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SOFT FICTION

insurgent imaginary

By Virginia Villaplana
and produced by consonni



SOFT FICTION

Alegiazko Matxinadak Imaginario/ Insurgentes

Virginia Villaplana eta consonniren proiektu bat Un proyecto de Virginia Villaplana y consonni

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SOFT FICTION: insurgent imaginary

The Soft Fiction project is understood as a mechanism for writing in its broadest sense, relating different levels of practices between experimental films, the novel as documentary fiction and critique as cultural performance. Based on the movie "Soft Fiction" by Chick Strand, the project develops various devices:

SF1: A programming of experimental essay as a cine cycle for the ZINEBI 51 short film and experimental essay festival of Bilbao.

SF2: A programme of films and talks with the filmmakers in the cultural centre Okendo in Donosti.

SF3: A workshop of mediabiografía where a network of people experience stories and create narratives from personal digital archives.

SF4: A publication about the building of desire and pleasure, as well as the dissection of the border between fiction and document.

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Soft Fiction is a project seen as a way of generating stories that moves between the fiction and the notion of document that will be developed throughout 2009 and be extended to 2010.

Based on the movie title *Soft Fiction* (1979) Chick Strand, there are varieties of devices putting into circulation many of the clichés and narrative images on erotic fantasies of women, both through his images and narratives of gender on the incident: technologies of visibility, film, novels, music and experimental essay....

The Soft Fiction project is understood as a mechanism for writing in its broadest sense, relating different levels of practices between experimental films, the novel as documentary fiction and critique as cultural performance. Soft Fiction is a mechanism for generating stories which moves between fictionalisation and the document notion. Soft Fiction evokes the subtle line between truth and fiction which characterises the way the fictional plot approaches the documentary, and suggests the idea of softcore fiction, which is appropriate for the narration's erotic content and its narrative strategies.

The origin of this project lies in a poetic reference to the film maker, Chick Strand. In 1979 the film maker Chick Strand shot *Soft Fiction*, an ethnographic, 16mm film. It is rare to find an erotic film seen from the female perspective with a command of both the narrative discourse and the visual and audio rhythms which structure the film. The Soft Fiction project puts many narrative and image clichés concerning erotic and sexual fantasies into circulation, both through the images and genre narratives it employs: Visual element technologies, film, novel, music and experimental essay; broaching questions such as the breadth of fantasy and sexuality, modes of expression, genre(s), the bodily form as a visual spectacle and narrative subject. Film strategies such as deconstruction, the image of appropriation, fictionalisation of the staging and the postproduction of the narrative, appear as clear symptoms of Post Capital times, in which the document image becomes a form of critical, open and plural reading of social contexts. The need to document and create documents forces us to resort to new narratives seeking to participate in reality.

If the film "Soft Fiction" (1979) by Chick Strand was somewhere between the boundaries of ethnography, documentary, avant-garde cinema and feminist counter cinema, the slot of the plot of this "Soft Fiction" Project is that of soft porn films, documentaries, narrative film and ethnographic film as experimental ethnography on the subject of fantasy. The lines of work in "Soft Fiction" cover gender policies and disidentity, translation as mediation to make problematic historical cultural references, reception of the documentary image through related projecting devices, performance as symbolic geography, and agencing with a clear vocation to create public images.

Virginia Villaplana

Devices

- 1/ Mediabiography workshop
- 2/ Cinema programme ZINEBI 51
- 3/ Video programme and talks in C.C. OKENDO
- 4/ Publication

1/ Mediabiography workshop

Virginia Villaplana proposes the Mediabiography concept as ongoing research working with stories, where a network of people deconstruct them and create new, experimental narratives using their biographical archives. Mediabiography as an experimental concept actually explores "memory technology" as a store and enlargement of the image and their narration. Mediabiography is a cross-discipline methodology which expands on experimentation with stories comprising word and image and where various collectives and networks of people take part; through a laboratory or wandering workshop system it invites its participants to experience stories and create narratives from personal digital archives. The Mediabiography Workshop, therefore, focuses on the creation of stories starting from biographical materials to eventually develop a collective mural.

