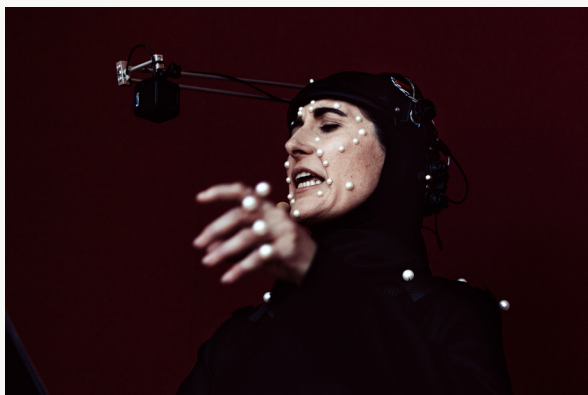


AIDS

21.09.2024–12.01.2025



A SILENCED HISTORY IN THE BALEARIC SCENE

B20

Artists: Costus, Pepe Espaliú, Robert Mapplethorpe, Pepe Miralles, Gori Mora, Joan Morey, Ocaña, Andrés Senra, Toni Socías Cladera, The Carrying Society and Agustí Villaronga.

AIDS: THE ECHO OF A WORD

Jesús Alcaide

There is always a beginning. AIDS in Spain goes back more than forty years now, when the first case was diagnosed on 5th June 1981. The pink plague, the gay cancer, the 4H disease. AIDS. An epidemic of signification¹ that is still raging. Pronouncement and action.² Desire and rage, still.

Circumscribing the history of AIDS to a specific context is complicated, as it is precisely its viralisation and the breaking down of all borders that allowed AIDS to become a universal epidemic. The history of AIDS is a collective history of names, narratives and lives. Of those who are no longer with us and of those who survive with an illness whose chronic nature and/or undetectability pose other problems for them. Biopolitics no longer differentiates between interior and exterior. As Deleuze and Guattari said in the work by Joan Morey: “Exterior i interior ja no volen dir res”.³

In recent years, in my role as a researcher into artistic practices in the Spanish context in relation to HIV and AIDS, in particular the work of artist Pepe Espaliú and the impact in the country of the action *Carrying*, run together

Joan Morey, *TOUR DE FORCE*, 2017. Performance documentation. Courtesy of the artist

1. Treichler, Paula. “An epidemic of signification.” In: Crimp, Douglas. *AIDS, Cultural Analysis, Cultural activism*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: October Book, MIT Press, 1988.

2. “Sida: pronunciamiento y acción” [AIDS: Pronouncement and Action] was the title of one of the first exhibitions about AIDS staged in Spain, curated by Juan de Nieves in 1994 and organised by the University of Santiago de Compostela.

3. [Exterior and interior no longer mean anything. (TN)]

with The Carrying Society in 1992, I have been able to talk to many artists, activists and agents linked to the associations supporting people living with HIV/AIDS, who have always had a single demand: AIDS has a history, but as in the poster by Vincent Chevalier and Ian Bradley-Perrin, *Your Nostalgia is Killing Me!*, we need to bear a reality in mind. Here and now. Thinking about AIDS today. Acting on AIDS today.

This is the beginning of a localised research project into the impact of AIDS in the Balearic Islands from the eighties to the present, just over forty years, in a narrative that, as Lebovici wrote, “can somehow exhaust all the other narratives but be just a vulnerable addition to them.”⁴

1985. A song playing. Some initials on the cover. S.I.D.A. Peor Impossible. On the front page of the newspaper *Última Hora*, on 3rd October 1985, a headline: “AIDS topples a Hollywood giant. Rock Hudson is dead.” The song plays on, now in my head: “I’m allergic to your hysteria / I come from the other side / Who am I? / Where am I? / What a terrible feeling / AIDS.”

Who am I? Where am I? Questions affected by a definition yet to be constructed. An acronym, AIDS, and a narrative found not only in the departure of those no longer with us but who built this story, but in that of this intangible archive of gestures, voices and shared stories that in some cases need reconstructing and in others to begin to be written.

