



Lluís Hortalà. Exercitatori

Fundació Suñol. Until April 30th

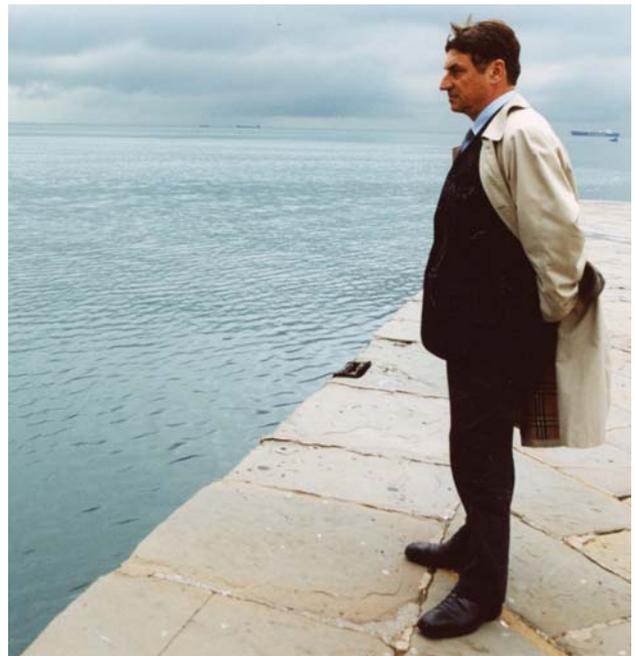
The air is cleaner on Montserrat, a consequence of blustery clouds and a cycling of micro-climates; a mystifying ecosystem that seems fitting for a site shaped as much by geologic circumstance as divine legend. Some say a castle once held Christ's Holy Grail here. In 880, after visions of the Virgin appeared, a bishop ordered a chapel built. Today, the monastery of Montserrat enshrines a Black Madonna, the golden globe in her right hand a less risky Blarney Stone for the Christian faithful.

As a subject, Montserrat favours many forms of art making. Those lumpy shapes are handily and frequently reproduced in clay, photo, film, drawing, painting, graphics, even crayon and paper do it some justice. Nevertheless, Montserrat is best imitated after comprehensive consideration, perhaps accounting for the site's geologic, aesthetic and holy draw.

Lluís Hortalà, an artist and rock climber, has focused his last two years on climbing, reproducing and revering this mountain chain from all angles. The result is a series of photo-realistic charcoal drawings, clunky little animations and two plain benches.

Hortalà likens his rock climbing and art practice to a spiritual journey, with climbing a mountain a pretty straightforward, even clichéd, metaphor for life and its trials. That said, Hortalà's comparison is not only earnest, but historical: his exhibition, *Exercitatori*, takes its name from a mystical essay written on Montserrat in the 16th century, the first of its kind to spell out a spiritual plan in the vernacular. The show brochure includes an excerpt of the monk's text, which explains the various ways that man approaches the divine as if he were hiking a mountain.

Ancient mystics aside, Hortalà's work delivers a thoughtful treatment of his experience and admiration for Montserrat that can appeal to many audiences. His drawings are beautiful and expertly crafted, superimposed with scientific graphs likely written in a rock-climber's shorthand. His animations are simple and sheepishly silly, depicting movement and/or the disappearance of Montserrat's rocky blooms. With basically all the works hung high on the wall, the benches provide a simple and time-tested strategy for evoking the holy: sit low and look up. Now, don't those mountains look marvellous?--SB



La Trieste de Magris

CCCB. Until July 17th

It's difficult to capture the essence of a city, but the CCCB's latest exhibition has managed it. The city in question is Trieste.

Overlooking the Adriatic Sea on the frontier between Italy and Eastern Europe, this is a place pummelled by the unique Bora winds that at times reach 171 kilometres per hour. It is also home to some of the world's most foremost thinkers, whose lives and writings are exposed by this latest installation, *The Trieste of Magris*.

A part of the CCCB's cycle of exhibits, 'Cities and Their Writers', the story of this multi-ethnic city is told through the eyes of Triestine writer Claudio Magris. Curated by theatre director and Magris's friend Giorgio Pressburger, this is more than a show with one protagonist. Instead, art, literature, science and the recent history of Europe are displayed in a format that includes both humour and sensitivity.

A wander through the 15-room installation reveals the heart of a town: replicas of Trieste's Caffè San Marco and town square, and simulations of the Bora wind are just a taster. Traverse the spectrum of human emotion and step into the madness of a mock sanatorium or sink into a plush psychiatric chair on display to illustrate Trieste's importance to the field of psychoanalysis.

Literature enthusiasts will also find themselves satisfied. As well as Magris's penmanship, original writings from the likes of James Joyce, who lived in Trieste for 14 years, are on display in all their glory. Perhaps it was the mad Bora that pushed Irishman Joyce to pen some of the "scandalous" letters on show here. Written to lover Nora Barnacle, they will leave any English speaker in no doubt as to why Joyce revolutionised literature!

Joyce is just one example of Trieste's multi-faceted makeup, which is a theme explored throughout: from the town's Bohemian roots to Mussolini's declaration of racist laws and Nazi autocracies.

Subtly raising questions about the importance of multi-culturalism, tolerance and acceptance through a non-confrontational medium, *The Trieste of Magris* serves to incite valuable discussions about the world we live in.

It also can't be forgotten that you're essentially paying around €5 to visit an Italian seaside village!--SS

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