This workshop looks into two reflection lines of the SOFT FICTION project: the thin line separating reality and fiction; the building of narrative reflecting the desires and sexualities of women and gender issues. This workshop is conducted by Virginia Villaplana, during two intense weekends - between October and November. In the workshop are involved: Manu Arregui, Ivan Crespo, Oihana Garro, Miren Gaztainaga, Ainhoa Güemes, Eduardo Hurtado, Aloña Intxaurrendieta, Josune Muñoz, Saioa Olmo, Susana Talayero, Itziar Ziga y Mainer Zilbeti. Artists, actors, feminist literature critics, feminist agitators, writers, art critics, culture managers...all backed by a lot of experience involved in creative processes and feminist reflections.



2/ Films programming ZINEBI 51

THE CONSTRUCTION OF NARRATIVES ON WOMEN'S SEXUAL DESIRES AND FANTASIES BETWEEN FICTION AND DOCUMENT

Zinebi 51, from 21st to the 26th of November, Bilbao

SOFT FICTION AT STREET

Saturday 21st

Torre Street (In front of Bizitza, Kukusoak, Zazpi Bide Taberna, Zulo y Ormaetxe).

From 20.30h to 01h am

Soft Fiction infiltrates the streets, the films narratives mix with regular Saturday night conversations in an emblematic spot of the *Casco Viejo*, the old quarter of Bilbao.

Extracts of *Soft Fiction* will be screened.

Mujer trama by Virginia Villaplana.

Boys meet girls by Eugenia Balcells.

Saturday 21st of November

Boy Meets Girl

Directress: Eugenia Balcells

Year: 1978

The Eugenia Balcells artwork has been developed in different disciplines as the performance, the video, the cinema or the installation. *Boy Meets Girl* in his original form is a 16mm film realized in 1978 where is treated one of the recurrent theme of this artwork like the critic of the stereotype models of masculinity and femininity linked overall through the Medias.

The film was realized with more of one thousand images which come from newspapers, magazines, advertising, etc... In this case this method is used to show an archetype portrait offers by the Medias about the contemporary man and woman.

Mujer trama

Directress: Virginia Villaplana

Year: 1997

This piece sums a large of the preoccupations of Virginia Villaplana in turn of the perverse effects that the setting in performance of the image in the media society where we live, produced in the treatment and the valorization of the women bodies. The origin of the exercise it's an image of advertising, taken in the media, in which you can see a young woman who seems hearting, abandoned in a secret place, presented to sell fashion. Virginia open a thinking about the using of this kind of images of vexing and attack in the medias, and the dangerous that can generate these decontextualization.

Soft Fiction

Directress: Chick Strand

Year: 1979

Nationality: United States

Soft Fiction is 54 minutes of black and white film that shows you 5 narrations of women which build visually as testimonies at the first person. The Soft Fiction stories flow so that one of them would reveal secrets at an unknown in a train. There are very private and personal, but drawn up into a vanguard films compositions, a documental, an ethnographic film and a soft pornography, Strand pretends that we begin to question the way that the femininity pleasures are represented and experimented in the patriarchal culture. The ethnographic asks that the film seems to do are: What are the narratives and visual components of the (hetero)sexuality of the white women in the middle class? How are they interpreted and implemented?

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FILMS PROGRAMMING SOFT FICTION

SESSION 1. 102 min

Tuesday 24th

Museum of Fine arts of Bilbao. 8 pm.

Presentation of the film programming by the artist Virginia Villaplana and projection of: "Soft Fiction" by Chick Strand (54 min)

Sink or swim by Su Friedrich (48 min)

SESSION 2. 140 min

Wednesday 25th

Bilborock. 8 pm.

November by Hito Steyerl (25 min)

Lovely Andrea by Hito Steyerl (30 min)

Mi vida, segunda parte by Angelika Levy (85min)

SESSION 3. 104 min

Thursday 26th

Museum of Fine arts of Bilbao. 8 pm.

With the participation of the filmmaker Sandra Schäfer who presents her video.

Passing the rainbow by Sandra Schäfer and Elfe Brandenburger (71 min)

La memoria interior by María Ruido (33min).

Tuesday 24 of November

Soft Fiction

Directress: Chick Strand

Year: 1979

Sink or Swim

Directress: Su Friedrich

Year: 1990

This film uses the swimming as a link in the relation between the film-maker and this father in this childhood: Autobiographical resonances through the idea of telling the memory by using the alphabet.

