

A FOR ARCHIPELAGO

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PEDRO
G. ROMERO

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“A group of islands united by that which separates them.” The classic definition of archipelago has proved useful in naming a series of works that are part of the project I call *Scénario*—both *mise-en-scène* and script, in the French meaning of the word—which, basically, reconsiders many of the ways in which my work confronts the idea of archive.

Of course, the scenario is the Balearic archipelago, the islands. We should also bear in mind that “*archi-*” shares an etymological root with the Greek “*arkhé*” (ἀρχή, meaning ‘start or origin’, the beginning or first element of all things), from which the word “archive” also originates; as well as the fact that “*-pelago*” originally means “sea”, i.e. the archipelago—the primary sea—that is now the Aegean Sea, an archipelago of archipelagos. By association, “*pleiad*”, namely a diversity of chosen things, also originates from there. In other words, our use of “archipelago” could be translated as an archive of different archives united, precisely, by that which separates them.

Ever since Casa Planas invited me to visit its archive a few years ago—back in pandemic times—I’ve been exploring the islands with the idea of taking notes for what could become a film. This idea is not only to do with the fact that lately I’ve been busy making films, though partly. The cinematographic interests me because of this primary idea of setting pictures in movement, bringing them onto the stage, broadening their field of vision, giving a time to their places. This is essentially what I also do with the pictures I take of this or that place, from this or that archive. In this respect, what I am showing here is the basic process of my imagination. There is a picture and, as Walter Benjamin wanted, a caption to complement it, direct it, move it in a particular direction. And that’s what these works

Pedro G. Romero, EB. Archipelago (Archipelago).
Melba Levick, Port of La Savina, Joven Dolores, 1970s.
Courtesy Arxiu d’Imatge i So de Formentera (AISF)

are, pictures with overgrown, overblown, overdeveloped captions. In fact, there is an abusive element in this use of texts against images. I say “against” not in a negative sense, though that too, but also as the idea of placing myself very close up against the picture, like when they say you are up against the wall, it means you are touching it. This is in fact how the text-image relationships function in the pieces I am exhibiting here. This is how they have always functioned in my work. I remember now—I don’t know who said—that the best gasoline to burn pictures is words. And there’s something of this, too, something that comes from before, from my work on image and iconoclasm under the title *Archivo F.X.*, and went on for more than twenty years, from the late 20th century.

And another thing, something I found, on those visits to Casa Planas of course. The chaotic, mixed-up model, the organised mess I found there, served me as a model to look through other archives in Mallorca, Menorca, Ibiza and Formentera. The primary task of Casa Planas was obviously to keep and circulate the photographs of Josep Planas. It is an impressive archive that details with military precision the urban and tourist development on the island of Mallorca what will soon be a century ago. This record, this portrait, metre by metre, of how the capital has spread around the territory of the island, is brutal. Overwhelming, I would say, like the speculative, extractive, exploitative experience it portrays. You can see how a specific place, the island of Mallorca, is shredded by the machinery of progress, and you can see it in real time, second by second, in thousands of photographs, slides, postcards and all kinds of pictorial work. So, alongside this we also have, by the hundred, by the thousand, photographs Planas himself acquired here and there, and this material was also awaiting classification. Piled up, filling several boxes and folders. With no index, with lots of annotations, after passing through thousands of hands that had, so to speak, shuffled

and reshuffled these pictures. Then I thought all that mass acted as a kind of subconscious of the main archive, with a kind of shapeless magma pulsating in it—the Spanish word for shapeless, *informe*, can also mean ‘report’—holding many of the keys to something unknown, but which I was interested in looking at. This way of working, this model for doing things, is also what guided me as I went on to look at other archives.

It’s worth listing them. In Palma, as well as Casa Planas, the Arxiu de la Col·lecció Josep A. P. de Mendiola, the Arxiu Vicenç Matas, which was in Binissalem, the Arxiu Miquel Font i Cirer and the *Última Hora* and *Diario de Mallorca* collections. On Menorca, Menorca-CIM Arxiu d’Imatge. On Ibiza, the Institut d’Estudis Eivissencs, the Arxiu d’Imatge i So of the island government and the Arxiu Històric d’Eivissa. On Formentera, the Arxiu d’Imatge i So de Formentera and the Josep Juan Juan collection, deposited at Neli’s jeweller’s shop. Then I had to look things up at the MNAC and in the Filmoteca de Catalunya, both in Barcelona, in the Biblioteca Nacional de España in Madrid, in the Archivo Luce de Roma, in Italy, and in the Bundesarchiv Filmarchiv in Koblenz, in Germany. As well as archives, second-hand bookshops and markets were sources of information. And of course Laura Jurado—I’ll talk about her assistance later—and other guides like the historian Miquel López Gual, who helped me on Menorca, or the designer Manolo García, who showed me around Ibiza.

And in all of them I saw, observed, read photo captions, and as things came to mind, I wrote them down. That’s all there was to it. The way I went about it was nothing other than that. That’s what I did. A dilettante, perhaps, a passer-by, an opportunistic *flâneur* looking curiously here and there. But there was a reason for it, it’s true, a kind of excuse to do all this nosing around. This *leitmotiv* or *McGuffin* corresponds to the point of view, an always eccentric perspective of *flamencos*, *gitanos*, itinerant workers,

migrants, nomads, exiles and other dangerous classes of people who have inhabited these islands. Nothing systematic, of course, but then again, the logic of the archive does its job. Perhaps the thing took off before Es Baluard's invitation to exhibit this work, even before the invitation to Casa Planas. After putting on together with María García Ruiz at CentroCentro in Madrid and La Virreina in Barcelona, the exhibition "Máquinas de vivir. Flamenco y arquitectura en la ocupación y desocupación de espacios" [Machines for Living: Flamenco and Architecture in the Occupation and Vacating of Spaces], between 2017 and 2018, a series of works about how flamenco and the *gitanos* understood space in the 1970s, with diversions into the situationist avant-garde, social architecture and experimental theatre of those years, I received an email from Laura Jurado, a journalist and researcher who was studying the *gitano* presence on Mallorca. Apart from discussing the many interests we had in common, Laura showed me the film *Amén romaní*, made in 1968 by the young Pere Planells and Francesc Joan about the enclaves of Son Banya, created to contain the *gitanos* kicked out of the centre of Palma. The film is experimental in many ways. They have something crazy, a kind of stylistic loan from the Barcelona School, but also something Buñuellesque, like the episode in which the two *gitano* child stars are driven out by the gargoyles from Palma cathedral after seeing an endless decoration made up of cold cuts, meat paste and ham on the ceiling. And the mysterious reference that gives the film its title is priceless, featuring Mari Carmen Torcuato, a Bolivian actress and dancer who, in the film, plays a *gitana*. Her entrance into the Barbarella discotheque, dancing to the sound of Jimi Hendrix, the psychedelic tone of the scene, altogether they prefigured many of the darker roles Son Banya was to play on the game board of the island's tourist industry. I recognise that this film, as well as the chaos of Casa Planas, helped me to realise what I should not do.