4. Lebovici, Élisabeth. *Ce que le sida m’a fait. Art et activisme à la fin du XXe siècle* [What AIDS has done to me: Art and Activism at the end of the 20th Century]. Zurich/Paris: JRP/Ringier/La Maison rouge, 2017.

When I began this research I was told about silence and concealment, about the discomfort this research could cause in some cases. It is still difficult to talk about AIDS today. Today, the *Silence = Death* (1987) by Avram Finkelstein, Brian Howard, Oliver Johnston, Charles Kreloff, Chris Lione and Jorge Socarrás is back, appearing on T-shirts under a picture of a watermelon, in a reference to the Israeli genocide against the people of Palestine. Struggles that cross over, because if AIDS has taught us anything it is to think about the political meaning of affections. As Jonathan Snyder writes, “This is a political issue, but also a poetic one, though we see poetry as an act of creation able to change both its creators and the very context in which the work or action appears. This process implies a double correlative: bodies, able to move and be moved, to express affection and take collective measures for political purposes, affect and impact in the same sphere where these agents of change act.”⁵

How did artistic practices act in the Balearic Islands in this respect? How did they join the struggles and demands of associations and other agents of everyday political action? Do these relations exist today or have the convergences disappeared? Why stage an exhibition about AIDS today in an institution like Es Baluard Museu? How to approach it? Not as an answer, but as a gesture that touches on these lines, I remember some verses by Miguel Benlloch: “Only accumulation of life / Nothing else.”⁶

5. Snyder, Jonathan. “Afectividades ingobernables. La durabilidad temporal y el repertorio de acciones activistas queer en la lucha antisida en dos tiempos: Madrid, años 90 y presente.” In: López Lerma, Mónica (ed.). *Cartografías in/justas. Representaciones culturales del espacio urbano y rural en la España contemporánea*. Granada: Comares, 2024.

6. Benlloch, Miguel. *Cuerpo conjugado*. Jaén: Fundación Huerta de San Antonio, 2017.

In 1984, Group Material⁷ presented “AIDS Timeline” at the University of California Berkeley Art Museum. The collective had already used the approach of relating time and chronology in other work, such as “Timeline: A Chronicle of US Intervention in Central and Latin America,” at MOMA PS1 in New York in 1984, but in this case the idea of time, a now-time, the time of AIDS, took on a new meaning.

As one of the members of the group, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, was to write years later in the famous letter to his partner Ross, which I hear in my mind so often, “Don’t be afraid of the clocks. They are our time. Time has been so generous to us. We imprinted time with the sweet taste of victory. We conquered fate by meeting at a certain time in a certain space. We are a product of the time. Therefore, we give that credit where it is due. Time. We are synchronized now and forever. I love you.”⁸

As with interventions like *Let the Record Show* (1987) by the members of ACT UP at the New Museum in New York or work like AIDS by General Idea, this “AIDS Timeline” by Group Material has become one of those actions or installations that at a time like the present take on a new perspective moving towards a non-linear time, a queer time. As José Esteban Muñoz wrote, “Memory

7. Group Material was founded by a group of artists whose intention was to create a collaborative practice that focused their interests in art and politics. The original members of the group (a total of thirteen) included Julie Ault and Tim Rollins. By 1981 the group had shrunk to three members, but some years later it was joined by Doug Ashford (1982), Felix Gonzalez-Torres (1987) and Karen Ranspacher (1989). The history of Group Material runs from 1979 to 1996.

8. Gonzalez-Torres, Felix. *Lovers*, 1988.

is always constructed and, what is more, it is always political.”⁹

It is from that then-there, from the “AIDS Timeline” by Group Material, that research localised in the Balearic Islands began to take place, taking the Group Material installation in the way David Román wrote about the performances concerning AIDS in the 90s, as *acts of intervention*,¹⁰ inserts¹¹ in the context of the cultural policy in a situation, that of the white cube, which was still reticent about viralisation practices like those proposed by the group. *Art Is Not Enough*. Let us look outside the white cube.

Son Dureta hospital. Fourth floor. An unknown virus comes to Palma. It’s 1983. Uncertainty and fear. The media raise the alarm. Risk groups and social panic. The 20th-century epidemic. Fear and taboo. Then, something more than a sexual health issue.

