

## CIUTAT DE VACANCES

### TEXTS

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Between the sun and the self, the concrete and water. Horizons punctuated by the masts of luxury yachts or large multi-story cruise liners. The lure of “fiesta and sangria” is the beginning of the legend, just as honeymoons were and each sunset with a light that is so immaculate that it makes you think of the set of the film *The Truman Show* continues to be. The memory of tangible things has hardly any meaning when everything is a myth and ‘fictional’ story.

Every interface confirms it, the chips of mobile phones, video cameras and tablet computers certify it. We live in a world of cloned gestures and images, a single land of tunnels, corridors and doors to connected theme parks.

After surpassing the industrial era, the economy’s evolution into a tertiary one brings with it new increases in the value of urban space and the transformation of capitalist city models that has established the ‘touristification’ of cities.

The global circulation of population masses that barely distinguish between the high season, associated with good weather, and timing their leisure time in periods with lower demand is increasingly transforming the social habits and the appearance of major towns and cities.

The proto-tourists who used to seek an escape in the sun have multiplied to the point that they have given rise to new migratory currents that pass through the centres of major cities associated with postmodern myths. Here, in the old Europe — the decadent lady that was the destination for the *Grands Tours*, on the borders of a bustling Mediterranean littered with themed historical centres and overpopulated coasts with turquoise waters — today shows the limits of a dream.

### Going on holiday

Since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, young aristocrats, writers, creators and intellectuals have been leaving their cold native countries to discover new lands and cultures in a practice which took on the name *Grand tour*, although its precedent can be traced back to the Renaissance, when artists and humanists travelled to Italy to learn about classic culture. Some, such as Gustave Flaubert, spent years exploring places in Egypt, Syria, Palestine and other countries in the Mediterranean as a source of inspiration, the journey serving as a catalyst for the transformation of the individual in dialogue with landscapes and monuments. This sensation is also tangible in the writings of another great traveller, the philosopher Jacques Derrida, who led us time and time again to study humanity in transit, in unfamiliar scenarios, subject to the harshness of interior and exterior change. On another hand are the specialised return journeys on a mass market scale, as was highlighted by the British sociologist John Urry, one of the most important analysts of tourism and mobility as a phenomenon developed out of post-industrial capitalism.

Going on holiday is a social practice where the vector that units time, space and leisure grows exponentially as workers’ hours and rights became more regulated.

The introduction of time off from work spread from 1948 when the United Nations proclaimed, in article 24 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that all people have the right to periodic paid holidays.

In the seventies began the so-called tourism studies. One of the founders of these studies was Dean MacCannell, who developed a publication that was essential to understanding it: *The tourist. A new theory of the leisure class*.

Today, the traveller's perspective and the mass tourist's point of view come together in the scenarios of capitalist consumerism, leisure and pleasure. Places are all one and the same, when everything is tourism.

## Holiday resorts

Marc Augé stated that tourism was "a visit to the future that only takes on its full meaning later".<sup>1</sup> The first official Spanish tourism promotional campaign appeared on the occasion of the universal expositions of Barcelona and Seville (1929) and, according to several specialists such as Ana Moreno Garrido, the same methods of promoting tourism and advocating monuments continue to be used today. Essentially, tourism in Spain was developed during the Franco era not only because of the economic possibilities it offered but also as a form of propaganda and a way to transcend the autarky of the dictatorship. In 1951, the Ministry for Information and Tourism was created and a series of stereotypes about sun and the beach began to be developed, linked to Benidorm, the Costa Brava, the Costa del Sol and the Balearic Islands.

The established definition of a "holiday resort" — which most people now associate with places like Marina d'Or — refers specifically to the artificial collection of buildings, hotels and apartments with numerous associated services, including a golf course, which are located in coastal areas and are designed such that tourists who stay there do not need to travel to the main towns they would usually need to go to.

The first one in the seventies was the Pobla de Farnals, conceived by the Radio Valencia broadcaster Juan Granell. Inspired by the documentaries of Fox Movietone about the formulas employed in the United States, he built jetties for artificial beaches and a marina for a town that did not have them.

