

## SCREEN INSIDE CCCB 2019

### AURORA GASULL ALTISENT

From 1 August to 1 September

#### *PAY ATTENTION*

Aurora Gasull Altisent (Barcelona 1962) is the composer of the animation or “visual music” pieces which from 1 August are to light up the dark space between two doors in the CCCB’s Hall for a month. As a result the second “The Screen Inside” will shift visitor journeys in the centre’s exhibition halls away from the direct and always straight path to trace the gentle curve of a change in trajectory, attracted by the sensory aura which every lit screen emits until it reaches us. Perhaps in this case the composer’s very name, Aurora, reveals the experience we have in the dark room which we enter like someone falling into a deep sleep. Because as if we were dreaming it, brightness and luminous radiation awaken us to another reality while at the same time rocking us to pursue the longing to continue transforming it. This is because the matter Gasull Altisent works with is none other than intangible time and its trail in the form of movement, changes and travel in space.

Just as she did (some years ago) as a cellist when moving her wooden bow to make the strings vibrate, her computer animation work draws our attention to the fluid architecture of music and its sound and compositional attributes. In fact, she asserts music as the main theme supporting her sound creation and observation. Watching her working with her 3D software and computers helps us to understand where her expressive method comes from, it is easy to maintain the analogy of the performer who decides precisely how much pressure she should exert on the strings with the horsehair. The resulting gentle curve makes it possible to bring the tip of the ebony wooden frog nearer to or farther from her bow. And it is this balancing of his body on the bow and on strings that is the origin of the transmission of the vibrations that the score triggers on her to the point of converting these emotions into sound, which, amplified with the dark space of the instrument's resonance box, travels to us - like the images travel to us now in the Hall of the CCCB.

Indeed, when Aurora works on a passage of music to translate it into images, she also rewrites a new score made of milestones in the same way that Gregorian chant placed the “square notes” – *punctum quadratum*- in the tetragram. And it is from this marked path of still images – we call them the key frames – that she begins her work of creating her unique form of visual expression. From milestone to milestone, from one state of stillness to another, and through the invisible drawing of the programming curves, she will decide what the movement will be like and which tempos will go best with the musical or sound passage she has intended to perform. As an explorer who investigates the languages of two worlds – visual and musical – in each of her abstract moving image pieces, she will take us from one to the other, initiating us to understand the formal language which includes both of them. Or is not the world of light, like that of sounds, another space of vibrations which can be modulated and made rhythmic in time? Just like the curve of a bridge which opens up to both banks, we are invited to walk the path of pure emotions that can only be recovered with art.

In Paul Haim's book "*Matta. Agiter l'oeil avant de voir*" about his friend the artist Roberto Matta, the author transcribes an excerpt of a conversation between them in which Matta tells him: "... *My concerns can be compared to those of an astrophysicist or a mathematician... In their research, there is non-visual content which art needs to focus on to render more visible a part of the invisible...* ". In the case of Aurora's artistic work, this research involves deep listening to music with eyes closed. The sounds that initially vibrate through the air penetrate inside her until they become her own. All of a sudden, the coming together of emotions inside her turns into chromatic and compositional vibration. Then there is the impetus and risky movement of the hand over the 3D programming bow taking equally risky yet also very precise decisions. Her body is intimately connected to the machine and filters the sparks which leap from the touch of the turning of the celestial spheres in her imagination.

In the seven pieces screened this year at "The Screen Inside", Aurora Gasull pays attention back to us. She gives us her listening time turned into creations which bring us to a halt before the free unfolding of her compositions. She thus allows us to remain still so as to see the latent movement which vibrated like a heartbeat in paintings by Iosif Shkolnik and Dani Ensesa. And also to discover the endless shapes and lights that were hidden in the music of Silvestrov, Xavier Maristany, Django Reinhardt, Mestres Quadreny, Messiaen and Bach. Compositions which are random and sometimes an accumulation of errors which are accepted as grounds for chance discoveries. Colours and geometric figures which seek in movement a pathway of freedom until they fade into white silence.

And now... turn your eyes and paths away from the text and trace the curve to the CCCB's Hall. Read the texts in which the composer describes her own compositions and know that "*the days she was working on them were days in which she lived as if dreaming*".

*Itziar González Virós* (Architect, specialist on citizen participation and urban planning).

Ciutat Vella, June 2019

## PROGRAMME

### **L'estiu calorós (The hot summer) | 2003 | 1'17"**

Music: beginning of Symphony No. 5 by Valentyn Sylvestrov

Listening to the 46' of Sylvestrov's Symphony No. 5 means being transported to a universe of pure, intense emotions in a place with its own skies and meadows. Working on the whole symphony would have been a dream come true but, at the same time, an impossible dream due to its length and my inexperience. But it was also out of the question to cut out and use just a fragment, as the themes start to emerge after a long process. My only option was to use the beginning and then stop at a point where the orchestra is almost silent, just over a minute's worth but highly representative.

I decided to base my work on a picture by another Ukrainian, Iosif Shkolnik, Abstract Composition, because of its direct invitation to movement, thereby concentrating solely on movement and transformation.