Wednesday 25 of November

November

Directress: Hito Steyerl

Year: 2004

Documental essay based on the life of an intimate friend-Andrea Wolf- assassinated in 1998 as a Kurdish terrorist in the East of Anatolia. Even if it was based, on the basic way, about the Wolf life's, who before this assassinate has been suspected of revolutionary activities and accused to take part of the Red Army Fraction in Germany, the documental questions what we actually we consider as terrorism. *November* shows the subjectivities, the gests and the positions which contribute to the creation of defined individual as authors or victims.

Lovely Andrea

Directress: Hito Steyerl

Year: 2007

Lovely Andrea keeps on the investigation initiated with the film *November* about the new forms that information technologies impressed to the construction o sexual symbols and icons. The film based it on the search of a

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photography took in Tokyo around 1987 which shows the artist Hito Steyerl semi naked and tied up: An image of slavery at the nawa-shibari style, characterized by tied up women with a rope and hanging on the air. An esthetic act that acquired an erotic dimension at the final of the XIX s. and the beginning of the XXs.

Mein Lebel Teil 2. Mi Vida, Parte Segunda

Directress: Angelika Levi

Year: 2003

The film is a box into a box. Out it develops the family history, the story of the mother life. The spectator discovers that the mother leg has been arranged in way of establishing what things have been repressed, moved and it stays to rectify.

SEANCE 3. Tuesday 26 of November

Passing the Rainbow

Directresses: Sandra Schäfer y Elfe Brandenburger

Year: 2007

Passing the Rainbow is a documentary film by about actors and actresses, as well as the methods of subverting the rigid social norms in Afghan society.

What does it mean to adopt a male appearance in order to find work on the employment market and, in so doing, to circumvent the ban on work for women introduced during the Taliban-Regime? And why do women practice the profession of acting, a profession for the most part considered "disreputable" in Afghan society?

La Memoria Interior

Directress: Maria Ruido

Year: 2002

This documental of creation, produce of a trip in Germany and a personal investigation of more than 2 years, speaks about the theme of the memory construction and the mechanisms of the history construction.

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3/ Video programme and talks in Okendo CULTURAL TALES ON VIOLENCE, GENDER AND GLOBALISATION

Casa de Cultura Okendo
November 13th - December 4th 2009
Monday to Friday from 4 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.

Opening - Friday 13th at 7 p.m.

VIDEO PROGRAMME

The programme of films and talks aims to focus on the troubled relationship between performance and visual devices, artistic practices, gender and violence. A critical reading of the deep creases to which the exercise of power has reduced the experience of real and symbolic gender violence in the discourse of visual culture.

The Peacekeepers and the Women Die Helfer und die Frauen, Karin Jurschick

La voz Humana, María Ruido

Nice Coloured Girls, Tracey Moffat

Passing the Rainbow, Sandra Schäfer y Elfe Brandenburger

Mujer trama, Virginia Villaplana

Writing Desire, Ursula Biemann

Carta a mi hermana, Habiba Djahnine

Women videoletters- a second text on war & globalization

Amazonas, Mujeres indomables, Mujeres Creando

GUIDED TOURS

This video series is developed within an exhibition space which has been transformed and tamed to respond to the narratives of the films themselves. The feminist activist, Nagore Iturrioz, is responsible for the guided tours offered to different women's associations or groups interested in getting to know the project; she is also in charge of the speakers' translation.

To enrol this guided tour email to berdintasuna@donostia.org or call to 943 48 14 13. The guided tour could be also during the morning.

TALKS WITH THE FILMMAKERS

November 16th at 6.30 p.m. - **Mujeres Creando** will show their latest work.

November 23rd at 8 p.m. - **Virginia Villaplana** presents the video sample and **Sandra Schäfer** unveils the details of her latest film *Passing the Rainbow*.

December 3rd at 7 p.m. - Talks with the filmmaker **Habida Djahnine**.

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PROGRAMMING FILMS

The Peacekeepers and the Women

Directora: Karin Jurschick
Año: 2003

The Peacekeepers and the Women is a film about how armed forces and political organisations try to solve problems which they are partly responsible for. The problem: women are trafficked and further forced into sexual exploitation. *Trafficking*, the trade of women and girls forced to become prostitutes, has become a booming business in Kosovo and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Members of the armed forces and humanitarian agencies deployed in the area are among their most solvent customers. The film moves away from the obvious victim/perpetrator point of view, to focus on the way the interviewees introduce themselves before they are filmed, and how each one of them talks about the subject.