The big resorts or towns centred solely around leisure such as Las Vegas, or around fantasy like Orlando, are clearly a trend of North American origin linked to consumerism and the post-war and post-recession booms in their various waves and phases.

The many themed conglomerate reproductions, such as Poble Espanyol in Barcelona (1929) or the one in Palma (1965), also offer another type of tourism experience linked to representation. They are an iconographic mummification of reality, which today can be found the other way around in cases such as Barcelona's Gothic Quarter.

"(...) the Gothic Quarter is an invention. A conscious one, built on the weak evidence of a certain concentration of gothic buildings, but intended from the beginning to be a recreation of the past, a falsification of Barcelona's historic centre".<sup>2</sup>

## State of tourism

To stop the sun from dying, the Aztecs conducted human sacrifices, thus feeding the sun with hearts and blood. The sun god, in all representations and cultures — whether it is called Helios, Utu, Inti, Ra, Amateratsu, Tonatiuh or Kren — connects man with the Earth and gives them life, bringing them closer to light, purification and revelation. The first tourists were the pilgrims to Olimpia and Rome or to the various centres from

the histories of religions, precisely seeking redemption and immortal enlightenment. We cannot look directly at the sun, but we can warm ourselves with it, stopping for a time under its rays, and wait for it to transform us.

Tourists draw on information and desire as a driving force to move. Preparation or prior calling anticipate everything.

Standing at a viewpoint, lookout tower or balcony with views gives them a symbolic sense of power, over the horizon and over others.

Lucy R. Lippard, whose 199 publication *On the Beaten Track: Tourism, Art and Place* is now a classic, states that people do not choose a place to travel to because of its beauty but because of the promise it beholds. In her book she also analyses notions such as authenticity or exoticism, and the construction of cities as an object of desire for the future tourist, usually driven by stereotypes and a planned restyling. For tourists, the sublime representation of the urban or natural landscape, the dominance of the image typified by the promotion of brochures, travel guides and tour operator catalogues, the archetypal gestures and habits, the economy of signs, the repetition of visible and identifiable codes and the instinct of collective communion — either in a pack or as a couple — are the key factors for understanding and revealing the experience, giving meaning to their journey. The situations and scenes created in the imagination before going away on holiday, the visit to fiction and those affects that are configured and integrated into the chosen scenario become constants in every step of the tourist ritual.

What's more, today, contemporary tourism is associated with the instantaneous, like an anthropophagy of the same image that is sold, expanded, appropriated and swallowed once again in the very system that created it, transcending the post card and the family photo album to multiply on social networks.

An exercise in functional anthropology emanates from the work of Martin Parr who, between 1987 and 1994, photographed groups of tourists in their destinations, removed from their daily habits.

During the time spent in the land of fiction, the reconstruction takes place, the representation is compared and the image of desire is lightly touched, barely with one's finger tips. The experience is appropriation, transmission and story telling.

John Urry developed the concept of "tourist gaze" in his book of the same name, published in 1990, which today has become a classic. In this book he remarks that any place, as bland as it may be, can be turned into a tourist destination.

"The gaze is constructed through signs, and tourism involves the collection of signs. When tourists see two people kissing in Paris what they capture in the gaze is 'timeless romantic Paris'. When a small village in England is seen, what they gaze upon is the 'real olde England'".<sup>3</sup>

Thus, streets and avenues are increasingly becoming communal spaces for capitalist investment, just as much as beaches and leisure centres that epitomise pleasure and intense and scheduled consumerism. The public space is the icon of material consumerism, whether an airport or a coastal haven.

The appeal of intercultural discoveries is associated with so-called cultural tourism, which is primarily urban. The tourist looking for sun, sea and sand only goes to the city if it is included in the package they bought or if the weather turns bad during their stay.

Museums, galleries, historical monuments, cathedrals or theatres are landmarks of the strategic circuits that "sell" a city brand, just as the top fashion, accessory and fast food franchises do today, which take on a status in the urban epicentre that is more

than a mere souvenir or the stuff of folklore. Banishing small traders, urban centres have become a big shopping centre of franchises mass-reproduced on a global scale.

### The dilemma

Cultural tourism has become an ordinary pursuit not only for the city-brand but also one which now forms one of the five main programmes of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and, therefore, is something that is socially beneficial, in the same way as cultural exchanges are.

