

EVIL YE E

Tabakalera
Exhibition hall

ENGLISH

23.01.28 —
23.06.04

- the parallel history of optics and ballistics.

- Haig Aivazian
- Zach Blas
- Pauline Curnier Jardin
- Ho Rui An
- Izaro Ieregi González
- Rajkamal Kahlon
- Kiluanji Kia Henda
- Kapwani Kiwanga
- Prabhakar Pachpute
- Miranda Pennell
- Natascha Sadr Haghighian
- Azucena Vieites



EVIL EYE. THE PARALLEL HISTORY OF OPTICS AND BALLISTICS



From the ‘visual ray’ metaphor to Pierre Jules César Janssen’s ‘revolver photographique,’ the history of optics and the history of ballistics developed in parallel to one another, ultimately conflating in the figure of the drone: a camera that can kill. But under the aegis of, and working in tandem with, this technoscientific trajectory one also finds a whole racialised and gendered regime of visibility, suggesting an ideological process at work that, as theorist Meg Armstrong argues, makes ‘what is contingent and local, perhaps even idiosyncratic, in matters of taste appear to be natural, and thus beyond dispute.’¹

The present exhibition aims to map the structuring force of this white gaze in both its concrete and abstract dimensions, thematising among other threads, the entanglements of aerial perspective with total war and the creation of death worlds; questions of transparency and opacity; and what cultural theorist Jonathan Crary termed ‘the inversion of the gaze,’² when the screen doubles as a surveillance device that watches the viewer watching it.

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1. Meg Armstrong, “‘The Effects of Blackness’: Gender, Race, and the Sublime in the Aesthetic Theories of Burke and Kant,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 54, no. 3 (1996): pp. 213–236.

2. Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999, p. 76.



Kapwani Kiwanga
Jalousie, 2018

Steel, two-way mirror
220 x 320 x 10 cm
Courtesy of: Galerie
Tanja Wagner and Studio
Kapwani Kiwanga

Aerial perspective, total war and death worlds

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In 1910, aviation was a cutting-edge technology, with the figure of flight used to encode national rebirth in the writings of Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, Gabriele D'Annunzio, and Julius Peterson. But these fantasies of departure and renewal were imbricated with colonial ravage. Artist **Miranda Pennell** explores the link between the aerial viewpoint (bird's-eye view) and total war, a concept first put forth in H. G. Wells' novel *War of the Worlds* (1898), denoting a war that would bring total destruction without moral limitations. Her video essay *Strange Object* (2020) takes, in her words, 'aerial photographs of an undisclosed colonised territory as the starting point for a meditation on images, erasure and the writing of history'. The notion of total war is also connected to what the philosopher Achille Mbembe calls 'threshold' or 'specular' experiences. Reading Amos Tutuola's novel *My Life in the Bush of Ghosts*, he argues that here, we enter 'death-worlds, forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life that confer upon them the status of living dead'.³ Artist **Rajkamal Kahlon**'s subjects inhabit such death-worlds, standing at the nexus between epistemic and material violence. Her work often deals with the difficulty of representing the subaltern – those who didn't make it into the proletariat after the experience of colonial dispossession, remaining instead a residue of a world undone. In a text so apt it could have been written with Kahlon's work in mind, the postcolonial scholar David Lloyd argues that the subaltern is 'haunted with the spectre of violence'⁴—not the violence done by or to the subaltern, but the violence inherent to the West's self-representation as the universal under which every particular can be subsumed.

The elements in **Prabhakar Pachpute**'s composition are drawn from a series of travels and observations that led him to trace the impacts of technology. The artist thematises what he calls 'stolen horizons' via the triangulation of *The pillar of Curiosity & The Lab*, *The Siren*, and *Feathers Never Die*. The first of these moves along with you as you move because it is 'an imaginative travelling creature which keeps innovating without being held accountable for the consequences of its innovation'. Meanwhile *The Siren*, the artist tells us 'depicts a devious and amorphous creature ready for its flight. Armed with an excavator and carrying a symbol of alarm on its back which gives a hint of precariousness. The flight might fulfil man's greed, but also devour the landscape and uncover the layers of buried history'. The

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3. Achille Mbembe, 'Life, Sovereignty, and Terror in the Fiction of Amos Tutuola', *Research in African Fictions*, vol. 34, no. 4 (2003): pp. 1–26, here p. 1.

