

# PUNK. ITS TRACES IN CONTEMPORARY ART

## 26 MAR — 4 OCT 2015



Martín Rico Villegas, *Parásito* (Parasite), 2014. Performance. Photo Martín Rico Villegas

# CA2M

Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo  
www.ca2m.org

lack of future, and the conventionalism installed in society and culture. This is where the question about being cheated came from. Punk is an attitude: an attitude made up of rage, speed, noise, informality, non-conformism, anti, refusal, opposition or provocation, that traverses the twentieth century, stretches out beyond the seventies, beyond the English-speaking context, and beyond the music scene. An explosion whose effects are still present, and that turn punk into one of the most transcendent cultural references of the twentieth century.

“PUNK. Its Traces in Contemporary Art” is not an exhibition about punk. Instead of a historical exhibition, the purpose of the project is to locate how punk has left its trace on contemporary art. It is about corroborating an intuition: that, beyond the divisions that one can establish between artists and trends, there is a furious noise that unites many creators. That is, that the punk attitude, which stems from that history traced from Dada through, among others, Situationism, is still present in contemporary art production. This exhibition shows how the echoes of the punk attitude are still alive, and are a reference in contemporary art. The reasons that lead to dissatisfaction, to non-conformism, to the loss of faith in progress, or the ferocious critique of the icons of an economic and social system are still valid, and are intrinsic to the practice of many artists. Taking up the famous phrase of “punk is (not) dead”, it is a question of stating that it is indeed so, that punk is a dead man walking, a zombie that keeps gaining followers. Finally, punk, as an attitude, presents a way of understanding culture, and, therefore, of being in the world: an uncomfortable critique of convention.

**Noise “kill yr idols” intensities surface anti hardcore detournement**

The most evident place where punk manifests itself is on the surface: in cut-out typography (Juan Pérez Agirreikoa); in the recuperation of punk songs, characters or slogans (Jordi Colomer, Iñaki Garmendia, Aïda Ruilova, Gavin Turk...); in intentional ugliness and the reference to bad design (Fabienne Audeoud, Gelitin); in the use of noise and punk music (Christian Marclay, Tim Reinecke or Joao Onofre); or in turning

Johnny Rotten, microphone in hand, is on his knees on a stage, surrounded by some broken beer bottles that have been hurled from the crowd; next to him, Sid Vicious, who has, during the whole show, and as usual, played his bass unplugged, is bleeding after having cut his chest with one of the bottles. This is the remaining image of the iconic Punk band The Sex Pistols' last concert in San Francisco in 1978. Only four years have passed since, in August 1974, the Ramones had played furious one-minute songs in the CBGB's club in New York, where, a year later, Television, Suicide, Talking Heads, The Dictators, and over thirty bands would also play. That same summer, in London, Malcolm McLaren renames his fashion store Sex, and creates The Sex Pistols. In 1976 they appear on TV, and swear a little. The following day, they are on the cover of all the newspapers, and are banned everywhere in England. And punk explodes. It holds out for two years. The same summer of 1978, when The Sex Pistols play their last concert, a *No wave* concert takes place at New York's Artists Space, reclaiming the intensity of the beginnings of punk, with bands such as Teenage Jesus and the Jerks, and, later, Sonic Youth. What follows are the effects of the explosion: hardcore, Einstürzende Neubauten and the SO36 club in Berlin, squatters in Amsterdam, Kaka de Luxe, Radical Basque Rock...

This is the brief, and strict, history of the punk explosion as an essentially musical movement, that took place during the second half of the seventies. But, during that last Sex Pistols gig, Johnny Rotten would launch a question whose echo traverses all those years: “Ever get the feeling you've been cheated?” Critic Greil Marcus was there. And, much later, when writing “Lipstick Traces”, the first genealogy of punk, he remembers how, underneath the grinding of teeth of Johnny Rotten singing to punk anarchy, one could hear the echo of a fury which, like a ghost, has traversed the whole twentieth century: fundamentally in the howls of Dada and its will of negation, or in the revolutionary desire of the Situationists and their anti-everything slogans. Punk, therefore, was not only a musical movement, but the manifestation of unease in the face of an economic, political, social and cultural system. Musicians, artists, designers, activists and hopeless youth reacted with fury to an economic crisis, to the end of the hippy dream, the unemployment, the

the context of New York punk into an object of analysis, as in Dan Graham's legendary documentary *Rock My Religion*. In punk, surface is not a minor issue. Fashion, design, and outward appearance are the places where to manifest opposition against convention. Johnny Rotten's voice is as irritating as his statements and his appearance. All of this would eventually cost him a beating or two, and a stabbing. Punk attitude consisted, first of all, in presenting an anti image: noise and provocation, a gag and do-it-yourself, destruction and mockery.

**Violence The Clash “No fun” Einstürzende Neubauten confrontation rage “The Filth And The Fury” void**

Punk is a violent response to an economic, political, social and cultural system that it considers violent. Following the trail of the radical twentieth-century movements, it considers violence as something intrinsic to society, and that the reaction against it also needs to be violent. Punk slogans and music, as well as the Situationists' publications (Claire Fontaine), are weapons. Obviously, this violence comes at a price, since the body is the real battleground where hits are received (Nan Goldin, Jordi Mitja, Jimmie Durham). And it is in the body, in the appearance, in the face where fury and opposition are manifested (Jean-Michel Basquiat, Chris Burden).



