

Stephen Prina

The Second Sentence of Everything I Read Is You

24 January - 12 April 09

This exhibition has been organized and produced by Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden in collaboration with Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, Consejería de Cultura, Junta de Andalucía.

On the occasion of this exhibition a bilingual catalogue (English/German) has been published, together with an annexe in Spanish.

Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo

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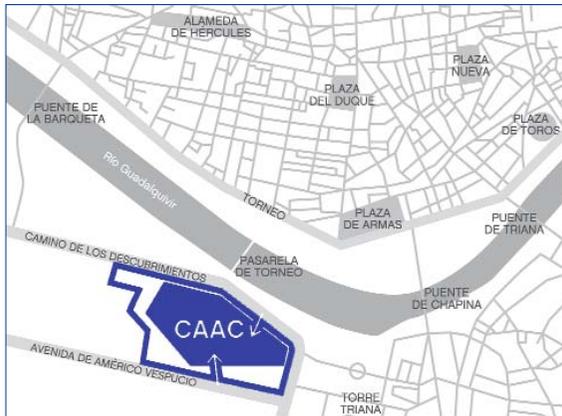
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Access

Avda. Américo Vespucio nº 2
Camino de los Descubrimientos s/n

Transport

C1 y C2 buses



Timetable

1 October - 31 March
Tuesday to Friday: 10 - 20 h.
Saturday: 11 - 20 h.

1 April - 30 September
Tuesday to Friday: 10 - 21 h.
Saturday: 11 - 21 h.

Sunday: 10 - 15 h.
Closed on Monday
Holidays: Please consult with Centre

Library

Monday to Thursday: 10 - 14 h. and 17 - 19 h.
Friday: 10 - 14 h.

Tickets sale until 30 minutes before closing.

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The Second Sentence of Everything I Read Is You

The artistic production of Stephen Prina (Galesburg, Illinois, 1954) is multifaceted: the artist, who lives in Los Angeles and Boston, works in a variety of media at once - a composer, musician, filmmaker and performer, his pieces return to the seminal processes of Minimal Art and Conceptual Art in order to challenge their paradigms in a critical and ironic spirit. We thus find aspects of the social and artistic evolution of the recent past updated and reflected in the present. Each of Prina's projects is characterized by a system of references on a number of levels, embracing art history, literature, music, film and philosophy, as he consciously blurs the boundaries between 'High' and 'Low', between high culture and mass culture.

Prina attaches considerable significance to the placing of the artwork within the exhibition space. His oeuvre engages with the context in which art is produced and establishes a special relationship between previous and present exhibition spaces. Working with an open and constantly evolving structure, Prina affirms the transitory nature of art.

The work in 35 pieces entitled *What's Wrong? Open the Door!* (1996) takes as its point of departure a scene from the Robert Bresson film *The Devil, Probably* (1977) in which the protagonist tries to commit suicide in a bathroom. In each of the pieces, covered by a coloured surface, a letter has been inserted which in some cases is almost illegible. Together these letters form the sentence 'WE REPRESENT OURSELVES TO THE WORLD'.

Like the effect of sampling in music, Prina use existing works over and over again, effectively expanding them in relation to the

exhibition space and giving rise to new works: these are long-term projects such as the ongoing *Exquisite Corpse: The Complete Paintings of Manet*, a reconstituting of all of Édouard Manet's paintings which Prina commenced back in 1988 and is still engaged in today. Here in Seville we are presenting part of the work Prina has developed on the basis of the three versions of Manet's *The Execution of Maximilian*. Instead of merely recreating the original picture, Prina updates it as regards the quantification of its dimensions: a black wooden frame of the same size as the frame of the Manet contains a monochrome drawing on paper the same size as the original. The entire surface is covered with abstract brushstrokes with a painterly rhythm and a gestural handling in a pale sepia tone on the white ground. Alongside this form of reconstruction is a silkscreen print that systematically reproduces all of Manet's oeuvre at a reduced scale, making it possible to place each picture inside the frame of a whole body of work.

In Prina's art the use of sound elements is related to the theme of time: on the one hand this illustrates the processual, evolutive nature of many of his pieces and on the other allows the music itself to convey a certain temporal linkage. In the installation entitled *The Top Thirteen Singles from Billboard's Hot Singles Chart for the Week Ending September 11, 1993* (1993) a clock, just before striking the hour, plays a carillon version of one of the thirteen top-selling songs from the chart referred to in the title, questioning the worth of such lists as institutionalized benchmarks for determining aesthetic-artistic quality.

As we have said, Prina is fond of working on long-term projects that reflect the



Stephen Prina, *The Second Sentence of Everything I Read Is You: The Queen Mary*, 1979-2006, 2006

specific exhibition context on each occasion, and this is the strategy pursued in *The Second Sentence of Everything I Read Is You*, the sound installation from which the present exhibition takes its title. First staged at the Friedrich Petzel Gallery in New York and developed through subsequent versions culminating in the one created for Baden-Baden and reproduced here in Seville, the installation invokes a 'travelling theatre', set up on a provisional basis. The cases used to transport the technical components of the installation have been placed on the floor in the middle of the room and converted into benches topped with cushions, all of the same colour. The cables and audio and electronic elements of the installation are similarly exposed to view. The walls of the room bear the programmatic text (not without irony) '...I ain't n-n-no conceptual artist...', which also figures in the song Prina himself composed for this installation. The lyric of the song is made up of quotations - statements by artists and writers as diverse as Alexander Alberro, Roland Barthes, Marcel Broodthaers, Johanna Burton, Thomas Clerc,

Andrea Fraser, Bettina Funcke, Irmeline Lebeer, Ed Ruscha, William Shakespeare and Lynne Tilmann. The evocative sound of Prina's song encourages the visitor to move around the room and engage in a new subjective relationship with the various individual components - text, sound, and pictorial and sculptural elements.

With this work Stephen Prina expands the concept of context. Unlike Richard Serra, who declares some of his works to be destroyed the moment they are removed from the site they were originally conceived for, these installations can be displayed anywhere there is insufficient space, because a key constituent of the idea that underpins these pieces is the simulation down to the last detail of the original space. And just as every detail of the work is reconstructed, so too the traces of its use are an integral part of it.

The different versions of the installation *The Second Sentence of Everything I Read Is You* contain all of the essential ingredients that define Stephen Prina's work: monochrome painting, sound, text, sculptural elements and photography.