

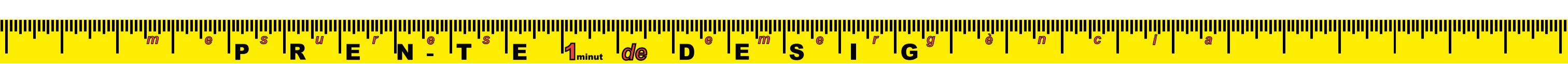


measure X measure
1992' 2015



measure X measure
1992 ' 2015

measurements by Antoni Abad verified by Eugeni Bonet
Fundació Suñol' Barcelona 2018



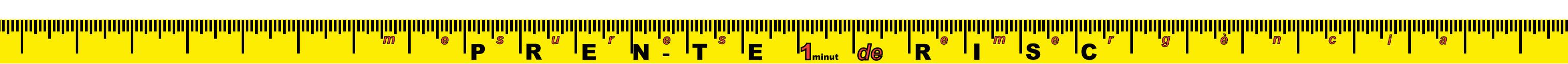
The Fundació Suñol presents **ACTE 39: Antoni Abad. measure X measure. 1992'2015**, a project specifically conceived for its Zero Level exhibition spaces that will display the works made by artist Antoni Abad (Lleida, 1956) between the nineties and 2015. The pieces on show are directly associated with his personal research into the concepts and uses of measurements, language and the connections between these.

In 1993 Antoni Abad met Josep Suñol in the premises on Passeig de Gràcia that would end up becoming the Fundació Suñol, and which in those days were not yet open to the public; that's where he discovered the collection in the making. As he had done previously using elements taken from everyday life, he produced an installation that consisted in surrounding one of the works in the collection and on display at the time, Antoni Tàpies's *Butaca* (Armchair, 1987), with tape measures.

The exhibition became an occasion to re-examine Antoni Abad's solid trajectory, in which notions of measure are defined along with more personal everyday routines and lead to a subjective vision of the world and of the commonplace elements that shape it.

Hence, Nivell Zero as a container and an exhibition space is at the artist's disposal, to be rethought and used to explore twenty years of actions in different formats, ranging from installations, photographs and videos to computer software.

The exhibition is curated by Eugeni Bonet, who has updated and enlarged an original 1995 text on the artist's oeuvre entitled 'Pesos y medidas' (Weights and Measures). Furthermore, a large part of his artistic material and of the documentation of his works has been recovered and digitalised. The present publication in digital format can be downloaded from the Fundació Suñol website and printed with Blurb's online publishing platform.



Weights and Measures in Time 2.0

Eugeni Bonet

metrology

Science of measurement and its application.

International Vocabulary of Metrology. Basic and General

Concepts and Associated Terms (VIM), 3rd edition, 2008 version

with minor corrections

This text embraces the rules and guidelines of the International Bureau of Weights and Measures (better known under the acronym BIPM on account of its French establishment and name, the Bureau International des Poids et Mesures), and of the Collège de Pataphysique, a society of scholarly yet useless, absurd studies and of 'imaginary solutions', all of which are so necessary to address what is taking place in the field of art.

'[A]nd only the weight of the world will oppress *us* again.'

Peter Handke, *The Weight of the World*, 1979

As I deliver it, the original Catalan text measures 3,637 words or 18,916 characters (22,459 with spaces), according to the word processor I've used. I don't pay as much attention to the number of lines and pages because these will necessarily change in the final edition of the essay.

Any correction, change or mistake made in the original may alter these counts or calculations, which should therefore be taken with a vague, discretionary degree of tolerance or indulgence. Not to mention the translations that will be made of the original, as the above-mentioned figures will have to be adapted to each language and the count will be made and given to us by a computer program.

I could even figure out other aspects: my taps on the keyboard (I prefer not to think of that, especially in terms of rhythm, and because of my ineptitude at using barely more two fingers); the time spent preparing, writing and reviewing these lines; the time devoted to finding ‘weighty’ quotes that title and fill out the text; the fees received and yet to be received, the taxes withheld, and so on and so forth.

measurand

Quantity intended to be measured.

VIM, op. cit.

Twenty-odd years ago, in conversations on his work of the time and that of the immediately preceding period, Antoni Abad passed on to me his feverish enthusiasm for measuring. Those conversations gave rise to an earlier version of this text, which is now *revived* or *reloaded*, as the popularly expression goes in other practices, not so much in the most exquisite of the visual arts. Or simply to a magnified look at a key period, in order to accompany its exhibitional RE-vision. Hence as a sort of palimpsest on an earlier text, in its turn RE-written for the occasion.

Antoni is now intrigued by the days when we began measuring everything with the digital tools available to us, half-primitive as they were then or as they seem to us today. For my part, since I started writing for different publications I’ve been used to having an abacus of approximately 2,100 characters per typewritten page (70 characters and 30 lines, double space, per page). More recently, the English way of counting words has prevailed, which at first I found disconcerting (luckily there are applications that count everything). I also suspect there is a certain correspondence, a reasonable equivalence (even if English and Germanic tongues are much more concise than the Romance languages in which I usually write).

The *measurands* thus become arbitrary, distances become subjective, and dimensions are disrupted. As Duchamp suggested in his *3 stoppages-étalons* (3 Standard Stoppages), some metric units have a changeable length, according to which the straight line isn’t the shortest route from one point to another.

measurement uncertainty

Non-negative parameter characterizing the dispersion of the quantity values being attributed to a measurand, based on the information used.

VIM, op. cit.

Antoni Abad’s trajectory isn’t typical of a post-conceptual or neo-conceptual artist, perchance of one who gradually becomes a post-object artist through the works we are considering here. After reading Art History he turned his hand to painting, although his works in this medium soon took on a three-dimensional quality, sequential and combinatorial: plaited paintings, gimp pieces and foam rubber as raw material.

I’m not surprised by the fact that Antoni Abad should now forget to include this formative stage – his starting point as an artist – when drawing up his curriculum vitae. By doing so he produces the false effect of a late beginning which is, however, quite the opposite, as proved by the catalogue of the retrospective exhibition of works from the first ten years of his activity, published on occasion of his being awarded the 1990 Morera Medal in his home town of Lleida.

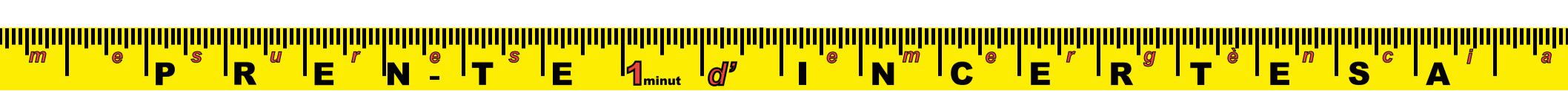
Furthermore, Abad was born into a dynasty of artists. His father Antonio Abad Gil was a sculptor, a teacher and one of the founders of the Circle of Fine Arts of Lleida in 1947. His mother Teresa Roses was a poet (and was perhaps fated to become a telephone switchboard operator to help provide for her children).

