

Compositions: Reial Acadèmia de Ciències i Arts de Barcelona

La Rambla, 115. Access through Teatre Poliorama

Mariona Moncunill

Unfaithful Meridian, 2018

Installation and performative visit

Artist represented by **Palmadotze**



Opening hours:

Thursday 27th, Friday 28th and Saturday 29th /09, 11:00 am- 8:00 pm

Sunday 30th /09, 11:00 am - 3:00 pm

Performative visits by the artist:

Thursday 27th /09: 12:00 am and 6:00 pm

Friday 28th /09: 12:00 and 6:00 pm

Saturday 29th /09: 13:00 and 6:00 pm

Sunday 30th /09: 1:00 pm

The Reial Acadèmia de Ciències i Arts de Barcelona (RACAB) is an association of Science researchers, dating back its origins to 1764. Its activity is the research, study and dissemination of science and its application to technology and the arts. Its current venue is a work of the architect Josep Domènech Estapà, who began the building in 1883 and completed it ten years later with the construction of two towers, each with a dome for astronomical observations and measurements. It hosts a library with especially relevant collections from the second half of the 18th century. Another outstanding space is the Clocks Room, which contains a monumental clock from 1869 with indications of the positions of the Sun, the Earth, the Moon and the planets, as well as the time of sunrise and sunset. In the past, one of the functions of the Academy was to communicate the official time of Barcelona.

Mariona Moncunill's project takes as its starting point two outstanding aspects of the history of the Reial Acadèmia de Ciències i Arts de Barcelona: the service of the official time of Barcelona and the role of the institution in the implementation and standardization of the decimal metric system in Spain. Making use of RACAB's historical objects and documents as catalysts, *Unfaithful Meridian* proposes a narrative through the creation of scientific conventions and their political and social implications, also playing with the relationship between temporality and length, two magnitudes that have been scientifically, poetically and arbitrarily linked in the process of institutionalising the measurement of time and length.

Unfaithful Meridian consists of four interventions: a performative explanation by the artist, a 3D printer in permanent operation during the opening hours of the RACAB, a video and an action carried out by the information staff.

In the performative explanation (which takes place every day at certain times) the artist makes use of books and documents from the RACAB library to talk about the evolutions of scientific conventions that have determined the standards of measurement over time, and also about the political, ideological and economic issues underlying these historical processes. In particular, Moncunill emphasizes the relationships between the meter as a measure of length and the hour as a measure of time.

During the artist's explanation, in a parallel process, a printer is operating. It is a 3D printing device that, following the artist's indications, has been specially designed and built by TMTMTM to print lines equivalent to one ten millionth of the quadrant of the earth's meridian, i.e. lines of one meter. In this way, all the versatility and functionality offered by this type of printer is radically limited to the production of an extremely simple element. The one-meter lines generated by the printer constitute a simple formal translation of the relationship between time and space and allude to the link between the temporal and longitudinal units of measurement with the terrestrial sphere. The printer remains always active, and the information staff is responsible for controlling the printed elements, which dialogue symbolically with the measuring instruments of the RACAB display case.

A cabinet displays a set of outstanding objects related to the history of RACAB, science and technology in general. One of these objects is a one-meter brass rod that functioned as a standard longitudinal measure. A video showing the athlete Caster Semenya walking a meter is projected on top of the showcase, in such a way that the athlete's feet are placed exactly on the brass meter on display. With this intervention, Moncunill refers to the historical and social construction of measurement conventions, as well as their arbitrariness, suggesting that a unit of measurement is what we agree it is. Indirectly and making use of irony, the artist also alludes to the conventions used to determine gender, which so affected Caster Semenya's sporting career.

Evoking the authority that the RACAB had in the past in the calculation and establishment of the official time, the information staff receives visitors by communicating the time out loud, and also announcing it at the end of the day. They do so by following the clock in the foyer, which used to determine the official time of Barcelona. The information staff also indicates the margin of error implicit in the measurement, revealing the close and fallible nature that many scientific calculations also have.

Mariona Moncunill (Tarragona, 1984) has a degree in Fine Arts, a postgraduate degree in the Master in Cultural Management from the University of Barcelona, and a PhD in the Information and Knowledge Society from the Open University of Catalonia. She has completed part of her studies at the Koninklijke Academie van Beeldende Kunsten de L'Haia. Her work has been recognised with the Generations Award 2014, the Marco Magnini Award 2013-Giovani Artisti de l'Associazione Marco Magnani de Sassari, the Ramón Acín Scholarship for Plastic Arts, the Guasch Coranty Foundation Scholarship for Artistic Creation and the Miquel Casablanças Award. She has also received residency grants at HIAP (Helsinki) and Rupert (Vilnius). She has exhibited both individually and collectively in different national and international museums and art centres, including the MNAC, the Espai 13 of the Joan Miró Foundation, the Centre d'Art Santa Mònica, the Convent dels Àngels of the MACBA, l'Espai Cultural Caja Madrid and La Capella (all of them in Barcelona), as well as the Centro de Arte Lo Pati (Ampostà), the Centro de Arte La Panera (Lleida), the MUSAC (León), the Gallery Augusta (Helsinki) and the Real Academia de España a Roma. She is the author of different artist publications, such as *Cinco infografías* (2012), *Menjadors* (2011) and *Unir els punts* (2010).

Acknowledgments:

Reial Acadèmia de Ciències i Arts de Barcelona
Daniel Giralt-Miracle