As a map, or as a guide, I've used, of course, *Viaje a Cotiledonia* [Journey to Cotiledonia], by the master Cristóbal Serra, especially since I discovered that old "germanía" argot—for we cannot strictly speaking call it Gypsy or Romany language—had been one of his anecdotal inspirations. The book is amazing, harking back to some literary works to which I am devoted, for example *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift, a fabulous satire that also stands as an example of children's literature, or *Phantom Africa* by Michael Leiris, another great book in which imagination serves to scrutinise and distance the people and customs portrayed. But of course, Cristóbal Serra's self-confessed tribute to the compendia of the Gypsy and Spanish languages published in the late 19th and early 20th centuries captivated me forever. I had already used his *Guía para el lector del Apocalipsis* [A Reader's Guide to the Apocalypse] as the basis for *El final de este estado de cosas* [The End of This State of Things], a show premiered by Israel Galván in 2008. But I had been a passionate reader of Cristóbal Serra since long before that. I discovered him through the *Antología del humor negro español: del Lazarillo a Bergamín* [Anthology of Spanish Black Humour: from Lazarillo to Bergamín], which he created as an answer to André Breton, which I think is itself significant. Cristóbal Serra has therefore accompanied me in many senses on my journey around these islands.

[As an almost secret footnote I should point out that all the pieces are ordered according to the categories laid down by Ramon Llull for his *thinking machine*, which according to Cristóbal Serra was nothing more or less than a kind of secularised Kabbalah, that is to say, Artificial Intelligence, like our computers or ChatGPT, no big thing.]

Then, of course, an artist like Helios Gómez reappears, whom I've studied a great deal and who in 1929 appeared as an extra in Berlin in the film *Die Schmugglerbraut von Mallorca* [The Smuggler's Bride of Mallorca]. Then in 1936, early in

the Spanish Civil War, he recruited a group of *gitanos* in Barcelona to join the Bayo Column, whose aim was to liberate Ibiza and Mallorca, held by the Nationalist forces, so they would return to Republican legality. How could one not be struck by this fabulous—in both senses of the word—expedition? The catalyst, however, was another picture. The photograph by Oriol Maspons *La gitana y los santos* [The *Gitana* and the Saints], looks as though it might have been taken on his trip to Ibiza in 1956. The light suggested this, but in fact the photo could have been taken anywhere else in Spain. What astonished me wasn't so much the quality of the photography or the place, but the fact that both narratives were familiar to me, the iconoclasm—with those mutilated saints—and the *gitanos*—my interest in whom came from my work with flamenco—were put together in the same picture. And there was Helios Gómez again, taking part in the attack on Portocristo that, apart from the corpses, left so many broken images. This may be thread that lasts the longest through this project, as it also runs through the different pictures taken of this iconoclast on Menorca, and even on Ibiza. It also comes together with other readings, the denunciation of the Italian fascist Conte Rossi by Georges Bernanos in *Les Grands Cimetières sous la Lune* [published in English as *A Diary of My Times*], the grotesque description of all this by Miguel Dalmau in *La Noche del Diablo* [The Night of the Devil] and, decidedly, the letter Simone Weil sent to the French writer after reading the descriptions in his book. Weil was impressed that a traditionalist Catholic like Barnanos, prepared to support the coup launched from Africa by the Spanish military, dared to make such explicit criticism. This confession not only led him to openly discuss the crimes uncovered during his days in the republican Durutti column, but also to conclude that political criticism must be present, denouncing the errors and crimes of one's own side rather than those of the enemy, who you already know is

the enemy. Rather than the propaganda and broad strokes of the pamphlet, real politics looks at the blood on one's own hands, only then does it have value and, importantly, only then can we talk of politics. The rest is war, violence, collaborationism, whatever we want to call it.

Obviously, the whole matter of reconstructing stories through the different photographs made me think of Vicente Valero's writings about the time Walter Benjamin spent on the islands. Benjamin, I think, raised better than anybody half of the problems those of us who work with images—and not just images, of course—still have today. Having him as a certain shadow on much of the ground I trod, he has certainly left his mark. However, there are other protagonists circulating beneath these images. I don't know, there's Robert Graves or Lola Flores, Chamaco and Richard Wright, Peret and Sebastiana Maldonado, the *gitana* tried by the Inquisition in 1596 for telling fortunes, there's Lisa, the Hungarian portrayed by nearly all the costumbrist painters in Palma in the twenties, and also Niño Chocolate, the hippies and other heroes and martyrs of the counter-culture. There are other films, too, the terrible—in both senses of the word—*Black Jack*, jointly directed by Julien Duvivier and José Antonio Nieves Conde in 1950, and a classic, *F for Fake* (1973) by Orson Welles, with scenes shot by François Reichenbach on Ibiza, a film that I have shown many times as a paradigm of what contemporary art is. There are traditional dances from Ibiza, the folk music of Menorcan band Trajinada, and the version of the *Song of the Sibyl* by Tomas Perrate has accompanied me on many a walk. Oh, and Vicenç Albertí i Vidal with his extraordinary version of *The Barber of Seville*.