‘Kaleidoscope

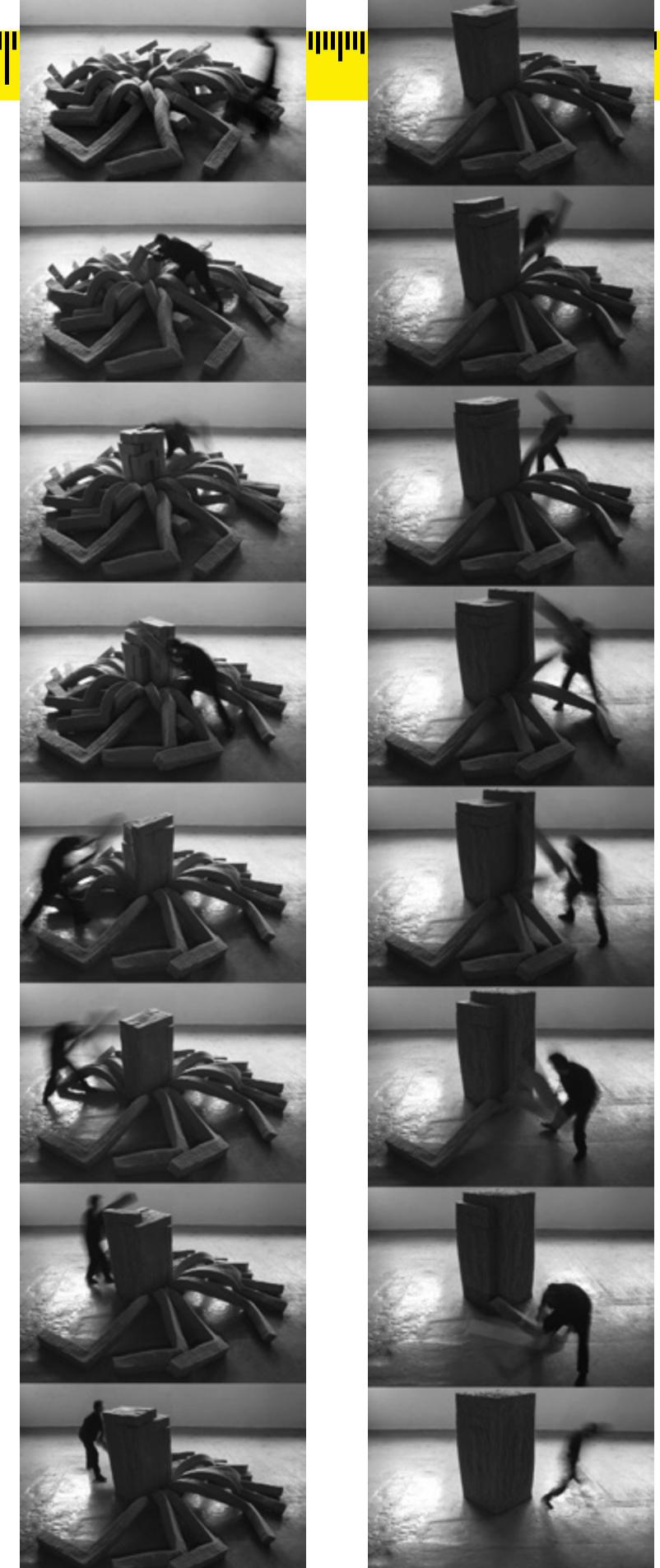
immeasurable and measureless.’

Teresa Roses, *Aquesta estranya margarida* [This Strange Daisy], 1999

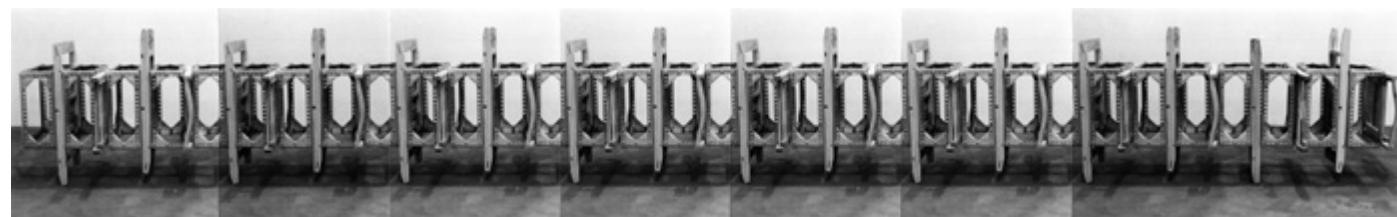
In any event, the measuring activity that Antoni Abad i Roses has undertaken since 1992 is a radical transition that enabled him to move from an eminently formal exploration, a minimalistic yet slightly baroque attempt to consume the poor or industrial materials he works with: blocks of foam rubber, units and accessories of grooved metal shelves, scissor chairs and a wide range of other objects.



Moreover, from his way of combining and swapping these modular units has emerged a potential element of action or performance and a required sequentiality, either through photographic means or videographic recordings. His sculptures of the late eighties reveal a tangible interest in metamorphic, flexible and un/foldable shapes that have a capacity for movement and can be regenerated into diverse states of matter. It makes little difference whether such matter is unique or multiple, hard (like metal or wood) or soft (like foam rubber).



Sin título (Untitled)
 Polyurethane foam
 100 x 450 x 450 cm
 Chisenhale Gallery, London 1987



Cèntuple mòbil (Mobile Centuple)
Folding chairs and grooved angle
113 x 1170 x 11 cm
Photograph: 127 x 852 cm
Palacio de Velázquez, Madrid 1992
Col·lecció Museu d'Art Jaume Morera, Lleida

Abad situates the beginning of his 'artimensor' cycle in a presumably untitled piece with an add-on in brackets that contradicts it. *ST [to Damocles]* (Untitled [To Damocles], 1992) is a sculpture of danger – a feature that will reappear later – in the shape of a column of sharp penknives that have a certificate of origin: penknives from Solsona (Lleida) with a long-standing tradition as regards the small and medium-sized knife industry.

Taking this assemblage as a starting point, Abad discovered another similar articulative element in traditional carpenters' rulers, which were usually yellow with fractional millimetric marks and could be conveniently extended thanks to the rivets between the different pieces of wood. And so on, until the extensible multipliable cube $1 m^3$ and other flexional and unfolding shapes on a human scale, such as *Size of Herself* and *Size of Myself*.

measurement model

Mathematical relation among all quantities known to be involved in a measurement.
VIM, op. cit.

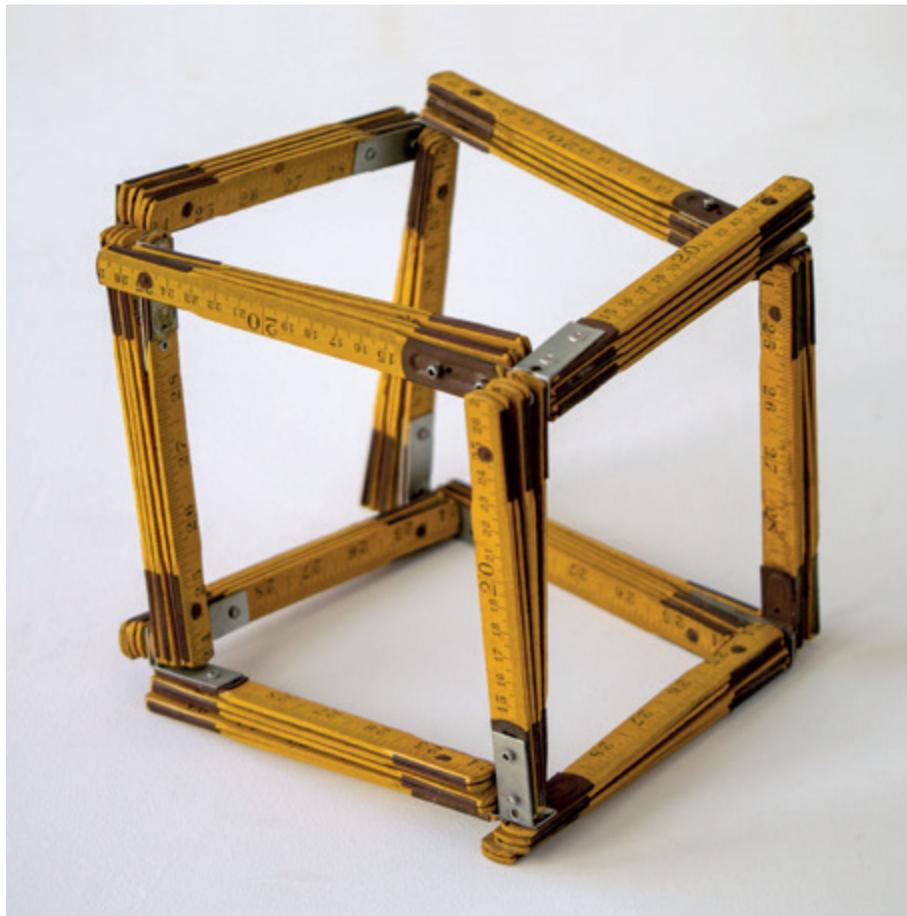
Abad then went on to employ this arbitrary standard ruler as a material and a parameter to penetrate other forms of metrology, tools, implements, standards and measurement systems: tape measures, flexometers, instruments used in topographic measurements, etc.