Urban marketing and the city-brand model in themselves produce a multi-faceted system which gives rise to the relentless process of 'museumisation' of the daily environment and to speculation with hospitality. As we have seen, historic urban centres converted into theme parks are themselves like big shopping centres where the same franchises of shops and chains spread and multiply. In his book *The Society of the Spectacle*, Guy Debord described tourism as a "by-product of the circulation of goods". Cities have therefore become an item of tourism merchandise, cloning themselves in what they offer, with all of them reproducing the same problems, always starting with their historical centres and beach-side areas. The social repercussions and the impact on the cities themselves reveal situations that are continuously reproduced and which invariably lead to two constants: homogenisation and desertification.

The relationship between the tourism industry and the property market, the economic growth of the hotel sector and holiday rentals result in a loss of land, local community and intimacy. Then comes the saturation and obstruction of public highways and the 'urban suicide' of Barcelona's Gothic Quarter, which has seen 45% of its population disappear, while the Assembly of Neighbourhoods for Sustainable Tourism (Asamblea de Barrios por un Turismo Sostenible, or ABTS) competes with capitalist colonialism which brings about real state investment. In Mallorca and Ibiza there is a serious problem of access to regular rental housing for residents as a result of the boom in tourist rentals.

The urban land is therefore a place where the guests and the host population both meet and come into conflict, which firstly leads to a transformation of identities, the commodification of culture, the speculation of private property and the appropriation of public property.

Those who receive the visitors are not in a state of tourism. Although they do not form part of this industry - as Lucy R. Lippard points out - they must receive the visitors by force or colonisation.

The conflict resulting from the loss of natural, urban and residential public space is a sore point, day in and day out. It seems that the sun god continues to demand victims.

From the south, and located on a Mediterranean that was the cradle of civilisation and is a route for cruises and an icon representing sun, sea and sand, four cities: Venice, Palma (Mallorca), Barcelona and Alicante, expose different stadiums of the same problem. As part of an initiative by Es Baluard museum, *Ciutat de vacances* (Holiday cities) has emerged, giving rise to an intense and extensive co-production that is growing and involves artistic creation and research efforts.

Through different artistic proposals we propose documenting the social and urban transformation in order to analyse and develop ways of understanding the trends in real time, within a framework of responsible and respectful reflection and action. The decision to hold the first presentation in the Museo di Palazzo Grimani in Venice makes sense as a benchmark of the apogee of elite cultural tourism which coincides with the

Biennale art exhibition in devotional communion with the environment; a Venice which still believes in representing itself even today.

With this project, as Lippard considers, the artists can contribute to a reformulation of tourism ("since, at the end of the day, their task is to teach people to look") and help us to understand this world we live in and its mutations.

<sup>1</sup> GANAU CASAS, Joan. "La recreació del passat: el Barri Gòtic de Barcelona, 1880-1950", in *Quaderns d'Història*, no. 8, 2003, p. 257-272.

<sup>2</sup> AUGÉ, Marc. "Un etnòleg en Disneylandia", in *El viaje imposible. El turismo y sus imágenes*. Barcelona: Gedisa editorial, 1998 (1977), p. 23.

<sup>3</sup> URRY, John. *The Tourist Gaze. Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*. London/Newbury Park/New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 1990, p. 3.

### Ciutat de vacances: Palma

In the museum's temporary exhibition hall, we present a selection of the productions developed, forcing them into dialogue with other works that complement or provide a vehicle for approaches and focuses of reflection on the basis of contemporary creation.

The image of the Balearic archipelago began to be made visible abroad through the book by José Vargas Ponce, published in Madrid in 1787 under the title *Descripciones de las islas Pithiusas y Baleares* [Descriptions of the Islands and Balearic Pithiusas], and it was propagated as a landscape and legend thanks to the work of the painters who came to the islands in search of light and mythical travellers like Archduke Ludwig Salvator. The mass tourism that started up in Europe after World War II pointed to Mallorca as the prime destination in the Mediterranean, when it became fashionable for holiday respite for foreigners both from northern countries and Spaniards, after the 1946 honeymoon advertising campaigns promoted by Fomento del Turismo de Mallorca (one of the oldest tourism promotion institutions in the world). In parallel, the Land Act of 1956 gave rise to intensive development and construction along the coast, which also spread to Ibiza and Menorca in 1960, and was to signal the tertiarisation of the islands and their association with holidays. It was the age of the tourist boom, the draw of sea bathing and romantic relaxation that the singer and composer Bonet de San Pedro the centenary of whose birth falls this year - disseminated in catchy commercial tunes. Today, summer hits have become de-seasonalised too.