4. David Lloyd, 'Representation's Coup', *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, vol. 16, no. 1 (2014): pp. 1–29, here p. 3.

final element *Feathers Never Die* tries to ‘reimagine restorations and repair. The wings which are growing in the pit are symbolic of hope and possible revolution or change. The fluid, a machine with a cape, and a gumboot filled with water are the characters that follow the feathers and create a dramatic atmosphere’. A special section of the exhibition, curated by **Germán Labrador Méndez**, will examine the way national and transnational space is structured by a colonial continuum, binding Carlism and the Rif Wars to the ascent of fascism and the Spanish Civil War, thereby tying the history of modern violence to the organisation of scopic regimes.

Transparency and Opacity

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In Western political theory, there is a nexus between visibility and representation: to be represented is to claim visibility, typically an emancipatory and empowering stance. Artist **Kapwani Kiwanga** delves into the hidden racial dimension of the notion of visibility in order to examine its deployment as a tool of colonial oppression, as well as representing the fugitive subjects it engenders – subjects who seek solace in invisibility. In March 1713, the Common Council of the City of New York, approved ‘A Law for Regulating Negro & Indian Slaves in the Night Time’. This law required any non-white person above fourteen years of age to carry a lantern or lighted candle when outside after dusk. Though slavery has now long since been abolished, the New York Police Department still uses high-intensity artificial lights to surveil housing projects, using violent illumination as a biopolitical tool. Kapwani Kiwanga examines the matrix of the white gaze and its persecutory mechanisms, as a regime of surveillance that produces and reproduces race as an index of vulnerability to state or state sanctioned violence. In all three works on display, Kiwanga refers to the asymmetry between those who see and those who are seen, and, albeit obliquely, to the hidden racial dimension of the synoptic gaze, thematising black fugitivity as an attempt to evade capture. Also dealing with questions of representation and persecutory mechanisms, artist **Kiluanji Kia Henda** examines the faith of Othello, Shakespeare’s tragic protagonist. Though *Othello* has usually been described as a tale of jealousy, race is also its overarching theme: it is because Othello is a Moor that he and Desdemona must elope; it is because Othello has internalised the racial abuse to which he is constantly subjected that he falls for Iago’s intrigue. ‘Haply, for I am Black,’ Othello reasons, believing Desdemona to have committed adultery, sealing everyone’s fate, and – because of the misrecognition integral to tragedy – never realising that it is he rather than his wife who looks upon himself through the eyes of another. In a suite of five photographs entitled *Othello’s Fate* (2013), part of the ongoing project *Self-Portrait as a White Man* (2010–), Kia Henda

stages a naked Othello against a late-Rococo backdrop thematising the black male nude as the forbidden vision of Western art.

After their discovery was made public, in 1885, as Beatriz Colomina detailed,⁵ X-ray machines were almost immediately put to usage, both within and beyond the field of medicine, as a surveillance technology in train stations and checkpoints or as form of entertainment. They also had a deep impact on architecture, with glass architecture following the transparent logic of the X-ray. But there is also a gendered dimension to this quest for transparency, predicated on the relation between the male gaze and the female body that predates X-ray technology and is already apparent in objects such as the 'Anatomical Venus'. Conceived as a means for teaching human anatomy, the anatomical Venus sexualised the female corpse. The yearning for an unresisting and enticing object reappears in the techno-scientific fantasies of the cyborg body, a female body designed to be transparent and hence pliable to the gaze of the male viewer. Dealing with scopophilia, and the intersection of gender with social technologies, artist **Pauline Curnier Jardin** often taps into the symbolism of amputation, bodily mortification and the relations between the body, the Chthonic cosmos and the social order. The gendered dimension of representation and the pornotropic gaze is also the topic of Pauline Curnier Jardin's take on Jean Genet's *Un Chant d'Amour* (1950). Her film *Qu'un Sang Impur* (2019) began as a loose remake of a homoerotic love story between inmates in a prison, under the yearning watch of a sadistic prison guard. In Curnier Jardin's film, Genet's young male bodies are replaced with post-menopausal women who invert the respective positions of predator and preyed upon, of those who watch and those being watched. The panopticon is a disciplinary concept brought to life in the form of a central observation tower placed within a circle of prison cells. From the tower, guards watch over inmates. Though **Natascha Sadr Haghighian's** *vice/virtue* (2001) does not, technically speaking, depict a panopticon, the artist conflates surveillance and spectacle under the same scopophilic regime: *vice/virtue* is a video loop that moves back and forth between two drawings. The first depicts a prison courtyard, the second a stage.

