We present a book “El barrio de San Francisco en Bilbao. Un polo artístico” (The district of San Francisco in Bilbao. An artistic kernel) that is part of an investigative project, run by myself, about the same neighbourhood.

Jai Du also presents an autobiographical view of a European town, but if Baizán and Entrialgo are part of the regeneration of degraded neighbourhoods undergoing gentrification, she speaks from the other side. She is part of the immigrant community – in her case, living in Germany – who are denigrated by the mere fact of being. Through her poetry she tells of her bitter experience as such. A painful experience that reminds us of the people who may never have a voice.

I wonder if “the Turk”, the automaton chess player of Wolfgang von Kempelen (1734-1804), that interacted with chess masters around the world would have worried about all this if he had not been himself a fake. Jacques de Vaucanson’s “Le canard digérateur”, hailed in 1739 as the first automaton capable of digestion was also a fake. The city buses in the work of **Daniel Romero** that we see interacting in the exhibition are real. Do they dream of electric sheep like Philip K. Dick’s androids?

Finally, turning to the music-making plants of the artist collective **uh513**, we could ask ourselves the classic question of whether plants suffer when eat them. We cannot say for sure that they are suffer, but we can be sure that they react. The sun, irrigation, wind, and so on generate different flows of electricity depending on the circumstances. Through electronic interfaces these artists give the plants the possibility to interact with us.

We communicate through our behaviors.

Txema Agiriano, March 2014

Pilar Baizán

Pilar Baizán's video, "Descubriendo el Barrio" (Discovering the neighbourhood) is a sociological and artistic investigation of the inhabitants of her neighbourhood of San Francisco in Bilbao (Basque Country – Spain). This historically depressed area –home to prostitutes, drug dealers and African and South American immigrants– is slowly being gentrified as artists, designers and members of the gay community move in. We also show her soundart work, "San Francisco, my neighbourhood" made with field recordings, recorded in that area.

Pilar Baizán is artist and musician. From 2004 to 2010 she was known as Baseline, her artistic name as an experimental musician. With this project she has published three records and has played in well known festivals and venues in Europe and USA.

<http://baselinenoise.com/>

Nowadays her main project is "Arte entre fogones" (Art in the kitchen) a documentary series, where artists show their works and also cook for the show.

<http://www.artentrefogones.com/>

<http://vimeo.com/pilarbaizan>

In order to contextualize the work of Baizán, in the exhibition we also present a fanzine made in the same neighbourhood "Sanfranzine" .

The book "El barrio de San Francisco en Bilbao. Un polo artístico" (The district of San Francisco in Bilbao. An artistic kernel) will also be available to visitors.



Jai Du

Jai Du started her artistic career as a poet (“Extractos d’Afrique” 2009, “Extractos d’Allemagne” 2011/12 and “Extractos d’UE” 2013/2014) writing about her own experiences in the different countries where she has been living and working. In many cases she has been the voice of people who could not express themselves freely due to the fear of being fired from their jobs.

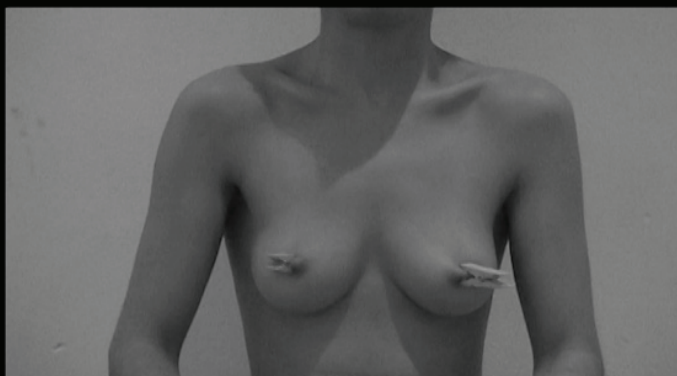
In 2012, due to the difficulty in the diffusion of poetry books, she started creating video performances inspired by some of her poems and, thanks to these, she has already been presented and projected in known festivals, galleries and art centres (BilbaoArte - Bilbao, Laboral - Gijón, Centre d’Art Santa Mònica - Barcelona, Artpotheek gallery - Brussels, MEM festival – Bilbao, Bideodromo festival, etc).