In the beginning, they were all new sculptural materials, three-dimensional and speculative. But they soon became procedures for measuring egos (the artist's own and that of others), the 'sublimity' of art, as in *Size of Sublime*, an intervention or involvement in a given group show, as in *En la mesura del possible* (In the Measure of the Possible). Or even, at least on paper, in a first class museum, as in the piece *El Prado métrico* (The Metric Prado), apropos certain icons and revered authorities in the local art world, as in *Tàpies mètric* (Metric Tàpies), and finally as projects for intervening in public space or on common architectural or town-planning elements, as in *Emergency Measures*.

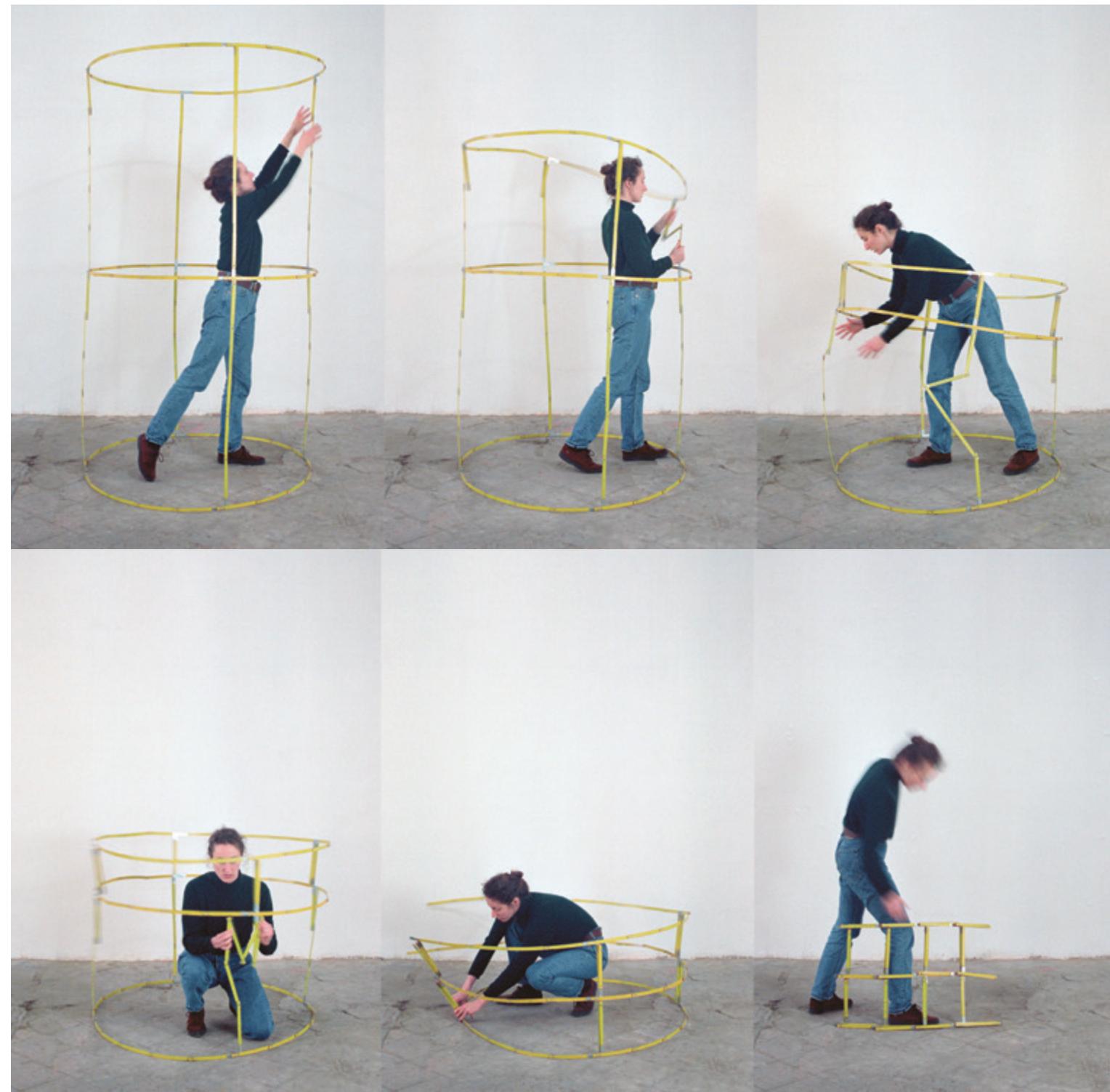


Sin título [a Damocles] (Untitled [To Damocles])
Solsona penknives
478 cm in height
Poblenou, Barcelona 1992

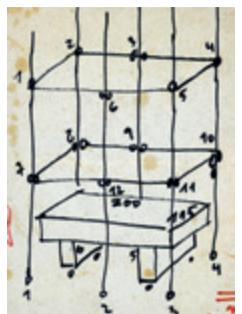
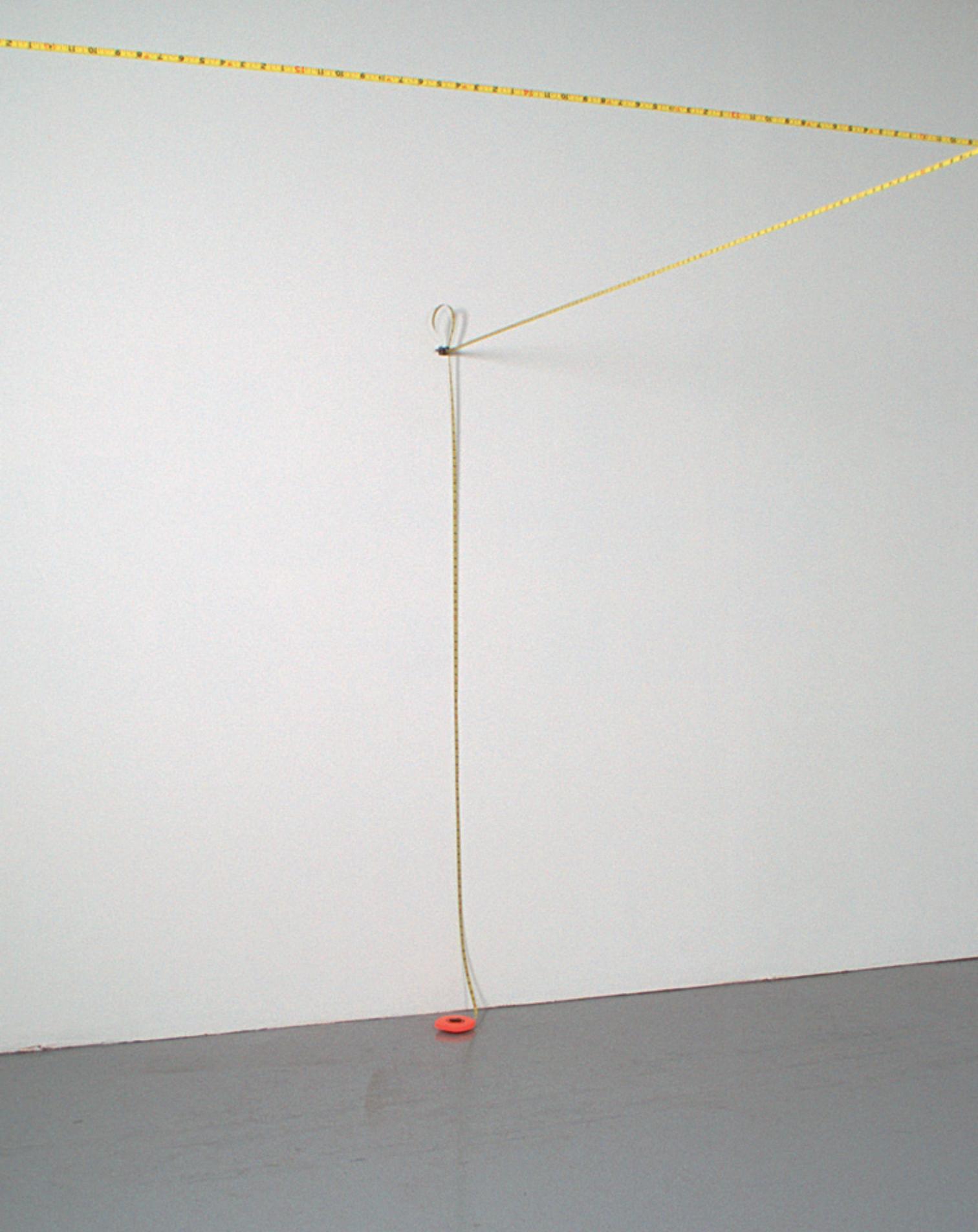