La Voz Humana

Directora: María Ruido
Año: 1997

La Voz Humana is a video-performance filmed in 1997. The work is about the violence of language, about the public use of words and about the functioning of discourse built around imposed, rather than agreed upon, premises. The performance's starting point is an extract from the book by Miguel Cereceda "El origen de la mujer sujeto" (the origin of the woman subject) (1996), in which the author discusses different linguistic fields and their gender-related links. This project reflects on the voice of women (not always their own, but sometimes a mere reflection of stereotypes), and proposes a fusion between body and language - a re-materialization of discourse - to generate an extended hybrid territory, beyond the uncritical assimilation of hegemonic paradigms, but also far from the ahistorical stand of empty silence.

Nice Coloured Girls

Directora: Tracey Moffat
Año: 1987

With a highly stylistic ambition, Tracey Moffat audaciously explores the exploitation relationship between white men and aboriginal women from the beginning; between the settlers and the native women; and currently, where modern aboriginal women try to change their luck in an urban environment. Through the combination of image, sound and written text, the film conveys the perspective of aboriginal women, while showing that their consciences are still being shaped by oppression and forced silence. Although they are no longer victims of these men, the women today are still trapped due to their economic needs.

Nice coloured girls cleverly overlaps images and voice-over reading extracts from a settler's diary, to question the now established genre known as "aboriginal cinema".

This way, the use of subtitles is a reference to ethnographic films, while avoiding the clichés of the so-called "realistic reconstructions" by means of style resources. It also opposes aboriginal art to European interpretations of the Australian landscape. The film poses questions about black Australia, about sexuality and about women issues. Moffat brilliantly destroys the classic good girl-bad girl dichotomy to transform it into a game of seduction, symbolic violence and illusions.

Passing the Rainbow

Directoras: Sandra Schäfer y Elfe Brandenburger
Año: 2007

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Mujer Trama

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Writing Desire

Directora: Ursula Biemann

Año: 2000

Writing Desire explores the booming Internet bride market business and other forms of romantic and erotic electronic correspondence. The video sees the cyberspace as a market, a place for consumption and a space where female body and desire are rewritten. It shows how electronic media, such as e-mail and the Internet, have created an erotized relational space which is defined in sexual and economic terms. In this compressed electronic space, self-awareness experiences transformations which also influence issues related to limitations, gender and sexuality. Thanks to its speed and immediacy, electronic communication has become a unique tool to establish supposedly romantic relationships.

While many Westerners enjoy Internet relationships as happy and fun experiences, many women from countries with fragile economies see them as opportunities, and see white men as a symbol of redemption, as a means to escape poverty. The intention of their messages has a single aim: emigrate to the West. In their writings romantic desire is entangled with the desire to survive. The prosperous "bride market" proves that emotional and sexual relationships are being marketed within the power structure based on economic differences.

Carta a mi Hermana

Directora: Habiba Djahnine

Año: 2006

Algerian film maker and writer and militant feminist, Habiba Djahnine, narrates the story of the murder in 1995 of her sister Nabila, President of the Association for the defence and promotion of women's rights "*Thighri N'tmettouth*" (women's shout). Ten years later, Habiba returns to Tizi-Ouzou, the city where the murder took place, to ascertain the reason why violence and massacre have been the only answers to a conflict which divides Algerians.

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Women videoletters- a second text on war & globalization

Directora: Renate Lorenz, Malou Bülow, Nadja Damm, Karin Kasböck, Christine Lamberty, Tania Eichler, Karin Michalski, Anne Frisius
Año: 2004

This is a compilation of short videos or “letters” sent by activists, film makers and artists from a variety of countries, as a reaction to the aftermath of war of the attacks of September 11th, 2001: the Afghan and Iraqi wars, as well as the racist control measures implemented by Germany and the USA.

Women Videoletters intends to bring more visibility to the consequences of war on gender hierarchies or on heterosexual rules, and how such hierarchies can become the basis of the war in itself. This issue of *Videoletters* includes statements from women in the USA/Iraq, Israel, Holland/Argentina, Chiapas, Palestine, Pakistan, Turkey, Uruguay and Germany.

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4/ Soft Fiction book

The SOFT FICTION project book will be a tool to read or outline new paths around feminism, in particular emphasising the poeties which it has generated. The topics will remain the same as they have been through the whole project: the building of desire and pleasure, as well as the dissection of the border between fiction and document. The book has received the essential support from the Montehermoso Cultural Centre.