As a performer, Jai Du performs in almost all her videos using her body and pain as her main means of expression. She has had the opportunity to collaborate with the known performers Tania Bruguera and Rocio Boliver participating in international festival such as “Acción!MAD” 2014, “Perfocilinne” 2013 and “El Arte es Acción” 2009.

Nowadays her work is focused on the creation of video performances that directly address political and social issues, such as the European crisis, migration and questions of cultural integration, gender roles in different work sectors, the current concept of “artist” etc.

<http://www.jai-du.com/>

<http://www.artpotheek.com/>



we'd never work there for 12 hours per day

Mauro Entrialgo

Mauro Entrialgo was born in Vitoria-Gasteiz (Basque Country – Spain) in 1965 and is one of the most prestigious cartoonists in Spain. A frequent contributor to many newspapers and magazines since the early 80s, he has published over 50 graphic novels and has written for theater, film and TV. He is also the lead guitarist of the rock band “Esteban Light”.

In his comic books and strips he explores relationships, friends and life.

He has also made a series of videos called “Trocitos de mi vida” (Little moments of my life).

We show one of the works in this series, “Desde mis ventanas” (From my windows), which reveals some of the hidden moments in his neighbourhood.

Visitors have also the opportunity to view two of his books:

“Tyrex”: An offbeat tale with wonderful character-driven humor.

“The Pee Family’s Cemetery”: The illustrator Mauro Entrialgo always has a sketchbook with him where every idea big or little ends up. As one can imagine he has plenty of them, and they are often are the starting point for his comics and other projects. For the first time one of these sketchbooks has been printed. Its title “The Pee Family’s Cemetery” is a reference to a cemetery that Entrialgo visited in the north of Spain.

<http://www.mauroentrialgo.com/>

<http://vimeo.com/channels/trocitos>



uh513

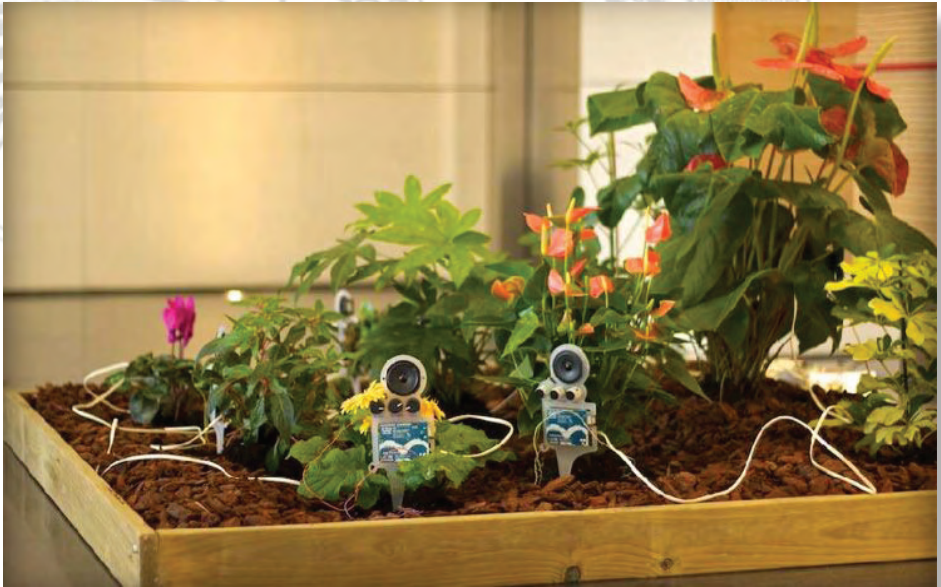
uh513 is María Castellanos (Gijón, Spain 1985) and Alberto Valverde (Madrid, Spain 1967). Both are artists and researchers at the University of Vigo.

“Clorofila 3.0” (Chlorophyll 3.0) investigates electrical impulses issued by plants as they respond to changes in their external environment. A program created specifically for the project captures voltage changes that reflect the state of the plant – its mood – translating them into sound in real time.

<http://uh513.com/>

<http://mariacastellanos.net/>

<http://a-valverde.net/>





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