

Democracia

Pablo España and Iván López

(Madrid, Spain, 1970, both)

Democracia is a two-artist collective. Pablo España and Iván López both identified with each other's idea of making art by discussing shared ideas, convinced that this was the point of departure to enable them to render their creative practice more open to the social realm and less tied to personal idiosyncrasies. Their projects always unfold in a public dimension and often begin with political situations.

Ser y Durar (To Be and To Last, 2011) is a video that emerged from a dialogue with a group of young people in Madrid who were involved with the *Parkour* exercise. The title is one of the mottos of this military-style discipline that has now become one of the typical expressions of urban culture in large cities. It arose as a new social practice in the 1980s in France and marked the entry into metropolitan culture of groups of youths that use every aspect of urban architecture as an obstacle to be overcome with spectacular leaps and acrobatics, tracing trajectories in space that refuse to submit to the flows regulated by streets and buildings. For this reason, despite the practice's martial origins, many have noted how the *traceurs*, in the way they traverse the urban fabric according to extremely personal directional lines, bring to mind the Psychogeography exercises of the Situationists and their attempt to remove themselves from the regimentation of the predictable paths and behaviors of modern urban life.

These young people's supreme disrespect for functionality and the meanings called for by architecture and infrastructures makes them likewise deaf to the historical implications of buildings and furnishings. The only thing that matters is the geometric conformation of architectural obstacles and the possibility, or lack thereof, of exploiting them to imagine new exercises and physical situations. This is why Democracia brought their group to the civil cemetery of Almudena in Madrid, giving them the opportunity to confront the tombs and commemorative aedicules dedicated to thinkers, political figures, and artists who were not practitioners of the Catholic faith, often socialists and materialists, openly resistant to any type of transcendental thought. The communitarian convictions of these laic intellectuals, all of whom addressed and emphasized the value of the present and who were convinced that the accomplishment of good is not to be sought in the hereafter, are curiously consonant with the convictions of the *traceurs*. Both viewpoints reject the hierarchies, traditions, and pomposities of authority, all of which are hurdled in a leap, regardless of what the symbol might be.

Perhaps the evolution of these young people unknowingly will prove to be the best anti-commemoration possible for those buried in the civil cemetery, people who, while living, did not submit to the commemorative rhetoric of any authority. (EV)