I would also like to highlight the work with two printers that has of course gone beyond mere technical services. Reflecting on how the pictures I took from the different archives were to circulate, I fell back on previous experiences, especially the prints for *The New Aberdeen Bestiary*,

a project I presented in 2020 at Peacock, an institution devoted to engraving techniques in Aberdeen, Scotland. Then, working together with Filiep Tacq, we considered what we could do, the different possibilities for developing in the broadest sense of the word, developing in the sense of making photographed pictures appear, or rather reappear. Usually, work with pictures in the archive involves, precisely, making the pictures themselves appear, disappear and reappear. With this process in mind, with Filiep Tacq I looked at different printers and printing possibilities to arrive at a piece of work in two directions, forwards and backwards, in terms of producing these same pictures. On the one hand, with Esment, we've slowed down the production line to make the originals, and on the other, with the newspaper printer *Última Hora* we've speeded up printing to have, so to speak, all the pieces printed so that visitors can take the whole exhibition home with them for free. Amadip Esment describe themselves as a foundation employing assistants with intellectual or social disabilities. In the way it works, rather than paternalism, we find a logic that in many ways goes against the prevailing productivism in printing, growing precisely in way that other companies mechanise for the sake of profitability. This means that the manual side can come first in the work chain: *esment* in Catalan means (among other things) 'care', 'attention'. So, what we did with them was to go backwards, so to speak, in the Benjaminian sense of the word, to use technical reproduction to create originals, if we can call these editions this, or at least products that function as originals. Therefore, the machines designed to produce thousands of copies only print a few, which go straight into a manual production process and are cut, assembled, glued, sewn; in short, all the artisan work that is expected of *bricoleur* workers, champions of untamed thought. In the opposite direction, we worked with the newspaper printer *Última Hora*, the oldest on the island

and the place that now prints all the press on Mallorca, including the competition, as well as media from mainland Spain and even tabloids from Britain and Germany. With them we made a democratic version. I don't know whether to reduce the word to a simple matter of numbers, but the idea is to be able to hand out thousands of copies to visitors to the exhibition at Es Baluard for them to take away a substantial part of what is going on there, which is course set up in a different way, but substantially the same. Thus, in a way we can say, to return to the start of this piece, that with Esment we are doing the *mise-en-scène* and with *Última Hora* the script, recovering the meaning I want to give to the word *scénario*.

In itself, my work tries to relate different, distinct, separate things through what they have in common. Hence my longing for the archipelago. In many ways, the chance encounter of the umbrella and the sewing machine on the dissection table is not that at all; Lautréamont's poetic power lies in precisely this, in that, even though it isn't obvious, there are connections, lines relating the two elements that the phrase puts together. Putting them together in many ways means putting them on stage. And in this sense, the theatrical logic of my work, theatre without theatre, of course, in a way organises all this circulation, all this flow, everything we call "relations". I have a high regard for what the French call *intermittents du spectacle* (meaning occasional, casual workers in entertainment), though here it has a different sense, of course. Thus, we could say that this is an occasional, stuttering, intermittent project—in fact, this is the archipelago.

Otherwise, apart from the exhibition, the project is accompanied by a film screening on 7th September, of the first films made by Pedro G. Romero: the feature-length *La película* [The Film] (2005), a special version de *Perros callejeros* (released in English as *Street Warriors*), with Paul B. Preciado, Marina Garcés, Marisa García, Valeria Bergalli,

Deborah Fernández, Eva Serrats and Pamela Sepúlveda, and the short *Los excéntricos* [The Eccentrics] (2018). And there is yet another part, *Arxipèlag* [Archipelago], a stage piece created together with Mariantònia Oliver, Perrate, Los Gemelos de Korea and a group of boys and girls from the neighbourhood of El Hoyo.

Pedro G. Romero, CB. Vacío (Nihilism). →
Untitled. Photograph: P.G.R. (Máquina P.H.)



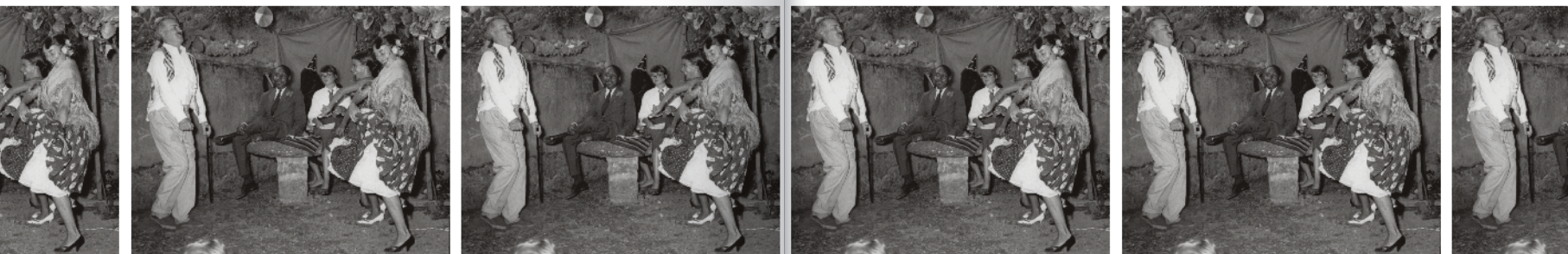
En los planos aéreos hay siempre una extraña sensación de vacío. Ese espacio vacío que no se ve si no es desde el aire, les confiere a estos planos algo interesante, algo semejante a la página en blanco, y por eso muchas historias comienzan así, llegando a la nada, donde puede empezar a escribirse todo. Se trata de un vacío político, también, algo que posibilita el ojo de la técnica. La fotografía aérea nos hace comprender que la mirada de Dios omnipotente no existe. Se trata de aviones o satélites o drones. La técnica seculariza pornográficamente, con una objetividad que asusta, con una mirada que siempre da terror. Lo que media entre el punto de vista y la tierra es nada. En los principios de la modernidad la soberanía de origen divino fue sustituida, secularizada se dice también, por la idea de pueblo. Pero, en realidad, ese espacio quedó vacío. No había nada que lo ocupara. En realidad nunca lo ha habido, dirían los ateos. Pensemos en la imagen de la página en blanco, cuando todavía es posible escribirlo todo. El pueblo, mejor dicho, el populacho, es decir la parte del pueblo a la que se le niega ser pueblo, sabe bien de este vacío y lo llena, desde siempre, tiempo inmemorial, con una imaginación desbordante. Cuando no hay leyes todo es posible. Llegamos a Menorca y dice el libro: «El lado oriental son pobletes lo que tiene. Allí es ver tierra llana y taragozas de nada». No es casualidad que en este viaje lleve en la mochila como libro principal el *Viaje a Catiledonia* de Cristóbal Serra. Esa imaginación, acaso, solo puede escribirse cuando te das cuenta de que la página está en blanco, de que no hay nada. El saber teológico de Serra, curiosamente, se funda quizás en la angustia que le produce esa nada. Es curioso que Serra refiera ciertos libros de jerga, los libros medio inventados que Rafael Salillas, Tineo Rebolledo o Barsaly Dávila ofrecieron como apuntes de caló, la lengua de los gitanos, como punto de partida de su viaje. En realidad, son tratados de jerga, de lenguas de las clases delincuentes, y no es casualidad que los autores fueran policías, jueces y el director de una cárcel. A los gitanos no solo se les negaba una lengua propia sino que se les atribuía un lenguaje medio dadaísta, sin sentido, o mejor aún, el exacto lenguaje del mundo al revés. Es habitual que las novelas realistas se pierdan, a menudo, intentando reproducir el habla real de la gente. Las novelas de los bajos fondos o del lejano mundo rural. Se pierden, sí, se desfondan. La jerga, las hablas y los dialectos lo convierten todo en mito y fantasía. Le pasa a Joyce, le pasa a Faulkner, lo escucha literalmente Jean Rhys en *Archo mar de los Serpientes*. El realismo no es más que una convención burguesa, un lenguaje que se lo debe todo a la ley, un espacio de consenso, tantas veces miserable. Lo que habla por debajo, cuando se escucha, vuelve hacer del mundo un lugar impenetrable. Eso es lo que ponían nuestros policías en boca de sus reos, los gitanos. Es lógico que el disparate etimológico y la eufonía onomatopéyica que esconden esos tratados encendieran la desbordante imaginación de Serra. Por eso, las apenas noventa páginas de este libro son nuestra guía. Un poco como cuando los del Colectivo Situaciones, sociólogos marxistas argentinos de rigor insuperable, usaban las disparatadas novelitas de César Aira para adentrarse en el mundo de Villa Miseria, los barrios de chavolos que acogen en los suburbios de Buenos Aires a los parias de la tierra. Aquí todavía no hay parias: «En el centro de la región oriental se encuentran lugares que jamás se libran de la miseria».