Faced with this situation the struggle and organising began. Support, information, accompaniment. In 1987 ALAS was set up as the Asociación Ciudadana de Lucha contra el Sida de Palma de Mallorca [Palma de Mallorca Citizens’ Association to Combat AIDS]. Started by a

9. Muñoz, José Esteban. *Utopía queer: El entonces y allí de la futuridad antinormativa* [Queer Utopia: the Then and There of the Antinormative Future]. Buenos Aires: Caja Negra, 2020.

10. Román, David. *Acts of Intervention. Performance, Gay Culture, and AIDS*. Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998.

11. “Inserts” (1988) was the title of one of the projects by Group Material, described as an “advertising supplement” in *The New York Times*, featuring artists like Mike Glier, Jenny Holzer, Barbara Kruger, Carrie Mae Weems, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Nancy Spero, Nancy Linn, Hans Haacke, Richard Prince and Louise Lawler.

circle of people who medical reality had shown the need to construct these support spaces, ALAS started out with the idea of serving as a space for help, information and affective support for people who in those early years saw how the stigma grew in proportion to the deaths from AIDS-related complications.

In 1995 the association's statutes were changed to start setting up, as was happening throughout Spain, a specialist team of experts which is still working, hand in hand with volunteers. Campaigns like those of Serobus and Angelets, as well as actions in and around the city of Palma, such as releasing red balloons in the Plaça d'Espanya on 1st December, have constructed a history of struggle and commitment that goes on today, working and providing a range of services in areas related to sexual health.

Another landmark of activism in Palma is Siloé, an association set up in 1994 in response to a social need identified in the city's prison, where many prisoners with AIDS were condemned to die there. Founded by Llorenç Tous, the association's history began when it managed to build a refuge for six people in the neighbourhood of El Jonquet, to provide palliative care to allow its users to die with dignity.

In the year 2000, the house moved to Santa Eugènia, boosting its capacity with room for ten people. In 2002, the authorities took an interest in Siloé's work and funded half the places, this being the first time government had backed care of this kind for HIV/AIDS sufferers in the Balearic Islands. Years later, after renovation, the refuge in El Jonquet was opened as a protected flat to host five more people, its aim being to help to improve quality of life and psycho-social welfare for the people cared for by the association.

Two experiences, those of ALAS and Siloé, joined by others like that of Can Gazà, the institute to combat social exclusion headed by Jaume Santandreu, in a context like that of the Balearic Islands, where the history of struggle and commitment is still being written, like this short text, a brief note to discover and appreciate the importance of the activism by these associations in the history of AIDS.

If it is visibility that is at issue, the profound meaning of the visual imagination largely determines the way most people see every aspect of the epidemic, from health promotion to issues of discrimination, prejudice, care, treatment and provision of services.¹²

This is the challenge that has existed right from the start for contemporary art work: to make something that may be undetectable today, and for a long time was silenced and/or hidden by a stigma, visible or pictorial.

In this respect, the chronology proposed by Group Material as a reminder in "AIDS Timeline" has been interwoven with a series of art projects linked to the Balearic Islands and to questions related to the impact of AIDS from the eighties to the present, as well as others revolving around the metaphors for the illness described by Sontag, which appear submerged in films like Agustí Villaronga's *El Mar* [The Sea] or in novels like *Tallats de lluna*, by the writer from Manacor Maria Antònia Oliver.

But the fact that AIDS has been a sexual health issue with a heavy burden of social stigma means that rather than talking about AIDS we have to talk about *Sida Social* [Social AIDS], as in the work of artist Pepe Miralles.

12. Op. cit. 4, p. 28.

His work has been some of the most important in terms of giving visibility to the relations between art and AIDS, from early projects like *El poder de las palabras* [The Power of Words] (2007), a series of interventions in places used for cruising like Sa Punta de n'Amer, Es Carnatge and Es Trenc, reminding people to use condoms for preventive purposes, to projects like *Sida Social*, which took place in Palma and Manacor (2009), spaces for collaborative work and creativity with a strong social impact that flee the logic of the white cube to propose other ways of relating to the realities of HIV-positive people. Finally, thinking of the now-time, he proposes a site-specific intervention that invites us to reflect upon the disappearance of the word *AIDS* itself among some groups at national level, and into some articles that discuss whether the word should stop being used.¹³ This controversial proposition stands as a mirror to the initials that give the exhibition its title, to the AIDS that opens the exhibition, a word that is disappearing and a reality that is changing.