1m³
Carpenter rulers
19 x 19 x 19 cm
Poblenou, Barcelona 1992



Size of Herself
Series of six colour photographs
266 x 185 cm each
Choreography by Mariana Jaroslavsky
Poblenou, Barcelona 1993

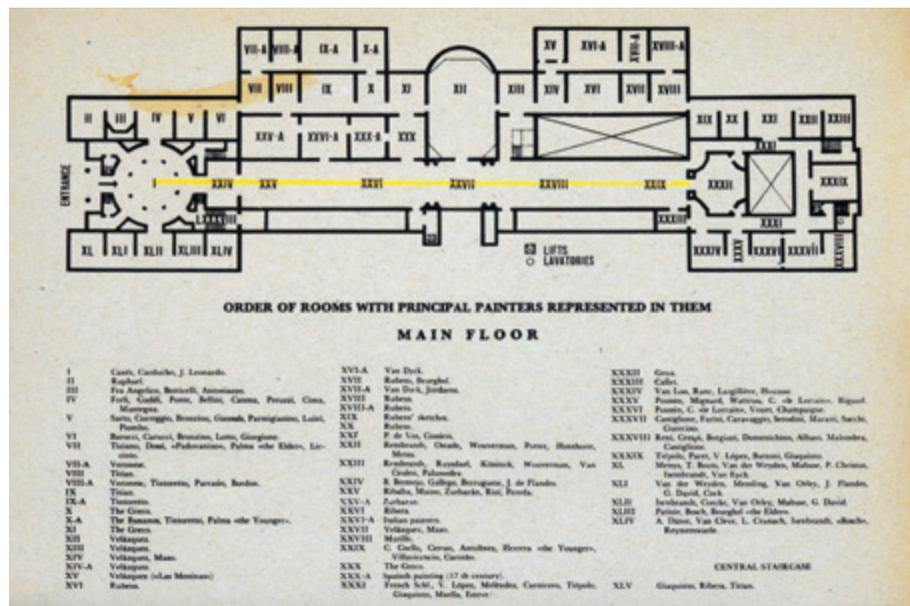


Size of Billiards

Measurement of a billiard table
Tape measures: 430 x 250 x 150 cm
Drawing: 20 x 15 cm
Poblenou, Barcelona 1993

Size of Sublime

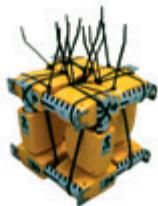
Installation with tape measures
Dimensions variable
The Banff Centre for the Arts, Alberta (Canada) 1993



El Prado métrico (Metric Prado)
Arte, Proyectos e Ideas, no. 1
 Light Laboratory, Fine Arts College
 Universitat Politècnica de València 1993

Tàpies mètric (Metric Tàpies)
 Measurement of *Armchair* sculpture
 by Antoni Tàpies (1987)
 Tape measures
 2 photographs: 180 x 120 cm each
 Drawing: 21 x 15 cm
 Fundació Suñol, Barcelona 1993





