

GENDER PAVILION

**ALICIA
FRAMIS**

The programming of the impressive exhibition hall at Alcalá 31, the building housing the Region of Madrid's Department of Culture, Tourism & Sports, showcases the work of mid-career and established Spanish artists, to which it adds an exhibition every season dedicated to Latin-American collections of contemporary art. Sala Alcalá 31 is an iconic exhibition venue in Madrid with a reputation for hosting challenging exhibition projects that must necessarily strike up a dialogue with the singular architecture designed by Antonio Palacios.

On this occasion, Alicia Framis (1967, Barcelona), one of Spain's most internationally acclaimed artists, especially in the Netherlands where she is based, proposes a new function for the main hall at Alcalá 31, reconverted into an exhibition venue in 2002. The idea is to transform this space into a

"gender pavilion" where visitors can discover the most outstanding works Framis has created since the late nineties that cast new light on various different focuses and positions on gender.

"Gender Pavilion" showcases almost two decades' work in which the artist has centred on such unfortunately current aspects of our day-to-day, like the blight of gender and domestic violence, but also on issues that are given less coverage in the news, and indeed very often silenced, but which are also part of our everyday life, like the discrimination women still suffer today.

These sociocultural aspects of the construction of identities define our forms of behaviour as women and men, and particularly those latent forms that still associate women with the home,

affecting the realms of the family—issues such as motherhood, caring for children and the elderly, affective relationships, etc.—and of work, with a particular mention for the glass ceiling which is the main barrier curtailing women's aspirations and opportunities in their professional careers.

Alicia Framis's way of working with these issues is through a language of action which combines different disciplines including performance, fashion, design, video, photography and installation. The artist applies them to her imaginary to give rise to designs for "baby-carrying suits" for men to take their children to work, to secret strikes by women to paralyse the traffic in a city, or catwalk fashion shows with designer handbags in which the models are naked men. The artist thus proposes creative and poetic alternatives to the problems

of contemporary society. Her works create doubts among spectators and ask them to question current ways of life, under the premise of the need for equality of conditions and opportunities for women and minorities in order to improve relationships between individuals and ways of cohabiting.

Finally, we wish to express my gratitude to Alicia Framis for her generosity and engagement in this challenging and timely exhibition project; and also to the art critic and researcher Margarita Aizpuru, for her wonderful curatorship; and to all those on the team of the Directorate-General for Cultural Promotion of the Regional Government of Madrid instrumental in making the current project possible.

Region of Madrid



Amsterdam, 2002

ONE NIGHT TENT

Nuremberg / Amsterdam, 2017

FORBIDDEN ARCHITECTURE

Barcelona, 2009

BLIND ARCHITECTURE

Nuremberg / Madrid, 2012-2013

SCREAMING ROOM

Barcelona, 1997

DAUGHTERS WITHOUT DAUGHTERS

Paris / Barcelona, 2002

ANTI_DOG

Madrid, 2003

ANTI_DOG, AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Amsterdam, 2004

MAMAMEN

Madrid, 2006

8 DE JUNIO, LIBRAN LAS MODELOS

Madrid, 2008

NOT FOR SALE

Lérida, 2005

SECRET STRIKE

Nuremberg, 2017

FORBIDDEN PEOPLE



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Margarita Aizpuru

Alicia Framis: Gender in Action, Through Space

Introduction

Alicia Framis (1967, Barcelona) is one of the Spanish artists currently garnering most international attention. Her practice is multidisciplinary, with a special focus on the wider realms of performance, installation, objecthood, video and photography, which she leverages from conceptual and optical premises and through committed and engaged social and feminist discourses.

She forges connections between differing fields of action which include fashion, design and architecture, but also activism and places for mutual encounter, exploring the confluence of highly diverse formats of artistic creation with everyday life and forms of behaviour. Her attention often focuses on how spaces and places are transformed and reinvented through gazes that sabotage the current status quo, turning it on its head and offering alternative new constructions for present and future ways of life in which human plurality and behaviour are not prioritized in a vertical order, but rather in a horizontal equality of possibilities.

Alicia Framis's practice is driven by a desire to come up with solutions to the problems afflicting our contemporary society. The new needs of urban dwelling, different ways of cohabiting, concerns such as security, violence, communication and solitude, related particularly with women, and the issues of gender identity occupy a central place in her creative experimentation.

Much of Framis's artistic creation can be framed within the broad scope of discursive positions of artistic feminism. Today we are faced with a plethora of feminist theories that advocate differing approaches and perspectives within art practices, adumbrating promising new paths for research which break down erstwhile certainties and immobilism, not just on the concept of the body and sexual and/or gender identity, but also on the world and human and social relationships.

This exhibition project is grounded in a selection of the artist's creative works which have engaged with feminist discourses and approaches to the world and social relations, and more specifically the position of women, children and human diversity within them, directly involving herself and even putting forward alternatives for living in a better world. Framis also positions her works within the field of social protest as well as within the construction of alternatives for everyday life and ways of living

in it, in which gender differences between men and women, understood in their entire spectrum, are not hierarchised, subordinated or prioritised.

To this end, this project wishes to transform the exhibition space into a *Gender Pavilion* which will include works that, through symbolism and a creative poetic tone coupled with their analogous ironies and metaphors, denounce the situations of subordination and discrimination in which women still find themselves in our societies today, such as the blight of gender violence, encompassing both domestic violence in the intimate sphere of the couple as well as in public spaces. Other forms of subordination are also denounced in works that evince the enduring sociocultural perspective of motherhood and the care of children as the ultimate goal of women, throwing it under the spotlight and even offering alternatives, for instance through fashion designs for men who look after their babies. She conceives works in which men participate actively in looking after children, and others in which women clearly demonstrate that they do not have to be mothers, and that motherhood is an option. And yet others that denounce how, in a patriarchal world of human exploitation, children are still being bought and sold for different purposes, ranging from organ trafficking to economic exploitation or as soldiers in wars. Among many other issues and concerns, the exhibition also includes works that attest to how, in these very same societies, our bodies are still being viewed by States and systems as territories of control, very often trespassing the limits between public and private, and our intimacy, and also how we perceive this trespassing of limits depending on our view of how others approach us and what their goals are.

Broadly speaking, the exhibition *Gender Pavilion* is internally structured around two axes. Firstly, we have a number of works that have more to do with architecture and rooms, which is to say, works in which space is a core element, and secondly, we have other works which are clearly performative, although overlapping with other artistic realms like fashion, design, video and installation. Nonetheless, this does not mean to say that there is a clear-cut distinction between the two, as a performative spirit can be discerned in the majority of all the works, but it is true to say that most of them lean more heavily in one direction or the other, and the distinction also has the functional purpose of helping to structure the exhibition space.

Architecture and Rooms

There is a particular line of work that has always been to the fore in the artist's practice, which has to do with imagined spaces and places conceived with a utopian ambition to transform themselves into realities. They are like fictions construed as possible alternative realities, because, after all, what are fictions if not discursive potentialities and the dreams and desires that we hope will become real. And, we could add, in the case of Alicia Framis, with the purpose of bettering people's lives and making this world a more liveable place.

She transforms and reinvents places, as a proposition and/or a construct, as other possible spaces, in projects where fantasy and imagination are entwined with human needs, with their diversity, with differing forms of behaviour and of freer and more open relationships. She depatriarchalises sociocultural and gender constructs assigned to men and women, transgressing the standardisation of binary nuclear family units, connecting with the desires and the whole gamut of possibilities for cohabitation, and providing her spaces with the necessary room for emotions and feelings to free the body and the mind.

Let us begin with *One Night Tent* (2002), a couple of photographs depicting reversible garments, for men and for women, which can be transformed into architecture, into a private room for maintaining sexual relationships at any given moment and in any given place, without having to search for improvised accommodation, because this space can be worn as clothing.

With a high dose of playful humour, though at once girding her designs with a utilitarian function, and from a transgressive utopia that is subtly yet effectively transformed into reality, Framis constructed these items of clothing as a ludic accessory to be turned into a kind of tent that would provide their users with a place where they can give free rein to their desire. She even provides instructions on how to take off the clothes, how to open them, how to put them together on the ground and how to build the room.

Framis has also explored these imagined places and spaces of possible and useful utopias, for instance in her series of works called *Forbidden Rooms*, which was also the title of one of her exhibitions in 2013. These forbidden rooms are spaces that go far beyond reality as we perceive it, and, as we said earlier, speak to us of imagined

places and imaginative possibilities of dwelling in them, but they also put up resistance to the so-called "real", and advance spatial solutions that escape from the norm and help to free us, even though it might be just for a while, while we are inside them, in those spaces that are, at least for now, like islands of freedom.

As part of her *Forbidden Rooms* project, which the artist has been developing in a series of works that put her at the forefront of the construction of possible non-binary housing, in terms of gender identity, which provide new options to a diverse and plural society insofar as forms of cohabitation and possible family units, over and above those normatively accepted by the patriarchal system, she also interrelates art and social needs, art and improving people's lives independently of their relational options. Take, for instance, her *Forbidden Architecture* (2017). This installation-cum-wooden hut contains photos on the ceiling of varied family and cohabitational units very different to the conventional nuclear family; a number of construction workers helmets; a video showing new prototypes of architectural constructions for plural and diverse forms of cohabiting. With this room or hut she builds a visual, sonic and spatial discourse that encourages the audience to ask themselves about new ways of thinking, designing, and conceiving housing which goes much further than standardised conventional homes for binary nuclear families. Homes that bear in mind the different kinds of families and of cohabiting that exist today, which are increasingly more diverse and distinct from the traditional nuclear family of mother, father and children.

Today, owing to the sheer quantity of all kinds of factors, forms of cohabitation, whether ephemeral or more permanent, have been greatly expanded, sometimes institutionalised under varying degrees of legal protection, like here in Spain and other countries where homosexual marriage is legalised and common-law unions can be inscribed in the Civil Registrar, conferring the registered persons with a series of legal rights.

Over the course of recent decades, we have witnessed manifold changes in this direction, and now we can find highly diverse types of families. The family has diversified and adapted to the new social context. The different types of family units have vastly expanded, due to, among many other issues: new mentalities and changes in values; new and distinct kinds of jobs, which can even lead to the members of a family living a large part of their time in different cities; the increasing incorporation of women into the

work place and greater independence; changes in romantic perspectives and the awareness that many relationships may not last for ever; the progressive tendency of couples not to marry, at least during many years; and the religious dis-ideologisation of the conception of the family.

Nevertheless, these changes and the proliferation of manifold kinds of families and new forms of cohabitation and the conduct of intimate relationships did not bring about a massive change in new kinds of housing, in consonance with the progression and expansion of this diversity, with the exception of minority cases in some countries.

And here Alicia Framis, like in many other of her works, is a true innovator. She has conceived and developed prototypes of housing adapted to this variable range of new families, asking us to rethink new family and cohabitational architecture and to build private residences from these social perspectives. She has designed homes for a multiplicity of family units and contemporary forms of cohabitation, developing ideas that rethink spaces and come up with solutions for them.

Continuing with her construction of spaces for new and better ways of living, from a feminist gaze that debunks prevailing models, we come across *Blind Architecture* (2009). This artwork is a combination of performance and installation, which is itself a kind of material print of the performance. Throughout Framis's practice this interrelation of actions with installations has always been foremost in her works, and *Blind Architecture* is a prime example.

The performance is enacted by a number of women dressed in black, whose individual identities are safeguarded behind masks, in other words they could be any women. The women invite men in the audience who wish to participate to try on and take away with them pairs of shoes from the brand "Framis for Men" which were previously installed in the space. In exchange, the men have to commit themselves to send a floor plan or a map with descriptions of a secret place they know, or have heard of, that is forbidden for women. The plans received are then incorporated into the installation together with a video recorded of the performance, as a form of documentation.

The work speaks to us of places which are exclusively for men, like the many there have been throughout history and even still today. However, we can also view it as a metaphor of public spaces which have historically been occupied and run by men, while women, on the other hand, have largely been relegated

to the realm of private spaces, and even today the presence of women in public spaces is still limited, especially in certain cultures.

Here, in this performance-installation, by proposing this exchange with the participating men, women manage to bring to light these secret forbidden places, putting them under the public eye, uncovering them, so that they are no longer secret and showing them to spectators who can then think and reflect on it.

Screaming Room (2013) is another of the artist's installation projects conceived as a room, this time as a space which the audience are invited to interact with. As such, we could say that, similarly to many of her works, it is a performative installation in which the actions of the audience are key to implementing or triggering its mechanism. Likewise, as in the majority of her works, and more specifically those on view in this exhibition, this particular installation is permeated by the interrelation between art and bettering life, a type of socially functional art.

The installation consists of a large wooden crate, the kind normally used for transporting artworks. Inside it is a room which people are invited to enter, where they can isolate themselves, press a button and scream as loudly and for as long as they like. This scream is then transformed, by software and a 3D printer located on the outside of the crate, into an object, in this case a glass with singularised forms customised according to the individual scream.

The work could be defined as therapeutic, inasmuch as it liberates anxiety, anguish, tension, anger and despair. Inside the little room, built with this purpose in mind, screams can be liberated and freely released without anyone repressing them. It is a form of therapy that is transformed into a singularised mechanical artistic creation, given that it is the 3D printer that actually makes the object-glass, but its form is dictated by the human action of screaming, shifting the liberation of emotions towards art with a highly poetic charge.

