



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 and license

Produced by André Chêdas. Interview and documentation: Dolores Acebal.

FONS ÀUDIO #42

Carlos Garaicoa

Carlos Garaicoa works with a wide range of artistic disciplines to devise his narratives of the contemporary city. Over the years, photographs, interventions, texts, videos, drawings, sculptures, architectural models, and installations have built up a visual and conceptual body of work with the city as backdrop. Garaicoa's city is conceived as a symbolic space of political, social, and emotional interactions that he attempts to disclose, in order to conquer new fields of freedom. In FONS AUDIO #42 Carlos Garaicoa talks about his education in Cuba, about the pressing need to move beyond post-colonial narratives, about his cultural activism, and about *Yo no quiero ver más a mis vecinos* (I Don't Want to See My Neighbours Any More), which forms part of the MACBA Collection.

01. Summary

Carlos Garaicoa (Havana, 1967) studied thermodynamics at the Instituto Técnico Hermanos Gómez and painting at the Instituto Superior de Arte, both in Havana. Even so, he believes that literature, writing, and the word is the origin of his interest in art. Literature and photography were a strong presence in his life since childhood, and his creative interests were also shaped by frequenting the Havana biennial and the city's intellectual and bohemian scenes.

In the late eighties and early nineties, a strong conceptual art movement emerged in Cuba and tried to define new spaces for art, beyond the confines of galleries and museums. Happenings and performances became ideal strategies for the articulation of a shared social, political, and relational space, outside of art markets and international biennials. Artists who were active at this time include Lázaro Saavedra, Nilo Castillo, Grupo Puré, the Arte Calle group, Abdel Hernández and Tania Bruguera.

But those years were also the time of the "Special Period in Time of Peace" in Cuba. Following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the subsequent collapse of the European communist bloc, the USA began an economic embargo that plunged Cuba into one of the most severe crises in its history.

Against this backdrop, Carlos Garaicoa began to use photography, video, drawing, and words to document his interventions in Old Havana. Worn down by the passing of time and the lack of conservation, the old city radiated a poetics of the ruin that drew attention to the contradictions of the socialist system. Garaicoa recovered those devastated landscapes and injected new, current meanings into them. His architectural drawings are fictitious sketches of another possible city, hand-drawn utopian fictions that clash with the documentary evidence of photographs, and with the critical power of strongly ironic language (in the titles and texts). *House of Diamonds* (1992), *Rivoli, or the Place where Blood Flows* (1993-1995), and *On those tireless cariatides that daily sustain our present* (1994-1995) are some of his works from this period.

From 1998 to 2001, Garaicoa worked on creating an artistic representation of the city, combining architecture with sculpture and video-installation. These were the years of his earliest fragile architectures or models, made out of materials such as sugar, glass, wax from melted candles, and ricepaper. *New architectures or a rare insistence on understanding the night* (2000) and *Now Let's Play at Disappearing* (2001) are two of these works. During this time, Garaicoa began to attend international biennials, galleries, and museums.

In 2002 he participated in Documenta 11 in Kassel. To produce the piece that he would present there, *Campus or the Babel of Knowledge* (2002-2004), Garaicoa set up a studio in Havana, where he implemented new work methodologies in collaboration with architects, designers, and model makers, always on the lookout for new ways of thinking about and representing urban space. His focus was no longer just on Havana: the representational object had



[With Carlos Garaicoa in his studio. Photo: Dolores Acebal]

expanded, given that the artist spent years visiting and living in cities like New York, Berlin, Bogota, Sao Paolo, and Paris.

In 2006, Garaicoa moved to Madrid and opened a studio there, without closing the original one in Havana. The collaborative dynamics were thus activated on both sides of the Atlantic, influencing his creative work and his work as a cultural activist. The Cuban studio was baptised *Artista x Artista* and became a platform for sharing and dissemination for Cuban artists. Meanwhile, Estudio Garaicoa in the neighbourhood of Malasaña in Madrid hosts and promotes a prolific series of exhibitions and cultural activities.

In 2014 and 2015 two parallel exhibitions – *Apparent Order (Poetic-Political)* at the Botín Foundation in Santander, and *Unfinished Order (Political-Poetic)* at CA2M in Madrid – offered an interesting overview of Garaicoa's artistic career: that of a socially committed *flânerie* whose critical-poetic perspective offers an insight into the political structures of our cities, and articulates new spaces for citizen freedom and participation.

02. Timeline

- 01:14** Yo no quiero ver más a mis vecinos" (2006)
- 08:16** Colonialism, postcolonialism, clichés
- 24:14** Architecture, sculpture, painting
- 32:19** Cultural activism/curating

03. Related links

Carlos Garaicoa web page
www.carlosgaraicoa.com

Artista X Artista
artistaxartista.org

Carlos Garaicoa at the Galería Elba Benítez
www.elbabenitez.com/artistas/carlos-garaicoa/

Carlos Garaicoa at the Galleria Continua
www.galleriacontinua.com/artist/6/artpieces

Carlos Garaicoa at the Galería Habana
www.galeriahabana.com/artista_obras.php?id=1

Carlos Garaicoa. Orden inconcluso, exposición at CA2M, Madrid (2015)
www.ca2m.org/es/historico/item/5-carlos-garaicoa

Orden Aparente (poético-político), exhibition in La Fundación Botín, Madrid (2014-2015)
www.fundacionbotin.org/contenido-de-una-exposicion/exposicion-orden-aparente-poetico-politico-del-artista-cubano-carlos-garaicoa.html

Interview by Fernando Castro Flórez to Carlos Garaicoa for El Taller del Matadero
blog.mataderomadrid.org/?p=861

04. Credits and license

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

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