Hans-Peter Feldmann, *5 pound bill with red nose*, 2012



**Attitude nihilism Black flag "I Fought The Law" Point Black! Provos "Ever get the feeling you've been cheated?"**

One of the iconic punk songs is "Anarchy In The U.K." by The Sex Pistols. It manifested the relationship that many punks had with anarchist groups, and the imprint that anarchism left in punk. For example, Black Flag was not only the name of an English anarchist fanzine which artist Eulàlia Grau collaborated in, but also the name of the most important Los Angeles hardcore band, which Raymond Pettibon collaborated with. That lineage is one of the most representative elements of punk, and the one that configures an attitude that is present in contemporary art. An attitude that is built on a will to question the economic and political system, and to mock it (Bill Balaskas, Claire Fontaine, Federico Solmi); or to resort to the scatological (Gelitin), to deviate from the norm and to reclaim the importance of leaving behind the maximum amount of dependencies and conventions (Martín Rico, Tere Recarens, Itziar Okariz).

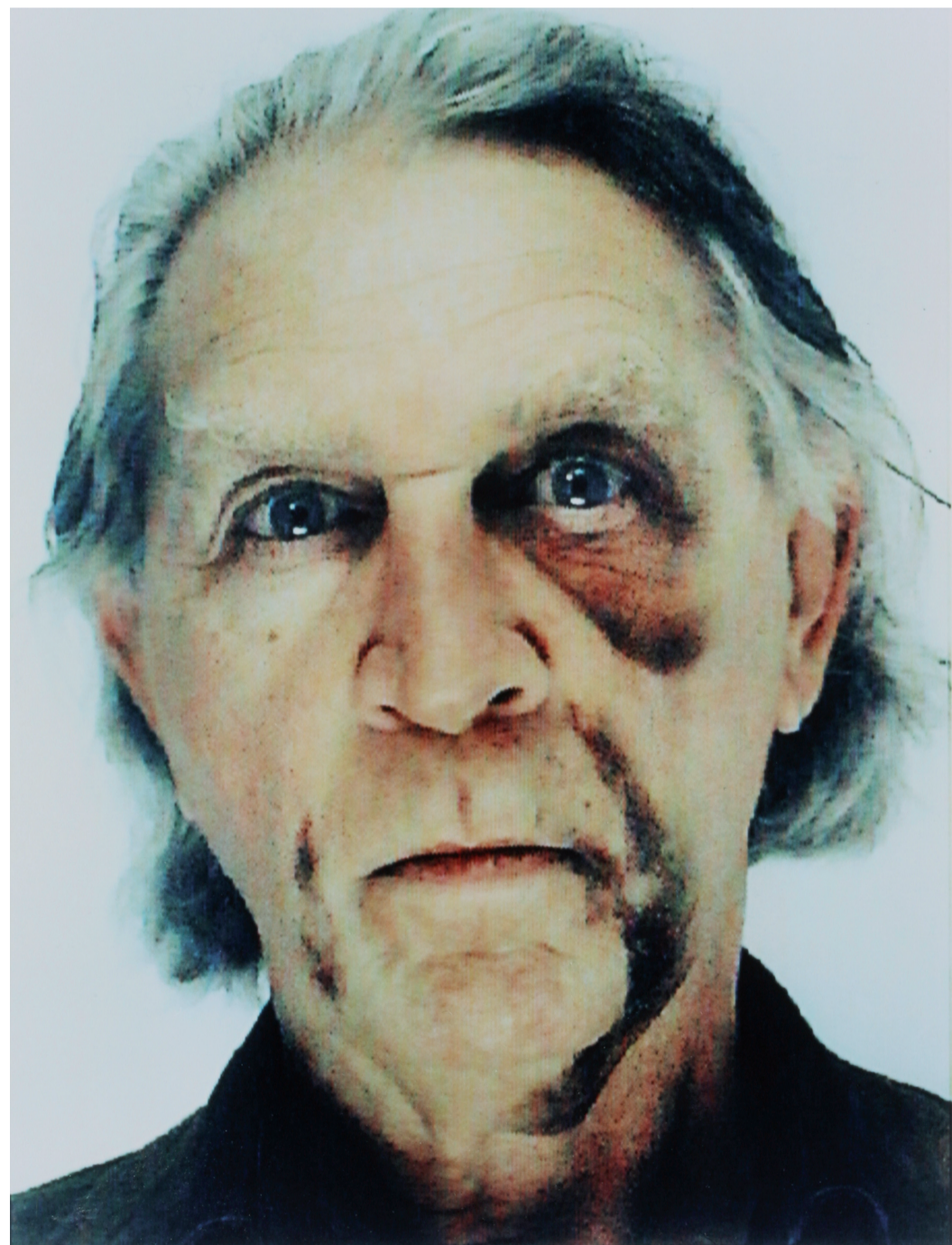
**Dirty alienation "No future" Psychic TV teeth-grinding Joy Division gore**

Punk stands against an oppressive society that leaves few ways out, which has shown its limitations, and which produces alienated subjects: uncomfortable, and astonished by the established social codes. Against this, it reclaims a space for otherness and difference. Thus, the psychotic, the alienated, and gore, are constant in punk: from the screechy voice of a furious madman of Jello Biafra in the Dead Kennedys, through the psychotic state of the singer i Joy Division, to the morbid fascination of The Damned, Artists such as Martin Kippenberger, Raymond Pettibon, Mike Kelley and Paul McCarthy, who took part in the punk scene of the 80's, have taken up alienation as one of the central themes in their work.