Another room as a space for social and gender interaction is *Daughters Without Daughters* (1997). This installation was conceived as a meeting place for women and, at once, as a tribute to the writer Enrique Vila-Matas, the artist Daniel Buren and the late gallerist Toni Estrany.

It pays homage to Enrique Vila-Matas and borrows its inspiration from his book *Hijos sin hijos* (Sons Without Sons), a compilation of short stories in which men isolate themselves from society; self-sufficient, individualist and indifferent men who remain connected to reality only by a thin thread,

and who comprise a particular history of Spain. Though based on Vila-Matas' book, and especially the title, Framis focuses her work on women, or "daughters without daughters", which is to say women who are not mothers, thus giving it her own feminist focus. Throughout history, motherhood has been a condition that the patriarchal system has not viewed as an option for women but as their destiny. In this regard, we ought to bear in mind the historical rejection and the divorces of those women who were not able to be mothers, all the expectations placed on women so that, when they arrived at a certain age, they would become mothers, almost as if it were an obligation. And we should also recall all the women who, except in the bosom of the family or inside a convent, generally lived isolated from each other and excluded from different social strata. And even though now they are included, but to a much more restricted degree than for men.

In *Daughters Without Daughters*, the artist constructs a meeting place for women, a room or hall where they can talk about the things that affect them, like, for instance, the issue of motherhood as an option; a place where they can think, talk and share something together. However, in contrast to the spaces just for men still existing in our societies, men are not forbidden from entering.

In this room women can write their problems, desires and thoughts on the four walls. One of the walls is inspired by, and brings to mind, the artist Daniel Buren, with a structure of black and white stripes, and even the sofa and the table also have the same striped pattern. There are glasses, wine and chalk for writing with on the table, encouraging them to meet and share something together.

One of France's seminal painters, Daniel Buren is basically known for his painted stripes, but also for his questioning of the museum as a social and institutional structure. This conceptual artist, strongly opposed to figuration and narration, who has gradually reduced painting to pure repeated stripes exempt from all gesturality and subjectivism in materialisation and expression, breaking away from representation, has clearly influenced Framis, chiefly in this work. Nevertheless, despite this influence and the use of Burenian stripes, in *Daughters Without Daughters* Alicia Framis introduces other kinds of elements and pretensions, ideologically feminist and charged with sorority, complicity, exchange and a meeting between women. It is a kind of space inside the museum space which creates, like some of her other rooms, a microcosm for reflection, questioning and, in this case, meeting.

Performances, their derivations and extensions

Unlike other artists who always enact their own performances, Alicia Framis only occasionally take part in her actions, which are basically performed by others or indeed by the audience who are invited to participate in them, because to her way of thinking the audience's intervention and interaction with her works is absolutely essential.

In fact, she specifically conceives many of her works to be experienced and used. Furthermore, in them the artist is absolutely committed with visibilising social conflicts and the discrimination and subordination of women in our patriarchal society and defending their demands, though she always does so from a poetised, aesthetic and formally innovative approach and with positive elements for a better future society.

In the realm of activism–protest against gender violence. *Secret Strike Lleida* (2005) is a performance, in video format, included within this project. The performance takes the form of a secret strike, which the artist uses to undertake this action–protest against institutional inaction in continuous cases of gender violence in Spain. The strike involved one hundred women freezing their movements and stopping traffic, unified by the blood-red gloves they are wearing. Their corporal presence is completely immobile, as they remain frozen, as if posing for a still photograph, detaining the actions or movements they were doing, except for their breathing, blinking or the slight tremor of a leg or a hand that reveals that there is life and that the stillness is deliberate. Meanwhile, the camera scans the "strikers" in long sequences, as the cars blow their horns and pedestrians pass by or stop to watch.

Also on show is Framis's new performance *The Walking Ceiling* (2018), underwritten by a similar, powerful discourse of protest and activism. It denounces the discriminatory glass ceiling which women still have to fight against at work, in politics and in their social lives, among other realms. It is what keeps us at the bottom in society, in public power, in jobs and professions, in salaries, and in all the other sectors of this patriarchal world we live in. As invisible yet also as hard as glass, this situation of subordination and general discrimination placed above our heads prevents us from progressing upwards.

In the realm of the confluence of performances and fashion. this exhibition project *Gender Pavilion*

includes a diversity of works featuring clothing, dresses and suits that have been used in certain actions and then later exhibited in their own right, conceived to be used and to contribute to society in the present and the future, while at once being innovative and attractive designs.

These lines of clothing—or, we could call them, fashion for a freer and more equal society—are conceived in conjunction with performance, video, and sometimes photography. The garments are dresses for women or suits for men used in performances which experiment with innovative, liberating, cathartic attitudes and forms of behaviour that transmit transgression and progress.

For many years now Framis has been working on a series that interrelates art and fashion from feminist perspectives, in which she continues to explore what women's bodies mean in contemporary societies, what purposes the various economic, political, media, ideological–social powers continue to put them to, utilising, reifying and normalising them. Bodies of sexualized and commodified women. And bodies of women on which violence is perpetrated.

In this regard, she created the dresses in the anti-gender violence and antiracism *anti_dog* fashion collection designed to protect women from possible aggressions from dogs, stabbing or bullets. The name of the collection came about from a piece of news in which the artist read about racist and sexist attacks by groups of skinheads and their dogs against immigrant women of colour in a neighbourhood in Berlin.

This line of clothing for women, in which renowned fashion designers and haute couture brands have also collaborated, is made with a kind of very tough fabric often used for bullet-proof, fireproof and stab-resistant vests. The dresses were conceived as defensive, and made with an intense golden yellow colour to call people's attention in the event of the wearer being attacked. Sewn into many of the dresses are texts in black referring to gender violence and sexist relationships. This exhibition presents various garments from this collection, displayed on mannequins.

These dresses are the core structural elements of a series of actions of activist feminist performances, recorded on video, which were carried out by the artist in 2002 and 2003 in Paris, Amsterdam, Madrid, Birmingham, Helsingborg, Barcelona and Venice, taking the form of cathartic and activist fashion shows conceived to stir consciences and to provoke debate on gender violence.

This exhibition includes the videos of the performances carried out in Madrid and in Amsterdam, in places with lots of people, with models from different races and cultures wearing various dresses from the *anti_dog* collection. The video *anti_dog, in Ajax football stadium* (Amsterdam, 2002) shows the action undertaken by a number of women at the exit to the Ajax football stadium, in front of the team's countless football fans, mainly men, who were chanting Ajax songs as they passed by the models, almost rubbing up against them and even walking over one of the models who was lying on the ground, following the script for the action. And they do so without the slightest care or concern, as if nothing was happening. The second one, *Against Domestic Violence* (Madrid, 2003), shows the *anti_dog* action carried out on the streets of Madrid in 2002, going from Galería Helga de Alvear, her Spanish gallery at the time, to the Museo Reina Sofía, as an uncompromising protest against sexist violence.

The artist then continued making use of clothing and fashion to engage with everyday life and with new ways of living, and with the changes in the participative functions of men and women in relationships and in the multiplicity of possible families. This led to, among other projects, *Mamamen* (2004), a collection of men's suits with built-in baby-carriers which men can wear to work and do different jobs, carrying their babies in their suits and shirts. The artist posited the need for new type of clothing for men who look after their babies, especially when observing how in certain Western countries, such as Scandinavia or the Netherlands, where she lives most of the time, men's roles and jobs are increasingly expanding to include domestic chores and looking after children. And although, in this regard, equality between men and women is still a long way off, it encouraged the artist to conceive and design these suits that would create a new image for men and their way of dressing. Three men's baby-carrying suits are included in the exhibition, displayed on mannequins.

But Framis has also created other performances with fashion yet without actual garments, like the one called *8 de junio libran las modelos* (2006). This action came about in response to an invitation from the brand Loewe, then celebrating its 160th anniversary, to take part in the group show *Take me with you*, with artworks that analysed the relationship between people and handbags. Although Loewe censored the artist's performance, considering it to be inappropriate for the company's image, she did carry it out at a later date, at Círculo de Bellas Artes in Madrid in 2006.

As is usually the case with her works, Alicia Framis decided to create a performance from a feminist gaze, this time in the form of a fashion show in which a number of nude male models paraded on the catwalk with nothing except white handbags from Loewe. With this action she was endeavouring to lay bare the exploitation of images of women in the fashion world, and the exhaustive use of and enormous pressure over their bodies, which furthermore must be slender enough to conform to sizes more appropriate to teenagers, in many cases leading to illnesses such as anorexia and bulimia, and/or the commodification of their bodies, even their pure eroticisation and objectualisation. By symbolically giving women models a vacation for one day, as suggested by the title of the action, *8 de junio libran las modelos* (8 June, day off for models) and getting male models to parade down the catwalk naked, all gazes were then shifted to their bodies, in a provocative and ironic inversion of how the bodies of women are usually the subject of the gaze, often with eyes that undress them.

Continuing with her work denouncing and highlighting the exploitation of people, but in this case of children, Framis created a hugely significant and forceful work called *Not for Sale* (2007-2008-2009). Taking the format of performance, video-performance and photographs, this ongoing project addresses the social blight of the exploitation and sale of children in the world.

The artist started working on the project in Bangkok, Thailand, photographing children, naked from the waist up and with a sign around their necks saying *Not for Sale*. She then took the project towards performance and video.

The work was presented as a performance at La Casa Encendida in 2008, as part of the *Madrid Abierto* festival, collaborating with the artist Michael Li, who designed an installation in the form of a catwalk, and also with a number of accessory designers from Spain, Shanghai and Thailand, who worked alongside the artist to design the pendants to be worn around the necks of the children who paraded in this special, critical, radical and committed “children’s fashion show”. The video of the performance is on view in this exhibition project.

In addition, and as yet another of the performances to be simultaneously enacted in this *Gender Pavilion*, a teenage boy will perform, now individually, an action among the public, naked from his waist up and wearing one of the *Not for Sale* pendants around his neck, here doing away with the need for a catwalk and transferring the terrain of the

action to the exhibition space, this time without any fixed spatial delimitations.

In the realm of the body and its limits, the public and the private, and the perception of intimacy we have the performance *Forbidden People* (2017), which was then turned into an installation. In this action a number of security guards wearing uniforms with the logo *PDA Security (Public Display of Affection)*, designed by the artist, are located at the entrance to the exhibition hall. They are supposedly there to do security checks on the public as they enter, but with the particularity that, rather than patting down the public, the guards give them a hug. The action is recorded on video, and together with the guards’ uniforms, is part of the installation in the exhibition space, as a form of documentation and a trace of the action.

Here the artist wished to explore the limit between security and affect, between what is public and privacy, and to get people to think about how we accept the fact that security guards can touch our bodies, from top to bottom, can pat us down, register us, and we think it is normal, but if they simply give us a hug then we are surprised, striking us as abnormal and even uncomfortable, like going a step too far. And this is especially odd when you think that the first action, entailing control, is much more aggressive and intrusive, while the second one is much more generous, friendly and pleasant.

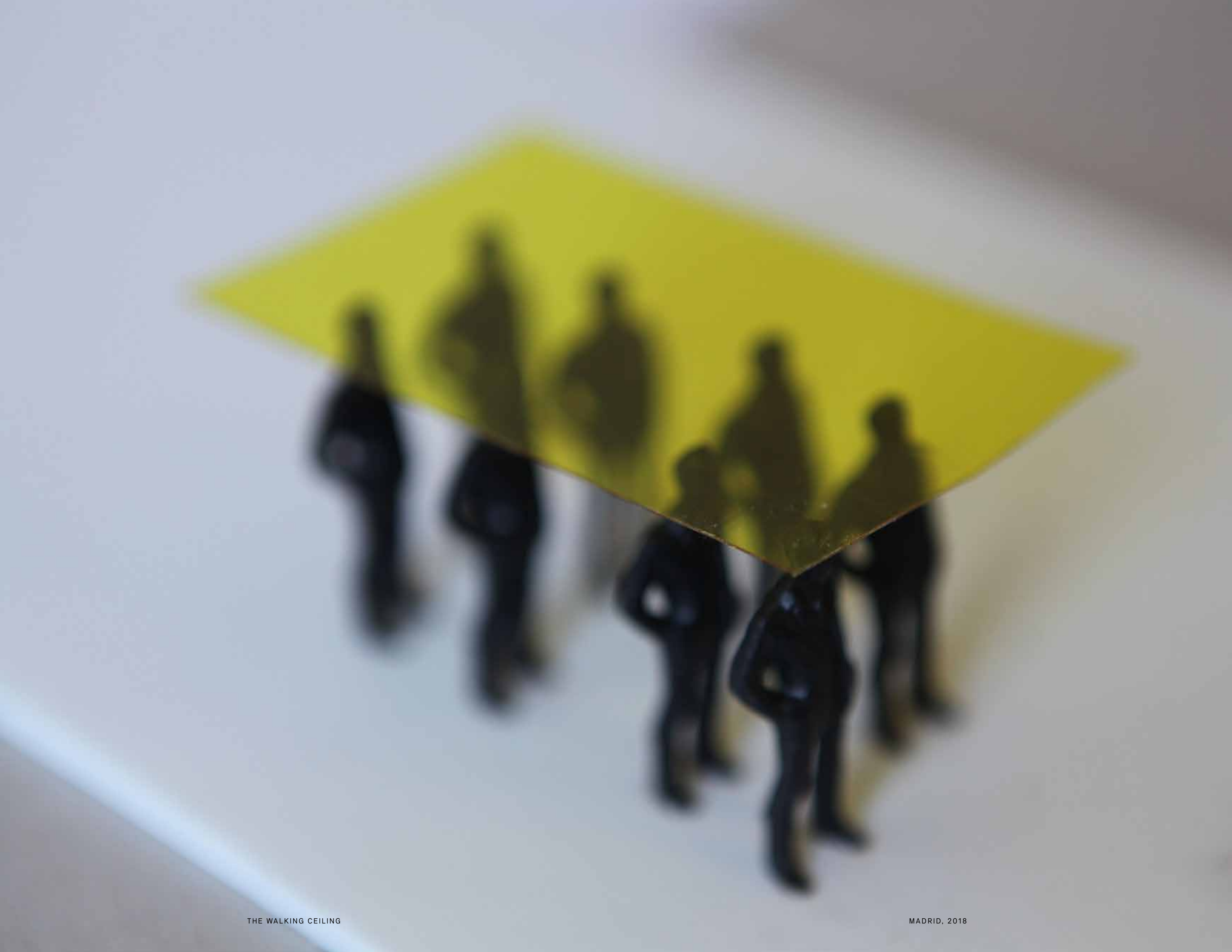
The artist could not help wondering why we are so complacent in the first scenario and so nonplussed in the second, and it is something we should probably all ask ourselves. It could be that in our society, with the exception of people we are very close to, we do not show signs of affect in public, assigning them for more private places.

