

## MACBA, in Àngels Ribé's labyrinth

- The Museum reviews the career of an artist who has made an outstanding contribution to renewing the languages of art since the 1970s
- The exhibition features some 70 works, including photographs and drawings seen for the first time and pieces that had not been shown for 30 years

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**Title:** *In the Labyrinth. Àngels Ribé 1969-1984*. **Dates:** 15 July – 23 October. **Curator:** Teresa Grandas. **Organised and produced by:** Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA).

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Foam, the cardinal points, light and dilated veins; all have provided material for her art. Àngels Ribé's is a grammar of fragility, and her early works found her experimenting enthusiastically. These pieces included *Labyrinth*, a huge sculpture with transparent yellow plastic walls that visitors could actually walk around. MACBA, the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona, has now recreated this work, which was originally presented at the Centre Artistique de Verderonne near Paris in 1969. Installed in one of the MACBA exhibition rooms, the work forms the starting point for the exhibition *In the Labyrinth. Àngels Ribé 1969-1984*. Featuring nearly 70 works, this show focuses on one of the Catalan artists who made the greatest contribution to renewing art forms, materials and grammars in the seventies. The period emphasised in the title (1969-1984) is particularly relevant, as it marks the beginning of Ribé's artistic activity and the consolidation of her own personal language, one that she has continued to develop right up to the present, using different supports and media. Àngels Ribé, or A. Ribé (as she signed many of her early pieces, considering that being marked out as a woman artist was a disadvantage in those days) was amongst the most international of Catalan artists of the time, her work shown alongside that of Vito Acconci, Gordon Matta-Clark, Hanna Wilke, Martha Wilson, Lawrence Weiner, Laurie Anderson and Krzysztof Wodiczko, amongst others. Many of her interventions were ephemeral, and for this reason MACBA has compiled considerable hitherto unseen photographic material in order to document some of her pieces. The exhibition also recovers works that had not been shown since their original presentation (in some cases, more than 30 years ago), as well as reconstructing others, including *Laberint*. This exhibition forms part of the Museum's initiative to recover pieces by outstanding Catalan artists, focusing on works that are little known but nevertheless play an important role, both in the careers of the artists themselves and in the development of contemporary art in our country. The artists thus featured also include Benet Rossell and Joan Rabascall.

In 1969, Àngels Ribé moved to Paris, where she began to develop her interest in art around the notions of form, volume and intervention in the public space. *Labyrinth*, a transparent yellow plastic work, acts as an object that occupies space as a participative sculpture exploring the corporeal dimension. Originally presented in the context of a festival at the Château de Verderonne, the work is essentially an interactive and collective piece exploring a sensorial itinerary that subverts the usual opaque nature of the labyrinth. That same year, Ribé presented *Acció al parc*, installing a sculpture made from a fragment from an aeroplane air conduction tube in a park. On the one hand, the work is open to participation and manipulation, especially by children who can use it in their play; on the other, it ceases to be a unique object as it is transformed by use.

Soon, Ribé began focused her interest on de-emphasising the object, in actions in which the inclusion of elements and materials from nature, the work in the space, the presence of the artist's or the spectator's body as narrative elements and the integration of geometrical forms became fundamental elements in her discourse. During the seventies, the artist moved to the United States, first to Chicago and a few months later to New York, where she settled for a while. In both cities, she established contact with the new galleries and exhibition spaces that were then emerging as an alternative to anachronistic institutional politics and to promote the emerging art scene. Following on from her earlier works in Paris, Ribé's art from that period is characterised by the investigation of space as an environment, a trajectory or a medium. In *Two Main Subjective Points on an Objective Trajectory*, 1975, a series of photographs shows her daily return journey to New York over the Williamsburg Bridge from two subjective points on an objective trajectory established by the artist.

### **The body in movement**

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Questions of space are closely related to the incorporation of geometry in much of Ribé's work. Whether in photography, installation, film or performance, the relation with space is essentially established through the artist's own body. In the various works entitled *3 punts*, 1970–73, and in the film *Triangle*, 1978, geometrical forms are created by the body in movement, in the same way as the body was able to carry light in the action *Transport d'un raig de llum*, 1972. In *Invisible Geometry 3*, 1973, the symmetry results from the displacement of the eyes from left to right, and it is this movement that creates a sort of geometrical sculpture.