Workers Leaving The Lumière Factory (1895), by Louis Lumière is often referred to as the first motion picture ever made. The film shows a vast mass of, mostly female, workers pouring out of the gates of the Lumière Factory. Whereas factory gates kept the world of work and the worlds of leisure separate, artist **Ho Rui An** finds that current security cameras offer a different perspective, one that allows one to peak into the world inside the gates. Examining security

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5. See Beatriz Colomina, *X-Ray Architecture*, Zurich: Lars Müller, 2019.



Haig Aivazian
*They May Own the
Lanterns but We Have the
Light, Episode 1, 2022*

Video-frame
Courtesy of the artist

footage of a factory in China, the artist finds there is ‘not a lot to be seen.’ There are not enough workers leaving the factory.

Ultimately defined by its use of metamorphic motion, animation is metaphor incarnate, the hypostatisation of deviancy onto the concreteness of the physical body, stretched and strained to the limits of recognition. **Haig Aivazian’s** *They May Own the Lanterns but We Have the Light, Episode 1* (2022) is, in the artist’s words ‘a film about the alchemy of light and the rhythms of things made to flow. Here, ghosts chase cops out of town, and labor and leisure shadow one another in elaborate labyrinthine infrastructures.’ Matter is dynamic and all form is provisional. It is a film about the ‘portrayal of the protean body’ based on a ‘fantasy of metamorphosis, change and mutability, unconfined by the forms of actuality’ that can carry the progressive promise of ‘a transformation that could be undergone by all – politically, socially.’⁶ Also interested in the fleeting, the ephemeral, and the impermanent, artist **Izaro Ieregi González** will develop a performative intervention, where she will depart from the masculine notion of an erect, vertical subject to once more narrate unstable states as privileged sites of queer performativity. Thematizing gravity as a notion that invites poetics reflections on falling, and by extension on failure, the artist will attempt to articulate ways of world-making that embrace, rather than resist, the fragility of our existence.

The Interface and the Inversion of the Gaze



The cultural logic of the information age is predicated on an inversion of the gaze: the screen, as Crary has noted, ‘is both the object of attention and (the object) capable of monitoring, recording and cross-referencing attentive behaviour.’⁷ The starting point for **Natascha Sadr Haghighian’s** *Onco-mickey-catch* (2016), is the somewhat-paradoxical notion of online face-to-face communication. With video-conferencing you typically look at your conversation partner’s screen image (or your own). As a result, your eyes rarely meet. CatchEye is an application designed to reorient your gaze towards the camera, ‘enhancing’ your ‘chat experience.’ The app is installed here onto two monitors, which, in turn, protrude from the dorsal region of a furry mouse-like shape. The abnormal form is slightly reminiscent of the Vacanti mouse – the rodent Charles Vacanti used to grow ear-shaped cartilage, which became an internet sensation in the ’90s – which Sadr Haghighian connects to

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6. Tum Gunning, ‘The Transforming Image: the Roots of Animation in Metamorphosis and Motion’, in *Pervasive Animation*, ed. Suzanne Buchan, London: Routledge, 2013, pp. 52–70, here p. 55.