What the artist is questioning in the performance is the contradiction between public and private, especially with regards the body and the whole concept of intimacy. She has already dealt with this issue on other occasions and in other works, for instance in one of her performative works called *¿Es mi cuerpo público?*, shown at her recent solo show at Galería Juana de Aizpuru in April-May 2018, in which a number of women, draped in pieces of tulle fabric with the question “Is my body public?” written in various different languages, entered the space one by one, until eventually filling it up with their bodies wrapped in transparent fabric with the sentence, after which the artist stripped away the pieces of fabric one by one, and hung them up like on a washing line.

Here she questions when, and to what extent, women’s bodies belong to the public or to the private realms. Our bodies that have been normativised, reified, possessed, demonized, insulted, assaulted, murdered, standardised under canons of beauty, made to feel guilty for being self-managed, constrained, throughout the course of history and up until the present day in lots of cultures and societies.

Alicia Framis also introduces us into an absolutely current issue in our contemporary societies, into the difference between what is public and what is private, reflecting on the privacy of our bodies in a present-future world in which increasingly more sophisticated technologies are applied to our everyday lives, and even to our very bodies. At the

current moment, a Belgian company has implanted microchips the size of a grain of rice between the thumb and the index finger of its workers with radio frequency identification technology with 868 bytes of memory. Meanwhile, 3000 people in Sweden over the last three years have had identification microchips implanted under the skin of their fingers. The goal of these microchips is police, health, labour and, why not, also behavioural and social control. This fact, coupled with an ever greater proliferation of (security?) cameras everywhere, means that privacy and spaces of intimacy are dwindling all the time. Perhaps we will live to see the end of intimacy and of freedom altogether, and this, it would seem, is what Alicia Framis is warning us about, and even more so when it comes to women.



Amsterdam, 2002

ONE NIGHT TENT

Tent, 2 colour photographs

Dimensions variable

Museum of Modern Art Arnhem Collection

Reversible architecture for one-night stand

- 1 Find the person who you want to have sex with. Take off the clothes you are wearing to make the tent.
 - 2 Put the man's suit on the floor and close the buttons and zippers. Like this it will become a perfect square.
 - 3 Close the buttons and zippers of the woman's dress and create a dome.
 - 4 Attach the square floor to the dome with the zipper and buttons.
 - 5 Take the two sticks from the man's bag and put them through the loops in the dome. Secure them on the metal pins at the corners of the square.
 - 6 Open the entrance zipper and enter the tent. Close the zipper and have sex. In tropical countries you can use the mosquito net.
- We wish you a lot of fun with your one-night tent. If, for whatever reason, a problem does occur, please contact your distributor.





ONE NIGHT TENT

Nuremberg / Amsterdam, 2017

FORBIDDEN ARCHITECTURE

Wooden room, 120 A4 photographs, construction workers' helmets,
fabric bags, two benches with cushions and video

300 x 300 x 200 cm

Banco Sabadell Collection

Forbidden Architecture is part of the ongoing project *Century 22* by Alicia Framis in which she challenges binary concepts of gender. The project premiered at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in January 2017. *Forbidden Architecture* is a space for discussion around the topic of gender identity and architecture.

Century 22 Real Estate, whose name is inspired by the well-known international real estate firm Century 21, is a real estate company established by Framis in which she explores different ways of living for non-binary families. Houses have traditionally been built to provide the traditional family of mother, father, and two children with a living space. However, there are many different ways of living together as a family: same-sex couples, community living, transgender and gender fluid couples, living amongst friends, or having a live-in au pair, to name just a few. *Century 22* breaks with stereotypical gendered architecture and creates non-binary spaces.

Forbidden Architecture presents the first changing room for construction workers that does not fit gender expectations and standards of male masculinity. It aims to catch up with the realities of our time

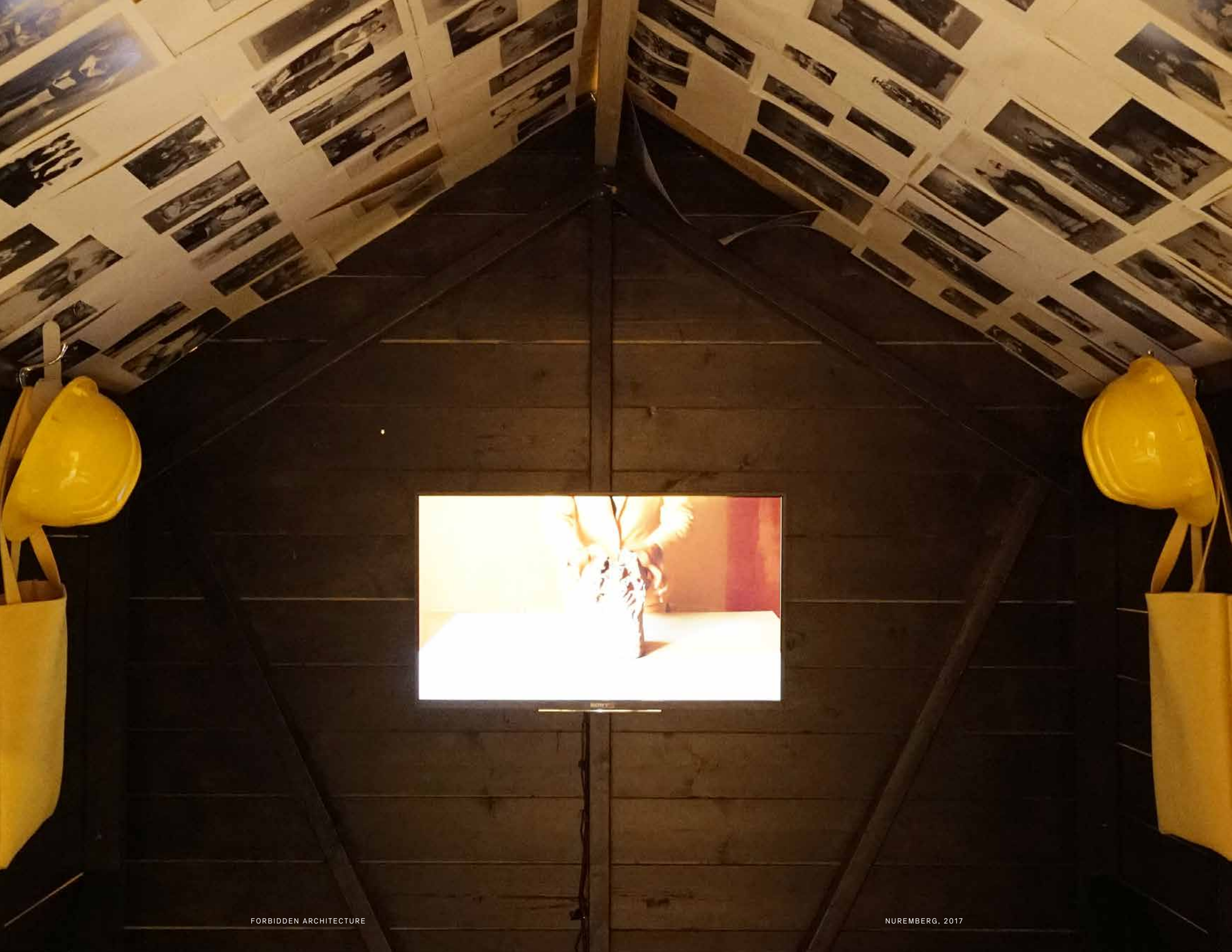
and escape persisting taboos and judgments. The six yellow helmets inside the house belong to construction workers. The construction workers are the ones that build the new architectural forms and create new acceptance. They are both builder and thinker.

The interior of the little 'house' conflates the stereotype of macho construction worker with that of the sentimental holding onto family photographs. The space is personalised and the photographs that are plastered onto the ceiling of the space do not present us with family pictures of traditional mother-father families but, instead, with, for instance, a homosexual couple in the nineteenth century and their four adopted children. Inside the changing room one encounters a video that acquaints us with new architectural models of living together. Introduced are, for example, the Transgender House, the House for Life Partner and Toyboy, and the Doghouse with Human Being. For the video Framis interviewed people living both in the Netherlands and abroad who told her their stories of non-binary living.

Framis is continuing the interviews and continues to develop new models of living.









Barcelona, 2009

BLIND ARCHITECTURE

Installation and performance

20 floorplans of secret places, performance, 20 pairs of men's shoes

Han Nefkens Collection

During this performance with eight girls, the girls made a secret exchange. Men received a pair of shoes from the Framis for Men brand, designed by Alicia Framis, and in exchange they had to send in a floor plan of a forbidden, secret place where women cannot enter.

Some buildings or places are not accessible to everybody; only men are allowed to enter. This project was created for ArtAids and is now part of the Han Nefkens collection.







Mirjam Westen

Gendered Space: Going Beyond the Binary

“Can we imagine a world in which we loosen up the gender specificity? What rules would need to be changed? What consequences would it have?”

—Alicia Framis, January 13, 2017

‘Art Is The Mother Of Resistance’ is displayed in neon letters on the façade of the art academy in Arnhem since 2016.¹ This seemingly simple one-liner raises countless questions. In what respect resistance – and to what? When related to the work of Alicia Framis, the maker of that light installation, the first thing that comes to my mind is: resistance to conformism, to rules, to pigeonholing. The second thing that strikes me is the word ‘mother’. For centuries, art has been associated with beauty, freedom and with the [gendered] muse, but in the art world the association with ‘mother’ is avoided, as being neither hip nor sexy, and, in particular as ‘unfree’ and fettered by everyday concerns.² With her use of that sex-specific word, Framis demonstrates that she doesn’t give a jot about the mores of the art world, which – like all other areas in society – is also structured by gender.

In her oeuvre Framis addresses a whole range of topics and deploys a wide diversity of disciplines, from performances to wishing walls, from clothing design to inventive architectural structures. Despite the variety of themes, such as fear, injustice, desire and loneliness, all her work can be reduced to one issue: our relations with others, to our fellow wo/man, to the world around us, in other words: to our human condition. Although social and cultural hierarchies within society play an important part in her work – without words like gender or feminism ever being mentioned in catalogues or press releases – Framis opted for her solo presentation ‘Gender Pavilion’ in Madrid at the end of 2018 explicitly for the gender perspective, starting with inclusion of the word in the title. The term ‘gender’, unlike ‘feminism’, does not point in a particular direction. But that alters as soon as we consider gender in the light of the differences between ‘being a woman or a man’

and, especially the consequences thereof, such as the unequal power relations facing us every day, on a personal and social level.

Feminism and the gender discussion may have considered to be outdated for decades³, but a change has been underway for a number of years. There is a striking increase in interest in gender issues and growing feminist activism among twenty- and thirty-year olds. In Spain cuts in the budget against sexual violence in 2010 already provoked protests, the tightening of abortion legislation in 2014 was a wake-up call for many young women. Since then they have been uniting actively and on 8 March, on International Women’s Day, they demonstrated in ever growing numbers against discrimination, gender inequality and sexual violence.⁴ Their actions spread like wildfire throughout the entire country, culminating in 2018 in a 24-hour strike. The gender issue is topical and urgent – once more – among young and old generations alike.

Would it seem that with her Gender Pavilion, Framis is capitalising on this renewed interest? If we look at her oeuvre of the last 25 years it transpires that the gender issue has played an important part from the very start. Framis challenges us time and again to consider established patterns in a different way. With fitting humour and a degree of levity, she offers us alternatives enabling us to view certain relationships in a different light, for instance between individual and collective, between individual and state, between parent and child, between man and woman.