Pedro G. Romero, DBC. Weil (Armas), *Iglesia de Sant Francesc, Guerra Civil, Maó*. Photograph by unknown author.
Luis Alejandre. Arxiu d'Imatge i So de Menorca-CIM Collection

Pedro G. Romero, FH. Espai (Architecture). *Untitled*.
Photograph by Josep Juan Juan. Courtesy of Fons Josep Juan Juan





Pedro G. Romero, HC. Graves (Choreography). Reportage on Robert Graves' party, 1958. Photograph by Josep Planas. Courtesy of Arxiu Planas © Arxiu Planas

Pedro G. Romero, HD. Dance (Choreography). Ball pagès [Peasant dance], 1960. Photograph by Albert Schwarz [Eivissa, 1960. Long-term loan in the Institut d'Estudis Eivissencs]



Rotary Printer. Still from the film on the newspaper *La Última Hora*'s workshop, 1921, directed by Rafael Balbi Muñoz.
 Courtesy of Arxiu del So i de la Imatge de Mallorca (ASIM)
 Working session for "A for Archipelago", Esment

Pedro G. Romero, *La película* [The Film], 2005. Video, colour, sound, duration: 87'. With Paul B. Preciado, Marina Garcés, Marisa García, Valeria Bergalli, Deborah Fernández, Eva Serrats and Pamela Sepúlveda. Courtesy of the artist

Pedro G. Romero, *Los excéntricos* [The Eccentrics], 2018, duration: 7'. Courtesy of the artist



Pedro G. Romero, *Arxipèlag* [Archipelago], 2023.
 With the collaboration of Mariantònia Oliver, Perrate,
 Los gemelos de Korea, CEIP Es Secar de la Real and
 the boys and girls from the neighbourhood of El Hoyo



IMAGES AS SCENES

Andrea Soto Calderón

What if all the density of images were at stake
 in the fold that closes over an eye when it blinks?

A process is never perceived in its entirety; no one can position themselves at the exact point where they can see it all. The method of the scene operates by cropping and configuring a field of vision that is determined according to the relation it has with the situation it shapes. A scene is not an exclusive element of theatre and therefore limited to it. We can speak of scene in the framing of a photograph that introduces a disproportion between the frame and its subjects, in the decision of how they are inserted within a delimited area; in a film that introduces a very long shot; or also in the landscape that disfigures a place as something given and moves it towards that which has been produced historically. Henceforth questions arise based on how we relate to that specific set of circumstances, what capacity to appear we are configuring and what sort of operation can alter the order of what is given.¹

A scene is not an allegory constructed to illustrate an idea; a scene is, first and foremost, an encounter. This understanding helps to avoid thinking of images as fixed entities or units, while also conceiving them as displacements of scenes and redefining their status. When you show something, it becomes necessary to show many things, because what creates an image is not a single element or index that describes the whole that said image brings together. What creates an image is the movement that connects, the vibration in which *something* different emerges, which is what is moving.

1. Jacques Rancière. *El trabajo de las imágenes. Conversaciones con Andrea Soto Calderón*. Madrid: Casus Belli, 2022, 46.

To think of images as scenes is a practice that consists of surrendering oneself to what is being thought, to become part of its movement. Scenes enable the conditions of possibility for words, forms and rhythms to create a surface. Scenes inscribe a possibility onto the world. Conflict is exposed by creating the scene of its exposure, a small machine that weaves its own sensitive community and makes that fabric thinkable. Thus, scenes suppose a different way of asking, as well as a commitment to engendering appearances, creating their own limits through a play of relations that does not follow a functional nomadism, as if we were part of a path that has expanded.

In “A for Archipelago”, Pedro G. Romero draws upon the classic definition of *archipelago* as a group of islands united by that which separates them. Based on this idea he develops a series of works that take on the provisional name of *Scénario*, a common noun that allows him to *take sides with* the scene and reconsider various ways of approaching the idea of archive. The problem posed by the concept of archipelago is that of finding the passages between such diverse sets of work, a challenge to the ability to know without an object. Perhaps that is why one of the many questions that drives this research is: What is the minimum relationship needed to establish a link?

While our eyes are diverted towards the image that outlines and escapes, we can diagonally read a sentence by Elias Canetti in *The Agony of Flies*: “All leaps in knowledge occur sideways; the way knights move on a chessboard. Anything that grows in a straight line and in a predictable manner is without significance. It is the skewed and particular, the lateral knowledge that is decisive.” It can be read as a declaration of principles, a way of doing things that proceeds by leaps: images that leap from one place to another, from a street market to the Sa Porta flea market in Palma, Mallorca; photographs that confront us with bodies that lean from a height almost level with the roof, glide through

the streets glimpsing a party that keeps itself hidden and then evaporate together with the lyrics of a song that comes out of the mouth of a child shivering from the cold.

