

Galería Elba Benítez



Hospital de cartón

Primož Bizjak – Carlos Bunga

September – November 2020

Primož Bizjak (1976, Slovenia) and Carlos Bunga (1976, Portugal) share an interest in architecture and the way it deteriorates over time. This exhibition — the first be based on the *Hospital de cartón* (Cardboard Hospital) (Vall Fosca, 1912) — is also the first artistic collaboration between these two artists.

The exhibition is the final phase of a project that began in the spring of 2019, after numerous unsuccessful attempts at gaining access to the building, followed by plans as to how to proceed with the project even under the circumstances, and ultimately the thrilling news that permission had finally been granted to visit the site. The project is structured as a collaborative effort between the two artists, and draws on the desire of each artist to find in the work of the other a complement to his own personal vision. The collaborative effort is thus approached in a Dadaist spirit, placing the emphasis not on the final work in and of itself, but rather on the act of having created it and of having collaborated with someone else as a way of arriving at a new vision of the world. To collaborate is to appropriate something in order to make it grow together.

Today, to consider this type of architecture — prefabricated, modular, low-cost, emergency-based and ephemeral yet still existing — is anachronistic, a voyage to the past in real time; and to document it, the desire to retain it outside of the passage of time, even as it is disappearing. Photographing analogically, Bizjak captures spaces of time; he dissects the architectural ruin with his photographs, showing us the skeleton, the excellent construction and the modular structure that has fallen into disuse and has now entered into a dialog with the natural environment that has begun to penetrate it. His practice is time-consuming; when framing each photograph, he has to be certain that it contains everything he aims for. Reviewing shots is not an option, and there is scarcely time to repeat them. Meanwhile, Bunga records with his cellphone. He pores over surfaces, utterly unconcerned about the quality of the image and establishing analogies between the Hospital and his own work: the layers of paint that in all likelihood correspond to different uses in the past, the architecture that is like a third skin (body — clothing — dwelling), the absence of patients. This micro-vision focuses on the epidermis, on those bodies that required urgent care, the more than 4,000 workers who migrated from the city to the country, from the center to the periphery, completely altering the natural landscape as they built Spain's second-largest hydro-electric power plant in order to supply the city of Barcelona with electricity.

Today the Hospital is an unwell organism, no more than skin and bones. It was originally a Doecker prefabricated model, consisting of walls of cardboard and felt and a wood structure. This model was patented at the end of the 19th century and distributed commercially around almost the entire the world by the German company (Danish in origin) of Christoph & Unmack, and designed for use in war, pandemics, religious missions, concentration camps and colonial settlements. The latter served as laboratories for modern architecture, as can be seen in the fact that the architect Konrad Wachsmann, after having been employed by the German firm, emigrated to New York where he worked with Walter Gropius on the Packaged House/General Panel System (1940).

The post-production phase of *Hospital de cartón* coincided with the arrival of the current pandemic, forcing both artists to work from their homes. As the Hospital de carton resisted collapse, new prefabricated field hospitals were being installed in Wuhan, China in fewer than ten days each. Even though they are separated by an entire century and thousands of kilometers, both constructions share the same characteristics: quick installation, excellent ventilation and a high degree of disinfection, all with the same goal: to save lives.

Ainhoa González
(Project curator)

The photography of **Primož Bizjak** (1976, Slovenia) explores the history of places, their limits and symbolic monuments as a reflection of our own society. Bizjak succeeds in creating photographs of such sublime beauty that they seem almost artificial. The framing of the photographs is key to his work, often requiring him to take risks by working from great heights or from positions of restricted access.

His work has been exhibited internationally in group shows in Spain, Slovenia, Croatia and Italy, where he participated in the 54th La Biennale di Venezia (2011) and at *Isola Mondo*, a collateral exhibition during the 53rd La Biennale di Venezia (2009). Recent solo shows include *Alpi Apuane* en Kulturni dom Nova Gorica (2020), *Mudanzas y reflejos* en Tasman Projects (Madrid, 2016), *Primož Bizjak: The Sava, the Danube, and the Drina* en el Museum of Contemporary Art Metelkova (Ljubljana, 2015), *Dos miradas sobre Venecia* at the Instituto Italiano de Cultura de Madrid (2013); and *Second chance – Elbasan*, at the Torre di Porta Nuova in the Arsenale of Venice (2012).

The work of **Carlos Bunga** (1976, Porto) combines an intense materiality with an evocation of psychic states. His sculptural and pictorial structures approach architecture as both a corporeal and a mental state. In his cycles of construction and transformation, he explores states of despoilment and nomadism; nature as a spatial experience; and the creative and symbolic potential of ruins.

Bunga has participated in the Chicago Architecture Biennial (2015), the 29th Bienal de São Paulo (2010) and Manifesta 5 (San Sebastian, 2004). He has had solo shows in numerous museums, such as the Whitechapel Gallery (London, 2020), MOCA Toronto (2020), MAAT – Museu de Arte, Arquitetura e Tecnologia (Lisbon, 2019), MOCAD Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (2018), MACBA – Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (2015), Museum Haus Konstruktiv (Zurich, 2015), MUAC - Museo Universitario de Arte Contemporáneo (Mexico D.F., 2013), Museo Serralves (Porto, 2012), Hammer Museum (Los Angeles, 2011) and the Pinacoteca de São Paulo (2010). He will exhibit at the Vienna Secession in 2021.

Ainhoa González (1980, Barcelona) has a degree in Art History and a Master's in Museology and Cultural Heritage Management from the Universidad de Barcelona. She is currently the studio manager for artist Carlos Bunga, contributor to the project *Archivo de Archivos* of artist Antoni Mundadas, as well as a professor at the Facultad de Humanidades of the Universidad Internacional de Catalunya (UIC) since 2015. She worked for twelve years in the Collection Department of MACBA (Barcelona), the last seven as Adjunct Curator of the Collection. She has worked for the CIMAM - International Committee for Museums and Collections of Modern Art and is currently a contributor to the research group "Los cambios en el modelo de gestión y consumo de la cultura post-COVID-19 en el ámbito iberoamericano. De la presencialidad a la digitalización" (Changes in the management and consumption model of post-COVID-19 culture in the Ibero-American context. From in-person to digitization) of the UIC.

Hospital de cartón is the first collaboration between the artists Primož Bizjak and Carlos Bunga, which will open on September 10th, 2020 within the framework of Apertura Madrid Gallery Weekend, organized by Arte_Madrid. The exhibition can be seen until the beginning of November.



Image: Primož Bizjak, *Hospital de cartón n5, Capdella-Valle de Fosca, España, 2019*

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