“I want to stop being afraid! Enough is enough.”

Text from a protest banner, Madrid, March 8 2018

Let’s start with the most recent performance, from the spring of 2018, which bears a striking similarity to Framis’ ‘anti_dog’ project of 2002-2003. The

¹ From 2016 to 2018 Framis was attached as a tutor to the Bachelor Fine Art Arnhem: Base for Experiment, Art and Research (BEAR).

² Many young female artists have experienced that as soon as they have children they are taken less seriously in the art world and become isolated. A large number of international networks seek to empower young mothers, including m/other voices, a non-profit organisation created for the purposes of initiating, supporting, doing, promoting, raising awareness and giving visibility to maternal thinking, -theory and -research within the arts, culture, philosophy and the society at large, as well as to increase the participation of mothers in the production of art, culture and theory. <https://www.moothervoices.org/foundation>.

³ Within the visual arts these discussions have long been considered irrelevant. See also M. Westen (ed.) *rebelles. Art & Feminism 1969-2009*. Museum voor Moderne Kunst Arnhem (2009).

⁴ In the Netherlands there is, for instance, growing interest for the celebration of International Women’s Day on 8 March. At the art academy in Arnhem feminism has been an important topic in the curriculum since 2016.

performance 'Is My Body Public?' was enacted by fifteen women. Swathed in transparent dresses, they walked through the streets of Madrid. Their procession ended at Juana de Aizpuru Gallery, where they removed their clothes and hung them on washing lines. Every dress was embroidered with the text 'Is My Body Public?', in fifteen different languages. With this 'transparent' collection made in tulle, which is generally used in lingerie for intimate indoor moments, Framis literally oversteps the boundary between the private and the public setting. With the question 'Is My Body Public?', she literally puts the alleged 'availability' of the female body 'on display', thus touching on discussions on sexual violence and intimidation that are not only taking place in Spain and the Netherlands, but throughout the world.

That was also Framis' intention sixteen years ago with 'anti_dog'. The project was prompted by personal experiences. "A woman always walks a mile more. The darkness tells me I cannot take short cuts in the city", Framis wrote during her artist-in-residence period in Berlin in 2002. She was advised to avoid certain districts in the city, because women, especially those with a coloured complexion, were regularly assaulted by rightwing radicals with dogs. That fact inspired her fashion line 'anti_dog' (2002). Unlike city councils that believe they can increase safety in public space using surveillance cameras, Framis developed impressive golden yellow clothing in order to empower women. Her reasoning was: "Omnipresent video cameras should protect us against other people but instead they deprive us of our privacy. The loss of intimacy reinforces the idea of security and unsafety (....) . Protection does not come from a monitor, the monitor is just a witness of fear. Safety comes from the feeling you are the owner of your own body and mind."⁵ 'anti_dog' is made in synthetic, bullet-proof, fire-resistant fabric from aramid fibres based on designs by famous fashion designers. Fear and resistance that, in threatening situations, give you the feeling of wanting to be invisible were 'redirected' into striking, theatrical attire that actually draws attention to the wearer's visibility. With the

'anti_dog' clothing, Framis mounted performances against sexual violence in numerous cities.⁶ When she was staying in Birmingham in 2003, she put conspicuous texts on five garments. Together with students from the fashion academy she asked residents of the domestic violence shelter for the most insulting profanities that were regularly hurled at women and immigrants which they never wanted to hear again. The expletives were embroidered on the 'anti_dog' dresses. The residents posed on pavements and steps in Birmingham, as if it were a fashion shoot, stylishly wearing the dresses with texts like 'get out of my life you ugly bitch' or 'this is not your country'. Every vituperation ended with the copyright symbol ©. With that symbol, Framis appropriated both ironically and symbolically, the right to curb the use of such insults. The performance was entitled: Copyrighting Unwanted Sentences. Framis will not allow herself to be ruled by fear, but transforms fear into a source of creative power. This altered perspective invariably results in actions and objects expressing empowerment and hope.⁷

Averse to stereotype role-and expectation-patterns

"The very first division, when we are born, is between male and female" – that was Alicia Framis's statement during the performance evening at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, in January 2017. "It seems almost fundamental for us to hold on to that as one of the last certainties we have to establish ourselves and our identity. For that reason we are extremely harsh on people who challenge that basic polarity, to those who want to change their gender during their life. Can we imagine a world in which we loosen up the gender specificity? What rules would need to be changed? What consequences would it have? What ethical decisions would need to be made?", according to Framis. In order to give a preliminary idea of those changes, she presented an alternative for the 'average' family (man, woman, child) on which standard public housing plans are based. Dressed in a canary-yellow outfit, plus safety helmet, and flanked by her team, she launched the 'Century 22

Real Estate' project. It comprised an "investigation of a gender-neutral and non-binary architecture meeting the needs of 'non-binary families'." The artist surprised us with humorous examples of non-binary house designs. All were inspired by the 'housing preferences' she hears about, including a design for a single mother who can satisfy her desire for love and eroticism without it bothering her children (a staircase directly accessing the bedroom on the first floor), or 'House Party' – a house with a dance floor, bar and darkroom in the basement for mothers who miss the leisure scene and can now go 'out' at home, or the 'House for an Exhausted Husband', who lives with several women whom he supports.

'Century 22 Real Estate' can be seen as a sequel to the dozens of prototypes of alternative 'social' architecture that Framis has developed since the 1990s. For example, the model "Well-matched house", Berlin (2001) consists of two apartments that can be moved together or apart. The design is intended for "weekend couples, gay, hetero, married, divorced couples" who want to share "horizontal intimacy" but not "vertical routine", or "for egos that are only prepared to give up their privacy for a few hours or a few days, and then proceed to be super-egos again", according to Framis. She made a portable 'house' with the installation 'One night tent' (2002), which she described as "reversible architecture for an amorous session". It comprises two different clothing outfits which can be zipped together to form a tent, in which the wearers of the garments can have one-night sex.⁸

Another example is the 'Billboard Thailand House' realised in 2002. It is a cube comprising three billboards and, apart from advertising, provides free accommodation. However, it has no kitchen or bathroom. It is just a place in which to relax and store things – so there is no need to argue about who is responsible for the traditional domestic chores like cooking and cleaning toilets.⁹

From the beginning of Framis's artistic career, an important theme has been breaking stereotype role- and expectation-patterns. One of her earliest

installations addresses the most 'obvious' expectation for young women – motherhood – and bears the title 'Daughters without Daughters. Testament of a hundred women'. When I first saw that work in 1997 I was deeply affected. Washing lines were hung cross-wise through the space with hundreds of black-and-white photos hanging from them. They portrayed cheerful-looking women, from young to old, from Barcelona and Amsterdam – I actually recognised some of them! What united these women from different social classes was their choice not to have offspring. With 'Daughters without Daughters' Framis wanted to pay tribute to women who "have opted for a different way of life". She asked them what they would leave behind when they died, and presented their answers as an 'anonymous testament'.¹⁰ Why was I so affected by the installation? Was it because I had recently become a mother (and a very happy one at that), or was it because Framis had broached a subject with which many women of child-bearing age grapple? Or did the shock I experienced stem from the taboo about bringing the choice not to have children into the open? So, women who publicly refuse to conform to the ideal image they are traditionally expected to uphold? I felt it was very courageous, and wondered if Alicia Framis had, as an artist, also grappled with those expectations herself? (Incidentally, she herself became a mother in 2005). In later versions of the installation, Framis expressly allows visitors the scope to add their own ideas on the subject.

Framis not only focuses on traditional patterns of expectation regarding women, but also those regarding men. For instance, she designed the clothing line 'Mamamen' (2004) specially for them – a collection of office suits and shirts ingeniously containing a baby sling, thus enabling a man to carry a child around with him during working hours. She made Mamamen models for a priest, a businessman and a yuppie.¹¹

She deployed a radical Bakhtin-esque role reversal in the performance she originally made for the exhibition featuring the luxury handbag made by the Spanish brand LOEWE. On 8 June 2008 there was a protest demonstration in Madrid against the use of

⁵ Lilet Breddels (ed), *Alicia Framis. Works 1995-2003*. Amsterdam: Artimo 2003, p. 53.

⁶ 'anti_dog' was presented in Paris, Madrid, Venice, Helsingborg, Barcelona and Birmingham.

⁷ This project might be seen in the tradition of the feminist art movement, particularly the oeuvre of the Spanish artist Esther Ferrer (1937 San Sebastian). From start to finish Ferrer was involved in the Spanish group 'ZAJ. Theory and practice' (1966-1996) which was associated with the Fluxus movement. The body is a recurring aspect of her work. Ferrer's performance 'Intimate and personal' – first held in 1967 – is an early example of the way the body is deployed to break through the barrier between private and public. In 'Intimate and personal' Ferrer measures the bodies of a man and a woman (herself) and writes the measurements of the various body parts on the ground and on a board in chalk, after which she reads them out loud. It is an early example with which to demonstrate the difference between masculinity and femininity and criticise the perception of the ideal, 'standardised' body. The fact that the body was subjected to the systematic translation of its proportions into numbers could, in the light of the Franco regime (1939-1975), also be seen as resistance to overruling totalitarianism.

⁸ This work is accompanied by detailed instructions, with points such as 1) look for the person with whom you want sex. Take off your clothes and make a tent with them; 2) place the male clothing on the ground and do up buttons and zippers so as to form a square; 3) do up the buttons and zippers of the female clothing and make a canopy from it, etc.

⁹ The design was inspired by Framis's stay in Tokyo. In Japan, minimal living space has resulted in cooking and laundry being done elsewhere, meaning that many women are liberated from their domestic duties. The series 'New buildings for China' (2007-2009) was inspired by her stay in China. Framis focuses on transparency and open spaces in prototypes for buildings and monuments.

¹⁰ Alicia Framis, *Daughters without daughters. Testament of a hundred women*. Dordrecht: Wax & Jardins 1998. The title was inspired by the book 'Sons without sons' (1993) by the Spanish writer Enrique Vila- Matas. Since its first showing in 1997 in Utrecht (Festival aan de Werf), the installation has been mounted in a different form.

¹¹ Several costumes were made in collaboration with the designer Gabriel Torres.

skinny female models in fashion and the concomitant advertising. Framis took the demonstration as her starting point and deliberately hired no female – they had a day ‘off’ to demonstrate – but male models (seventeen of them) who took to the catwalk in their birthday suits, only carrying ladies’ handbags. The Spanish royal family was due to attend, so the hilarious video of the performance ‘8 June, day off for female models’ (2006) was omitted from the exhibition. The stretching of certain norms and expectation patterns was wasted on both the handbag manufacturers and the Spanish royal family.

Social interaction

Alicia Framis made a name for herself in the Netherlands and in Spain in the 1990s, a period in which artists no longer wanted to make autonomous art in the seclusion of their studios, but elsewhere. They were seeking a way to make ‘meaningful’ art and wanted to bridge the gap between artist and public. The American artist Suzi Gablik (1934) had already concluded in her book *Has Modernism Failed?* (1984) that the heroic, egocentric idealism of 20th-century art had led to a lifeless art market of styles that followed in quick succession and were interchangeable, and of ‘anything goes’. In 1991 Gablik signalled a shift in art in *The Reenchantment of Art*. Unlike the competitive, institutional, patriarchal power structures of modernism, she noted that growing numbers of local and smaller networks were flourishing in which artists were sharing and cooperating far more than in the past. She envisaged an art that was “essentially social and purposeful, art that rejects the myth of neutrality and autonomy”. Gablik advocated a responsible form of art, art by socially-committed artists, who could put their egos behind them and acknowledge their surroundings and social issues. Nihilism had to make way for a “pragmatic idealism and more integrated value system that brings head and heart together in an ethic of care, as part of the healing of the world”, according to Gablik. Socially committed art of that type was to become fashionable a few years later in Europe, designated as ‘relational aesthetics’. The term was first used in 1996 by the art critic Nicolas Bourriaud in his exhibition catalogue *Traffic*. He described relational art as “a set of artistic practices which take as their

theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space.” The role of the art work is no longer about whether or not to portray an idealised version of reality; it functions as a platform where people meet up in order to participate together in an activity.

Interaction with others, with the public, also became an important artistic resource for Framis, and was precisely how she set herself apart at the end of the 1990s. And promptly won the prestigious Prix de Rome in 1997: with the performance ‘Walking monument’ in Dam Square in Amsterdam.¹² But interaction is never a goal as such. She takes as her starting point situations that attract her attention, situations that amaze her, sometimes annoy her and are sometimes problematical, and – not unimportant – for which she wants to provide alternatives. Not as an admonishment, but with a good measure of inventiveness, fun and humour, Framis succeeds in creating openings in the way we think, and gets us, as spectators or participants, to look at and experience existing situations and relationships differently. We should not only view Framis’s oeuvre within developments in art in the 1990s, but also in the light of the feminist art movement that overturned and changed the art world for good in the mid-1960s. The tampering with the foundations of entrenched sex patterns and views on art and artishood was but one of the strategies of the feminist avant-garde. Another important tactic was to develop alternatives. An underlying element was the understanding that personal, private life is closely interwoven with public life.