Virginia Villaplana

Social communicator, writer and artist. Born in Paris in 1972 of immigrant Spanish parents who returned to Spain in 1982 following restoration of the democratic process. PhD in Fine Arts and Communication. Also studied Film Direction at the London Film Academy. Since 2006 she has been an assistant lecturer at the Department of Language Theory and Communication Sciences, University of Valencia.

Her artistic work encompasses film, photography and installation projects. These include: in 2008-2009, *La exhumación de la infamia (Disinterring Infamy)*(Off Limits, Madrid); in 2008, *En una corta unidad de tiempo [In a Short Unit of Time]* (Liquidación Total / Medialab, Madrid), *Cine infinito [Infinite Cinema]* (Sala La Gallera, Valencia) and Espai Visor at Arco y DFoto; in 2007, *Cara a Cara [Face to Face]. Diálogos y confrontaciones fronterizas [Frontier Dialogues and Confrontations]* (Centro Cultural Español, Miami) and *Mapas, cosmografías y puntos de referencia [Maps, Cosmographies and Reference Points]* (CGAC, Santiago de Compostela); in 2005, *Cuerpos de producción [Production bodies]* (CGAC); in 2004, *Una película de ficción [A Fiction Movie]* (MUSAC, León); in 2003, *El cine del afuera: el espíritu del retrato [Cinema on the Outskirts: the Spirit of the Portrait]. San Sebastián;* in 2002, *Arquitecturas del discurso [Architectures of Discourse]* (Fundació Antoni Tàpies. / Ute Meta Bauer, Barcelona), *Kosmópolis. Verbarium* (CCCB, Barcelona), *Narratives of Work* (INIVA, London) and *Monocanal* (MNCARS, Madrid), and in 2001, *Cine y casi cine [Cineme and quasi-cinema]* (MNCARS, Madrid).

She has written several books (*Zonas de intensidades* (Madrid, 2008), *24 contratiempos* (Valencia, 2001) and *Cine infinito* (Valencia, 2007)), and numerous articles and essays on cinema, literature, the visual arts, cultural criticism and gender. She has worked in different creative areas - cinema, literature and the visual arts - in London, Paris, Montevideo, Buenos Aires and Bologna. She currently writes narrative and essays and gives workshops in a number of knowledge networks, at art centres and universities in Spain and elsewhere, including Institute of International Visual Arts (London), Kunstverein München (Múnich), University of Antwerp and Limburg University Centre (Belgium), MUSAC (León) and la Universitat de Barcelona. She co-edited the book *"Cárcel de amor. Relatos culturales sobre la violencia de género* (Madrid, MNCARS, 2005).

In the area of cultural production, she worked on the media-art and visual arts projects *Working Documents* (La Virreina Centre de la Imatge, 2008), *Imaginarios en tránsito [Imaginaria in Transit]*(CGAC, 2007), *In/security in a global context. The City of Women* (Ljubljana, Slovenia) and *Le détournement des technologies* (Constantvzw, Brussels). Between 1994 and 2001 she was the editorial coordinator of the film magazine *Banda Aparte, formas de ver*. Her work – detailed information on which can also be found at www.virginiavillaplana.com – explores writing as a form of negotiation between tales of fiction and documentaries, gender narratives, strategies from *Do it yourself* to *Do it together*, the palimpsest, participation and contextual mediums in cultural practice.

More information in www.virginiavillaplana.com

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consonni is a **producer of art projects** based in Bilbao. Since 1997, it has been inviting artists to develop projects **which do not take the form of an art object displayed in an exhibition space.**

Matthieu Laurette, Hinrich Sachs, Andrea Fraser, Sergio Prego, Ibon Aranberri, Itziar Okariz, Saioa Olmo, Iratxe Jaio and Klaas van Gorkum etc. are developing works with consonni which borrow tools from the contemporary world to produce art projects in a wide variety of formats including a television programme, an auction of Basque typography, guided tours of an abandoned amusement park and a march of zombies to subvert, criticise or simply analyse the society that surrounds them.

This makes for projects which are less visible as art but are seen by a wider range of audiences. consonni opts for camouflage as its strategy for action. The production of art in its most intangible, communicative sense and the system of art itself are based not only on practice and context but also on self-analysis and questioning, which consonni seeks to provoke in all its projects.

More information in www.consonni.org