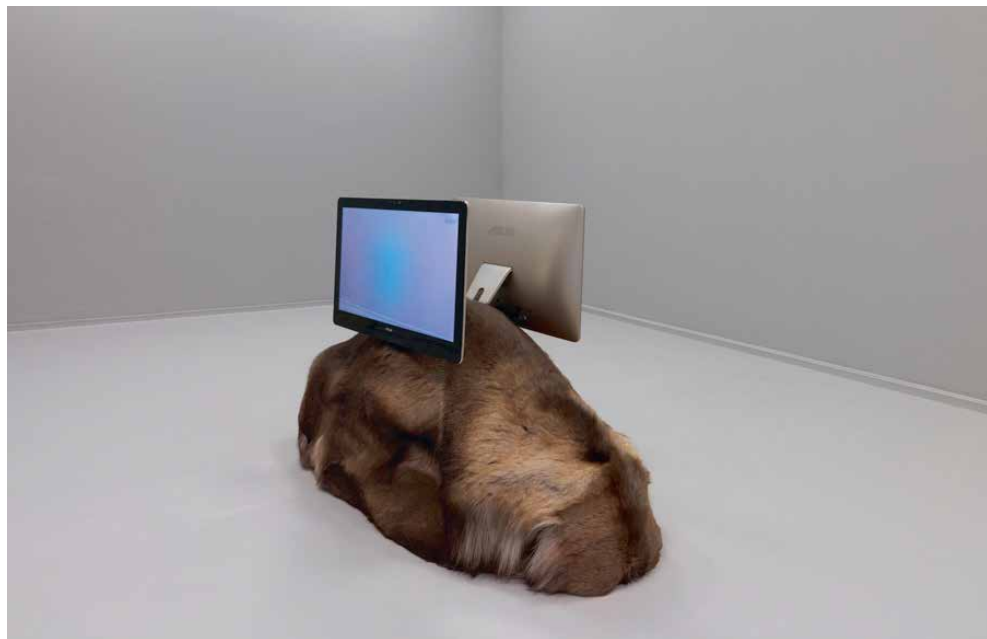
7. Crary, *Suspensions of Perception*, p. 76.

two other famous mice: the Oncomouse, genetically modified to become susceptible to cancerous tumors (a registered trademark, the Oncomouse was the first fully patented animal), and Mickey Mouse, often a shorthand for the military-entertainment complex. By juxtaposing technomorphs and optical technologies, Sadr Haghghighian points to a fully autonomous model of vision, no longer tied to emotion, representation or cognition. Data processing – whose reach spans the NSA, credit rating agencies, health insurance providers, up to the sorting algorithms used by Google or Instagram – is predictive, modeling future actions according to previous behaviour. Data processing implies a model of temporality in which the past is but a standing reserve of information, waiting to be mined. Artist **Zach Blas** charts the transmutation of big data into a magical substance that predicts – and polices – the future. His *Jubilee 2033* (2018) is a re-imagining of scenes from filmmaker Derek Jarman's queer punk film *Jubilee* (1978). The film follows author Ayn Rand (Susanne Sachsse) and members of her Collective, including economist Alan Greenspan, on an acid trip in 1955. Guided by an artificial intelligence named Azuma, they are transported to a dystopian future Silicon Valley. As the campuses of Apple, Facebook and Google burn, Azuma reveals that Ayn has become a celebrity philosopher to tech executives, whose writings foster their entrepreneurial spirit. Amidst the wreckage, Rand and The Collective observe techies being captured by anti-campus groupies, and bear witness to the death of a Silicon Valley elite. Inside an occupied office of Palantir Technologies, they encounter Nootropix (Cassils), a contra-sexual, contra-internet prophet, who lectures them on the end of the internet as we know it. Working with low-fi technology in order to undo high fi effects, **Azucena Vieites** destabilises scopic regimes by creating a set of images in which intimacy and critical distance converge, intimating indeterminacy and ambiguity.

