

# Galeria Estrany-de la Mota

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## Bestué/Vives. Acciones en el cuerpo

Opening: Friday, November 24th 2005, 19.00 p.m.

Exhibition: 24.11.2006 – 13.01.2007. Tuesday to Saturdays from 10.30 a.m. to 1.30 p.m. and 4.30 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.

In their first individual exhibition in the gallery, Bestué/Vives present this latest project with a video that includes this function, as well as photographs, drawings and objects of the actions. Martí Manen chatted with them about their work and the result is the following interview, which is published in this month's edition of *A-Desk* magazine ([www.a-desk.org](http://www.a-desk.org)). It discloses some of the key issues in their work.

Martí Manen: From your work in common I find it interesting to point out its probing nature, the fact that you are constantly willing to test new assets, see how they work out and integrate them into your discourse. I think you present different actions which happen at different levels as well. Somehow, actions and micro installations which have very distant origins appear at the same level. Is there any kind of hierarchy among them?

David Bestué: I think there is definitely a hierarchy. There are actions we like and actions we don't like –we are aware there are "bad" actions. When we conceive the actions, what we consider is intensity. We think about ups and downs in intensity.

Marc Vives: That's right, but I think the question is about origin and hierarchy, if they are related or not. The fact is there are artistic actions, there are popular actions and so on. Or this action everybody is going to get it, this action will only be understood by people in the art world, this is an intellectual action, this is an action to compensate...

David Bestué: I do not think we work following those hierarchies. Those are only referents, they do not impose a hierarchy. When I said there was a hierarchy among actions I meant as individual realities, as in a cellular pattern.

Marc Vives: What it is true is that we always take a paradigmatic action as a starting point. There is always something which enables us to articulate the whole thing and from which the rest unfolds.

David Bestué: There might be an internal hierarchy, on a subjective level, but what we are really interested in is getting the actions to conform a story, a narrative structure. So, in this light, there may be no hierarchy, because all actions get the same treatment and are equally interrelated.

Marc Vives: It's obvious that in life there are things you like more than others. So the same applies to people in relation to our work. Their likes and dislikes may not coincide with ours. Our subjectivity is not visible. People choose what they like best and that has nothing to do with what we like best. And if we are talking about a hierarchy based on subject matters or the typology of actions, I do not think there is any kind of hierarchy whatsoever.

Martí Manen: Working with episodes gives you the chance of freeing every small action from the weight of Art History. These episodes almost look like exercises with which you can freely experiment but,

at the same time, it is obvious you take control of the situation. To what extent can we say there is probing and experimenting in your work and to what extent it is about following a guideline?

Marc Vives: I think there is not that much control in our work. Although it is clearly intended.

David Bestué: When we think about episodes we can gather information. So we make all of these lists on what has already been done concerning each subject, not only on an artistic level but on any level. We try to cover all fields, track it all, and put it all down. At least, in relation to a given moment in History. For instance, with *Acciones en el Cuerpo* we were thinking about the latest examples of body usage in art, about what has influenced them and a whole lot of other things. And, at the same time, we were thinking about the body in its multiple aspects, so all of this gets mixed in the end and becomes an entity in itself.

Marc Vives: I think the question can be framed on an artistic level, in the sense of freeing things from the weight of History, or Art History. Well, it is not something we have under absolute control; we do have control over our referents, but we consider them to be dynamic, not static, so we do not take a still picture of a specific moment in History. What we do is insert new references in between all the time.

David Bestué: Yes, there is also tension at that stage because we not only work with referents, it would be too simple to do that.

Marc Vives: Yes, they have a starting point. But aiming at reconstructing all the starting points makes no sense.

Martí Manen: Your relationship with the audience seems very interesting to me. In *Acciones en Mataró* there was a direct contact with them, not blocked by the wall Contemporary Art. It was some times a contact between yourselves and them while performing the actions, some other times contact was made through what was left of those actions, and later on it was through the book. In *Acciones en casa*, the audience is on the other side of the screen watching a filmed performance presented as a narrative structure. In *Acciones en el cuerpo*, you perform on stage. The way I see it, your work somehow aims at analysing your relationship with the audience, besides questioning some of the limits of the performance or the installation. Do you think the audience's reaction to a given action onstage is important? Or is the action just an element in the context of the whole work and the audience comes later?

Marc Vives: I think that there are different realities at different levels. *Acciones en casa* was presented directly as a film, so the contact with the audience has always been this way.

David Bestué: This question could be answered in a very naïf way, saying that everything we do, we do it thinking about the audience. And that you choose your referents thinking about the audience as well. So you are playing with an idea you have of the audience. An audience that, within some limits, you can imagine what it's like. But what I like playing with is the different formats that allow us another kind of contact with the audience.

Marc Vives: I think contact with the audience is something that always comes later. What you think about is the action in Mataró or the action in the book about Mataró.

David Bestué: The audience's reaction is very different in each case. There is no general rule. For instance, in Mataró the context was unique, and so the moment was unique and that was very important.

Marc Vives: And later we realised that it was even more important to make the book.

David Bestué: Because we are talking about the audience at two or three different levels. There is the audience that watches the performance on the spot and the audience that gets it later on.

Marc Vives: We did realise that the audience that watched live in Mataró was not the "real" audience for actions.

David Bestué: We liked the book very much as a format to spread our work, which allowed us to capture it. But the actions took place in their moments.

Marc Vives: We performed the actions and documented it. Later on, with the book, they have become something "we had". Otherwise, we would not have made a part two at home and on video.

David Bestué: I think that, more than a book, which is a good format, what we aimed at was to keep a picture of a given action. This might not have captured all the meaning involved, but I liked the idea of a photographic record of our performance. In the case of the second performance, it was a video record and in the third case, a "body record".

Marc Vives: But the audience, in all of those cases, is what comes after. You do have them in mind when you create, but they actually come later.

Martí Manen: Developing a piece of work based on several processes usually entails a problem to present it. Action is a format related to time, so its presentation in an exhibition, even when based on space, is really difficult. But you do solve this problem by introducing other formats in your actions. Do you still want them to be referred to as "actions", or the label is not that important?

David Bestué: To me it is really important to keep calling them "actions". If you replace action by gesture, you get this idea of something you do, and it is absolutely related to time, in the sense that it is ephemeral. I am interested in working with the ephemeral as a format. With what is something and then it's nothing. I do not think it's less important. I like doing something that suddenly turns into nothing. I am interested in that kind of actions. We have always tried not to get a result, but it hasn't always turned out that way.

Marc Vives: That is because the actions function within certain structures. They work alright within the formats we have chosen. I believe the idea of action can have a lot of meanings. I like using the word, since I am wide aware of its referents and the meanings it involves.

David Bestué: Action is a very simple word with a clear meaning, although it has its connotations.

Martí Manen: I believe your approach to the audience arises from the connection that may be established when something conceived from a micro reality is offered. Things happen one after the other, so that to refer to them, we talk about specific moments. Bauman talks about the social need of unique moments, about the emotional value of the what's new, the need of continuous experiencing. However, the experiencing you offer is far from the showbiz culture. Still, do you think there might be some sort of connection between the very small actions (willing to be ordinary and up close) and Bauman's supra structural view of the system?

David Bestué: The importance we give to very small things answers that question. There is indeed a vital conscience in that.

Marc Vives: Because that way you start out from a context.

David Bestué: And even more than that. When we started in Mataró, we did talk quite a lot about the situationists, for instance. Later on, that changed.

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