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How Artist Leonor Serrano Rivas Carefully Manipulates Space, Time and Fiction



BY RAFAEL BARBER CORTELL

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At C3A, Córdoba, the artist explores the strategies of theatre and its relation to the audience



For her first institutional solo show – titled ‘The Dream Adventure’ after a 1963 book by Roger Caillois on the nature of daydreams – Leonor Serrano Rivas created two immersive installations that serve as antidotes to the frenetic pace of contemporary life. Reconfiguring the building’s existing architecture through video and sculpture, the artist implemented a new spatial framework, inspired by theatre, encouraging the audience to engage with their environment from an alternative perspective.

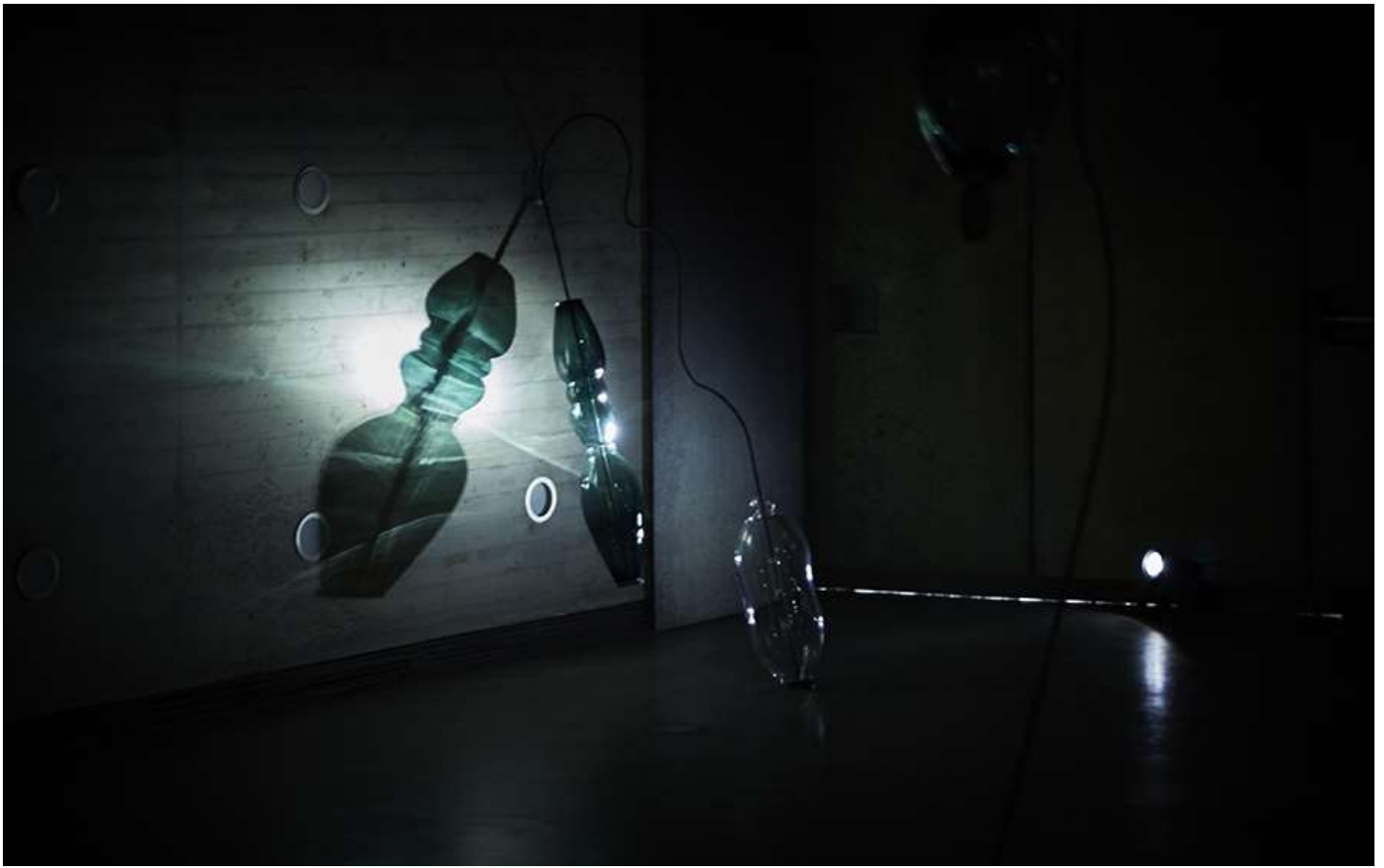
Upon entering the show, we see a six-by-three-metre screen hanging from the ceiling: on it, the surface of a liquid mass is repeatedly ruptured by pigments poured to create sinuous coloured forms into which objects are plunged (*Estrella*, 2019). Accompanied by a soundtrack of softly falling water, this video-sculpture induces the audience into a different frame of mind and creates an atmosphere that expands throughout the cavernous room. Flanking *Estrella* are two large sculptures, *Towards a Faded Sky 1 & 2* (both 2019), which are also suspended from the ceiling to appear as though floating. They recall some of the objects from the video, like characters that have escaped from the footage to levitate among the audience.