**Destroy terror panic Killing joke Dead Kennedys "killing hippies on the Cies islands" Valerie Solanas**

The context in which punk appeared in the decade of the seventies is touched by terrorism and violent actions. The hippy dream reveals its limitations, and its dark side, both in a political commitment that leads to terrorism, and in the hallucinated deliriums that lead to crime.

4/6



Jimmie Durham, *Self-portrait with black eye and bruises*, 2006

6/6

As a mark taken up by punk, and one that deeply affected it, terror is present in the videos of Tony Cokes, and in the series of installations and photographs by Christoph Draeger dedicated to the reconstruction of the terrorist attacks of the Black September group. In Mabel Palacín's "Sniper", the bullets in a gun cartridge have been replaced by terrorist attacks and disasters. DETEXT recovers the used and found bullets in Guatemala. Chiara Fumai focuses on the figure of Valerie Solanas (whose name appeared on a t-shirt designed by Vivienne Westwood), author of the attack on Andy Warhol and the *SCUM Manifesto* for the elimination of men. If the Kennedy assassinations provided the name of one of the most emblematic punk bands, Dead Kennedys, T. R. Uthco and Ant Farm reconstruct the assassination of JFK in the very same streets of Dallas.

**Prostitution Show "not sure if you're a boy or a girl" Genesis P-Orridge lipstick New York Dolls Sex Pistols Vagina Dentata Organ**

The New York Dolls, a band formed by four boys with wigs and platform boots, were a reference for Malcolm McLaren, owner of the "Sex" fashion shop, when forming The Sex Pistols; the first punk exhibition, with sexually-charged performances by COUM Transmissions, was titled "Prostitution Show". Sex is very much present in punk. The libertarian impulse implied by punk had to, necessarily, involve the reclamation of anti-normative sexuality, and if the body was the battleground, sex had to occupy the front line of concern. The reference to sex appears entwined with protest (VALIE EXPORT, Guerrilla Girls, Tracey Emin), and also with reclamation and, even, as a weapon with which to once again reclaim attitude and sarcasm (Maria Pratts, Raisa Maudit). If punk involves being a human wreck, and queer is the reclamation of a more pejorative way of referring to non-hetero sexuality: queer is punk, and punk is queer (queerpunk manifesto at <http://www.queerpunk.org/manifesto-es-ES/>).

David G. Torres, exhibition curator

5/6

<i>PUNK. Its Traces in Contemporary Art</i>	26 mar — 4 oct 2015	<b>Exhibition tours</b> Wednesdays 18:30 h. Saturdays 12:30 h. and 18:30 h.
<b>Curator</b>	David G. Torres	
<b>Publication</b>	<b>Catálogo</b> with texts by David G. Torres, Glòria Guirao Soro, Eloy Fernández Porta,	Servando Rocha, Iván López Munuera y Greil Marcus
<b>Other exhibitions</b>	<b>Jeremy Deller. The Infinitely Variable Ideal of the Popular</b> Until 7 jun	<b>Naturaleza nominal. ARCO Colombia 2015</b> Until 26 apr (Alberto Baraya, Milena Bonilla, Adriana Salazar and Carlos Bonil)
<b>Activities</b>	<b>Creative Workshop</b> <i>La muerte del pop</i> Tuesdays 7 apr — 5 may. 18:00 — 21:00 h.	<b>Education</b> Punk. Visit - workshop to the exhibition March — June 2015
<b>CA2M</b> Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo <a href="http://www.ca2m.org">www.ca2m.org</a>	Av. Constitución 23 28931 Móstoles, Madrid Tel. 91 276 02 21 <a href="mailto:ca2m@madrid.org">ca2m@madrid.org</a>	Open: Tuesday - Sunday 11:00 a 21:00 h. <b>Free entry to the Centre and to all activities</b>
	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/CA2MMadrid">facebook.com/CA2MMadrid</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/CA2M_Madrid">twitter.com/CA2M_Madrid</a> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/ca2m1">youtube.com/ca2m1</a> <a href="https://www.flickr.com/CA2M_Madrid">flickr.com/CA2M_Madrid</a> <a href="https://www.instagram.com/CA2MMadrid">instagram.com/CA2MMadrid</a>	<b>Local train.</b> C5 Móstoles (23' from Embajadores) <b>Underground.</b> L12 Pradillo Free WI-FI available

Co-produced by

Supported by

Cooperated by