Framis communicates that interconnectedness of self and the world in projects in which she seeks direct contact with her audience and creates scope for dialogue through sensory experiences. An important strategy incorporates a form of care(giving). Framis’s care focuses on happiness and heartbreak, on the widespread desire to ‘be seen’, and on feelings of insecurity and loneliness.

“The assumption of being merely individuals is our greatest limitation.”

—Pir Vilayat Khan

¹² 160 participants scrambled over one another to form a pyramid that briefly replaced the national monument (1956), the memorial to the Second World War, on Dam Square, Amsterdam which had been removed temporarily for restoration. Fully in keeping with the philosophy of the makers (architect Oud and artist Raedeker) Framis wanted to make a ‘breathing’ monument. Hundreds of bystanders spontaneously joined in the performance to underpin the living pyramid.

Framis has realised countless projects in public space with which she hit a raw nerve regarding the present-day contradiction: on the one hand, we are connected with the whole world through the media and internet, on the other hand in Western Europe we are increasingly living alone. We are no longer part of a community and feel lonely, in spite of all the interconnections. The artist created with many different projects the possibility for individuals to meet other people. For instance, in a reaction to the unsafe situation after closing time in the shopping centre bordering Utrecht’s Central Station, Framis organised an ‘escort service’ for individual visitors to the Festival a/d Werf in Utrecht (1996). People could go from the railway station to their destination, accompanied by identical twins, and so safely cross the desolate shopping area inhabited at night mainly by junkies and “others who do not want to go home”.

In 2000 the artist designed a ‘Minibar’ for various art events – a small, wooden relaxation space for, at most, two women; a male ‘comforter’ responded to their needs for “Conversation, relaxation, sharing ideas, laughing...”.

Framis again overcame the distance between art and public with what in many ways was a spectacular project: ‘Dreamkeeper’. It was one of the first performances in which she created the possibility for direct, one-to-one contact between herself and someone who had signed up. The project ran for months, but the most unusual aspect was that the encounter took place at the individual’s home. For forty days the artist was available as a ‘dreamkeeper’ for city dwellers who felt the need for company at night as they slept and who had reacted to the announcement “Suffering from lonely nights? Phone the Dreamkeeper” (Amsterdam 1997-1998).

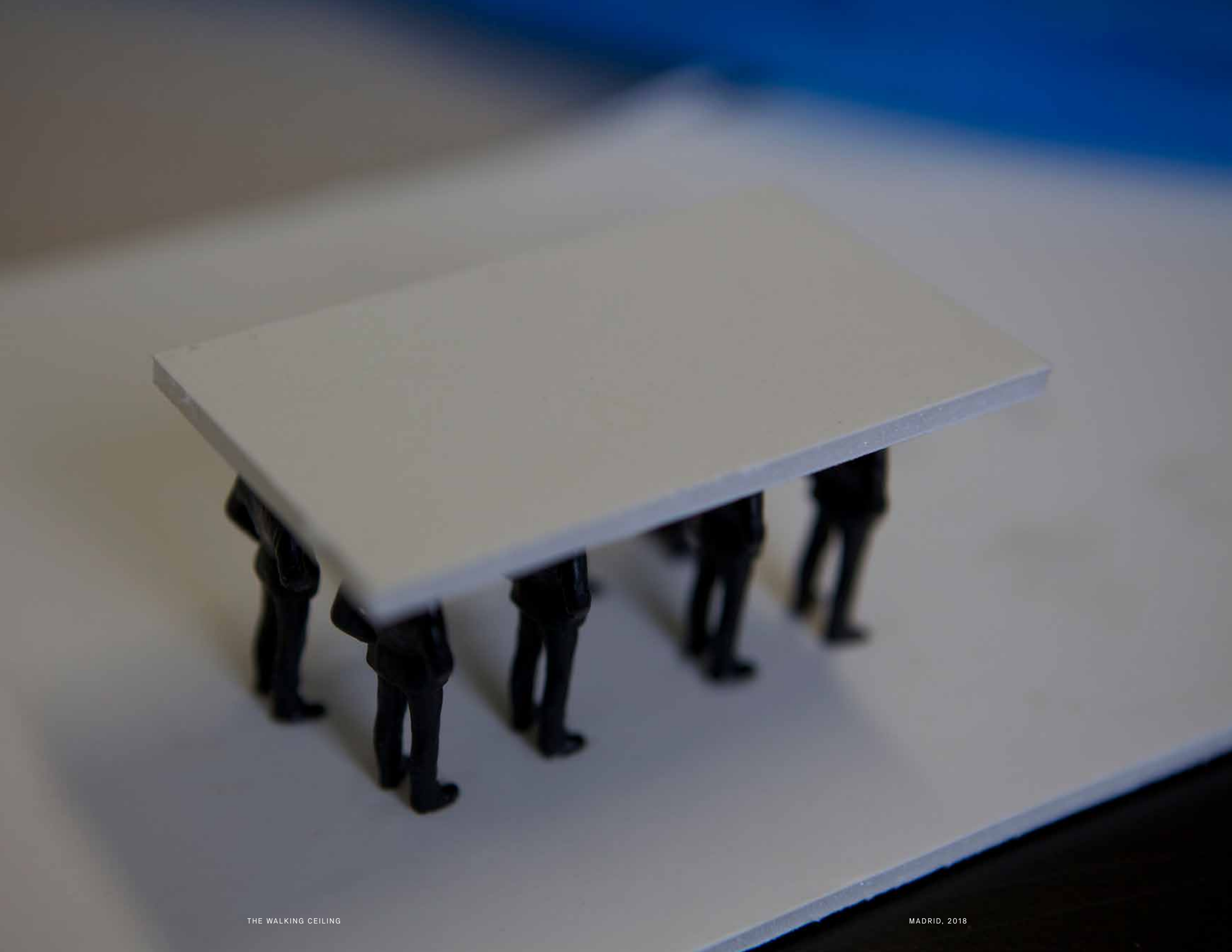
Lonely people are less in need of dead things, like art, or grand gestures, but of intimacy, fantasy and poetry, Framis claimed.

Based on such compassion she organised the successful project ‘Loneliness in the city’ in five European cities in 1999-2000. An attractively designed oval pavilion served as a travelling platform for research, workshops, performances and lectures on the causes of loneliness and the question how contact between people could be stimulated.¹³

Care(giving) for Framis is invariably accompanied by great attention to detail and beauty. Her analytical view of how people interact and react to gendered social structures is also accompanied by empathy, compassion and engagement. The aim being to explore stereotype patterns and stretch our mental scope. The human condition, with all its possibilities and inadequacies, visions and (gender) limitations, is dissected and exposed in all its vulnerability and potential. Time and again, Framis succeeds in surprising us with her designs, installations and performances, which stimulate us, spectators and participants, to reflect on our fears and visions, on our relations with others, and on what is taking place nowadays, in the world around us. Her approach to the human shortcomings and entrenched gendered expectations is invariably combined with possible alternatives to bridge the differences, by thinking in possibilities rather than impossibilities.

As I was completing this essay in June 2018 and checking the final details with the artist, the announcement was made that the newly formed Spanish government had appointed, alongside six male ministers, no fewer than eleven females. Talking about gender....

¹³ Designed in collaboration with Dré Wapenaar.



Nuremberg, 2012-2013

SCREAMING ROOM

DM beech conglomerate board of 12 mm thickness,
natural pinewood of various measurements,
Styrofoam and acoustic isolation foam, microphone, cables,
light bulbs, computer, 3D printing software, 3D printer,
white PLA plastic welding rod

Unique piece

225 x 176 x 180 cm

Colección INELCOM Arte Contemporáneo, Madrid

Each visitor enters the soundproofed room and screams. A computer program records the scream and converts it into instructions for a 3D printer. Each scream thus produces a unique 3D printed teacup, based on the volume, pitch, and tone of the visitor's scream.

Screaming Room (2012-2013). This room is made from a giant wooden crate that resembles the shipping containers used to transport artworks. People can enter this soundproofed room and scream at the top of their lungs. The box is then filled with a scream that becomes the art piece. When a visitor exits the room, their scream is made into the form of a teacup. Each cup is different, as all screams are.

Since energy cannot be destroyed but only change form, thanks to a computer program and 3D printer, each scream is transformed into a teacup, a process

that takes approximately 20 minutes to complete. Each visitor can then take the cup produced by his or her own scream home with them.

There are times in life when things become blurry and confusion takes hold of us. We get angry and upset, which causes our circulating energy to get stuck and can degenerate into frustration or even rage. When the despair, hate, conflict, guilt or shame has enveloped us we must try to do something with these emotions. At those moments we just want to hit someone, hide in a closet or simply scream.

When this happens, our bodies are asking us to release that energy, to transform it, to make something worthwhile with the energy. A scream is energy that does not disappear; it is transformed by releasing the blockage.









Barcelona, 1997

DAUGHTERS WITHOUT DAUGHTERS

Homage to Daniel Buren and Enrique Vila-Matas, and Toni Estrany
Programme: a thinking room for women

This is a room for women only. A place to think and maybe share ideas on the question of fertility. Women must consciously deal with that question several times in their lives. But fertility and procreation are not related directly to femininity anymore. A woman can be very feminine but decide not to have children.

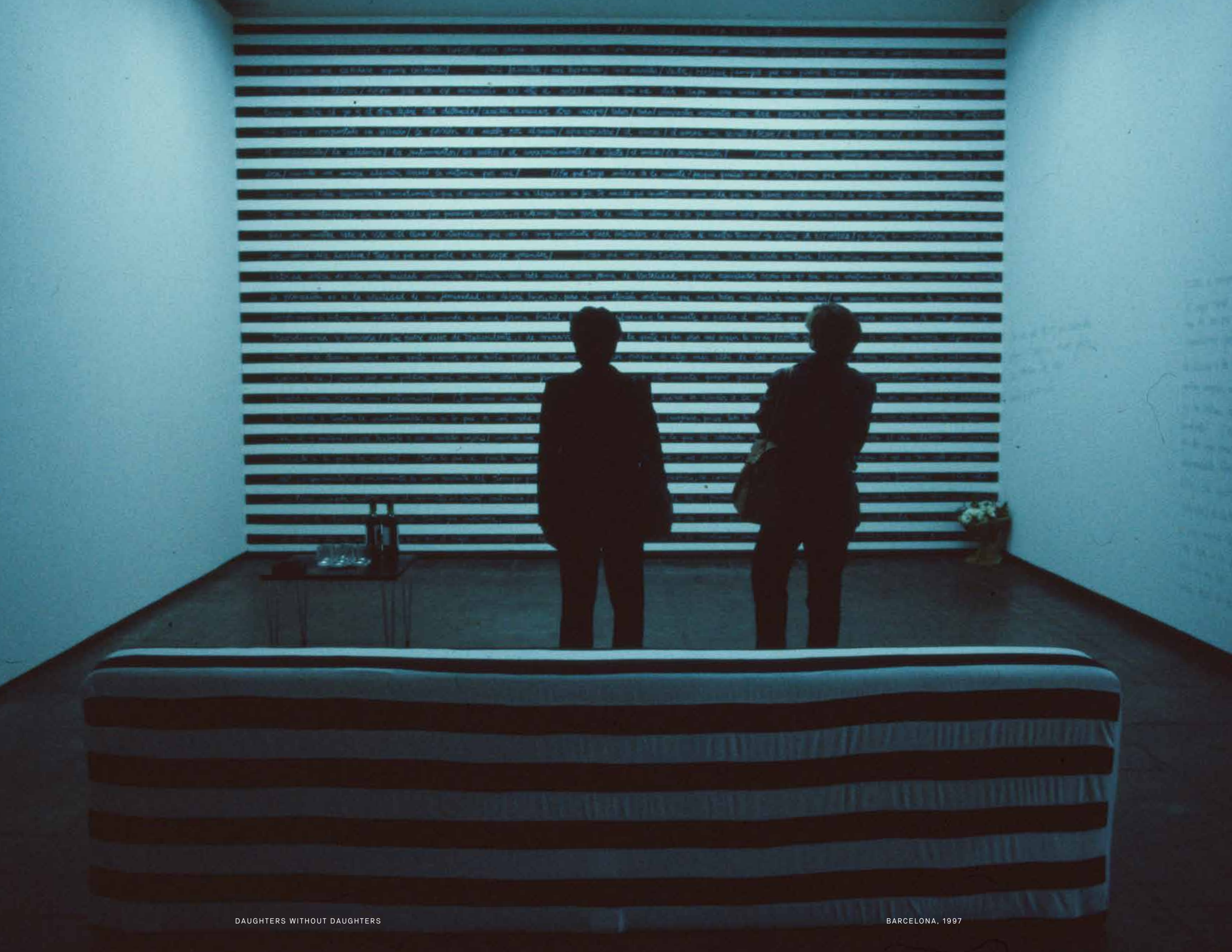
The room has some 'tools': four walls where women can write about what they feel or what they desire. One of the walls has a structure that evokes the artist Daniel Buren. Another inspiration for this room is the book *Hijos sin Hijos* (Sons Without Sons) by the Spanish writer Enrique Vila-Matas. In 1997, the room in Galería Estrany-de la Mota was turned into a living room, where women leave flowers, wine and messages.

