

Antoni Abad

(Lleida, Spain, 1956)

The son of a sculptor and a poetess, Antoni Abad was drawn spontaneously towards the visual arts. His earliest works, using painting and drawing, already reveal his desire to break away from the wall in their constant quest for volume. Following a timid approach with his *Pintures trenades* at the start of the 1980s, the shift towards sculpture took place thanks to the use of a soft and light material: foam rubber. Although that was also soon to be set aside in favour of stiffer and colder materials, such as the metallic modules used for industrial shelving, his works from this period are often coupled with photographs documenting the progressive modifications of the form or the material in the wake of the artist's intervention, in sequence and with a certain dose of performativity.

It wasn't until the mid-1990s that Abad's research reached another major turning point. His interest in spatiality and the measure of the body that he had developed throughout the period of his sculptural experimentation little by little led him towards the moving image. In his first video *Medidas menores* (1994), it's his open hand, projected onto the wall, that measures the wall of the room through slow and repetitive gestures; the ensuing *Últimos deseos* (1995) continues his investigation into the space of the work, projecting a tightrope walker filmed from below onto the ceiling. It was during this period that he also produced the trilogy of videos featuring a number of groups of mice – animals that Abad makes use of to examine natural human attitudes and reactions with irony. While in *Errata* (1996) the rodents are filmed in various phases of the mating process, in *Ciencias naturales* (1997) images in which they run here and there, letting out high-pitched squeaks, appear from the floor itself, taking spectators by surprise as they move through the space. The trilogy comes to a close with the work in the collection, *Love Story* (1998): here the mice pounce one after the other onto a heart-shaped cake filmed from above, quickly removing the four decorative letters that make up the word 'love' from the frame.

While carrying out these experiments with video, Abad moved ever more towards the new expressive forms offered by Net Art. By virtue of the unprecedented communicative opportunities it offers, the web was soon to become his medium of choice: in 1999, the artist even developed a prototype of a social network called Z, visualised on the computer screen with the avatar of a fly in order to establish contact between users from various parts of the world. To this day, his research is directed towards audio-visual communication projects designed to provide a voice in real time to social minorities at risk of exclusion, such as illegal immigrants, asylum seekers, displaced communities or prostitutes. In 2004, the platform *megaphone.net* was opened for this purpose, and in 2015, so was the spinoff project *blind.wiki*, specifically aimed at the blind or visually impaired.

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