### **L'espera (The wait) | 2009 | 3'31"**

Music: Xavier Maristany

Maristany suggested to the CCCB (Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona) that they should change their hold music, which at that time was Bach. They accepted his proposal and have been using his music for years now. I was thinking about working on the connection between sound quality and visual form when, one day, I called the CCCB to ask them for some information. Luckily they left me on hold long enough for me to realise that Maristany's music was exactly what I'd been looking for.

The initial pedal created a terrain and opposition, a force I related with a sphere moving upwards; the growth of a life form with thorns, leaf and flower, decisive and dynamic, it emerged from the initial sound as a whole with the help of the white sphere. Little by little I gradually found forms and movements that matched each sound; little metal tongues, weightlessness, rhythmic voice, the appearance and sudden disappearance of drops of water, the emergence of a creature from the depths of the ocean, the longing of time, balance and, finally, the nocturnal hubbub of the city represented as a kind of still life. The days I spent working on this piece were like a dream.

### **Divertiment (Entertainment) | 2009 | 3'04"**

Characters: Dani Ensesa, Music: Charleston, by Django Reinhardt

In 2008 I went to an exhibition at Can Sisteré given by my friend and neighbour, Dani Ensesa, hoping to find an inspiring idea as the painter was open to his work being animated. There was a piece from 2002, A Man from Cardedeu, which consisted of a whole series of characters.

Divertiment is entertainment thanks to the painter's ability to observe the world around him with curiosity, affection and a sense of humour. To animate the painting's graphic content I chose a song by Django Reinhardt because of its rhythm and energy, I removed the characters and then, one by one, they entered the scene at their own pace. At minute 2'10" we can see the original picture; afterwards the characters mix themselves up and move together, like the people strolling around Ciutat Vella on a fine day, gathering around a street musician...

### **Sonades de la calor del foc (Sounds of heat from the fire) | 2010 | 4'26"**

Music: 4th movement of Sonades de la calor del foc by J.M. Mestres Quadreny

In 2009 I attended the homage to J.M. Mestres Quadreny at the Auditorium of La Pedrera. I wanted to work on musical randomness, which meant abandoning classical digital animation and writing code to generate visual processes. I chose the 4th movement of Sonades de la calor del foc because of its forcefulness.

The composer uses randomness for the frequencies throughout the three parts of the movement. In the first part, I represented each instrument by constructing a series of rectangles that alter their individual sizes at random; a mechanism capable of indefinitely generating different

proportions without repetition. After a bridge, there's an episode of extreme, dynamic contrasts. Here the animation technique is based on physical behaviours and the cubes move like sparks in a closed-off, turbulent fire. In the long final part there's a transition towards silence and a return to the initial mass of sound; the silences come in at random until achieving total silence, afterwards symmetrically returning to the beginning.

### **Geometria (Geometry) | 2011 | 4'10"**

Poem: Anna Tortajada; Music: Imma Udina, Voice over: Anna Subirana

For some time I'd wanted to work on a poem and Anna Tortajada gave me some she'd written years before, among which was Geometria. The animation has been created using quite simple tools. Something I like to do, present in these early animations, is to link ideas without any breaks. But connecting one visual development with the next involves limitations; often I want to move on to a composition that's far removed from where I am and a link seems impossible to find. But such limitations also end up becoming a process that uncovers unexpected progressions. Very often the most fortuitous error opens doors.

First I created the animation and, when it was finished, Anna Subirana recited it and then finally Imma Udina created the music.

### **Un Sourire (A Smile) | 2016 | 7'20"**

Music: Un Sourire, by Olivier Messiaen

Since I was young I've been fascinated by Olivier Messiaen and his music, the composer and ornithologist who could hear colours and see music. I chose Un Sourire even though I realised the depth of his music was beyond my capabilities, nevertheless in the firm belief that I would enjoy immersing myself in his language and investigating guided by his influence.

The visual begins by focusing on the melody; the tritones at the beginning give way to the part with the triangle which then leads to the rhythmic passage, which is the transition from the absence of time or time eternal to reality, from geometry to colour... From here on, my aim was to work on the harmonic depth using masses of colour, following the melody's intimate discourse with all its doubts and contradictions, except in the passage where the camera takes over.

### **Estudi cromàtic (Chromatic study) | 2018 | 2'54"**

Music: Prelude I (BWV 846) by J.S. Bach

I've tried working with this Prelude in many different ways for a long time now, attempting to balance the horizontal discourse with the vertical colour of each chord. Finally I ended up creating a chromatic piece, beat by beat. I used the initial white to start up and end the piece. I decided on blues-greens for the chords of C Major and reds-yellows for those of G Major, intuitively finding the way to move from one side to the other. I don't believe in establishing any fixed correspondence between notes and colours but find it more real to listen to my own intuition and open myself up to imagination, in spite of the bewildering task of having to choose.

The camera has no perspective and frames a two-dimensional space, with the lowest notes at the bottom and the highest at the top, like in written music although the 5 voices are not always represented. I had a lot of doubts concerning the direction to be taken by the sound's energy. Finally, the present remained on the right while the trace left by memory is depicted moving towards the left.