Another way of approaching the reality and the construction of the image of AIDS appears in the project *TOUR DE FORCE* (2017) by Mallorcan artist Joan Morey. Though using other parameters, this issue had already been present in *BAREBACK. El poder i la mort* [BAREBACK. Power and Death] (2010), a project run in the Capella de la Misericòrdia in Palma, but it was in *TOUR DE FORCE* that a narrative about the history of

13. In this respect it can be pointed out that the Stop Sida association changed its name to simply Stop, and some articles published this year suggest that the acronym is redundant and loaded with stigma and should be replaced with “advanced HIV disease.” See Núñez, I.; Piñeirúa-Menéndez, A.; Valdés-Ferrer, S. I. [et al.]. “Retiring the term AIDS for more descriptive language.” *The Lancet HIV*, March 2024.

HIV/AIDS was constructed. The series of performances are presented through a video montage that synthesises or shows some moments of that dramatic work about the history of HIV/AIDS in which a small number of participants were able to board five limousines that toured different settings in the city of Barcelona, recalling some of the contexts of signification linked to AIDS, “uncertainty”, “transmission”, “the illness”, “the theory” and “the utopian body”.

But as we were saying before, together with the history of AIDS, this timeline also features other metaphors about sexual health or illness that we have seen re-emerging or gaining importance since the covid crisis. While the realities of the two epidemics and the way they have been treated by society are radically different, we see how in the case of the work by Mallorcan artist Gori Mora, *Embrace* (2023) and *Luster* (2023), two images are presented of how to reassess distances and touch in a situation like that of the homosexual community, which is currently seeing how words like PrEP or *chemsex* are taking the spotlight off AIDS. Realities that overlap like night and day, inviting us to think about how we are bringing our affections into play.

History always has cracks. In the face of a monolithic notion of history, we know that we need to establish new approaches and interpretations. Nuances, gestures, discontinuities, overlaps, contradictions. As Gilles Clément writes, “All spatial organisation generates a neglected space,”¹⁴ and in

14. Clément, Gilles. *Manifesto of the Third Landscape*. Lund: Trans Europe Halles.

this constructed landscape, in this vulnerable addition, there are still places to explore and many voices to hear, because perhaps, as Sejo Carrascosa wrote, “Nobody will talk about AIDS when we are dead.”¹⁵

15. Carrascosa, Sejo. “Nadie hablará del sida cuando estemos muertas.” In: Vila, Fefa; Sáez, Javier (ed.). *El libro de buen amor. Sexualidades raras y políticas extrañas* [The Book of Good Love: Strange Sexualities and Peculiar Policies]. Madrid: Ayuntamiento de Madrid, 2019.



Gori Mora, *Embrace*, 2023. Oil on plexiglass, 98.5 x 120.5 cm.
Courtesy of the artist and Galeria Pelaires



Pepe Miralles, *El poder de las palabras (I)*. Intervenciones en Es Trenc, Sa Punta de n'Amer y Es Carnatge [The Power of Words (I). Interventions at Es Trenc, Sa Punta de n'Amer and Es Carnatge], Mallorca (Illes Balears), 2007. Courtesy of the artist



Rally-demonstration organised by ALAS in memory of those who have died of AIDS, Palma, 1995. Courtesy of ALAS Salut i Sexualitats



Symbolic action carried out by members of Siloé to honour the memory of María Jesús, a user who died in 2011. The action consists of the planting of a tree, in this way returning life to the earth. Courtesy of Asociación Siloé

A LEGACY THAT STILL HAS SOMETHING TO SAY: ART AND AIDS, IN CONTEXT

Juan Vicente Aliaga

Today the term *AIDS*, with all its social and individual implications, has practically disappeared from the public sphere, from the media and also from the innards of the artistic ecosystem, where it was once very much present. This silence does not mean that there are no longer many people still coping with the consequences of the illness in different parts of the world, often stigmatised and excluded.