The impact of tourism on local identities reveals the evolution and transformation of the receiving population and the region, but also the complex geopolitical situation of the competitor countries, the strategies of tour operators, the excesses of mass 'low-cost' tourism and the evolution of the consumer society in exponential growth. As a result, urban destinations such as Palma also underwent an intense upsurge in terms of a change in identity, moving towards an image of luxury and status to suit the taste of foreign investors.

Statistics and images are its barometer. As John Urry has insisted, tourists seek a realistic representation of what they have internalised from postcards and guide books, and therefore photography is closely linked to the tourist gaze, the organisation of the experience and the identification of the preconceived myth formed prior to travel. Images organise the anticipation of the places we visit, structuring memories and the narrative. The memory of each visit and movements are to a large extent scripted through the photographs and text, mainly verbal, with which we weave the images when we show them to others. Since Martin Parr, numerous Spanish and international artistic photographers have structured their work precisely in the reflection of the

gaze of that tourist, in well-known series like those dedicated to Magaluf, the focus of much comment.

In “Ciutat de vacances”, we propose a different methodology, returning to the starting point of stereotypes of contemporary photography and iconography in order to develop hypotheses of transversal interpretations removed from the customary formalism and based on decentralised processual field works linked to experimental pedagogy that deals with the historical, social and developmental changes we are experiencing *in situ*.

A year ago, at Es Baluard, visitors were able to see a work from the series “Protocolli Veneziani” by Antoni Muntadas in which the artist deconstructs the image of Venice faceted by its own destination brand. Every museum project is interrelated as a programmatic line cohesive with the objective of lending sense to contemporary art in terms of today’s society.

“Ciutat de vacances” (Vacation City) in Palma is comprised of two themes: the dichotomy of the private as opposed to the public on the one hand, and on the other, the imagery of the tourism myth. Both are fundamentally linked by the analysis and construction of the phenomenon of tourism through the gaze of both host and guest, of the economy and ecology, from the nearby example of the Balearics and the Mediterranean to the global paradigm.

The photographic heritage of postcards and historic posters, and the recording of moving images, are instruments used by both artists and tourists as a means and an end. Moreover, the origins of the cinematographer have an influence, as does the association of narratives through documentaries or the numerous amateur, entertainment and advertising films encouraging tourists’ choices for their travels and the typical expression that will reproduce them.

We may well think that every myth is based on an image. The abstraction of a sun conceived by Joan Miró has been a global reference since 1983, associated to the Turespaña campaigns as the corporate image of Spanish tourism, like its previous application in 1973 to the also-famous poster by Mallorca’s *Fomento del Turismo* tourist board.

Identitary dynamics reveal the truth of the worshippers of sun and light when incombustible waves of tourists leap on its flames for pleasure, redemption or curiosity.

Photography is the magical act that captures its incandescence. That ritual exercise reveals and shows itself as a testimony of social evolution and the progressive mercantilist objectives linked to its industry through the photographic-touristic document. Using postcards and posters from the different periods, this heritage creates the history and archaeology of places and moments, like the reproductions made by Herwin Hubert. The same is true of Josep Planas i Montanyà, who introduced the postcard as a commercial tourist instrument and developed, like no other, an amiable documentalism of the expansion in the Balearic Islands of the so-called Balearisation. His photographs, commissioned for hotels, are essential for understanding the phenomenon. At Es Baluard, with the collaboration of the Mallorca Hotel Business Federation, we have re-published a selection of these vintage postcards showing the evolution of the formats of transmission, enticement and transfer of the gaze according to demands.