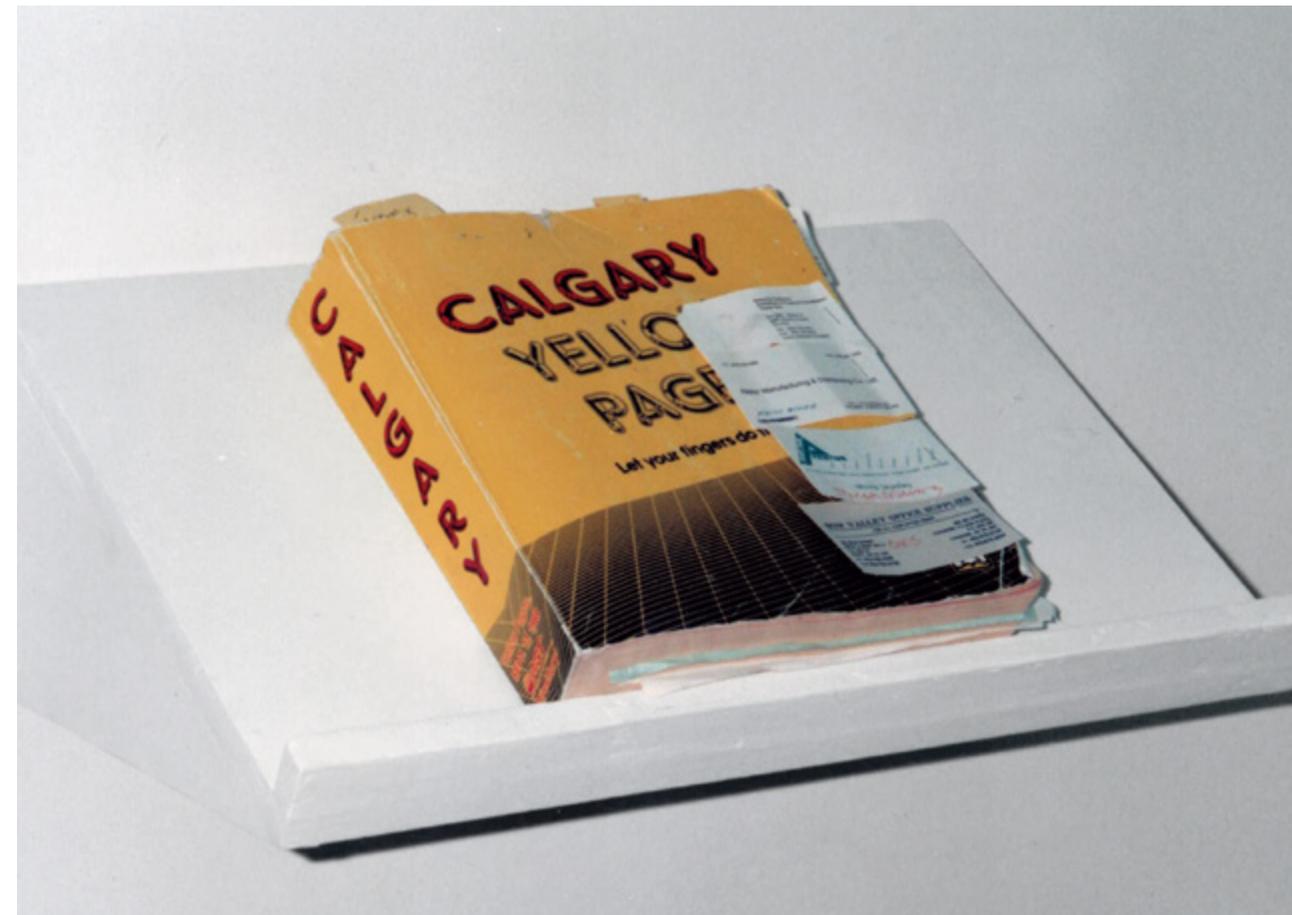
Size of myself

Topographic measurements and bridles: 15 x 15 x 15 cm

Colour photograph: 170 x 170 cm

The Banff Centre for the Arts, Alberta (Canada) 1993

Private collection, Barcelona



Size of Calgary Yellow Pages

Yellow Pages

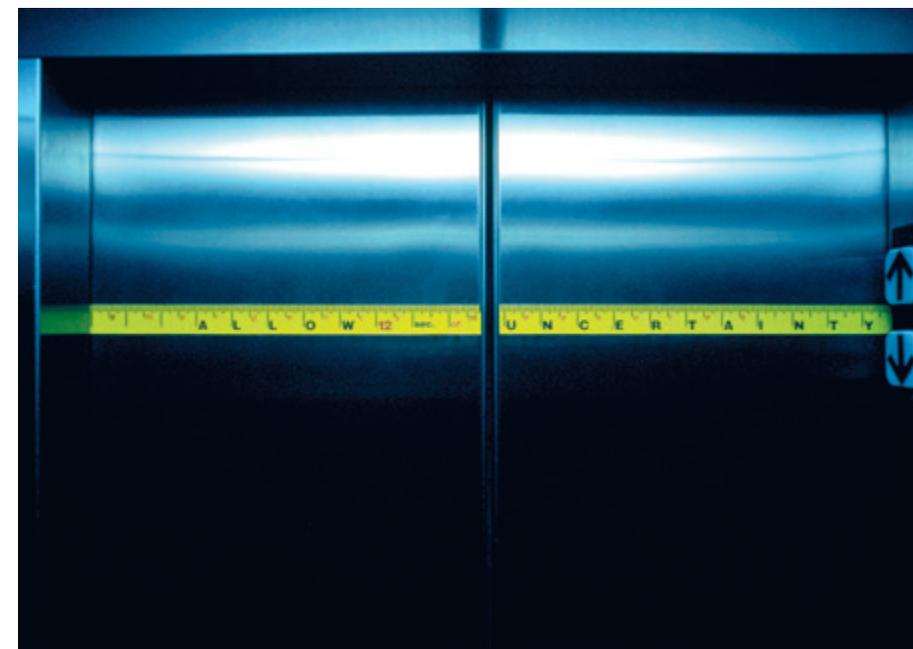
27.9 x 21.6 x 6 cm

The Banff Centre for the Arts, Alberta (Canada) 1993

Private collection, Barcelona



Distance nulle part (Distance to Nowhere)
 Colour photomontage and cardboard maquette
 Dimensions unknown
 The Banff Centre for the Arts, Alberta (Canada) 1993



Emergency Measures
 Intervention in lifts
 Dimensions variable
 The Banff Centre for the Arts, Alberta (Canada) 1993



Doble pila de plats (Double Pile of Plates)
Measurement of *Pile of Plates* sculpture by Antoni Tàpies (1970)
Plates and tape measure
76 x 40 x 23 cm
Sala Vinçon, Barcelona 1994
Fundació Vila Casas Collection



En la mesura del possible (As Far as Possible)
Intervention with tape measures in the Antoni Estrany collection
Galeria Antoni Estrany, Barcelona 1994

Having reached this point, if his measurements referred more explicitly to the sphere and context of his art and trade, those that followed opened up to different standards: those of language, forms of behaviour, lifestyles, feelings, routines, desires ... and, when all is said and done, everyday experiences.

This discovery, however, would distance him increasingly from his first formal approach. Having left to one side his thoughts on the nature of art (at once abstract and concrete), it gave way to an autobiographical slant, which was perhaps disguised. Not totally introspective, and even less untransferable, he opens up to the exterior, beyond sublimity and aesthetic forms. Even if only because all the *weight of the world* is reflected in it, becoming present and weighty.

'Thinking of what one has to do, even if it is as insignificant as changing one's shirt, is always tiresome.'
Peter Handke, op. cit.

This weight without scales is now measured by other standards (not metric) in the works that Antoni Abad would make next. Minor measurements, major works. Quite appropriately, these standards are furnished by the actual body, the actual subject (in keeping with the subjective accent that imbues these new works) and are specifically the handspan – back of the open palm of the hand – and the foot. We would consider these standards primitive if they weren't still valid in certain cases, spheres and charts: according to convention, a handspan measures 20.873 cm; a foot measures 12 inches or 30.48 cm.

And works that we could start to call installations without Abad feeling he had abandoned his trade or his identity as a sculptor; quite the opposite: 'More than ever I feel that I'm a sculptor', he said when I asked him about the new direction I had noticed his work was taking, particularly due to the growing presence of video (usually as a loop projection).

Rosalind Krauss, of course, helped situate the genealogy of installations in the expanded field of modern sculpture (one of Bruce Naumans' video corridors illustrates the cover of her 1977 book *Passages in Modern Sculpture*), while on another occasion I put forth a definition of the art installation as a practice expressed not by a dimension superior to sculpture but by a *fractal dimension*.

A first approach to autobiographical subjectivity can be found in *Mesures menors* (Minor Measures, 1994) thanks to the key component of a sliding text. A brilliant, enlightened text that is a painstaking, laconic and prosaic chronicle of daily routine: 'The distance covered in waking up, getting up, taking a pee, showering, brushing my teeth, getting dressed, going into the kitchen, putting on a pot of coffee, raising the coffee to my lips, going out to the news-stand, bending down to pick up a paper, paying the newspaper seller, reading the headlines on my way home, putting my key in the lock, opening the door, walking to the armchair, sitting down to read the printed words, turning a page, turning another ...'.

And so on until having read over six hundred words that conclude with the date of the text as a record of one day: 'the eleventh of August of 1994'.

'Yesterday I did loads of things: I went for a walk, I crouched down, I tidied up, I did the washing up, I queued up, I read, thought, spoke, drew, wrote, and yet I *honestly* didn't feel tired.'
Peter Handke, op. cit.

And that text that in the installation (in the first version) unfolds lengthwise a few metres, that series of routine and more or less insignificant activities that are simply transcribed – and yet end up assuming, even unintentionally, a literary existence – are furthermore the object of the (minor) measurements on display.

These take the handspan as a unit in the other elements in the work. For a start, the projection of a video sequence in a continuous loop, where a hand enters the frame of the image stretching and contracting the fingers as in a gesture of handspan measuring. Then, a row of aluminium hands and palms made from the casts of the artist's hands as a sculptural unfolding of the actual sequence projected. (And, in turn, as a way of signing and authenticating the work.)

At the time, I considered this last element redundant and somewhat superfluous. I interpreted it as a way of clinging to the aura of the art object, to the sublimity of the sculpture and of the signature, of submitting to the rules of the art market, etc. — in short, all that against which Abad had rebelled in previous works.

Minor Measures

I observed too an unforeseen irony in the fact that the fragmented marketing of this objective component in the form of pairs of hands and handspans should furnish, not long afterwards, the measure of the success – at least of the commercial success – of the work and of the artist himself. Like a computation, another reckoning of his routine and his life. (And seen this way, he would seem to have the upper hand!)

Abad himself considers this work his farewell (for now?) to sculpture in the usual sense of the term. In fact, he developed its prototype on occasion of a decisive residency at The Banff Centre for the Arts (Alberta, Canada). And, once back, the conception of the work acquired more corporeal features, where the hands and the handspans in cast aluminium evoke the bar of platinum-iridium formerly taken as a standard metric unit.