Some of Ribé's work is characterised by the use of unconventional materials such as foam, water, light and shadows. In the pieces entitled *Escuma*, 1969, the artist plays with decontextualisation by placing accumulations of foam on a wall or in the open sea. She also plays at making the ephemeral durable through the photographic image. The three photographs *Intersecció de llum*, *Intersecció de pluja* and *Intersecció d'onada*, 1969, show how these elements intersect in a natural environment, and their dependence on random factors to make the interactions visible or invisible. In *Light Interaction* and *Wind Interaction*, 1973, we see the interference of two decontextualised sources of energy: the light from a bulb and the air from a fan in a park.

Also important is the artist's interest in things found by chance and in the ephemeral, and in exploring to the full the narrative possibilities offered by the environment. We often find references to elements of a symbolic nature, whether corporeal or immaterial, in her work. In 1979, Ribé produced *Ornamentació* (Ornamentation), a series of colour slides taken in Barcelona that focus on the ornamental forms which configure the imaginary of our urban environment. In these images, the casual find is combined with a repertory of forms that configure a sculptural reflection. Soon after, she repeated the process in New York, this time with black-and-white photographs.

During those years, Ribé also became interested in performance and installation. In her performances, she no longer seeks to invest the object with an artistic entity; it is the presence of the artist and the spectator that brings a subjective factor to the development of an action in a particular time and space. The aim here is to shift production of the meaning of the artistic object towards experience, in a process that de-objectivises art. It is an attempt to understand the work as something not necessarily durable, to transfer the quality of artistic object to something immaterial and to negate its objectuality. Ribé's performances are characterised by contingency, by the possibility of one thing becoming another, by the ephemeral. Most important are the performances presented at the N.A.M.E. Gallery of Chicago and at the Vehicule Galerie of Montreal in 1974.

### **Reflection on duality**

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These works allow Ribé to enrich her vocabulary and to deal with the intervention of the unconscious and subjectivity in perception, to incorporate conjunctural aspects and the analysis of contradictory information, as well as aspects of her condition as a woman and her personal baggage. *Can't Go Home*, 1977, is an installation that reflects on duality, on the possibility of doing or not doing something. It contrasts past and future, reality and the dream world, memory and desire. Also in 1977, Ribé produced another installation, *Amagueu les nines que passen els lladres*, which was presented at Galeria G, Barcelona. Here she dealt once again with the need to break away and open up to other realities, with hope, by contrasting it with what can't and shouldn't be done. The dual situation that Ribé proposes in these works reveals not only a personal, feminine, fragmented and stigmatised imaginary, but also certain parallels with the political situation in the country, at a time when it was undergoing the process of constructing the State, precariously articulated between the burden of the recent past and the possibility of a different political imaginary.

At the beginning of the eighties, Ribé began working with a symbiosis of media: sculpture as a support for painting, as in *Paisatge*, 1983; and sculptural painting over wire mesh, in which painting goes beyond the support and covers the wall directly. The exhibition also presents a selection of drawings from 1984, shown here for the first time, in which paint becomes worn out through the repetition of strokes, accentuating the feelings of loss and fragility that are so frequent in Ribé's work, in marked contrast with some of the paradigms of modernity that favour the durability and monumentality of art.

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## ***In the Labyrinth. Àngels Ribé 1969-1984***

15 July – 23 October 2011

■ **MACBA.** Plaça dels Àngels, 1. 08001 Barcelona.

■ **TIMES.** Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, from 11 am to 8 pm (from September 25, from 11 am to 7.30 pm); Sundays and holidays, from 10 am to 3 pm; Tuesdays except holidays, closed

■ **DAILY GUIDED TOURS (INCLUDED IN ADMISSION PRICE).**

■ **GUIDED TOUR WITH CARLES HAC MOR.** Thursday, July 21, at 7 pm. Included in admission price. Museum rooms. Places limited.

■ **LECTURE BY ABIGAIL SOLOMON-GODEAU.** Thursday, September 29, at 7 pm. MACBA Auditorium. Admission free. Places limited. With simultaneous interpretation.

■ **FURTHER INFORMATION.** [www.macba.cat](http://www.macba.cat) and [http://twitter.com/MACBA\\_Barcelona](http://twitter.com/MACBA_Barcelona)

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