Thus, upon analysing these promotional materials, not only coming from Mallorca but also those of the Thomas Cook group and its *Holidaymaking* magazine for example, we observe the gradual evolution of the destination images (during the '50s, they focussed on the cathedral, folklore, fishing boats and the idealisation of tradition) towards new hotels, views of beaches, pools and tanned tourists in the foreground. That is to say, the group and regional identity is replaced, giving way to standardisation and dehistoricization.

In this way, the city of Palma reveals one of the axes of the exhibition in comparison to examples that precede its dynamics in Barcelona and Miami, revealing presents and potentials.

Gentrification is one of the symptoms of the problems inherent in tourism development. One of the first visibilization actions organised by Es Baluard was the workshop by the Left Hand Rotation collective which, in addition to congregating the artistic and activist sector close to its circumstances, enabled one to reflect, on the basis of action, on the metastasis of the city's icons and their decadence. Three artists with links to the Balearics, Marina Planas, Neus Marroig and Irene de Andrés also take the image as a point of analysis. Planas does so through the influence of her grandfather Josep Planas Montanyà, Marroig by using quotes from travel guides and reference books, and De Andrés by means of the ruins of the clubs and discotheques of Ibiza, an icon of leisure. The structures and planning of spaces urbanised as resorts are usually islands within islands, the theme park (as Michel Houellebecq so precisely describes in his novel *Platform*) which, in its *kitsch* exponent, is presented to us by Xisco Bonnín after he made contact with the *Paradisus Río de Oro* in Cuba.

Faced with the organised circuits, the political dimension of being stateless or an emigrant dealt with by Adrian Melis, as a tourist feature, situates us on a touristic performative circuit from a stance of marginality.

The effect of the visible and underground economies or the instrumentalization of spaces is revealed in four artistic works produced during the last two years. Daniel Gasol proposes a historical review based on an artist's residency in Alaró (Mallorca), Irene Pittatore has centred on workers in the tourism sector in a city transformed into pure service for tourists - Venice -, the Idensitat collective, activated by Gaspar Maza and Ramon Parramon, explored semi-deserted places conditioned by seasonality, whilst at an opposite pole, Ana A. Ochoa analyses the strategies linked to the luxury investments that transform things public into things private, as has occurred with the operations carried out in the city of Miami.

A transformation that turns the photographs of the coastline and adjoining areas explored by Àngel Marcos into an archaeology of the present, which foretells the standardisation of the landscape. Tourism imagery, group identity and tourist stereotypes transport us to a different focus of those who use the image as a resource. In the expanded field of the photographic, Ochoa, Marcos and Trillo have enabled us to produce, within the exhibition space, new forms of interpretation of their work based on the archives of the "Ciutat de vacances" assignment.

The figurehead, in this setting of comings and goings, is the host, whilst the guest, cloned in his or her tribal variables, photographs and is photographed in an infinite loop where attitudes, faces and the standardised use of holiday time are all one. Miguel Trillo captures gestures of the body and the epidermis of the new sun worshippers, aesthetics of young people that are repeated eternally in leisure spaces, whatever their geographic point in the world, when it is the image that embalms the hunter and

the prey, the container and the contained. In a similar sense, the same exercise is performed by Massimo Vitali when he uses photography to capture the extensions, leisure spaces with high occupational density, images that synthesize their alienating choreography in thematised leisure parks like sanctuaries. The special light given off by Vitali's photographs transports us once again to the ancestral exercise of worshipping the Sun God. Based on the installation, and deconstructing the image that blinds and guides us, Juan Aizpitarte prepares a complex exercise of synthetisation. Following the post-structuralist vision of Dean MacCannell, it is a form of apprehending the Other through symbolic representation. On this point, reference systems are fundamental. A path which is also put forward based on observation by Melissa Epaminondi, in the long travelling shot moving from the shore of a beach in Corsica.

Finally, with the aim of rethinking different study cases based on anthropology and the arts, we have introduced analyses of works and reference proposals both in the local sphere and internationally which enable us to maintain an open research group in the exhibition hall itself. To achieve this, we have enjoyed the collaboration of Jana Leo, Marc Morell, Fran Simó and Tomás Ruiz-Rivas, who have outlined their proposals to confront the different audiences and visitors to the exhibition with them.