

# the goma

Javier Arce

*Doblar la tierra*

25/05/2017 - 15/07/2017

Javier Arce will be visiting Madrid for his exhibition *Doblar la tierra*, a statement from an ongoing project that coincides with a vital experience of opening up —and not of isolation as one might expect — based on a new way of life and of working. His *cabaña pasiega*, the typical house-cum-barn of the mountains in Cantabria, has provided him an escape from a hyper-surveillance society and a permanent state of crisis. It proffers a fertile ground to instigate new experiences, to accumulate time and to dodge the ambush laid by the spectacle and the ephemeral, yet without taking refuge in a romantic conception of landscape and removed from any anchorite ideal. Arce does not turn his back on the city, well aware that interaction is both necessary and fruitful; the ambivalence of the rural dwelling, made to the measure of the body, proportions a sense of corporality, a source of empathy and solidarity.

A large part of the wealth of this exhibition lies in interaction and appropriation. Three poles produced by the artist Belén and covered with rags by contemporary Spanish painters, serve as supports for Javier's creations charged with references to collaboration: a glass of milk covered with a serviette designed by Louise Lawler for a group show at Dia Beacon, a book by the documentary photographer Jean Mohr with texts by John Berger reconverted into a collage, or an apparently slowed-down video in which Arce and Maureen Tsakiris appropriate an illustration from the book *Guide to Easy Living* by the US designer Russel Wright and his wife, Mary Small Einstein. These works contain allusions to rural life but also to current behaviour in systems of production and diffusion of contemporary art.

The works on view in the exhibition are not immediately available resources nor do they fall back on the subterfuge of the found object. On the contrary, they are grounded in their understanding and their use. This constant rubbing up against bodies is what connects with drawing, Javier's most recognised practice. In his compositions, the range of greys avoids the instant impact of the image. To execute it, Arce uses the ashes from the fire he heats himself with, lightly touching the paper and creating slow images. Time is the measure of the work he produces. This has always been Javier's goal, as the critic and curator Mónica Carballas says: "conferring time to an image that had lost it."

A few days ago I called Javier to ask him if he really wanted to exhibit the ground plan of filmmaker Derek Jarman's cabin that he reproduced with charcoal sticks. I was worried because he had not taken them to his recent exhibition in the USA; a few months previously some spiders who lived in the fragile sculpture had woven other plans in the space. Had this subverted the original idea of the work? Was Javier simply respecting the natural order? When I asked him "Will you bring the sculpture to Madrid?" he replied "I don't know". Later, I clearly remembered that when I discovered the spider's web on the piece in his studio in Esles, Javier said: "They aren't there anymore, and I don't know if they will come back." So, it is not a question of a problem of emplacement, of removing the creature from its context. Now I understand that the real agent is time: I could tell Javier to immediately package the work if the spiders haven't come back, but I believe that it is a time that belongs only to the work itself.

Javier Arce (Santander, 1973) has a degree in Engraving from the Escuela de Artes Aplicadas in Oviedo and his Honors Degree in Fine Art at the Basque Country University. He received his Masters in Sculpture from the Wimbledon School of Fine Art. He was granted with The International Studio and Curatorial Program in New York in 2008 and by Marcelino Botín Foundation in 2006. He has exhibited in CAB, Burgos; Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb; MUSAC, Leon; CA2M in Móstoles, Madrid; ARTIUM, Vitoria, Espai 13 at Miró Foundation in Barcelona and Espai Quatre, Casal Solleric, Majorca. His work is included in numerous collections such as Caja Madrid, Marcelino Botín Foundation, ARTIUM Museum, the Coca-Cola Foundation, Santander Museum of Fine Arts, CAB, MUSAC, Fundación El Monte, La Caixa Foundation, IVAM, or DKV Collection.