



Specials > FONS ÀUDIO

The *Specials* podcasts focus on projects by artists and curators who have some kind of connection to the Museum's programming and the MACBA Collection. Conceived as an audiovisual project, FONS ÀUDIO is a documentary series in which artists from the MACBA Collection talk about their work.

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Produced by Lucrecia Dalt. Interview and documentation: Dolores Acebal.

# FONS ÀUDIO #24

## Antoni Abad

Antoni Abad (Lleida, 1956) is a multidisciplinary artist who investigates the creative and sociological possibilities of new technologies in a career that has led him from the individual to the collective, exploring the emotional interstices of the human condition and their formal and social scope.

In FONS ÀUDIO #24 Abad charts a course that begins with his early sculptural works and ends with his current community-based mobile communication projects, by way of his video installations and net.art. And he does so by discussing his works from the MACBA Collection.

### 01. Summary

Antoni Abad grew up in a creative family – his mother is a poet and his father was a sculptor – and after earning a degree in Art History from the University of Barcelona in 1979, he embarked on his own career as a sculptor. He soon moved on from big blocks of 'soft' materials such as foam rubber to industrial-style mobile structures made out of Mecalux (industrial metal shelving systems). In both cases, he adopted a minimalist aesthetic that emphasises the visualisation of the creative process and dynamic shapes that suggest infinite possible combinations. Accordingly, these works are often accompanied by photographic sequences that document the different stages of production. These works also sparked the artist's interest in systems of measurement: Abad obsessively measures the reality around him in a desperate attempt to apprehend it.

In 1993 he travelled to Canada to take part in the Nomad Project artists residency at The Banff Centre for the Arts, an experience that turned out to be a turning point in his career. Abad arrived a sculptor, and returned a video artist. In the Rocky Mountains he discovered the creative potential of video and projections in space, and also of computers and the Internet. 'When I returned to Barcelona my suitcase no longer contained the tools of a sculptor, just video tapes and my first e-mail address,' he recalls.

His somewhat Kafkaesque chameleonic video projections express the fragility of human beings in an existential but also playful and sensual tone. They include works like *Últimos deseos* (1995), the first version of *Sisyphus* (1995) and his 'rat trilogy': *Errata* (1996), *Natural Sciences* (1997) and *Love Story* (1998). These video installations later evolved into net.art, continuing a process of dematerialisation that crystallised in his network of virtual colonies of flies that parasite the net: *Ego* (1999) and *Z* (1999-2003). Abad is also the author of the first piece of net.art ever sold in Spain, *1,000,000* (1999).

Nonetheless, he reached a point where he felt the need to connect all this technological know-how with a social reality that transcends the boundaries of the art world. And so he began working on his community mobile publishing projects, intended to give voice to groups that are usually ignored or discriminated by the mainstream media. The immediacy and autonomy of new-generation mobile phones make them an effective tool for online broadcasting, in first person, of issues that participants initially discuss in group assemblies. In these works, the artist plays the role of an instigator or catalyst of narratives that are soon freely expressed by the protagonists themselves in their own voices. Since 2004, the following projects are hosted on *megafone.net*: sitio\*TAXI, México DF 2004; canal\*GITANO, Lleida 2005; BARCELONA\*accessible, Barcelona 2006; and canal\*MOTOBOY, São Paulo 2007.

Antoni Abad's work has been shown at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (1997); Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires (1999); New Museum, New York (2001); Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin (2002) and MACBA (1996, 2003 and 2014).



[Antoni Abad during the interview. Gemma Planell/MACBA, 2013]

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## 02. Timeline

- 00:26 From sculpture to video projections
- 02:06 *Sense títol (Creu esclava)*, 1990. Foam rubber and Mecalux sculptures
- 04:20 Measurements: tape measures, hand spans, feet and inches
- 07:12 *Últimos deseos*, 1995. The temptation of allowing oneself to fall
- 10:23 *Natural Sciences*, 1997. A colony of rats in the museum
- 13:48 *Sisyphus*, 1995 and 1996. Online art
- 17:10 *Z*, 1999-2003. Flies parasite the Web
- 19:55 Mobiles, social networks and activism
- 22:03 Trip to Sao Paolo: 'motoboy's'
- 23:47 Trip to México City: taxi drivers
- 25:17 The artist as catalyst: displaced authorship
- 27:05 Documentary installations or expanded documentaries
- 28:15 Mexico City. Taxi drivers, 2004
- 29:50 *canal\*GITANO*. Young gypsies in Lleida, 2005
- 32:36 *Inaccessible Barcelona*, 2006
- 37:08 Concluding thoughts

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## 03. Works by Antoni Abad in the MACBA Collection

*Sense títol* (Creu esclava), 1990  
MACBA Collection

*Natural Sciences*, 1997  
MACBA Collection. MACBA Foundation

*sítio\*TAXI*, 2004  
MACBA Collection. MACBA Consortium

*canal\*GITANO*, 2005  
MACBA Collection. MACBA Consortium

*BARCELONA\*accessible*, 2006  
MACBA Collection. MACBA Consortium

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## 04. Related links

Megafone  
[www.megafone.net](http://www.megafone.net)

An Interview with Antoni Abad  
[www.a-desk.org/spip/spip.php?article1604](http://www.a-desk.org/spip/spip.php?article1604)

Antoni Abad at Hamaca  
[www.hamacaonline.net/autor.php?pos=1](http://www.hamacaonline.net/autor.php?pos=1)

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## 05. Credits

Produced by Lucrecia Dalt. Voice: Lucrecia Dalt and Roc Jiménez de Cisneros.  
Documentation and interview: Dolores Acebal. Recorded with Beyerdynamic MC 930, a Tascam DR-100 recorder and edited with Ableton Live.

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