- I will leave my body behind.
- Bones will I leave, only bones, an empty bed, a void with a name.
- When I die somebody will have to handle my body, dress it and put on make-up.
- If someone remembers me, I will continue to exist.
- My family, my brother, my husband,
- Victor, Helena.
- Friends that I can't take with me.
- Older people.
- Women who cry.
- I hope that I won't be alone at that moment. I hope I will be able to hold somebody's hand on that day.
- What is important is the distance between me and the other, I will leave that distance.
- The caressing of another body, everybody, everything.

- The sharing of moments with another person, the magic of a moment, a fantastic moment.
- A time you have shared in silence.
- The passion to die for somebody. To go into raptures, to love.
- To love secretly, kisses.
- To make love many times. The desire to know each other. Knowledge, wisdom, feelings, my dreams, remorse, my affection, fear, despair.
- When I die I want to be unproductive, I will be a lazybones.
- When I die somebody will close the window for me.
- Why am I afraid of death, why don't I know how to live?
- I believe that when I no longer suffer, I will be dead.
- We know very well, logically, that the organism will come to its end.
- Therefore we imagine a life we have already lived, a life of continuous constriction, of increasing problems, through the stupidity of it, that is life as we want to live it and also it is part of our souls, of which we say that it is part of the divine, but with our life.
- Life is full of stupidity, I think that is very important for our understanding of the spirit of our time.
- I will leave behind stupidity with a capital S.
- I will leave behind the unbearable lightness of being, as Kundera says.
- I believe that I will get rid of all stupidity.
- Everything I couldn't learn or didn't know how to learn.
- I die every day and I am conscious of that.
- What I do daily, going to the office, the repetition of enjoyment, with its sorrow and its fear, the uncertainty, that is what life is. I won't think of death, nor the contrary perhaps, I've grown accustomed to living like that, I accept it, I will grow old with it and shall die.
- I will leave behind unfinished work and an unhappy husband.

- When I die I shall make an image of everything I have known, just like at the end of the day, I shall work out an image according to what I live through.
- All that can be renewed will die, every day I renew myself and I die a little more. My ego will die because the ego is only a process of thought.
- Thought is a product of time, therefore the thought will die, my energy however will stay with the living, female energy.
- When I die I will take other people's secrets with me, but first of all my own, my crimes.
- I will take my lies with me.
- Life has just no relevant meaning at all.
- I will leave no certainty.
- I will leave this sentence: 'it's not important to be first in life.'
- I don't need to write a book about my life.
- I am still searching why I have to die.
- When I die, my emotional part will go and then I want to be nothing, absolutely nothing, nothing.
- Stupefaction.
- The last day of my life must be the best moment.
- I will leave behind short anecdotes.
- To wake up in the morning.
- To walk next to someone.
- To look people into their eyes.
- To stop thinking, my routines.
- To drink alone.
- I won't think of others anymore, hard sex with all that follows from it.
- Love and death are the same, therefore, is asking what I will leave behind the same as asking myself what I will leave behind when I cease to love?
- The fear of not existing has led me to possess things, that is myself protecting cleverness, my house, my small acquisitions, my long travels. Therefore I will leave behind many things, but

- they won't have the same function as they had for me, which is the covering up or the wrapping up of fear.
- I shall leave clothes, letters, furniture which will smell of me, but after a while those things will get back their freedom or their anonymity and they will be their selves again, independent, free from the burden of my memories and my breathing. I don't know.
- My books, my writings, my photographs, my records; a collection of things. A house with a certain smell, the sound of the river, the trees, the setting of the sun, my inner landscape, the light.
- When death comes it won't argue with me, so I don't know what I will be able to leave behind and what I can take with me.
- I will leave behind my constricting loneliness.
- Although loneliness is a kind of beauty, a frozen beauty perhaps like the presence of death. I won't feel lonely anymore, I feel myself a part of strange universe.
- I believe that I have decided, like so many other women, not to have any children, perhaps by an inner revolution, not only against a communist or fascist society, but against every form of brutal society and organized power; I hope that I will be a living proof of that after my death.
- Procreation is not the identity of my femininity, I won't leave behind any children, no, but rather a continuous consciousness that governs all my days and night, a vision.
- When I think of the way we are born, to be born is to come into contact with the world in a brute, horrible and extreme way, and death is to lose contact with the world, forever, in an extremely cruel way, unique and terrible.
- What can I leave behind, something extraordinary, so that people and things will follow me as soon as possible?



1 é que não pode deixar de

, me gusta pensar

me quedará aquí con

Paris / Barcelona, 2002

ANTI_DOG

3 bulletproof, fireproof, dogproof dresses
 The anti_dog collection is made from Teijin Twaron,
 a dog bite-proof, fireproof and bulletproof fabric
 Rabo Art Collection, Utrecht

With the introduction of the anti_dog fashion label, Alicia Framis was addressing topics like safety, vulnerability, racism and violence, which were high on the global political and cultural agenda, in a highly refreshing way. After extensive research, she and her team found the fabric suitable for creating her garments. The Dutch invention Twaron was a revolution in the world of protection and reinforcement. Five times stronger and significantly lighter than steel, it is often used for bullet- and stab-resistant vests. The glossy, gold-like colour of the fibre gave it the allure that Framis wanted for her dresses. The garments created with Twaron were worn by women of mixed race at demonstrations in several European cities that have a reputation for aggression against women (of colour). For each city the collection was enlarged with special designs for the specific situation, in close collaboration with the host organization. For example, in Helsingborg, Sweden, a group of women was fighting for better lighting at dangerous dark spots in the city, such as creepy alleys.

Framis worked together with these women and with local designers to invent dresses that emit light and make the women visible. In Paris, a collection largely inspired by famous designers such as Courrèges, Christian Dior and Coco Chanel was shown, with an ironic wink, on a catwalk during Paris Fashion Week, at Palais de Tokyo.

With the huge skirts designed for Birmingham the women occupied an entire public square. Because the sentences written on the skirts (such as 'This is not your Country') are copyrighted, they can never be used in public again without risking a fine. After Paris, Amsterdam, Madrid, Helsingborg, Barcelona

and Birmingham, the collection consisted of 23 garments with their accessories. In Venice they were all shown together for the first time in the anti_dog fitting room.

This 'dome' could be closed and became a fully protected shelter constructed with five of the anti_dog dresses.

This work draws our attention to three important issues. First it points out the uselessness of the road we have taken to actually protect ourselves. For the sake of protection there is a huge network of cameras installed in public as well as private spaces, which creates either the uncomfortable feeling of Big Brother or the awareness that there will never be enough people to actually watch all that footage, let alone be in time to act upon it if necessary. In conjunction with this proliferation of cameras we tend to lock ourselves within high fences, creating our own prisons. To counteract this tendency, Framis's fashion suggests optimum individual freedom as well as literal and figurative visibility.

Secondly, the work makes us aware of the way we usually protest against violence and racism. It seems as if the aesthetics of demonstrations has remained unchanged since the very first time a group of people marched in the streets to proclaim their disagreement. Framis makes the protest seductive and powerful at the same time. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Framis placed the combined themes of racism and violence against women on the agenda, at a time when it seemed that feminism was retreating into the shadows in the Western world.

Text by Lilet Breddels, adapted from *We Are The World*, the catalogue for the Dutch Pavilion at the 2003 Venice Biennale







a woman
walks
ways a mile
more
the darkness
tells
me
i can not take
abortions of
city. a woman
ways walks
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mile mor





Bea Espejo

A Room of One's Own

Alicia Framis

BEA ESPEJO (BE) Let's start by talking about the room, one of the spaces you have experimented with most in your works. On occasion, I've heard you speak of your affinity with architects like John Hejduk.

ALICIA FRAMIS (AF) Hejduk is the father of architects like Rem Koolhaas, Herzog & de Meuron or Shigeru Ban. In his books he talks about the poetry and the architecture of "victims". His contact with the other was very different from that of his predecessors. His contact was not with a mere client, but with humanity. Let's say that he created a new relationship with the other, and that interests me a lot. His buildings are prepared for human experience, that which speaks of humans. He was the typical architect who almost built no buildings during his lifetime, but who had an enormous influence. He was ahead of his time and misunderstood. He spent his life teaching and was instrumental in the renovation of younger generations of architects. In my case, the connection has to do with my idea of art as experience rather than its material or commercial aspects; a kind of art that becomes part of your vital experience and goes beyond art in itself. That is why I try to combine disciplines and different ways of working, to interact with and understand the human.

BE This idea of architecture that goes beyond the human dimension reminds me of Absalon's cell rooms.

AF Absalon is another major benchmark for me. His work captures the suffering of AIDS, a place for the self, for shared hope and a white domestic space. These cells were a cry for a place for rest and the construction of a space for the self. He managed to physically materialise the concept of home, not the actual house in itself, which was of no interest, but the idea of a place to arrive at and the emotions that attach us to it. A kind of refuge. Likewise, in my works, the function of things is not as important as the concept of all the things together that convey an experience, which is not just intellectual but also emotional, spiritual and physical.

BE The potential of the room first appeared in Paris, where you moved after graduating in Fine Arts from the University of Barcelona. There, you made your first forays into performance in your *chambre de bonne*, those small attic spaces in middle-class houses originally set aside for domestic servants and then later occupied by low-wage workers.

AF My room-home was very small but it was all I had. A minimum space with a door behind which I could disappear from the outside world and which I started to open so that people could see inside. My *chambre de bonne* was full of solitude, fears and a yearning to learn, with a whole life ahead of me. At that time, it served as a kind of personal performance laboratory. I still did not feel capable of doing them at the School of Fine Arts in Paris, so I did them at home. The rooms I have lived in on my own have been very important in my life. Wherever I have been, they have functioned as a refuge, a place to return to and a place to survive in instability.

BE Is there something of your childhood bedroom in all these other rooms?

BE In fact, solitude, especially in large cities, is probably one of the underlying themes of your practice. I am thinking, for instance, of early works like *Compagnie de compagnie* (1996), a service offering a pair of identical twins to accompany you when you are alone, or *Dreamkeeper* (1997/1998), and other more recent ones like *Lost Astronaut* (2009), a performance where you wander aimlessly in New York like a kind of defenceless, vulnerable animal in a hostile environment.

BE That reminds me of Pierre, the mannequin in *Cinema Solo*, which is ultimately an idea of “emotional architecture” where you seek refuge.

BE Sophie Calle said that art is a real fiction, that it is not her life but nor is it a lie. She also worked a lot with the idea of the room, to which she invited a varied mix of *sleepers*...

AF I never had my own room until after I left home. On one hand, I felt a huge sense of freedom to be on my own within four walls which were mine alone. On the other hand, I had slept in the same room as my sister for twenty-three years and that meant that I had to learn to be alone all of a sudden. It was tough, and I could not sleep well for several years and often ended up going to friends' houses because I was not able to bear the emptiness of home.

AF Solitude is tied to a desire to communicate, to go towards a meeting with the other. I believe that this feeling is proper to big cities and its set of values. We are completely mistaken if we think that moving to a city and having a career there would lead to success. It has made us slaves to ourselves. We are dissatisfied people in search of love and acceptance.

AF Yes, that was in 1996. I lived with a male mannequin in the suburbs of Grenoble, as a strategy against fear. This is where the project *Cinema Solo* came from, which consists of thirty-six photos of my life with Pierre, a mannequin I rented for a month. At the time I was living on my own in Villeneuve, during a three-month period as artist-in-residence, and I was afraid of my surroundings. The police never came near the neighbourhood. I saw things that are tough to explain, and junkies used my doorway as a toilet. So I decided to live with a mannequin. We spent most of the time at home and I took photos as a memory of that time in my life.

AF Yes, I feel close to Sophie Calle. Although she presents her works within the art world, while she is making them she does not start out from the idea of making art. I am very interested in this attitude. She is a great explorer of spaces, like Marguerite Duras. I have always identified with Duras's way of writing, her way of writing the unwritten, succinctly, without grammar, a writing of single, stray words. The essence of her literature lies in desire, attitude, madness, the cry as a form of rebellion. I came across her several times in Paris and I even fantasised about the idea of following her. I met Sophie Calle thanks to Matilde Ferrer, Esther Ferrer's twin sister, who helped me a lot in overcoming my despondency whenever things turned difficult during those years I lived in Paris.

BE What was behind your decision to leave Spain? Did you feel pressure back in the nineties that you had to leave in order to be successful?

BE Did you have any exhibitions at that time?

BE In Paris you studied with Daniel Buren, who you have always mentioned as a major influence.

BE Like a 'no' artist?

BE Can you tell us about this present you are interested in talking about?

AF Yes. I left because in my home city of Barcelona there was no place for a Spanish- and Catalan-speaking woman who worked with performance. In the School of Fine Arts in Barcelona the history of contemporary art concluded with Picasso. After him there was nothing else. So you can just imagine our level of learning. That's why I decided to continue studying in Paris. Matilde Ferrer used to organise conferences with really interesting people, like Gary Hill or Sophie Calle. I spent a whole year at the Pompidou library studying everything that had happened in art since the fifties.

AF Very few. Back then, there were not many alternative spaces in Barcelona that would exhibit young artists. On the other hand, in Paris there was a big community of interesting artists who wanted to be understood and accepted, including a lot of Spaniards. We set up exhibitions at our studios and there was a magical energy. Survival always confers a very special brand of elegance...