It is necessary to think about AIDS and its representation in visual cultures and art again, not only to see what we were like and how we behaved in the eighties and nineties, at the peak of the pandemic, but also to understand the present. In this respect, it is important to make an effort to situate ourselves in the early eighties—the term AIDS was coined in September 1982—that is, in a pre-internet society in which the powers emerging from the Cold War still confronted one another and in which conservative morality was deeply rooted.

I will now try to provide some details to give an idea of how we moved gradually from discovery of the symptoms of an illness to the construction of a moral stigma associated with it and the blaming of certain groups in society. Alongside this, I will flesh out this framework of information with references to the different ways in which the art world tried to break the silence and make the public aware of the complex realities of those considered as “lepers” by a violent, discriminatory society.

Thus, as early as July 1981 the term *gay cancer* appeared in certain media in relation to some people suffering from pneumonia, immune deficiency and Kaposi’s sarcoma, one

of the most virulent symptoms of the illness. In the same year some cases were discovered of children infected with the virus, whose mothers took drugs and worked in prostitution. In January 1982 Gay Men's Health Crisis was set up in New York, the first organisation to set out to help people affected by this new illness, as yet without a name. On 11th May 1982 *The New York Times* mentioned the term GRID (Gay Related Immune Deficiency) consolidating the deliberate association of the illness with homosexual males that still persists in the popular imagination today. Other media, many of them sensationalist, but also progressive ones, echoed this tendentious but also false name. On the other hand, in the same year some cases in immune-deficient haemophiliacs were identified. In January 1983 the first cases of women infected with AIDS were reported. In the United States the first voices appeared among the gay community criticising the lack of resources for researching the causes of AIDS. In May 1983 Françoise Barré-Sinoussi and her colleagues at the Institut Pasteur in Paris reported the discovery of a retrovirus as the cause of the illness. At the same time certain media were spreading the term *4H Club* (homosexuals, heroin addicts, haemophiliacs and Haitians) to refer to risk groups, instead of talking about risky practices (unprotected sex and so on). Despite the surreal aspect of this association—are all gays, even if they do not practise unprotected sex, at risk simply because they are gay? Is the whole population of Haiti likely to catch it?—the unfair formula entered common use.

At this time the forms of contagion with AIDS were identified and other routes like food, water and air were ruled out. It is important to stress that saliva was not ruled out as a transmission agent until 1986. In a climate of uncertainty and biased information, fear overcame many parts of the population all over the planet, egged on in particular by ultra-conservative and religious media. It may appear shocking, but until 10th April 1985 the Centers for Disease Control

in the United States did not rule out that the male Haitian population was at a higher risk than others of contracting AIDS. In the same year the activist Larry Kramer published *The Normal Heart*, in which AIDS played a central role. At a time of paralysing conservatism, president Ronald Reagan mentioned AIDS for the first time in public in September 1985. This did not lead to more resources being allocated to research or preventive campaigns. Prejudices remained.

Rock Hudson, an actor who suffered invective and slander by the sensationalist press, died in October 1985. Liberace, the famous pianist and showman, died in 1987. The cause of his death was announced as a heart attack. This was in fact a lie, as it was the result of AIDS. This illustrates the fear of stigmatisation, which made many families decide to cover it up. On 12th March of the same year ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) was founded, becoming the principal activist organisation to highlight the deep-rooted homophobia in American society, the fragility of healthcare resources, the interests of the pharmaceutical industry, discrimination by insurers against people with AIDS and the irresponsible policies of the political class and religious groups. The first protests were staged in different places, many of them with a marked performative slant: the die-ins where demonstrators lay on the ground as if dead and the outline of their body was drawn on the ground in chalk as a record of the death; the kiss-ins that called out homophobia through hugs and kisses, at the same time launching a message of solidarity with people affected by illness and exclusion. ACT UP was present in major American cities and also elsewhere, including Paris and Barcelona.