We could say that the scenes Pedro G. Romero articulates are “scenes that ignore one another and signal to each other”.² They are not overly concerned with what each of them does and how they interact with the others, but are intensely committed to the situations they shape, even out of the corner of their eyes, opening up their folds, prolonging them, adding layers of times and experiences that they accumulate or could well accumulate. Stoking the survival of images to prevent them from becoming enclosed once captured. I recently realised that, contrary to what Jacques Rancière maintains, a simulacrum does not so much indicate an opposition to the real; rather it identifies those images that carry within themselves their own death, that have no afterlife, that give in to their own emptiness, which is the emptiness of commodities: images that are incapable of generating new images. Marie-José Mondzain has thought a lot about these equivalences of the relationship between images and power and the conversion of images into money, and how they relate to bodies: “The immaterial danger of the image as ghost, as virtual apparition, is dragged by iconoclasm to its condition of body, of organ, of thing.”³

Thinking in terms of images does not consist of critically examining certain propositions; a deeper and more superficial movement is necessary: to be suspicious of what is offered to us as true and to introduce a distinguishing element. As we can see, this involves a paradoxical movement that creates its depth on the surfaces that form and inform us. What is considered true is a set of beliefs that we have

2. Michel Foucault. *Theatrum Philosophicum seguido de Repetición y diferencia*. Barcelona: Anagrama, 1995, 47 and 15.

3. Pedro G. Romero. *Mercadillo (Armas)* [Street Market (Weapons)]. Es Baluard, 2023.

been forgotten they are, so it is necessary to “know about the conditions and circumstances under which the values grew up, developed and changed”,⁴ and to understand the conditions of origin and birth, but based on the active force of the distance of those entanglements. Therefore, as Agustín García Calvo once said: “Money is the lie of all lies, that’s why it requires so much faith. Much less than papers: that’s simple in comparison. The Universal Computer Network criss-crossing the markets from Tokyo to Melbourne, now that’s Money, and it has no body at all, nor the slightest appearance; that’s why it requires so much faith. It can only be sustained by faith, by credit.”⁵

It is not only necessary to undo the knots of beliefs, in order to recover the struggles, the memories, the processes, the contradictions, the particularities that have not so much been erased as neglected; it is necessary to introduce bodily rhythms, pulses that configure the possibility of that experience. Reality is not generated through the immediate contact with ideas. Its conditions of possibility have to be produced. Life is full of habits, a scaffolding is necessary, a framework to be able to introduce “what is no longer or is yet to be, or even what has never existed and can perhaps never exist except as an image”.⁶

Historically, images have based a fundamental part of their visual power on resemblance. But a considerable part of the work of images is to create new links; moreover, a significant part of images destroys any possibility of comparison. To proceed by scenes introduces the capacity

4. Friedrich Nietzsche. *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, 7.

5. Agustín García Calvo. “Un día, fe”. In: Pedro G. Romero. *El fantasma y el esqueleto. Un viaje, de Fuenteberidos a Hondarribia, por las figuras de la identidad*. Vitoria-Gasteiz: Diputación Foral de Álava in collaboration with Sala Amárica, 2000, 591.

6. Michael Goddard. *The Cinema of Raúl Ruiz: Impossible Cartographies*. New York: Wallflower Press, 2013, 5.

of a non-correspondence with our usual objects of perception, but not based on a privilege for amazement, but on a certain imbalance: “a scene is not put together as an imitation of reality, on stage a double reality is constructed, and in order to show itself as such, it must first take care of destroying any possibility of imitation”.⁷ It is not a question of life being a sham, “it is a question of the complexity of the diagram of the positions that make living possible”.⁸ Therefore, the stage is also the place where other forms of life are rehearsed. We could respond to Pedro’s much-loved reference to Ramón Gómez de la Serna with Silverio Lanza’s view that “the essence of his art is in undoing, not in removing, as the grain of wheat is undone to create new flour”.⁹

To work based on this approach to images is to go against a logic that places them in a reality hidden behind appearances: “the choice of scene is the choice of a singularity, with the idea that a process is always understood by going deeper into what is at stake in a singularity”.¹⁰ A scene’s function consists, precisely, in connecting that which apparently has no connection or that needs its appearance to be produced in order to enjoy the possibility of existence. Therefore, creating scenes also involves working with appearances, and in this process, appearance is obviously not the opposite of reality. The movement is not between the space of the cavern and the place of truth, it is that of one appearance against another. A framework that goes from singing, telling a story, producing a shock, introducing a quote or feeding the desire to lead us towards another image. It is about being on the surface of things.

7. Pedro G. Romero. “Actores, situaciones, desenlaces: La máquina teatral y el teatro: escenas subalternas en el Estado español”. In: *Un teatro sin teatro*. Barcelona: MACBA, 2007, 47.

8. Idem.

9. Ibid., 51.

10. Jacques Rancière and Adnen Jdey. *La méthode de la scène*. Paris: Lignes, 2018, 11.

It is on the surface that resistance is played out, rehearsing a movement, open to and opening up an occurrence.

An image is connected to the eye that sees it, hence the responsibility of images to create a gaze that does not dominate a scene, that can glide around and is able to transform the eye that observes it. In this case, the exhibition seems to be inviting us to engage in a physical encounter between the lateral gaze and the blinking eye, as if all the density of images were at stake in the fold that closes over an eye, in the relation that is produced between what we look at and what looks at us. Therefore, as I mentioned previously, it is not about what an image hides nor a search for what lies behind an image. If there is a behind, it would be in the manner of what remains around a conversation. The truth of objects is expressed precisely on their surface.¹¹

it is not how deep but how *jondo*

Montage opens up the possibility of a procedure that enables the construction of a memory that does not understand its connection as a relation to depth, as if it were linked to a three-dimensional deposit, but rather by extension, to a sort of superficial deposit.¹² Hence, getting rid of the logic of representation has less to do with renouncing representation than with the ways in which a connection is established. Montage is a procedure that operates on the surfaces, through frames that establish a vision of reality. Images understood as such perform the opposite exercise to that of synthesis. When we look at images, we do not see

11. Susan Buck-Morss. "Estudios visuales e imaginación global". In: José Luis Brea (ed.). *Estudios visuales. La epistemología de la visualidad en la era de la globalización*. Madrid: Akal, 2005, 145–159.

12. Nelly Richard and Jaime Muñoz. "Entrevista a Eugenio Dittborn", 6th Franco-Chilean Video Art Festival. Santiago de Chile: Instituto Chileno-Francés de Cultura, 1986 (catalogue without page numbers).

fully constituted objects, but objects in the process of creation. The structure is torn, and that is also the materiality or resistance of images.