AF Daniel Buren taught me the importance of taking responsibility for my own work. To be an artist is to bring new things, objects, experiences and circumstances into the world. You have to be coherent with what you do, because it has consequences. You have to think before doing. He also introduced me to the Situationists, to artists whose work was being shown in public spaces and not in galleries, or who made art you could wear, as he did with his waistcoats from the seventies. Everything he taught me gelled with my own idea of making art without making it.

AF Something like that. The ultimate goal of my idea of art was not the market, although I was involved in it. Rather, it had more to do with protest art, social art for ordinary people. In those early days I remember I used to read a lot by Vila-Matas, who wrote so much about the writing of 'no', and spoke from a constantly changing present, the now, and of how things progress there. My work also has this intention.

AF I am speaking of a type of atopia, the individual's sense of malaise in the city today, which, under no circumstances, could be taken to represent the promised land or paradise offered by utopia. I would describe it as the tension between a city that is individualised and an individual that is standardised, and how we can create new ways of living together there. That is the essence of relational art, to come up with an answer to this issue.

BE Do you have an affinity with Nicolas Bourriaud's theories in *Relational Aesthetics*?

AF Yes, when I discovered this movement I identified both with the artists as well as Bourriaud's theory. In my case, I started intuitively, from the need to break away from the gestural abstract painting of the eighties. I had no intention of making pictures to hang over the mantelpieces of the Catalan bourgeoisie. For me, that was dead art. So I became more radical. I associated with artists who did not make art objects, artists working against the ruling taste of the market. I started to do performances at home, in the street, with objects that people could touch and wear. Thanks to Manifesta 1, which was held in Rotterdam, I met Rirkrit Tiravanija, Douglas Gordon and Tobias Rehberger, among others, and we had long discussions on the art we were interested in, which functioned as an instrument for bringing people together. Not art as an end in itself, but as a catalyst for shared human experience. I remember saying to Rirkrit how misunderstood relational aesthetics was. I hope history will put it in its rightful place. We are not interested in entertainment or spectacle and we do not use people. Our intention is to go beyond the art object and the marketplace in order to arrive at art in its pure form, namely, transmission.

BE It is probably in *Habitaciones prohibidas* (Forbidden Rooms), your project from 2013, that you have reflected most extensively on this utopian idea of a room of one's own, from manifold perspectives: a room to be naked, a room for eating meat, a room for kissing, a room for voting, a room for gossip... What is the synthesis of this project and what are its limits?

AF There are still a lot of rooms to be made, in which we could have new and different experiences. *Habitaciones prohibidas* encompasses all the things that are still forbidden in some part of the world. It might seem incredible, but there are places where you cannot smoke, kiss, eat meat, vote, wear a skirt, and so on. Imposing restrictions on behaviour is something that happens silently. Little by little, we allow governments to ban more things. And that worries me. Our society is ruled by fear and governments use that to pass irrational laws against other human beings. Fear drives away love for other people, and the paranoia of fear makes us much more neurotic societies.

BE And what about censorship? You have also dedicated one of your rooms to it.

AF It was a library of banned books such as Voltaire's *Candide*, Giordano Bruno's writings, Nabokov's *Lolita* or Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. Censorship still exists today in the sense that there are certain topics that cannot be broached. Galleries will not exhibit art that frightens off their collectors and museum directors are afraid to show works that could tarnish their relationship with the state authorities which have appointed them. The market is the grand dictator.

BE Let's turn to your library. Which women would you underscore?

AF My major point of reference is Beatriz Colomina, another Spaniard who left Spain because of the few opportunities for women interested in artistic research. I was introduced to her work by Dan Graham, who taught me at the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam. Her books are full of wit, humour, intelligence and nerve, like herself. It was a revelation for me to learn from her how architecture can condition our sex and our attitudes, how it directs our desires and drives, and how the city is designed by others so that we act obediently. Another thing I like about her books is that they are full of collaborations. As an author she likes to include, not exclude. And that is an issue if you think of Spain and how women artists throw stones against those who come after them and at younger generations. It's a petty-minded attitude. But Beatriz is not like that. She is instrumental in incorporating key women into thinking on architecture and gender. Now that it is widely accepted internationally, it seems as if intellectuals in Spain are jumping on the bandwagon and inviting everyone else to join them... It's very sad.

BE There is something very subversive about a *Secret Strike*, the title of one of your projects. A silent strike for the silenced...

AF I did it in Lérida, a *secret strike* with one hundred women against domestic violence lasting five minutes. The performances I do with women are a way of protesting against male dominance. For instance, it is still difficult for a woman to win a public competition.

BE Among the plethora of feminist theories, which do you agree with?

AF My theory can be summed up in one: equality in conditions and opportunities, something which still does not exist for women or minorities.

BE In fact, your work has often focused on men. I am thinking, for instance, of *Mamamen* (2004).

AF That is one of the things I am most interested in exploring when speaking about feminism. Today men are going through a crisis of identity. What is expected of him? What is his role? What do women expect of this role? Sometimes, there is an exchange of roles: women take on the role of men, and men adopt women's roles. The masculine side of women is also another issue. *Mamamen* deals with all this, and I would also like to work on another project on this issue which is taboo.

BE The title of this exhibition at Sala Alcalá 31 conflates two of the words which have most meaning for you. One alludes to gender and the other to the idea of the pavilion. What is the idea behind it?

AF The idea is to stage an exhibition with works that speak directly about gender. It is not an absolute constant in my work, but an issue that keeps cropping up and overlapping with other ideas. I believed that in Spain it would make sense at the present moment, with such a major problem in education. I have always liked the idea of the pavilion because in principle it is a space where everything is concentrated together. It has a predetermined intensity, and, to my way of thinking, this identity can be used as a working tool. In fact, all my work is like a vast archive of moments.

BE Fashion and clothing signifies us as women and it is something you address in projects like *anti_dog*, with which you represented The Netherlands at the Venice Biennale in 2003. It basically consists of a collection of dresses made with dogproof, bulletproof and fireproof materials, which you use for performances in locations where violent acts against women had taken place, including the exit to the Ajax football stadium in Amsterdam.

BE Did it not strike you as odd to represent a country other than your own in Venice?

BE Have you any idea what you would do if you were commissioned with the Spanish pavilion at the Biennale?

BE Looking back at those years with hindsight, do you feel supported in Spain?

AF *anti_dog* brings to the table issues like security, vulnerability, racism and violence which are still in the global political and cultural agenda.

AF I was very young, but I do admit that my work is very Dutch. First of all, because in The Netherlands an artist is like a dentist; it is a job as valid as any other. Secondly, my work is very social and the idea of community goes down well in The Netherlands. There is a lot of emphasis on team work and people are careful not to stand out from others.

AF Yes. I would work with women artists or do something about the situation of women in Spain. I have studied the Spanish pavilion in depth and how to improve it. I would take a radical approach.

AF I feel supported by people from my generation, who understand why I left for The Netherlands. I identify a lot with Esther Ferrer, who was largely ignored for many years, because her thinking was too radical, on the sidelines of the taste of the majority, but with time her work has gained recognition. I have never won a prize in Spain, and my work is not in any museum in Madrid... I'll have to wait until I'm sixty, like her. But I have time. Art is not easy if you want to do something other than create a brand of jeans. I know that I chose a tough path, but I would prefer to experiment than to be lauded.

Dress made by Karen Park Goude >



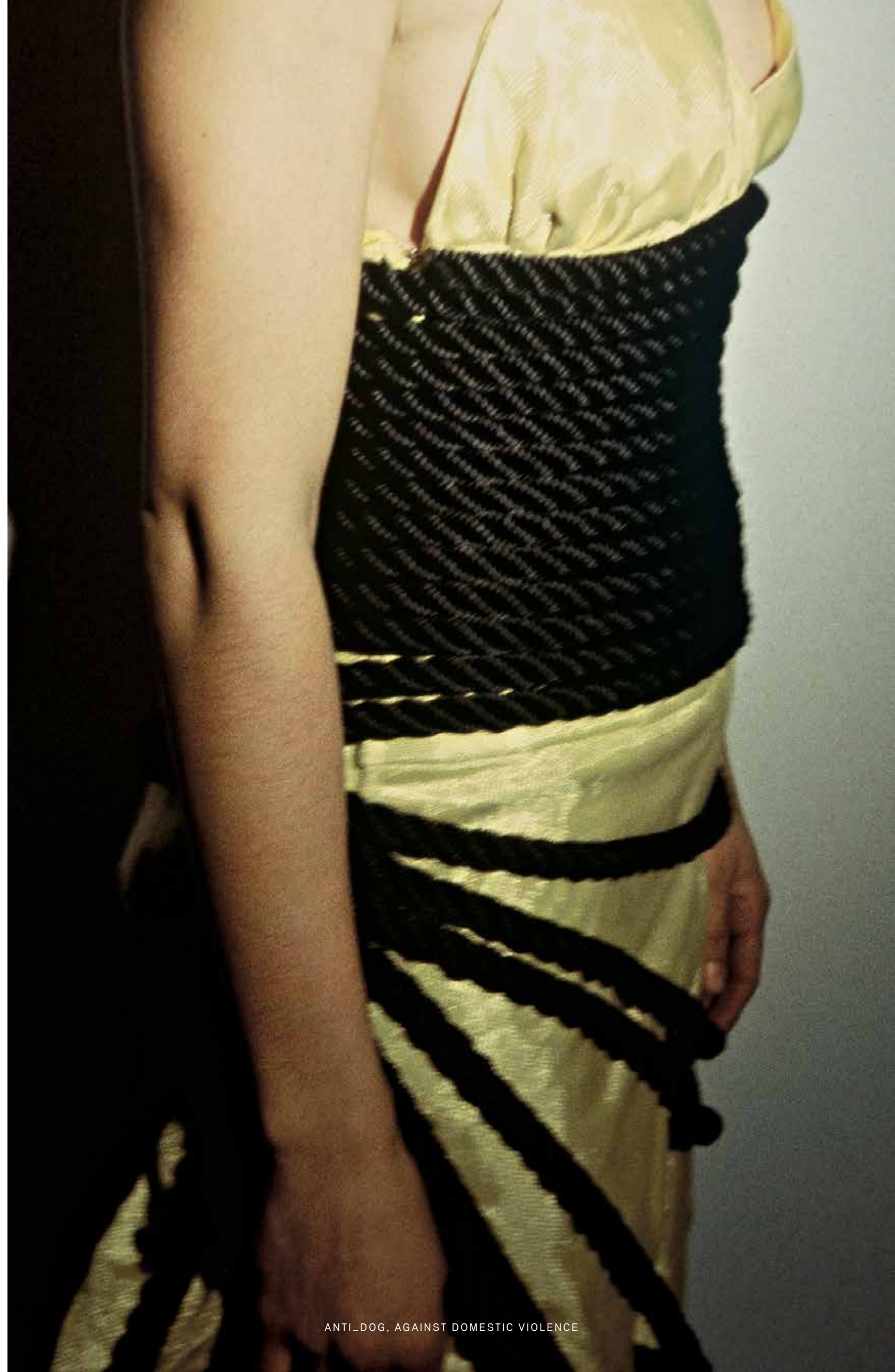
Madrid, 2003

ANTI_DOG, AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Video, 7 minutes

In Spain, 27 women were killed in their homes between January 1 and May 1, 2003. This situation made me decide to stage a demonstration against domestic violence in Madrid.

The anti_dog collection protects women from aggressive behaviour and, perhaps more importantly, gives them the courage and strength to walk around fearless and powerful.





Amsterdam, 2004

MAMAMEN

Three suits for men
Rabo Art Collection, Utrecht

The role of men is increasingly expanding into women's tasks and desires. Not all of them, of course, but there are men who, because of their situation, are single fathers or want to adopt children by themselves, or they are in a homosexual couple, transgressing the role of the mother.

The suit is always connected to businessmen, men with power, men that belong to a company, men that work for men. At the same time, men were deciding, more in the Netherlands than in Spain, to take over roles of women in their private lives. So why not invent the suit that can handle the real life of these men? "The reality in Europe is that a lot of fathers and mothers are divorced, that there is a big group of children at school with separated parents. This means that the father has to assume the role of the mother now and then, fulfilling the emptiness, and likewise, it means the same for the mother.

The cliché that the role of men is to make money for the family is now completely passé. Most men have to be active at home and are sometimes alone, or sometimes two men have children, and so on. I thought it was important to invent a suit that matches the new life of men – their needs, their desires. I wanted to make three suits that would make it possible to integrate a baby into the suit, for the men to carry a baby; not like the kind of baby bags we know, but so integrated that the man can wear it to work. This presented the possibility of creating a new image for men, an image that society actually needs, clothes that truly reflect the daily life of these men."

Mamamen is a collection of menswear that is intended to exploit their more maternal side: as these suits enable them to carry their child on their backs while working. Some of the Mamamen suits are made in collaboration with designer Gabriel Torres.





Madrid, 2006

8 DE JUNIO, LIBRAN LAS MODELOS

Video, 2 minutes

Museum of Modern Art Arnhem Collection

8 de junio libran las modelos is a work that was created in response to Enrique Loewe's invitation to participate in the *Take Me With You* exhibition, which was part of the celebration of Loewe's 160th anniversary. Twenty well-known artists were asked to analyse the relationship between people and their handbags.

