



Unknown Fields Division
Unravelled 2017 video

AS I LEFT CATALONIA BY ROAD HOURS BEFORE THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE ON FRIDAY, THE SPANISH BORDER HAD A HEAVILY ARMED ROADBLOCK MANNED BY MASKED GUARDIA CIVIL, SOMETHING I HAVE ONLY EVER SEEN IN RURAL MEXICO.

vast amounts of sand onto new land. The public is encouraged to bid for sand for themselves on alibaba.com.

Unknown Fields Division, known for its participatory research expeditions to various parts of the planet such as Chernobyl, Baikonur and the Congolese mines, has one of the more ambitious commissions in 'Unravelled', a video shot in Bangladesh above murky red water piped into the gallery. Scenes concerning the production of fashion garments, factories, milling and a ship-breaking yard are inhabited by a fashion model walking through them slowly while draped in a gold-threaded garment made here. Ironically, the only way the artists could get permission to make this work was by claiming that they were doing a real fashion shoot.

While a visually stunning image, one could not help thinking that the model was one of the few non-white participants in the exhibition and that perhaps the curators might have profited by inviting some artists from African, Latin American and indeed indigenous cultures to participate in an exhibition aimed at the inhabitants of the earth in 2100. Maybe in its tour (it comes to FACT in Liverpool in early 2019) this will be addressed.

The non-human does feature, however, in Rimini Protocol's participatory theatre experience 'Win > < Win'. As Robinson says: 'You exist like jellyfish in the ocean: Earth washes in and out of you with every breath you take. So when you talk about your planet, you're talking

about your body. And remember: a fever can kill you.' In this installation experience, jellyfish are the main protagonists and in a visual *détournement* the human participants are asked whether the gelatinous zooplankton have a better chance of survival on the planet than they do. The jellyfish win, of course.

Artist and engineer Natalie Jeremijenko is making a very ambitious work in installing her 'Environmental Health Clinic', a 'centre for research, education and practice to improve our quality of life in the city by means of collaboration with our non-human neighbours: insect citizens, plant citizens and microscopic citizens', which was motivated by a group of dying orange trees near the building. She entered the immediate drama around independence in an irreverent self-proclamation as 'ex-Queen of Catalonia':

'Whether you wave a Catalanian flag or a Spanish flag you have the same bureaucratic systems. What the issue is, is not the celebration of democracy or the republic or the political clichés, but energy independence. The environment is not part of the mainstream discourse around independence. The goals that I have here at the Environmental Health Clinic include 200 flywheels generating the same amount of energy as the three nuclear power stations in Barcelona – which I would like to close down. I have appointed myself to be ex-Queen because it's the soft power – the first ladies – the Michelle Obamas, the Jackie Os that are gagged. It's absurd that Spain would pull out their King as

a talking bust – to somehow validate Spain. He's in fact an ex-King – it's not a legitimate political form. So I've changed my name to Natalonia. Who gets to be King or Queen by birth anyway? I'm a mongrel with junk DNA descended from Ukrainian and Irish refugees. It's a proclamation, not a performance. I have a little crown ...'

Meanwhile, the situation in Barcelona was becoming tenser every day. Andy Gracie, a British artist residing in Barcelona, said to me that in these situations – a recent example being the former Yugoslavia – it usually ended up with neighbours shooting at each other. However, the Independistas remain, for the moment, determinedly pacifist. As I left Catalonia by road hours before the declaration of independence on Friday, the Spanish border had a heavily armed roadblock manned by masked *Guardia Civil*, something I have only ever seen in rural Mexico.

Ironically, it was two days later that Puidgemont and his cabinet took this same route to Marseille, that traditional escape route from occupied France (André Breton and many of the Surrealists escaped France this way). As I write, it seems that there will be a Catalan government-in-exile in Brussels. As for the citizens of 2100? De Vicente: 'We find ourselves three years before the Paris Agreement comes into effect: we can opt for a pact between generations, or we can wage war between generations. There is no third choice.' ■

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