



## The Twofold Childhood of Cinema

When we proposed to Abbas Kiarostami and Víctor Erice the mounting of an exhibition on their respective careers they'd only met once before. This had been at a session of the Taormina Festival, where they'd had the opportunity to express their mutual admiration. They weren't friends but knew each other thanks to the universality of cinema language. It was probably due to this that they didn't have to be asked twice when Alain Bergala and Jordi Balló explained their idea to them about a joint exhibition. The cinema—a certain way of understanding cinema—was their common ground. And it was this basis, and not friendship or personal knowledge, which lent meaning to the project. Later, when they'd already agreed to participate, they saw each other for a day in Thessaloniki, and exchanged a couple of e-mails. The rest has been a matter of cinema. Cinema—the main language of these two artists—has served to depict in images the dialogue between two directors who only knew each other through their films.

Exhibitions—like all creative genres—have their own internal codes. A bad exhibition is one that shows things that might have been better presented in some other way. “Erice-Kiarostami. Correspondences” is the location, at once physical and mental, in which a dialogue takes shape between two artists—between a cinema and its referents—that would hardly have come about using other means. Thus, for instance, Antonio López's paintings can coexist directly with Víctor Erice's speculations about them, and Kiarostami's photos and installations pass the test of contact with his cinema. And thus, especially, the correspondence between two people who are from cinema and who therefore agree to write to each other in shots and not words, can take shape in all its intensity as part and parcel of two cinematic trajectories that are two ways of looking at the world, with many points of contact, from behind a camera.

Creativity ceases to be a solitary exercise the moment the work exists and goes off in search of other people, who are the ones who truly endow it with meaning. Here, this exercise has an initial part created between two. When the exhibition reaches the public it will have the added value given it by the encounter between two artists who, without meeting, knew of each other. And who have had the generosity to test what happens when their creative works are shown conjointly. Artists are accustomed to keeping themselves to themselves and they prefer to ride alone. Here, not only are they exhibited alongside one another but at a certain moment they combine to knit the experience of filmic correspondence together. This is a way of symbolising that any artist is part of a long chain that he hasn't begun and which he will not finish.

The common ground is childhood: the childhood of cinema and the cinema of childhood. Cinema has two characteristics that differentiate it from other arts: it's relatively new—it's just over a century old—and consequently it possesses an absolutely precise history. Any filmmaker knows who his ancestors are. The newness and rapid succession of cinema, as if it were a perennial language which furnishes icons and ingredients for the child's imagination and for formative novels, has to do with the thinking of two unusual filmmakers. The twofold childhood of cinema is, finally, about the correspondence Erice and Kiarostami have maintained with the help of their ballpoint pen: the movie camera. It's their way of writing.