Jeff Wall stated that one must not choose "between fact and artifice", but "working only in the shadow of choice".¹³ I would not say that Pedro works in the shadows of this choice, but he does introduce zones of opacity to create a mechanism of thought that questions the image we are looking at and the text we are reading. The work is in motion, as is the question of how we relate to these representations. Even though the images he captures are photographs, in many cases neglected by the banal everydayness of the facts, it is suddenly as if the music of Tragicomedy's passacaglia were playing again, inscribed in a wider landscape where young people can almost be seen walking down the cobblestone streets humming along to the tune of: "Her mother says to her, crying: Roseta, are you feeling better?" It is not a staging, it is a scene, the notion staggering to lean towards its own indeterminacy, entertaining itself with things. Entertaining oneself, as a way of straying from the path of meaning.

Referring to what Pedro says, analysing another of the images he attributes to the category of nihilism, a photograph taken in the 1970s in Alaior, in the vicinity of what was once the Gangaria Inglesa, in which street musicians are seen singing in a sort of second-hand market. The thing is that the musicians are wearing a type of fake nose, a clown-like touch that was quite common in this kind of proceeding, but the lighting of the space and the coincidental point of view make their noses lengthen and shorten as the instant of each photograph evolves. It is difficult for the camera to capture this effect, which in the snapshot seems casual. But that is the point of this shot, to achieve, by means

13. Jeff Wall. *Selected Essays and Interviews*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2007, 181.

of natural lighting and without special effects, the growing and shrinking of their noses, just like in Collodi's *Pinocchio*: "It is not that Pinocchio lies, what is manifested in the continuous growing and shrinking of his wooden feature is the mobile nature of truth, its malleability, its continuous 'performative' evolution."¹⁴

When Friedrich Nietzsche proposes the genealogical method, he begins by stating that "all long things are difficult to see, to see round."¹⁵ Therefore, it is necessary to go around them. In opposition to lines of thought that seek to go straight to the point, it is necessary to recover a practice that is perhaps one of the most forgotten, for which one must practically become a cow: ruminating. To ruminate is not only to chew something over and over again, but to chew that which returns from the cavities of the stomach in order to shred it once again. With this Nietzsche seems to indicate that the genealogical method does not consist in making general abstractions, but neither is it enough to closely inspect what one wants to analyse. It is insufficient to just read and look, but rather a "long, brave, diligent, subterranean seriousness"¹⁶ is required, a jovial approach, that is, an ability to go back over that which has already been digested, extract it without completely pulling it away from the organism it is a part of, and go through it with totally new questions.

In *El fantasma y el esqueleto* [The Ghost and the Skeleton], Pedro G. Romero argues that in some way an artist has to be deep in the pit, boring a hole, to go around it from there, "filling it in, even at the risk of burying oneself alive".¹⁷

14. Pedro G. Romero. *Pinocchio (Nihilismo)* [*Pinocchio (Nihilism)*]. Es Baluard, 2023. This paragraph reproduces a fragment of what is written next to the image. The complete quoted text has been omitted for the sake of rhythm.

15. Friedrich Nietzsche. *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, 18.

16. Ibid., 9.

17. Pedro G. Romero. *El fantasma y el esqueleto*. Op. cit., 30.

We could say that Pedro's work proceeds by ruminating not so much on a subject, but on the mechanics from which modes of life are formed, probing the vortices provoked by the machines that undermine reality and how those machines can enable other uses. At times that has involved creating his own institutions, but in most cases his choices are based on lesser procedures.

Minor literature, as expressed by Franz Kafka in his *Diaries*, is the affirmation that it is not enough to invent a language, it is necessary to invent a machine, in his case a literary one, whose aim is to dismantle the political apparatus. It is not enough to dispute a meaning, it is necessary to put other functions into operation, to attend to the unformed expressive matter that requires a specific procedure. Hence, attending to what is *minor* involves producing the modes of this approach, the modes of its consistency.

We have known for some time that images do not represent reality, but their machinic procedures remain in their hidden beginnings: "Images belong to the interworld, or rather, they introduce a sensitive and vibrant politics into the world. In order to be able to think up a world, unassignable images must, like invisible razors, cut through everything that constitutes a mass, a block, a compactness, a continuity. Even though it might not seem a big deal, images are nevertheless seismic events, which make bodies tremble and the earth crack."¹⁸

It is not enough then to invent images, it is necessary to invent a machine, scenes that put into operation other functions that do not neglect the work of materials and the exteriority of relations. To operate strategically, even by using the spectacle.¹⁹ To shake up history, to touch its memory, to activate its relational strengths.

18. Marie-José Mondzain. *Images (à suivre): De la poursuite au cinéma et ailleurs*. Paris: Bayard, 2011, 2.

19. Pedro G. Romero. *Un teatro sin teatro*. Op. cit., 51.

C for Cow

I turn on the radio and hear the host of an esoteric programme say: “The ghost of the first cow probably saved their life, because when it crossed in front of the car it warned the driver about the next cow, this one real, which was soon to do the same thing a couple of kilometres further on.” To be honest, a news story like this smashes all my preconceptions.²⁰

20. Bernardo Atxaga. “Alfabeto sobre fantasmas en el que solo la M habla de milagros”. In: Pedro G. Romero. *El fantasma y el esqueleto*. Op. cit., 564.

AN ISLAND WITHIN AN ISLAND

Laura Jurado

An island has as many stories as there are people living on it. Even if some people never tell theirs.

D. H. Lawrence—author of *The Man Who Loved Islands*, but who said of Mallorca that it was “dull”, “silent”, yet bathed in a “permanent drowsiness” that gave it “the trance-like charm of dreams”—wrote that an island, if it is big enough, is not unlike a continent. “It has to be really quite small, before it feels like an island,” he added. But he left out, or forgot, that the emptiness that surrounds it is even more important than the land itself. An island is a piece of land surrounded by water on all sides. A place where, unlike the mainland, it is always easy to know what is within—and is *from here*—and what is without. And which, in part, constructs its own identity, its history, based on this dichotomy, on this difference between what is considered its own and what is considered foreign. And that which is foreign, which comes from the outside, rarely ceases to be so, no matter how many centuries have passed since its arrival.

The island’s *geographic exceptionality* has always seemed to attract travellers. In fact, its portrayal also draws on the outsider’s gaze. Pedro G. Romero speaks of Robert Graves, Georges Bernanos and Walter Benjamin. Everyone knows that Mallorca has crafted a large part of its image based on that quote by Gertrude Stein, today halfway between a slogan and a prophecy: “Mallorca is paradise, if you can stand it.”