In most East Asian countries the process of rapid urbanisation and modernisation was perceived as synonymous with Westernisation, and so technology could thus be seen as the site of a double alienation, via the introduction of the new and the foreign. In China, under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, industry undertook a process of acceleration in order to 'synchronise' the country with the West. Technological development—which as philosopher Yuk Hui notes is the 'source of synchronization of the global time axis since the beginning of globalization'⁸—came to constitute 'a past the Chinese never lived' but whose unfettered power has nonetheless progressed at a much more tremendous pace than in the West. In **Ho Rui An's**

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8. Geert Lovink, 'Philosophy of Technology in China: Second Interview with Yuk Hui', *Institute of Network Cultures*, blogpost, 4 September 2017, <https://network-cultures.org/geert/2017/09/04/philosophy-of-technology-in-china-second-interview-with-yuk-hui/>.



lecture-performance *Dash* (2016-18), the frictions between these intersecting realms are represented as a full-frontal collision between a venture capitalist's sports car and a humble taxi—a moment the artist opts to narrate instead of showing. Captured on a dash-cam and uploaded to YouTube, footage of the accident becomes a cipher for the imbrication of frontier narratives and financial eschatology: while the artist talks, the viewer is shown a sequence of dash-cam car crashes uncannily similar to Hollywood car-chase scenes. Whereas the dashboard emerges as a signifier for a God's-eye view (he who, surviving the crash, drives on towards the horizon's vanishing point), Singapore itself appears as a liminal space, standing at the intersection between a traditional ways of life and a cyber-modulated social milieu, while the metaphors of speed and acceleration are codified as a form of upward motion, leading to the future.

Ana Teixeira Pinto & Oier Etxeberria Bereziartua

Natascha Sadr Haghighian
Onco-mickey-catch, 2016

Taxidermy, computer,
RealSense cameras,
Skype or Google Hangout,
CatchEye
85 × 50 × 120 cm
Credits: Taxidermy: Neda
Saeedi
Courtesy of the artist



Kiluanji Kia Henda
*La conquista del reino
sin memoria (Jeanne
Rolande), 2023*

Inkjet print on fine art
paper.
93 x 140 cm
New commission

CHECKLIST

Haig Aivazian (Beirut, 1980)

They May Own the Lanterns but We Have the Light, Episode 1, 2022

HD Video, black and white, sound

07:00 approx.

Courtesy of the artist

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Zach Blas (Point Pleasant, 1981)

Jubilee 2033, 2018

HD single-channel video, color with sound

30:52, looped

The Seal of the Absolute, 2017

Fluorescent vinyl, dimensions variable

Palantir: Disappeared Internet, 2017

Etched glass sphere with 12 inch diameter, LED light

Palantir: Killed Internet, 2017

Etched glass sphere with 12 inch diameter, LED light

Courtesy: Studio Zach Blas

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Pauline Curnier Jardin (Marseille, 1980)

Qu'un sang impur, 2019

HD Video, 16:05

Courtesy: ChertLüdde Gallery and Studio

Pauline Curnier Jardin

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Ho Rui An (Singapore, 1980)

Ultimate Coin Test China High-Speed Rail, 2018

HD video, loop

DASH, 2016–18

Lecture and video installation with car seats and synchronised screens

57:10

Courtesy of the artist

Twenty-Four Cinematic Points of View of a Factory Gate in China, 2022

Video 4K

24:00

New commission

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Izaro Ieregi González (Algorta, 1987)

Conjugate one to each other, 2022

Objects from a performance with: Camilo Tonón, Ane Zelaia, Akane Saraiva, Andoni de La Cruz, Iratxe Bilbao, Alba Fernández and Jone Laspiur

New commission

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Rajkamal Kahlon (Auburn, California, 1974)

War Bill, 2010

Gouache and Acrylic on Watercolor paper
180 × 130 cm

Wrestlers, 2010

Acrylic and Gouache on Watercolor paper
130 × 180 cm

Fear of a Black Planet, 2010

Acrylic and Gouache on Watercolor paper
180 × 130 cm

My Temple of Justice, 2010

Acrylic and Gouache on Watercolor paper
180 × 130

Courtesy of the artist

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Kiluanji Kia Henda (Luanda, 1979)

Othello's Fate (Act I, II, III, I, and V), 2013
Digital print on matt paper mounted on aluminum

110 × 170 cm

Ed.1/5 + 1 PA/AP

Phantom Pain – A Letter to Henry A.