Leonor Serrano Rivas, 'The Dream Adventure', 2019, exhibition view, C3A Centro de Creación Contemporánea de Andalucía, Córdoba, 2019. Courtesy: the artist; photograph: Pablo Ballesteros.

Estrella evolved out of the artist's research into Madrid's Teatro Eslava – a venue renowned as the birthplace of Spanish avant-garde theatre in the early 20th century, where plays by figures such as Federico García Lorca were first performed. In Serrano Rivas's installation, lines from plays staged at Teatro Eslava are whispered by the video's invisible narrator, *Estrella*, whose whispers occasionally emerge from the sound of the water. The work evokes a time when theatre was an incubator for now-commonplace, then-revolutionary strategies that reconfigured the roles of the audience, the use of space and the experience of time.

The show's second installation, *The Dream Follows the Mouth (of the one who interprets it)* (2018), is likewise influenced by a text by Caillois, *Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia* (1935). Exploring themes of mimicry and camouflage, Caillois argued that, in adapting their colour to assimilate with their surroundings, chameleonic creatures experience an altered perception of space. Through mimicry, these beings renounce their own selves and become vulnerable to their environments. Inspired by this vulnerability and continuing an interest in theatrical devices, Serrano Rivas's stage-like installation comprises two facing screens between which are placed a number of glass-blown sculptures.



Leonor Serrano Rivas, *The Dream Follows the Mouth (of the one who interprets it...)*, 2018, installation view, C3A Centro de Creación Contemporánea de Andalucía, Córdoba, 2019. Courtesy: the artist and Marta Cervera Gallery; photograph: Pablo Ballesteros.

The screens show the same video (played simultaneously but at different start times) of a group of women performing a choreography of erratic movements, creating a backdrop to a non-existent play, while another woman, like a puppeteer, creates the foreground. The screens show the same video but at different moments. The audience is invited to jump inside the interstitial space they create punctuated by delicate sculptures; as such, the fiction presented in the video slowly becomes part of it, as audiences are invited to step into this space. It amounts to a feeling of insubstantiality, one subtly enhanced by the hum of Ernesto Lecuona's 'Siboney' (1929), which fills the room like an oneiric lullaby that softly calls on the audience's minds to drift off.

In 'The Dream Adventure', Serrano Rivas draws on theatre's capacity to create a temporarily differentiated reality through the careful manipulation of space, time and fiction. She sets the rhythm of this reverie: we just have to let ourselves go in order to dream it.

Leonor Serrano Riva, 'The Dream Adventure' <http://www.c3a.es/exposiciones-actuales/detalle/-/asset_publisher/pQOPxnELFHj/content/leonor-serrano-rivas-sueno-de-la-aventura> runs at C3A Centro de Creación Contemporánea de Andalucía, Córdoba, until 29 September 2019.

Main image: Leonor Serrano Rivas, *exhibition view 2019*, C3A Centro de Creación Contemporánea de Andalucía, Córdoba, 2019.

Courtesy: the artist and Marta Cervera Gallery; photograph: Pablo Ballesteros.

RAFAEL BARBER CORTELL

Rafael Barber Cortell is a curator and writer based in London.

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London

1 Surrey Street
London
WC2R 2ND, UK
+44 (0)203 372 6111

New York

247 Centre St
5th Floor
New York, NY 10013
+1 212 463 7488

Berlin

Zehdenicker Str. 28
D-10119 Berlin
Germany
+49 30 7675 80230

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