As with travellers, first literature and then cinema became fascinated by *insular topoi*. Not only because of the isolation, but also precisely because of the remoteness from the mainland. Like D.H. Lawrence, Agustín Gámir and Carlos Manuel maintain that a “cinematic island” is never of large dimensions.¹

1. Gámir, Agustín; Manuel, Carlos. “La representación de las islas en el cine”. In: *Espacios insulares y de frontera, una visión geográfica*. XXIII Congress of Spanish Geographers, Palma, 2013.

Following novels, *insular topics* then fed into the moving image; and islands were successively portrayed as paradisiacal places, spaces of terror and mystery—of monsters, of lost men, of lost souls, of the end of the world—strategic enclaves, places of second chances, and even of hell. Judging by the selection of films that Pedro G. Romero has made for “A for Archipelago”, we could say that they have also been lairs—if not Edens—for criminality: from Elmyr de Hory’s forgeries in *F for Fake* to the smuggling in *Black Jack* or *Die Schmugglerbraut von Mallorca* [The Smuggler’s Bride of Mallorca].

In 1970, filmmakers Pere Planells and Francesc Joan also came to Mallorca to shoot their first film, *Amén Romani*. In fact, they were commissioned by businessman Josep Vert, who asked them to document the *social experiment* that had recently been inaugurated a few kilometres from Palma. When Planells and Joan mounted their camera atop a Citroën 2CV to film their entrance into Son Banya, they discovered before their very eyes an island within an island. In the middle of nowhere, rows of white barrack-like constructions divided into a hundred or so houses sprung from the ground. Behind them, clothes swayed on makeshift clotheslines in patios enclosed by concrete lattices. In its streets, in its doorways, there were only *gitanos* (direct descendants of the Romani people who first arrived in Spain in the 15th century). The rest of the world began several kilometres away.

“I’d never seen anything like it, and we often wandered around the Barcelona slums”, he acknowledged in an interview. The camera captured the deprivation. The ramshackle streets. The bare feet. The EMT bus lined with a Quely snack advertisement passing in front of homes where they only had four toasted chickpeas for tea. The outlines of aeroplanes could already be seen silhouetted against the sky above those single-storey houses. “It was like going from the boom of tourism to a reality that was years behind”, described the filmmaker.

I was living in Barcelona when, in 2018, the Centre de la Imatge La Virreina opened the exhibition “Machines for Living: Flamenco and Architecture in the Occupation and Vacating of Spaces”. Its curators Pedro G. Romero and María García Ruiz had translated their years of research on *gitanos* and *flamenco* into an excellent artistic project. There one could see their representations in cinema, as well as their nomad passports and anthropometric cards. But there was also a whole space dedicated to their link with architecture and urban planning. It was there that I discovered that the Son Banya enclave was not an isolated case. The exhibition included models, maps and sketches of at least half a dozen enclaves built specifically for Romani people around Europe, and which began to be constructed throughout the whole of Spain in the late 1960s. Over time, I have managed to document about thirty of them.

The exhibition was the trigger—the inciting incident—that set in motion a project I had been thinking about for years. Because Son Banya was not represented in that exhibition. Nor were the Balearic *gitanos*. What I would later discover is that their presence is also practically non-existent in scientific literature. Those who have traced the history of the *gitano* people have never really spoken of the Balearic Islands. And those who have written the history of the Balearic Islands have not included the *gitano* people in it. A double omission in which Ramon Rosselló Vaquer’s *Notes sobre gitanos i estrangers* [Notes on Gitanos and Foreigners] have been both pioneering and exceptional. No one else had trawled the archives to show that their presence in the archipelago dates back to the end of the 16th century. Because, for far too long, *gitanos* had been *the others*. The outsiders.

An island has as many stories as there are people living on it. Even if some people never get to tell theirs.

The filming of Planells and Joan’s *Amén Romani* began in Son Banya months after its inauguration. A ghetto—a “concentration camp”, according to Planells—made up of 124 allegedly provisional shelters to which *gitano* families

living in a shantytown in the Molinar area were relocated, seeing as the route of the new motorway to the airport coincided with the settlement. An enclave erected by way of paternalism to protect the touristic image of the island. “We had to suppress the ugly spectacle of shantytowns in a place so visible to the thousands of tourists who come here, at the very entrance to the city,” the civil governor went so far as to say.² It was the intermediate step between shacks and flats because “these underdeveloped people”³ needed a “long process of civic education”,⁴ everyone said, before they could live in society.

As a matter of fact, Son Banya was not, nor has it ever been, a self-built, spontaneous and voluntary settlement, but was constructed by developers—with the INGIMA association at the helm—architects, ideologists and the support of public institutions. As Cristina Botana Iglesias stresses, the “public and institutional responsibility” for the ghettoisation of *gitanos* that emerged in the late 1960s in Spain “has yet to be recognised”.⁵

It still took several decades for the Balearic *gitanos* to raise their voices. In 1983, Desarrollo Gao Caló became one of the first *gitano* associations on the Islands. By then, the idea that Son Banya was little more than a ghetto was more widespread. But, for the vast majority of people, *gitanos* became *just* that: the marginalised. You could not get more *gitano* than Son Banya. This stereotype quickly spread to the entire community. And more than half a century later,

2. Cortés, Lamberto. “Mañana serán inaugurados en Son Riera 124 albergues provisionales para familias gitanas”. In: *Diario de Mallorca*. Palma, 03/08/1969, p. 6.

3. Sabater, José. “Inauguración del poblado gitano”. In: *Diario de Mallorca*. Palma, 30/07/1969, p. 11.

4. Preliminary project for Son Riera, February 1968 (description of the preliminary project).

5. Botana, Cristina. “La promoción pública de segregación urbana”. In: *Crítica urbana: revista de estudios urbanos y territoriales*. A Coruña, 3, 12 (2020), p. 17–20.

this “transitional neighbourhood”, which should not have existed for more than a decade, has become entrenched and is sinking deeper and deeper into exclusion.

For decades, this otherness *gitanos* represented found its way into the homes of *the locals* in the form of sinister threats. “Come on! One more teaspoon. If not, I’ll call that *gitano* outside...”, Bartomeu Vallespir recalled being told as a child at home.⁶ In Ariany, Catalina Pont and Jaume Taberner said that when a child did not behave well, their parents would tell them that *gitanos* from Pou Jurá were going to come and take them away.⁷ Jaume Santandreu maintains that among *us* there has always been a “hidden and subtle” racism against the *gitano* people. A racism that is a “byproduct” of another, “accepted by the good conscience of the Mallorcan people”: racism against outsiders.⁸

An island has as many stories as there are people living on it. Even if some are never told.