Kissinger, 2020

HD Video, color, sound, 08:30

Courtesy of: Galeria Filomena Soares and the artist

La conquista del reino sin memoria (Jeanne Rolande), 2023
Inkjet print on fine art paper, 93 × 140 cm
New commission

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Kapwani Kiwanga (Hamilton, 1978)
Glow #11, 2020
Marmor Sahara Noir, Holz, LED, Plexiglas
180 × 40 × 60 cm

Jalousie, 2018
Steel, two-way mirror
220 × 320 × 10 cm

Courtesy of: Galerie Tanja Wagner and Studio Kapwani Kiwanga

Novaya Zamlaya, 2015
Audio and slideshow projection
13:23
Courtesy of Studio Kapwani Kiwanga

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Miranda Pennell (London, 1963)
Strange Object, 2020
HD Video, 15:00
Courtesy of the artist

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Prabhakar Pachpute (Sasti, 1986)
Stolen Horizon, 2023
Acrylic paint, charcoal and graphite on the wall
Variable dimensions
New commission

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Natascha Sadr Haghighian
Onco-mickey-catch, 2016
Taxidermy, computer, RealSense cameras, Skype or Google Hangout, CatchEye
85 × 50 × 120 cm
Credits: Taxidermy: Neda Saeedi

Vice/virtue, 2001
Animation loop on a stack of paper
01:05 (looped), no sound
Courtesy of the artist

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Azucena Vieites (Hernani, 1967)
Affection, 1993-2023
Electrography, paper
Unique piece + artist's proof

Affection, 1993-2023
Silk-screen printing, mirror
Unique piece
New commission

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Case Studies

Étienne Jules Marey (Beaune, 1830-Paris, 1904)
Pneumatic machine reconstituting the flight of an insect: Marey's artificial insect

Lucien Georges Bull (Dublin, 1876 - Boulogne, 1972)
Stereoscopic film viewer by Lucien Bull, 1904
Courtesy of La Cinématèque française

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Oscar Domínguez (San Cristobal de la Laguna, 1906- Paris, 1957)
Arbalète, 1950
Oil on canvas, 77,5 × 146,2 cm
Courtesy of Museum of Contemporary Art of the Basque Country Art Collection. Artium Museoa.

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Evaristo Valle (Gijon 1873-1951)
Aeroplano, 1922
Oil on canvas, 79,5 × 99,5 cm
Courtesy of Museo de Bellas Artes de Asturias

Aerial camera, 1942
38 × 38 × 30 cm

Photographic gun and black enameled metal case Photosnaiper kit, 1982-1990
26 × 14 × 59 cm

Stereo Optical Corporation black stereo-viewer + stereoscopic photograph
18 × 21 × 27 cm
Courtesy of Photomuseum

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Bertso papera: JAA. 08. "Berso Berriac",
1860
Ink on paper, 32 × 22 cm

"The Civil War in Spain: Don Carlos in a battery on mount St. Marcial watching the effect of a shell", 1874
Lithography, 50 × 42 cm

Spyglass and case belonging to Tomás Zumalakarregi
Wood, brass, glass and leather
XIX. century

Courtesy of Zumalakarregi Museum. The Gipuzkoa Provincial Council

Sierra de Teruel, 1940
Film (excerpt)
Directors: André Malraux and Boris Peskine
Courtesy of Filmoteca Española

Ispaniya, 1939
Film (excerpt)
Director: Esfir Shub

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Arrhash (Veneno), 2009
Film (excerpt)
Directors: Javier Rada and Tarik El Idrissi
Courtesy of the director



Miranda Pennell
Strange Object, 2020

Video-frame
Courtesy of the artist

TABAKALERA



**INTERNATIONAL
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CONTEMPORARY
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Exhibition Hall opening hours

Tuesday-Sunday
12am - 2pm / 4-8pm
Mondays closed

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