Patients began to be treated with the first antiretroviral, AZT, though it had many side effects in those who took it. Signs of solidarity with sufferers gradually became more visible. March 1987 saw the foundation in New York of the *Silence = Death Project*, just before ACT UP. Thus, to raise pu-

blic awareness, posters went up in the streets using these words together with the pink triangle with which the Nazis identified homosexuals in their concentration camps. It was urgent to drag AIDS out of silence and shame and expose the hate directed primarily at gays. In October of the same year, the AIDS Memorial Quilt, a set of panels made with fragments of padding with the names of the dead accompanied by texts, pictures and figures to recall those no longer present, was rolled out in Washington. At the same time there were successive political attacks tinged with homophobia, like that by Republican senator Jesse Helms, who criticised the promotion of homosexuality and advocated chastity.

In Spain the Ministry of Health and Consumer Affairs set up the television campaign "SiDa, NoDa" [To infect or not to infect] in 1987. This ad, broadcast in 1988, is based on cartoon characters performing different actions (anal sex, sharing drinks, injecting themselves, kissing and so on) to explain how the illness is transmitted in a somewhat childish way. This was followed by the controversial "Póntelo, Pónselo" [Put it on] campaign, intended to encourage the use of condoms among adolescents, a campaign that outraged many people, such as the puritan Spanish bishops' conference. In the same year the first information campaigns of a preventive nature were launched in the United States. 1988 also saw the appearance of Gran Fury, the artistic wing of ACT UP, initially made up of a small group of activists. Even with scarce resources they managed to roll out countless graphic initiatives (posters, bills, stickers, printed T-shirts and so on) in which they used simple, precise language to denounce the maltreatment suffered by people with AIDS and homosexuals in general. One of their projects with the biggest impact was the poster with the slogan "Kissing Doesn't Kill: Greed and Indifference Do",

a kind of pastiche of the Benetton ads¹ on the side of some New York buses. Gran Fury were invited to take part in the Venice Biennale two years later. This time they denounced the ominous words of pope John Paul II. The row was enormous.

1st December 1988 was declared World AIDS Day to alert the population to the issue and honour the dead.

Robert Mapplethorpe died on 9th March 1989. He was one of many artists who perished because of the pandemic. Mapplethorpe was the victim of vile attacks and demonised by the most reactionary groups in his country. The retrospective exhibition "The Perfect Moment" was censored at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington after being labelled indecent and blasphemous by religious fundamentalists.

Keith Haring died in 1990. Shortly before this he created a mural in Barcelona's Raval neighbourhood (now transferred to near the MACBA museum). It shows a giant snake symbolising evil, which two figures in the form of scissors are cutting in half. On the right of the mural, the words "Todos juntos podemos parar el sida" [All together we can stop AIDS] transmitted a hopeful, accessible message.

In 1991 the basketball player Magic Johnson announced that he was seropositive. Bearing in mind that he was a heterosexual male, this announcement should have helped to deactivate the pernicious, lethal association between homosexuality and AIDS, but the stigma did not disappear. Prejudices prevailed over scientific truth. In the same year, Freddie Mercury, the vocalist in Queen, died of HIV-related pneumonia.

1993 saw the release of the first major Hollywood film—*Philadelphia*—to deal with the issue of AIDS, starring

1. Watney, Simon. "Read my lips: AIDS, Art & Activism". In: *Read my lips*. New York AIDS Polemics. Glasgow: Tramway, 1992.

Tom Hanks and, among others, Antonio Banderas. On 2nd November 1993 Pepe Espaliú died in his native city of Córdoba. With hindsight it can be stated that in the Spanish and international context his *Carrying* project, in its performance and sculptural dimension, reached a broad, varied audience as well as minority artistic circles. Working with urgency but always with a clear head, Espaliú aimed to shake up the political class, not very interested in the impact of AIDS, but also to stir the conscience of artistic circles and of the general public at a time strongly marked by homophobic narratives.

