

# GALERIA MPA

GALERIA MOISES PEREZ DE ALBENIZ

## **Making Visible: Anna Barribal / Susan Hiller**

From April 6th to May 25th 2019

Curated by Carolina Grau

The exhibition *Making visible* brings together the work of two artists from different generations: Anna Barribal (Plymouth, 1972) and Susan Hiller (Tallahassee, 1940 – London, 2019) that share a common interest in making different aspects of our society and our environment visible, focusing on what almost no one pays attention to or perceives. Barribal finds mystery and hidden meaning in the ordinaryness that exists in our everyday spaces. She is interested in contrasting ideas such as surface / depth, positive / negative, and intention / accident. Hiller examines society's underlying cultural currents and its belief systems. Her work is based on specific cultural artifacts from our society, which she uses as basic materials.

The selection of works reflects what the two artists share in common as well as differences in their formal concerns and production methods, creating a dialogue between their distinct bodies of work. Anna Barribal's practice is characterized by the way she utilizes materials to create works that situate themselves below the threshold of visibility. Her working method generates works that are trapped in time, but that also echo their long production processes. We have selected four projects that exemplify this facet of her artistic language. The artist is fascinated by windows and their function as barriers between the interior and exterior world, a recurrent element in her work. *Night Window with Leaves* (2015) is made of three panels and is inspired by the experience of looking through a large window at night. Barribal has placed a thin paper over a glass carved in relief in order to imbue it with black pigment, a slow and manually intensive process that transforms the piece into a tactile drawing with a burnished, dense finish that suggests something beyond its surface. The series *Untitled* (2004) is made of found black and white photographs that have their common denominator in the presence of people and a drop of ink that are present in each photograph. The bubble in the image represents capturing a moment in time, that instant when the photographer presses the camera's shutter.

The video series *Daylight, Candlelight, Firelight and Moonlight* (2013) that is exhibited on monitors on the gallery floor show shadows and reflections that explore the effects of natural and artificial light. Some of the images appear almost abstract, others like the dust on a window, or simply the reflection of a camera's flash. The artist is interested in the surprise and revelation of the image, in what the lens automatically catches. These images become negatives as she edits them, sometimes they succeed each other rapidly or they meld together. Each video is tinted a different color, inspired by the use of tints in silent films, and in this way they transmit certain moods or lighting effects. Her latest video *Scan* (2018) is made up of images of reflective surfaces that are taken with a digital camera with an automatic flash. Barribal has edited the images in negative, recreating different movements and rhythms, playing with colors that shift from one to another. Neither the image nor the color ever slow down, like a scanner that is constantly searching for a new surface.

Susan Hiller is one of the most influential artists of her generation, known by her innovative media works, many of which incorporate elements from anthropology and psychoanalysis. The artist allows us to see the invisible, hear the unspoken, and tries to show us the unexplainable, moving between the rational and the irrational. We have selected three projects that reflect three series of works that the artist has been developing throughout her career: automatic writing, homages to other artists, and the unexplainable. The painting *Brickwork* (1984) reflects her interest in automatic writing, a technique that she experienced for the first time at the beginning of the 1970s and to which she has returned throughout her career. The work is composed of painted wallpaper with an image of bricks together with another layer of subconscious, freely

associative, graffiti-style marks. This work becomes very remarkable since many of these paintings ended up later being burned and transformed into ashes, thereby becoming part of her series *Relics*.

Hiller's works construct alternative alphabets of traces and imprints that question a society that ignores the unconscious, where its ghosts and fears remain hidden. The artist has always been interested in types of visual phenomena, grouping them into people who see aliens, vapors, and auras. The artist calls these contemporary visionary experiences. *Vapours, Brown* (2012) is a series of found black and white photographs that feature clouds of vapor in shapes that appear to be ghosts. One asks if it's a paranormal phenomenon, or if it's our unconscious that projects that image.

Since 2008, Hiller has made various works in homage to other artists, including Joseph Beuys, Yves Klein y Marcel Duchamp. The work *After Duchamp* (2016-2017) is based on a little known painting by Duchamp called *Portrait of Dr. Dumouchel* (1910) where the figure is depicted as being surrounded by aura. In this series Hiller presents a collection of fifty found portraits of people that emanate a luminous, colorful radiance. The auras can be associated with a traditional representation of saints, but the artist has chosen a wide spectrum that embodies ordinary people of all ages and cultures, describing them as 'metaphors of the self in the digital age.'

The image on the gallery's facade comes from the video *Resounding (infrared)* (2013) and includes audio transcriptions of pulsars and plasma waves, as well as static interference from radio and television programs that contain traces of the Big Bang and the voices of people talking about their experiences with inexplicable visual phenomena.

**Anna Barriball** was born in Plymouth in 1972. She studied at Winchester School of Art and Chelsea College of Art and Design. Barriball has had recent solo exhibitions at Centre Pasquart, Biel/Bienne, Switzerland (2018); Be-Part, Waregem, Belgium (2017); Museum Villa Stuck, Munich (2013); Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh (2012) and MK Gallery, Milton Keynes (2011). Her work has been included in the recent group exhibitions *Fokus Papier*, Kunstmuseum Basel (2017); *Double Take*, The Photographers' Gallery, London (2016) and *Apparitions: Frottages and Rubbings from 1860 to Now*, at The Menil Collection, Houston and Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2015). Anna Barriball's unequivocal use of materials results in work that hovers beneath the threshold of visibility. Her interventions produce objects that are at once locked in time yet echo the processes by which they are made. Early works such as treated found objects and slide projections act as counterpoints to more recent architectural relief drawings, floor pieces, and video works that emanate luminous colour. This range of mediums is a testament to Barriball's enduring interest in the indexical; in particular her engagement with the sculptural qualities of paper demonstrates a seemingly endless endeavour to make sense of the world by empirical study. Through her uncanny approach to making, Barriball demonstrates how the aesthetics of everyday life can be reimagined or transformed in unexpected ways.

**Susan Hiller** (1940-2019) was born in Tallahassee, Florida, and was based mainly in London since the early 1960s. After studying film and photography at The Cooper Union and archaeology and linguistics at Hunter College in New York, Hiller went on to a National Science Foundation fellowship in anthropology at Tulane University in New Orleans. Her career has been recognised by survey exhibitions at The Polygon, Vancouver, Canada (2018); Officine Grande Riparazioni, Turin, Italy (2018); Pérez Art Museum Miami, Miami, FL, USA (2017); Samstag Foundation, Copenhagen, Denmark (2014); Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Toulouse, France (2014); Tate Britain, London, UK (2011); Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden (2007); Castello di Rivoli, Turin, Italy (2006); Museu Serralves, Porto, Portugal (2004); ICA, Philadelphia, PA, USA (1998); and ICA, London, UK (1986). Hiller's work features in numerous international private and public collections including the Centre Pompidou, Paris, France; Ludwig Museum, Cologne, Germany; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, USA; Tate Gallery, London, UK and the Centro de Arte Contemporanea Inhotim, Brumadinho, Brazil.