On this occasion, the artist's intention was to protect women from the exploitation of their images in the fashion world; she contracted only men. Female models could take the day off and be free, at last, for one day.

It is no secret that part of Alicia's work is strikingly feminist: she defends women through her work whenever she feels it is necessary, and in the world of fashion women are exploited much more than men.

It is very important to note that this performance was censored and cancelled just minutes after the international press presentation. Loewe's advisors decided that this kind of art proposal was inappropriate for the company and for the VIP audience.







Alicia Framis

The Walking Ceiling

What is the future of young women in their twenties? About 60% of university graduates are women, but only 3% will reach management-level positions. What are the skills required by these high-responsibility posts that women still do not possess? What is the existing business leadership model that women are seemingly unable to attain? Will we be able to design a form of leadership in which women can compete on equal footing with men? It looks like the role of top executives is designed for men and not for women. This is why I defend a new design of leadership power which will not exclude access to women.

According to the US Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, set up to work towards greater social justice and to improve the country's economy, at the moment women are obstructed from reaching posts that entail greater responsibility and, at once, greater profits to share out. Another form of inequality, according to the Comisiones Obreras trade union, is that women have to work 109 days more than men to earn the same salary, in other words, three months more per year.

The glass ceiling—an expression used for the first time in 1978—is artificial, it is an invisible barrier in women's professional careers. The invisible glass curtails and limits women's aspirations and opportunities. Now, in 2018, forty years after the coining of the expression Glass Ceiling, what has actually changed for women over the intervening time?

For Sala Alcalá 31, I would like to carry out a performance that involves the city. Passers-by

can join in a silent protest or be mere spectators. The material I am going to use is glass and the reflections it produces, the element par excellence in big cities. A glass plate, measuring 2 by 3 metres, will be placed over the heads of professional women from Madrid, who I have asked to help me to carry it through the streets of the city. The plate will be supported using a piece of padded cloth or silicone, so that glass does not slip and also to cushion vibrations. The movement of the glass plate through the city, carried by these women, is silent yet also aggressive. The action is part of my search for new, truly feminine ways for women to protest, though without imitating masculine attitudes or symbols.

I believe that, contrary to what it might seem at first sight, silence and the movement of women in step with gloved-covered hands could provoke a liberating effect from latent oppression.

It is worth underscoring my experience when speaking about *Glass Ceiling* with assistants or students, because they, of course, with the innocence of youth, still do not know what it is and are still unaware of what the future holds in store for them, if we do not change something for them. That is why this performance is aimed at young women, so that they prepare themselves and act in consequence; and also, of course, at older generations, among which I count myself, who would have wished that we could have broken this inequality at work. Right now I can break this ceiling but it keeps coming back like weeds in a garden.

Madrid, 2008

NOT FOR SALE

Video, 3 minutes

Not for Sale is a work in progress about children who are for sale around the world.

The project started in Bangkok, Thailand, where Framis made the first portraits of children, who are naked except for a necklace that says 'NOT FOR SALE'. At first glance, the images appear sweet and endearing; the boys are smiling and seem to be happy and healthy. It is only on looking more closely that you notice what Framis is pointing out: the present-day reality of the fragile and dangerous position of many children. From the moment we are born we have a price, but for many children there is a real risk of actually being sold. Since living in China, Framis has been interested in the idea of portraits as propaganda, like those of Mao Zedong or King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand, who has his portraits all over the city, printed in the same measurements as Alicia Framis used for her photos. In *Not for Sale* she used the methods of propaganda portraits, but changed the subject from leaders to something more domestic. Propaganda posters always have an optimistic, cheerful appearance with certain details or attributes conveying the message, showing the subject from below or with the flag or a crowd in the background, highlighting the leader's power. Framis shows the beautiful smiling kids in their idyllic surroundings, with only the small attribute of the necklace revealing their possible fate.

Framis created a whole new demonstration toolkit for us to use and expand upon: she uses fashion in

anti_dog, *Mamamen* and *100 Ways to Wear a Flag*, employs the still image in *Secret Strike*, and even imitates the visual language of propaganda posters in *Not for Sale*. "The absolute artwork converges with the absolute commodity," Theodor Adorno writes in his *Aesthetic Theory*. He argues that the only way art can influence society is by embedding itself within it. This doesn't mean that Framis is just creating another likeable object to comfort or entertain us. Nor is her work just an important message wrapped in nice packaging. The latter could, at best, lead to awareness of the issues she wants to address, but her cause is bigger. Framis's work always has an edge to it, something that dismantles and unsettles. The boys in *Not for Sale* are extremely cute and nicely posed in idyllic surroundings. The photographs are something you definitely want to look at, or have in your home. Yet the small necklace with the text 'NOT FOR SALE' – or in some of the photographs nothing more than the sunburnt stencil of the necklace – keeps bothering you. "The socially critical zones of artworks are those where it hurts; where in their expression, historically determined, the untruth of the social situation comes to light," says Adorno. Framis creates alternatives to those situations. Her demonstrations are not only to demonstrate, to show, but to protest and bring about change, and not necessarily by acting alone but by creating tools that empower us to do so. The boy has his necklace, the women have their protective *anti_dog* collection, and we have our triggered imagination as a tool of seduction.

Text by Lilet Breddels, *Framis In Progress*







Lérida, 2005

SECRET STRIKE

“5 minutes thinking about her”
Video, 5 minutes
Centre d'Art la Panera Collection

Alicia Framis organised a “secret strike” in Lérida on 25 November 2005 to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. One hundred women with red gloves stopped the traffic at a pedestrian crossing as a form of protest against institutional inaction with regards domestic violence.

The secret strike in Lérida, directed by Alicia Framis for Centre d'Art la Panera, consisted in getting a crowd of women to remain motionless at a pedestrian crossing in the centre of the city. The video is a panning shot of living statues in various poses. Passers-by who were unaware of the action circumvented the crowd, further highlighting its stillness and occasional movement. On the other hand, the constant sound of the horns of the cars stopped by the silent protest reconfirmed the women's willingness to strike and also the truthfulness of the facts, beyond any virtual effects. The spontaneous gestures and behaviour of the motionless people helped to define a perceptive fragment of the unconscious everyday, of pedestrians and their different ways of crossing an area belonging to their nemesis, the driver. This social exercise lies somewhere between document and constructed situation, by putting reality on pause with a subtle manipulation.

Framis explores the relationship between time and space in the contemporary city, producing collective static situations to spur reflection on the vindications of various groups of people today. There are apparent similarities to the new forms of social activism imported from the USA by the Improv Everywhere collective, recently spreading to many cities in Spain, including static public protests similar to “Secret Strike” but, unlike Alicia Framis's, their sole goal is to abstain from the accelerated dynamics of modern culture. In many of these actions, the immobilised people are actors and lack the spontaneous charm of this descriptive travelling shot that reinforces the idea of immobility in the work of Alicia Framis. The development on various levels of knowledge and the meticulousness of Framis's works are proof that sensitive research and social protest are compatible in the work of art.

In this video of effective simplicity the travelling shot of the camera over the frozen action produces a kind of displacement through the suspension of movement, creating the effect of pause that allows spectators to observe the different protestors, and permits them to sociologically and psychologically pry into the urban/human space.





SECRET STRIKE

LERIDA, 2006

Nuremberg, 2017

FORBIDDEN PEOPLE

Performance, video and installation

“The moment in which we are touched by an agent we do not know, and we allow it, is very strange. And we do allow them.”

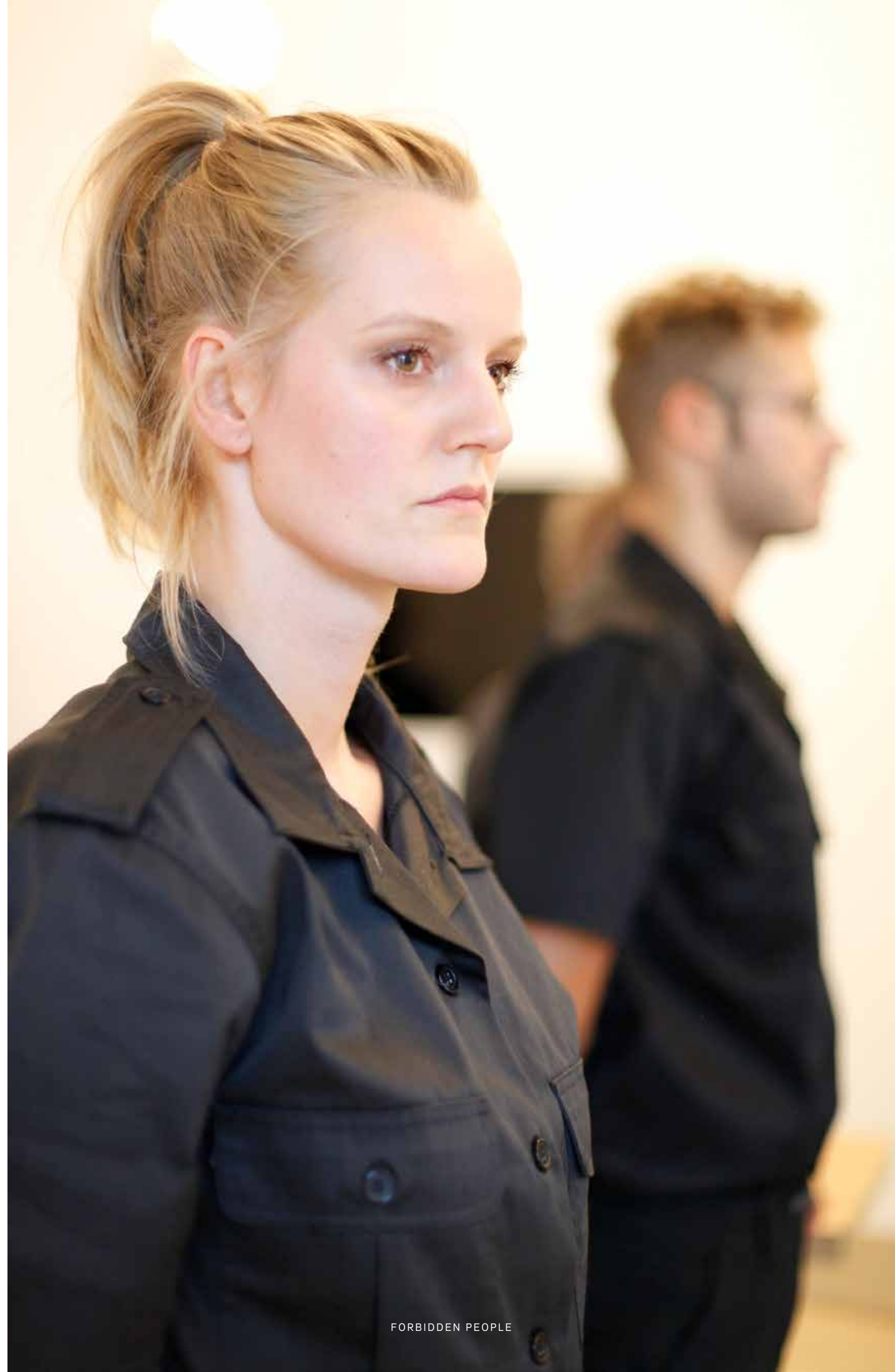
Forbidden People is a performance that touches upon the sensitive subject of intimacy and what exactly is the border between public and private. The artist criticizes an everyday situation such as body checks. Nowadays we are used to being checked every time we enter a club or at airports. It is completely normal and nobody questions his/her intimacy anymore.

The performance plays with reality and challenges people's expectations. The security guards not only check the people but afterwards give them a hug. It is quite surprising to realize that we allow strangers to touch our bodies but when we are given a hug, this action comes as a surprise, a shock and even going as far as being revolting for some. This proves that we are not used to showing

affection in public. The special security guards wear the tag PDA (Public Display of Affection) in order to emphasize the two worlds, their differences and what can happen when they become one. The concept of Public Display of Affection includes all acts of physical intimacy in public. This may vary according to different cultures and contexts. It is known that showing affection in public can often be considered obscene, offensive and something people will object to.

We need to take moments to think what we are doing and this work triggers people to raise awareness about our daily unconscious behaviour.

The main questions are why we are so complacent when the security guards are checking our bodies and belongings, a highly uncomfortable experience in public, but on the other hand we find it so weird when a stranger shows a tiny sign of affection, an embrace.





HELIX 1004

Helix 1004 is a DNA sample from a man who lived in the 19th century. It is one of the few DNA samples from a man who lived in the 19th century. The sample was found in a hairbrush that belonged to a man who lived in the 19th century. The sample was found in a hairbrush that belonged to a man who lived in the 19th century.



HELLIX 1004

HELLIX 1004 is a collection of 1004 items, each representing a different aspect of the city's history and culture. The items are arranged in a grid, allowing visitors to explore the city's past in a unique and interactive way. The collection includes everything from ancient artifacts to modern-day objects, providing a comprehensive overview of the city's rich heritage.



**ALICIA FRAMIS
GENDER PAVILION**

Sala Alcalá 31
C/ Alcalá, 31
28014 Madrid

29 November 2018 –
27 January 2019

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