The history of the *gitano* people in the Balearic Islands actually dates back to long before Son Banya. Between the end of the 16th and beginning of the 17th centuries, there is proof of their presence in Felanitx, Inca and Palma, where they soon established a small community based near the church of Sant Miquel. They had come from Valencia, Catalonia, Sardinia and even from Salamanca. In 1578, a *gitano* woman called Magdalena Bertrana was born in Inca, followed by another *gitano* woman, Francina Elvira, who was born in Felanitx in 1598. The first *gitanos* made offerings to the Mare de Déu de Lluc, but they also suffered the harassment and persecution of the Inquisition, which condemned seven *gitano* women accused of witchcraft and of casting spells.

6. Vallespir i Amengual, Bartomeu. “Han arribat els gitanos”. In: *Dijous*. Inca, 11/06/1981, p. 4.

7. Taberner, Jaume; Pont, Catalina. “Els pous públics d’Ariany”. In: *Ariany*. Ariany, 181 Sept.–Oct. 1992, p. 11.

8. Santandreu, Jaume. “Mallorca: un racisme subtil”. In: *S’Arenal de Mallorca*, 15/03/1985, p. 6.

Their arrivals increased during the 19th century. Their presence was first documented in Menorca in 1872, and before that, in Ibiza in 1869, during a time when, according to Archduke Luis Salvador, Ibizan peasants would form circles around gypsies who had recently arrived from the Iberian Peninsula so they could read their future on the palms of their hands after they left mass.⁹ This was long before the *gitano* families who arrived with Father José disembarked in Sa Penya, and even before Juan de Dios Ramírez Heredia himself—the first Spanish Member of Parliament from this ethnic group—wrote that there were no *gitanos* left in Baza because they had all migrated to Ibiza.¹⁰

Although it has not yet been possible to determine the consequences anti-*gitano* legislation had in the archipelago, we do know that it was precisely in the 19th century that the community began to suffer severe harassment. Expulsion orders were constant. They were so criminalised that it was not even necessary for them to commit a crime to be banished. Some of them were sent back as soon as they reached port, even though their papers were in order. The authorities did not even need to worry about who paid for the return ticket, as there were occasions when the shipping companies themselves offered to cover the cost.

This continuous persecution—coupled with the centuries of nomadism they had already experienced—meant that it took years for them to establish stable communities. They moved from town to town, from fair to fair, setting up their camps on the outskirts. They were boilermakers, shearers, blacksmiths, horse dealers, basket makers, they told people's fortunes and organised shows for which they even brought trained bears to Mallorca and Menorca,

9. Rosselló Vaquer, Ramon. *Notes sobre gitanos i estrangers*. Felanitx: Gràfiques Llopis, 2006.

10. ASGG. *Estudio sociológico: los gitanos españoles 1978*. Madrid: Asociación Secretariado General Gitano, 1990.

with whom they performed in Palma's bullring in 1886 and toured the streets of Inca in August 1907.

At the beginning of the 1950s, *gitano* families were already documented as having settled in a stable way in various towns on the Islands. In Mallorca, in addition to the "Mallorcan Sacromonte"—as journalist J. Maria Domènech named the district of El Molinar—the Porta de Sant Antoni became the other main area where Catalan *gitanos*, dedicated to the sale of textiles, lived together with Andalusian *gitanos*.

When the tourist boom exploded in the archipelago, the *gitanos* felt its consequences first hand. The situation became even more complicated for those who were most excluded and lived in precarious settlements. In Palma, the City Council denounced the "deplorable spectacle" of "*gitano*-ism" in the shantytowns "that so discredit the good name of this eminently touristic capital".¹¹ The city turned its gaze towards the sea and noted that a good part of the coastline of El Molinar was still occupied by these *gitano* shacks, so unattractive for a city aiming to grow in terms of luxury housing and tourists. The persecution even led to an attack in which the authorities set fire to all the shacks they came across. Little did they know, or expect, that this same settlement would become a tourist attraction, to the point of having to prohibit more coaches full of Swedes from stopping in the vicinity to capture and immortalise this allegedly "typical Spanish" scene. This "gypsy slum"—a neighbourhood that looked more like "a rubbish dump than anything else"—that existed "a stone's throw away from Palma's luxury tourism",¹² as Swedish newspaper *Söndagstidningen* described it.

But tourism also generated a voracious demand for labour, and the *gitano* community played a part. They took up street vending, performed in the *tablaos flamencos* that were

11. Order from 17 May 1958, Arxiu Municipal de Palma.

12. Translation of an article by Helge Ströhm preserved in the Arxiu Municipal De Palma.

beginning to open in the cities, worked from sunrise to sunset on the construction sites that were gradually engulfing the archipelago. And when tourism emptied the fields of day labourers, they became an indispensable workforce. The *locals* despised the countryside, its harshness. The construction and hotel industries monopolised all available personnel. The relevance and indispensability *gitano* seasonal workers attained—as the *París-Baleares* newspaper stated as early as 1971—was “clear proof that tourism does not solve everything”.¹³ “The *calés* were a great solution. Without them it would’ve been impossible to harvest”,¹⁴ the islands’ peasant farmers would say.

Historical memory—along with social, cultural and economic memory—has also ignored *gitano* memory. Little or nothing is known about the *gitanos* who lived on the Islands when the Civil War came to destroy everything. Little or nothing has been investigated about the *gitanos* who, according to Helios Gómez, arrived with the Bayo Column in Mallorca and disembarked in Portocristo. “There were *gitanos* who fought like lions on a parapet known as the Parapet of Death.”¹⁵ We do not know their names, and neither do we know if any of them were murdered and buried in the mass graves that the new Democratic Memory Law has recently begun exhuming on the Islands. Perhaps we will never know.

An island has as many stories as there are people living on it. And there are stories that deserve to be told.

13. “Campos del Puerto”. *París-Baleares* (Sept. 1971), p. 11.

14. Riutord. “Más de 300 gitanos en la recolección de la almendra”. In: *Diario de Mallorca*, Palma, 28/08/1971, p. 7–9.

15. J. F. “Los gitanos en la Guerra Civil”. In: *Crónica*. Madrid, 18/10/1936, p. 4.

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Pedro G. Romero
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