Minor Measures (in progress)

Extraction of moulds of a closed handspan

The Banff Centre for the Arts, Alberta (Canada) 1994

The distance covered in waking up, getting up, pissing, having a shower, brushing my teeth, getting dressed, going into the kitchen, making coffee, raising the cup to my lips, going out to the newsstand, bending down to pick up a newspaper, paying for it, reading the headlines on the way back home, putting the key in the lock, opening the door, walking over to the armchair, sitting down to read the printed word, turning a page, turning another, lighting a cigarette, crossing my legs, being startled by the phone, picking it up, hearing a very wide-awake voice, making up a reply, hanging up, sitting down at the typewriter, inserting a sheet of A-4 into the roller, losing myself in the blank page, deciding on a beginning, typing the first idea, lighting a cigarette, hitting the space bar, typing continuously, taking out the sheet, reading the fragment, getting up from the chair, pacing up, pacing down, re-reading the fragment, sitting down again to write, inserting another sheet, writing another fragment, lighting a cigarette, forgetting the cigarette on the ashtray, writing further paragraphs, taking out the sheet, going over to the armchair, sitting down, reading the fragment, picking up a pencil, crossing out some words, adding new words, leaving the sheet on the table, getting up, going to the kitchen, turning on the tap, filling a glass of water, raising it to my lips, swallowing the water, leaving the glass in the sink, returning to the armchair, re-reading the text, deciding that is not the time for writing, going back to the drawing board, staring at the things piled up on it, choosing the aluminium hand spans, placing them on the ruler, measuring the exact length, hearing the phone again, answering it, arranging to meet for dinner tomorrow, returning to the studio, picking up the hand spans, considering the possibility of fixing them on the wall, deciding to try it, extending the tape measure, marking the positions, fixing the bit in the Black and Decker, drilling holes in the wall, rummaging around in the tool box, discovering that there aren't any #6 wall anchors left, going to the ironmongers, scanning the shelves, reaching out for the Fisher #6, queuing at the till, handing over a 1000 peseta note, putting the change in my pocket, walking to the bakery, asking for a loaf, paying the baker, going to the greengrocer, choosing some apples, asking for a bag, putting into it the wall anchors, the bread and the apples, paying the shop assistant, going back home, putting the bag on the table,

taking out the bread, cutting two slices, opening the door of the fridge, putting the apples inside, opening a beer, taking a sip, slicing some cheese, sitting down to eat, putting on the coffee, looking through the paper, lighting a cigarette, savouring the coffee, going into the bathroom, pissing, washing my hands, brushing my teeth, going back to the studio, inserting the wall anchors into the holes, screwing in the hand spans again, deciding to change their position, opening the sketch book, noting down the correction, sketching another possibility, drilling new holes, unscrewing the hand spans, fixing them in the new position, stepping back two paces, weighing up the result, approving it, sitting down, switching on the calculator, calculating the number of hand spans per metre, noting the result, sketching possible variations, noticing that it is already gone 7pm, thinking about taking a walk, taking the photo of the hand spans with me to photocopy, walking to the door, slamming it shut, heading towards Eivissa square, entering the book shop, awaiting my turn, taking a look at the books on display, choosing Vasari's Lives of the Artists, asking for 20 photocopies, examining the copies, paying for everything, going out to the square, sitting at the terrace of a bar, catching the waiter's eye, ordering a beer, lighting a cigarette, taking the first sip, looking through the new book, taking another sip, watching the people, day-dreaming, pouring the rest of the bottle, lighting a cigarette, emptying the glass, calling the waiter over, giving him the money, heading off home, going through the front door, switching on the light, noticing the flashing light on the answering machine, pressing the playback button, listening to the messages, returning one of the calls, going to the studio, picking up the scissors, trimming the photocopies, sticking them to the wall in sequence, looking at the results, lighting a cigarette, putting on a cassette, going into the kitchen, putting some salted water on to boil, adding the noodles, frying garlic and mushrooms, mixing it all together, opening a beer, sitting down to eat, choosing an apple, biting into it, going to the studio, lighting a cigarette, re-reading the morning's writing, pacing up, pacing down, realising that it is already late, turning off the music, going to the bathroom, pissing, washing my hands, washing my face, brushing my teeth, getting undressed, sitting up in bed, arranging the pillow behind my back, turning on the television, zapping between channels, turning it off, reading some Vasari, setting the alarm, turning off the light, going to sleep, the 11th of August 1994.



Mesures menors

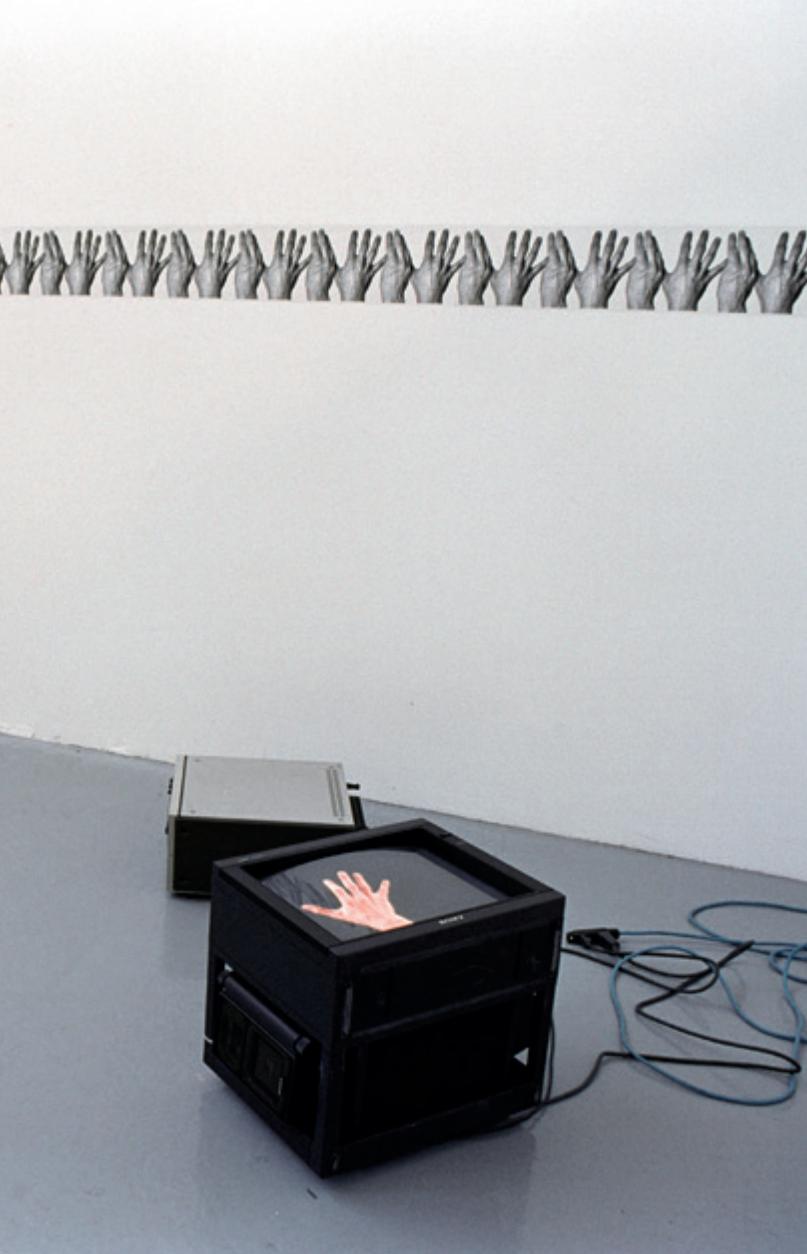
The distance covered before choosing *The Lives of the Artists* by Vasari, 11 August 1994

Aluminium cast

21 x 63 cm

Galeria Antoni Estrany, Barcelona 1994

Cal Cego. Col·lecció d'Art Contemporani



Minor Measures (in progress)

