



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.

PDF Contents:

- 01. Summary
- 02. Related links
- 03. Timeline
- 04. Credits
- 05. License

Produced by André Chêdas. Interview and documentation: Anna Ramos.

FONS ÀUDIO #39

Iván Argote

Iván Argote is a multifaceted artist who uses media such as video, photography, sculpture, performance, and installation to question the notion of heritage, and tests the events that govern our social, political, and private contexts. In FONS ÀUDIO #39 Iván talks about the family as a small social unit, about pranks or 'pilatunas' and caresses, about a change of scale as a critical tool, and about the archaeological remains that we carry around within us.

01. Summary

Iván Argote's work repeatedly brings us up against the deconstruction of the concept of public space, of personal interaction, and of our strange social habits. Multifaceted, conceptual and non-conformist, Argote questions our heritage and our way of looking at the events that dictate our social, political, and private contexts.

Through a variety of media ranging from video and photography to sculpture, performance, and installation, Argote explores the city as a site of transformation. "Many of my works are about living in the city and living with other people," he says, "I do feel it is pretentious to look at art as something separate from real life."

Although he initially intended to study philosophy, Iván was seduced by the permeability and immediacy of the image as a vehicle for ideas, and by iconoclasm as a tool for generating subjectivity. His simple and transgressive gestures and his 'pilatunas' or pranks, subvert symbols. Grand imperial lions turned into little meme kittens (*Blind Kittens*, 2014), impotent, toppled monuments (*Hangover and Ecstasy*, 2014; *Turistas*, 2013), a glorified pigeon (*The pigeon*, 2010), responses to declarations of love from a stranger (*Untitled*, 2010-2012) and two Mondrians ruined on After Effects (*Retouch*, 2008), are some of the subtle disruptions to the established order through which Argote reflects on how we construct certainty.

The MACBA Collection includes four examples of Argote's multifaceted oeuvre. *Activissime* (2011-2013) is an installation that documents the workshop for children aged four to nine that Argote ran in summer 2011 and 2012 at the MAC/VAL Museum in France. Inspired by his parents activism and educational activities in Columbia in the seventies, Iván came up with a workshop in which the children organised protests, formulating critical aspects linked to their own lives ("sleep more to be less tired") and producing tools for demonstrating in public spaces. A set of slides show the posters, megaphones, and banners, as well as a transcription of a phone conversation in which the artist explains the project to his mother, in a characteristic gesture: an intimate circle in a universal reflection. In *Activissime*, Argote uses the same critical device as the film on revolutionary groups in Bogotá in the seventies and eighties that he uses in *La Estrategia* (2012) and as the reflection on hierarchy and power in *Reddish Blue* (2014).

The overlapping of the private and public sphere also runs through *Histoire de l'Humanité* (2011), a Super 8 film in which Argote's family stages the perfect synecdoche: a selection of important moments in the history of mankind, in the form of choreographed allegories and games. The video is divided into eight chapters – "Homo Sapiens", "The First Agricultural Societies", "First Civilisations", "Wars", "Love & Hate". "Colonization and Post Colonization", "Nation States", and "Uncertain Future" – and plays with the hope of making the most of an afternoon in a Bogotá by producing a collaborative home movie, an activity that appears familiar and universal, but was actually not part of Argote's childhood.

Another park – this time Tuileries Garden in Paris – is the setting for the pair of



[With Iván Argote a Saturday morning at 8 am. What did you expect? Photo: Gemma Planell]

lovers who are the protagonists of *Caress* (2012), a video in which the shadow of the artist-ghost's intruding hand practices tender gestures on the couple, and explores anonymity and affect as conceptual strategies.

Meanwhile, *Who has not, at one point or another, played with thoughts of his ancestors, with the prehistory of his flesh and blood?* (2013), is based on a quote from Jorge Luís Borges. In 1934, the magazine *Crisol* accused the writer of concealing his Sephardic origins, an accusation that Borges answered with a text published in *Megáfono*, from which Argote borrowed the title of this work. He translated the words into Morse code using eighty-eight light bulbs connected in a garland of cables that evoke a village festival and the feeling of loneliness in public space, and at the same time light up their surroundings.

02. Timeline

00:03 'Pilatus' and pranks

01:35 *Retouch*

08:53 The family, a small social unit

10:31 *Historia de la Humanidad* (The History of Humanity) and other changes of scale

14:02 *Activissime*

21:26 A critique of authority

23:14 *Caricia* (Caress)

24:42 *¿Quién no jugó a los antepasados alguna vez?* (Who has not, at one point or another, played with thoughts of his ancestors?)

29:38 A decolonial perspective

03. Related links

Iván Argote
www.ivanargote.com

Iván Argote in Galería Perrotin
www.perrotin.com/artiste-ivan_Argote-84.html

Historia de la Humanidad
ivanargote.com/selected-projects/article/history-of-humanity

Activissime
ivanargote.com/selected-projects/article/activisimo-bcn

Untitled (NY), 2011
vimeo.com/58585299

Podcast with Iván Argote
esnorquel.es/13ivan-argote

Retouch, 2008
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q-JVFeHaYsl

04. Credits

Produced by André Chêdas. Voice: Lucrecia Dalt. Documentation and interview: Anna Ramos. Recorded with Beyerdynamic MC 930, a Tascam DR-100 recorder and edited with Ableton.

05. License

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