



Exhibition «The complete letters»
12/10/2011 – 19/02/2012

Back to craftsmanship

During the process of constructing the exhibition “Erice-Kiarostami”, the idea emerged of the two filmmakers exchanging filmed letters. The idea was well received. And little by little the correspondence grew, increasing with each of the exhibition’s itinerancies. We had originated, almost without realising it, a new cinematographic dynamic.

For an internationally renowned film director, a filmed letter is a commitment. To a certain extent, it is a return to the origins, to the craft phase of his learning. A letter is, by definition, a very personal exercise. For budgetary reasons it does not admit the paraphernalia of a professional production. In a certain sense, the director feels as though he is confronting himself, stripped of all the cushioning and protection that industrial cinema provides. Not all directors are prepared to embark on this adventure. But we had launched the idea and we had to continue with it. It was a matter of trying it out with the most daring among them. And they agreed to take part in the proposal. Over a couple of years, several duos of filmmakers paraded through the CCCB to formalise their agreement to the filmed epistolary exchange, to meet each other (in some cases, they had never seen each other before) and to explain their way of doing cinema. And that was how the work born from one specific exhibition gradually snowballed: Víctor Erice-Abbas Kiarostami, José Luis Guerin-Jonas Mekas, Albert Serra-Lisandro Alonso, Isaki Lacuesta-Naomi Kawase, Jaime Rosales-Wang Bing, Fernando Eimbcke-So Yong Kim. Six pairs of filmmakers (and it does not necessarily have to stop there), all well recognised in Europe, Asia and America, were willing to take the risk. And moreover, it seems that they took to it. A new exhibition format was thus born that means a step forwards in the evolution of what we call exhibited cinema, one of the exhibition genres in which the CCCB has innovated most.

Later, certain partners joined the project. Firstly, the Tlatelolco Cultural Centre in the City of Mexico, and shortly afterwards, La Casa Encendida in Madrid. We thought that with a project that had traced connections between such distant points on the map it might make sense to inaugurate it first outside the CCCB. And that is what we did. One afternoon in April, the Cultural Centre located in the legendary Plaza de las Tres Culturas filled with people to celebrate this peculiar film festival, with Fernando Eimbcke as the spokesperson of a form of understanding cinema that only those who feel passion for what they do can have. “The Complete Letters” is presented in Barcelona and Madrid after living the Mexican experience and before continuing its journey on to other cities. Next stop: «Las Cigarreras» Cultura Contemporánea (Alicante). The threads of the crossed letters continue to weave a certain web.

Exhibiting the filmed letters in an exhibition hall, rather than screening them at a cinema, responds to the will to create public space – another of the CCCB’s obsessions. A small street of cinema in which visitors meet, talk, look at each other or exchange sensations while moving from one stand to the next. In Mexico, this worked very well, because the letter maintains an own space that demands a certain privacy. But the artistic experience is an event that is never far removed from the social reality surrounding us. And that is one of the secrets of this exhibition. The rest is the creativity of a set of filmmakers who have been willing to return to the most elementary and essential dimension of cinema: camera in hand, some situations, some editing and somebody on the other side who is looking forward to receiving our news. Letters fulfil a very important role in the history of literature. But in cinema this was a virtually unknown genre. We have released it. Who knows whether, as happens with written letters, it will help us to find out essential things about filmmakers that their major works, sometimes, conceal. Or reveal in a way that is too indirect. Are the films by these filmmakers perceived differently after watching their correspondences? Undoubtedly Richard Sennett would welcome this particular return to craftsmanship, in other words, to the artist’s natural impulse.