



Joan Fontcuberta

Photographer, teacher, essayist, curator of exhibitions and historian

«The art market in Europe is now idle because the entire European economy is also in crisis»



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In Andorra, an exhibition of Joan Fontcuberta's «Gastropoda» has opened in one of the private galleries.

For more than four decades, Joan Fontcuberta (Barcelona, 1955) has developed an artistic work centered in the field of photography, deploying a plural activity as a teacher, essayist, curator of exhibitions and historian.

His creative and reflective output is in the critical perspective of language and focuses on the conflicts between nature, technology, photography, memory

and moments of truth. His projects, usually of an interdisciplinary nature, explore the narrative and documentary state of the image, parodying its authoritarian aspects.

He has been a professor at the Audiovisual Communication Studies of Pompeu Fabra University, at the Department of Visual & Environmental Studies at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts, United States, and Le Fresnoy/Studio National des Arts Contemporains, Turcoing, France.

He has held individual exhibitions of his work at centers such as MoMA (New York, 1988), M.I.T. (Cambridge, 1988), Musée Cantini (Marseille, 1990), Art

Institute (Chicago, 1990), IVAM (Valencia, 1992), MNAC (Barcelona, 1999), Museum of Fine Arts (Fukui, Japan), Palazzo delle Esposizioni (Rome, 2001), ARTIUM (Vitòria/Gazteiz, 2003), Australian Center of Photography (Sydney, 2007), Palau de la Virreina (Barcelona, 2008), MEP (Paris, 2014), and Science Museum (London, 2014).

Public collections have acquired his work and these include the Musée d'Art Moderne – Center Georges Pompidou, Paris; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Art Institute, Chicago; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; National Gallery of



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Art, Ottawa; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; MACBA, Barcelona, among others.

In 1994 the French Ministry of Culture awarded him Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. In 1998 the Ministry of Culture awarded him the National Photography Award; in 2011, the Generalitat de Catalunya awarded him the National Award for Culture in Plastic Arts, and the Ministry of Culture awarded him the National Essay Award. In 2013 he was awarded the Hasselblad International Prize, and in 2016 with the City of Barcelona Prize in Essay and Humanities. In 2020 he received the title of Doctor Honoris Causa from the Université Paris VIII.

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IRINA RYBALCHENKO



We talked to Joan about his exhibition.

– Why did you decide to become a photographer? What did you base this choice on?

– Many years ago, when I was a student trying to decide what to do about my future, I had an apparition of Saint Lucia, who told me «Joan, look for the light!» “How?” I asked. «Become a photographer,» she answered. And so I did.

– What does your art talk about? Please tell us about your «Gastropoda» exhibition in Andorra.

– This is an ongoing series called «Gastropoda». I let snails eat photographs or invitations to exhibitions illustrated with art reproductions. With their voracity, snails spoil the skin of the paper and leave the interior of the image in plain sight. The result is new creations with a great plasticity that ask us questions about the metabolism and physical substance of the image.

– What is the symbolism in your work?

– My work does not claim to be symbolic, but conceptual: it tries to explore aspects of contemporary visual culture. But this does not prevent it from often creating mysterious, poetic or evocative works.

– What do you think about the European art market in general?

– On the one hand, art is a laboratory of ideas; on the other hand, it is part of the cultural industries. The market belongs to this second aspect and understands works as commodities. In this sense, the same agents of the capitalist economy (advertising, marketing, etc.) control it. The art market in Europe is now idle because the entire European economy is also in crisis.

– What do you think are the current trends in contemporary art? What do you think about the evolution of art in general?

– Since <Marcel> Duchamp, the main strength of art consists in problematizing itself. I defend an experimental creation that perverts hegemonic values. Many artists work in this direction, sometimes without much recognition or commercial success, because the market tends to favor more decorative and less problematic works.



JOAN FONTCUBERTA

►► The snails spoil the skin of the paper and leave the interior of the image in plain sight.

– Do you believe in cryptoart? Do you know the world of cryptoart? Could you name some artists whose works interest you?

– I see it as an attempt to give guarantees to a collector interested in digital works. I'm skeptical, and I'm afraid that in the long run, it will happen like seasonal fashions, or worse, that it will be some kind of pyramid fraud. Anyway, I'm curious

about it and I'm looking forward to it.

– How do you usually sell your works? Would you like to participate in some other exhibitions?

– There are projects of mine that have a more installation nature, and then I need public space or museum premises. Others are more narrative and require the format of the artist's

book.

But I feel very comfortable in galleries, which tend to have a more dynamic operation than institutional equipment, which is much slower and cumbersome. I have a prolific body of work and am always open to considering new submission opportunities. Everything always depends on the proposal. ≡



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