Photographs and video on a monitor

Dimensions variable

The Banff Centre for the Arts, Alberta (Canada) 1994



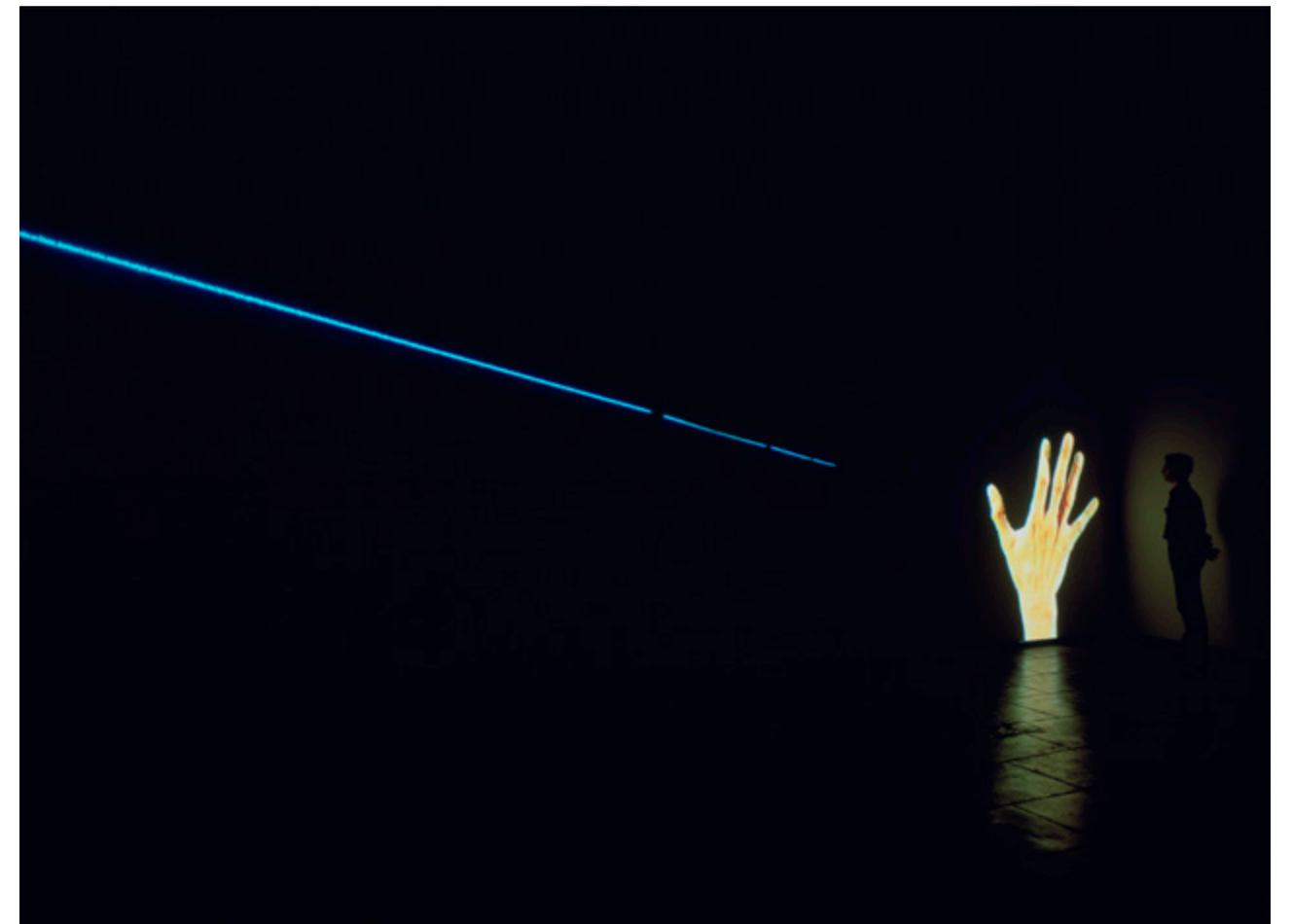
Mesures menors (Minor Measures)

Audiovisual bacchanal

VISU3L, aperiodic review in VHS format

L'Angelot, Barcelona 1994

La distància recorreguda en despertar-me, llevar-me, pixar, dubxar-me, rentar-me les dents, vestir-me, entrar a la cuina.



Mesures menors (Minor Measures)

Continuous video-projection and text

Dimensions variable

Galeria Antoni Estrany, Barcelona 1994

Private collection, Barcelona

measurement standard

Realization of the definition of a given quantity, with stated quantity value and associated measurement uncertainty, used as a reference.

VIM, op. cit.

On the contrary, Antoni Abad’s subsequent installation, *Últimos deseos* (Last Wishes, 1995), is divested of all solid or objective elements other than the actual space it grasps. The images – once again, a loop sequence – are projected either on a screen or else directly on the ceiling of the venue. Fortunately, some of the first shows in which this work was displayed were held in ideal spaces such as the former Roser Convent in Lleida (on the dome of St Domènec Church) and Sala de Verónicas in Murcia (on the rib vault in another old church).

This ringed image (Abad loves loops, circularities and palindromes: A MAN, A PLAN, A CANAL – PANAMA!) which is projected overhead and obliges us to turn our necks, presents a tightrope walker striving to keep his balance as he wobbles backwards and forwards along a rope, almost as if he were doubting whether or not to continue. The frame shows a close-up of the rope and the feet of the tumbler, who is anonymous and appears naked; the impressive composition is in chiaroscuro, and has been retouched with digital care.

While the work’s autobiographical connotation is neither immediate or literal – if at all, it follows Gertrude Stein’s premise as stated in the second instalment of her semi-apocryphal memoirs, *Everybody’s Autobiography* (‘Alice B. Toklas wrote hers and now everybody will write theirs’) – we could say that it visualises the set phrase ‘walking on a tightrope’. In this way it becomes the autobiography of everyone and anyone who, in search of a perpetual happiness, tries to leave anxieties, adversities and deficiencies behind.

So the funambulist is no hero, just a tumbler who moves forward falteringly, without truly advancing. Aware of the danger and of the risk he is assuming, he finds himself suspended in space, on a thin rope; on a straight line that is in fact a circle, a vicious circle. He keeps his balance thanks to a tragic hesitant onanism, but it’s only natural that we ask ourselves when he’ll fall or deliberately head towards his fate in the world, as if he were the leading player in an absurd though everyday drama.

In some sense, the core of the work just traces – or is a more expressive and penetrating variation of – the central image in *Mesures menors*, where the foot replaces the hand and the handspan as a standard measure of the narrow

space of an image that is virtually a small theatre of the world, without actual relief or depth.

In spite of having been made after the artist’s sojourn in Banff, Quebec and other parts of Canada, it also derives from his having come into contact with the different standards used for comparison between the metric system and the imperial system that was still in force at the time in the former British colonies and their areas of influence. Hence, a varied metrology and imagery that assumes other connotations and enriches metaphors, as in the related photograph *Una giornata particolare* (A Special Day), or the powerful image of the funambulist who slips, in a tragic ending to the tumbler walking on the tightrope.

measuring interval

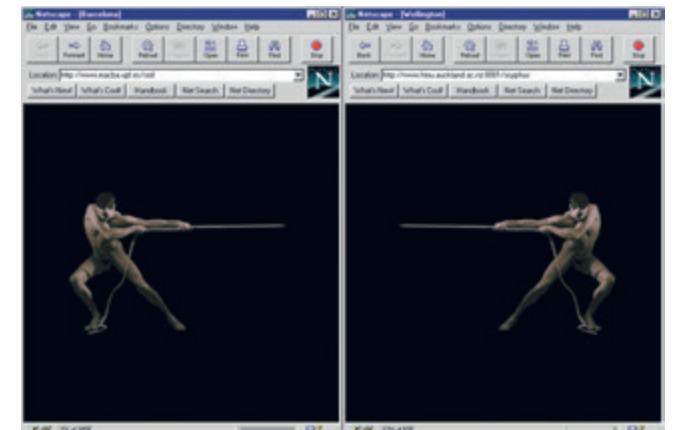
Set of values of quantities of the same kind that can be measured by a given measuring instrument or measuring system with specified instrumental measurement uncertainty, under defined conditions.