The Russian dancer Rudolf Nureyev died in 1994. Between 1995 and 1996 the cocktail of antiretroviral drugs, the so-called tritherapies, was approved. In 1997 over thirty million people in the world were estimated to be seropositive. By 1999 fourteen million individuals had already died of the pandemic. The figures are certainly chilling. However, partly because of the illness becoming chronic, the media impact of the pandemic began to diminish. Nevertheless, in the 21st century there continued to be significant news in the struggle to eradicate the pandemic and its lasting effects on those affected. For example, in 2001 the Doha Declaration was signed, whereby developing countries could have access to generic drugs to treat AIDS without having to purchase them at the exorbitant prices charged by the big pharmaceutical companies.

2007 saw the start of the first trials of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) to reduce the risk of HIV infection among subjects exposed to the virus. A few years later, in 2012, the United States authorised the first preventive treatment, the antiretroviral Truvada. Pending the creation of a vaccine, which does not yet exist, the most recent research has focused on those individuals, exceptional cases, who have a surprising ability to remain free of the virus.²

2. Mouzo, Jessica. "El enigma de los controladores de élite del VIH.

Today the medical advances are undeniable and the life of sufferers and their families is much more bearable. There has therefore been a shutdown in news about AIDS, except in specialist media, which might lead one to think the illness and its consequences have been overcome. This is not the case. Nor has the demonisation of people supposedly to "blame" for their behaviour and way of life ceased.

The response of art has also changed. There is nothing comparable today with prolific output of the eighties and nineties. Much of this art came from within the pandemic, out of rage against exclusion and hate, and reflection on the life that was slipping away. The dead are no longer with us, but they must live on our collective awareness. It is therefore essential to conduct an exercise of memory to consider how art was used to give visibility to many human fears and terrors of the unknown. Also produced were numerous images that spoke of the lives under threat and the meaning of mourning.

In a context like that of the eighties, in which the predominant art preached a formalist, depoliticised, market-oriented vision, some thinkers and activists reflected about the need for a new awareness, like Douglas Crimp³, who sadly reviewed the mark left by friends who were no longer there, but lived on inside him.

The abundant artwork created about AIDS does not adhere to any specific or single style or type of representation, or to a language with fixed guidelines, or any marked aesthetic, or any particular current. It is an art that is initially born out of urgency, chaos and disorder, by those clamouring for their lives and those of their loved ones. But this art that

Personas con capacidad innata de mantener a raya el virus" [The Enigma of the HIV Élite controllers: People with an innate ability to keep the virus at bay], *El País*, 17th July 2024.

3. Crimp, Douglas. *Melancholia and Moralism. Essays on AIDS and Queer Politics*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2002.

takes shape in the street and is not separate from activism is also created in other ways; it is a symbolic, subtle art; it is an art of meditation, of disappearance, of bitterness, of sadness, of love. To paraphrase Élisabeth Lebovici,⁴ AIDS is an epidemic of representation that shatters into a thousand pieces and works in unexpected ways. And which does not stop at frontiers or territories. Its legacy is international,⁵ universal. We see it in the humble canvases of the Brazilian Leonilson, whose fragile body is turned into changing measurements (age, height, weight). We see it in the educational public art in neighbourhoods of Kinshasa by the Congolese Chéri Samba. We see it in the performances by Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis about their transvestite friends under a Chilean dictatorship that refused to deal with AIDS. We see it in the concise, beautiful conceptualism of the Cuban Felix Gonzalez-Torres or in the satirical colour of the Canadians General Idea.

These names are relevant. They are moments, flashes in the past that still shine and must not go out, above all because this legacy still speaks to us, as meanness, selfishness and exclusion of the other live on in today's individualist, brutally capitalist societies.

4. Lebovici, Élisabeth. *Ce que le sida m'a fait. Art et activisme à la fin du XXe siècle* [What AIDS has done to me: Art and Activism at the end of the 20th Century]. Zurich/Paris: JRP/Ringier/La Maison rouge, 2017.

5. Regarding representations of AIDS in Latin America and Spain, see Mérida Jiménez, Rafael M. (ed.). *De vidas y virus. VIH/sida en las culturas hispánicas* [On Lives and Viruses: HIV/AIDS in Hispanic Cultures]. Barcelona: Icaria, 2019.

AIDS: A Silenced History in the Balearic Scene

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