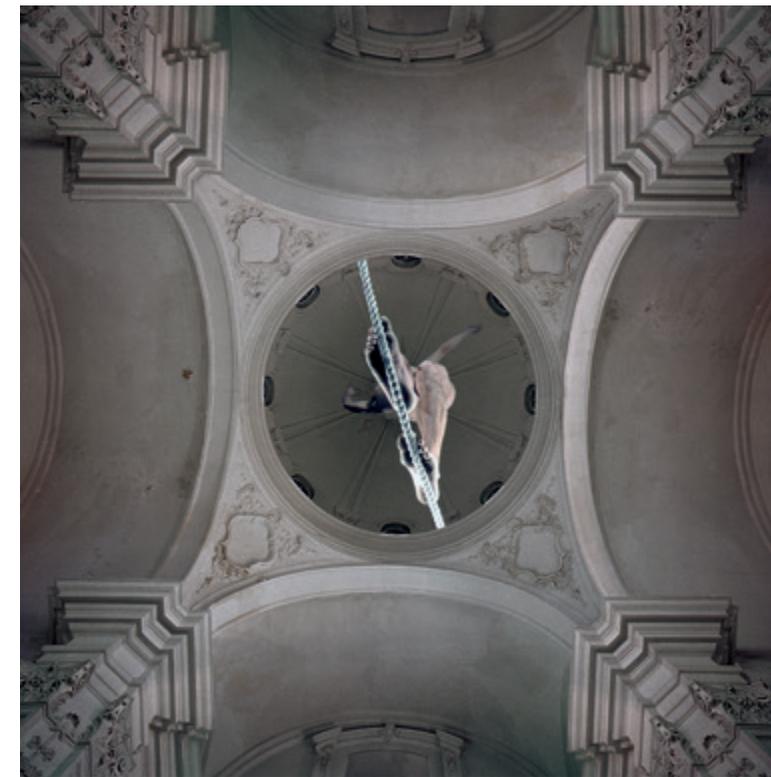
VIM, op. cit.

Other photographic, audiovisual, interactive and early net-art works would follow *Últimos deseos*, connected by a few common motifs: the rope tautened between two adversaries in the static images of *De force majeure*, *Fuerza de flaqueza* (Strength Out of Weakness) and the installation entitled *Sísif* (Sisyphus). The latter prompted Abad’s first steps in the field of net art, under the same title, as a part of the *MACBA en línia* (MACBA Online) project which, based on the premise of the digital museum without walls, was too ahead of its time and was unfortunately suspended.

Sísif (Sisyphus)
Internet project

MACBA online / Pompeu Fabra University (UPF)
Te Papa Tongarewa New Zealand National Museum,
Barcelona and Wellington 1996





Últimos deseos (Last Wishes)

Continuous video-projection

Dimensions variable

Lleida, Teruel, Barcelona, Jerusalem,
Gothenburg, Madrid, San Sebastian, Murcia,
Lima, Biennale di Venezia, Maribor,
Mexico City 1995-2004

Colección MACBA (Private deposit)

Colección Fundació "la Caixa"

Pinault Collection



Últimes coincidències (Latest Coincidences)

Colour photograph in light box

16 x 14 x 4 cm

Galeria Antoni Estrany, Barcelona 1995

Estrany de la Mota Collection

However, as regards the metrology examined here, the photographic transparency mounted on a light box entitled *Últimes coincidències* (Latest Coincidences) is his most relevant work, an image of open hands, fingers intertwined, as if to help the funambulist's climb on the tightrope, where palms/handspans and feet band together!

Progressively allegorical, Abad's measurements belong to a relatively short period that spanned from 1992 to 1995 and yet they have significantly conditioned his career. They appear in his step from sculpture – and from an intuitive and complementary sequentiality of the materials and procedures employed – to media sculpture, as formulated by Irish-born American artist Les Levine, where techniques such as carving, modelling, construction, assembling, etc., spread to all kinds of media (particularly to information and communication technologies), contexts and dimensions of social reality.

Hence his preference for installations featuring projections, interactive pastimes, palindromes and audiovisual bagatelles, until the year 2004, when he began to prompt the gradual transformation of mobile telephone appliances from the most rudimentary protocols that transcended the function of voice communication to the growing versatility of current smartphones. Developing this series of projects, retrospectively grouped under the name *megafone.net*, Antoni Abad has travelled half the globe, working alongside different collectivities with common concerns; creating channels of communication, exchange networks, physical and conceptual maps for routine users of mobile phones or similar devices, and for communities that have discovered their possibilities at the initiation workshops and debates that promote the *smart use* of those devices that take pride in their own intelligence.

instrumental drift

Continuous or incremental change over time in indication, due to changes in metrological properties of a measuring instrument.

VIM, op. cit.

However, amidst the volume of his activity in recent years, standards and units of measure reappear in a number of works that prolong 'the distance covered'. These pieces are also more conceptual than allegorical, along with the first works in his series of infra-measures, in the sense that each one is a visual translation of an idea with the elegance of the minimal.

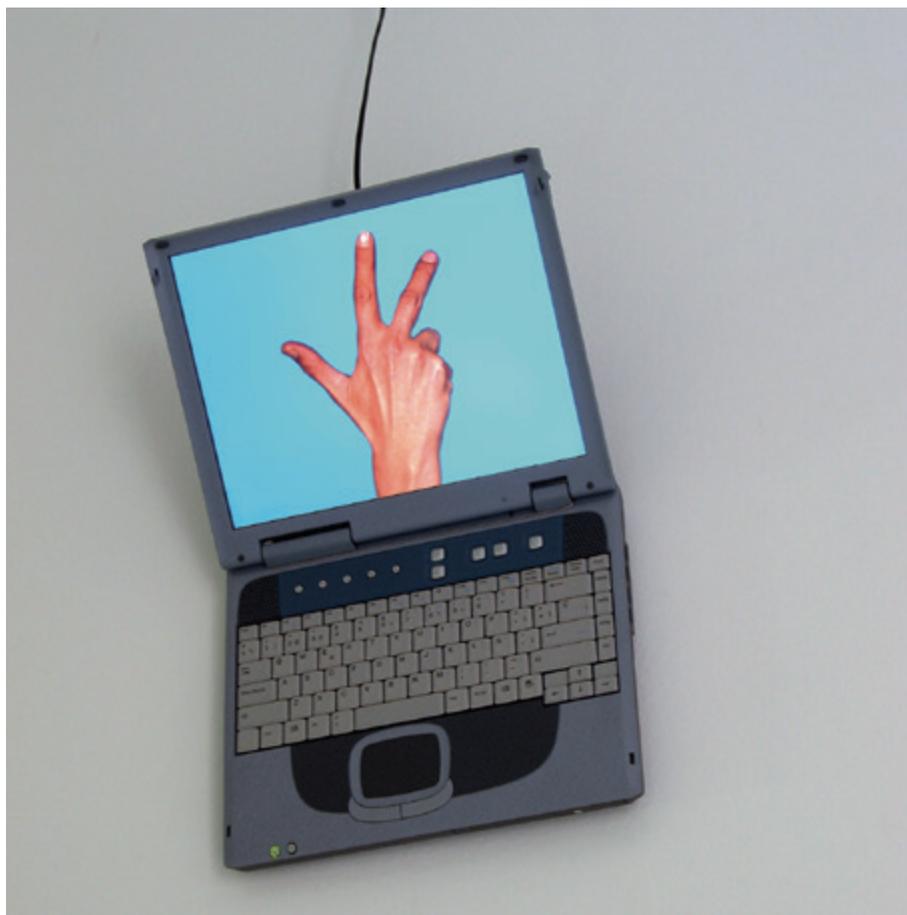
Let's take the piece of software art *Time Code* (2002) for instance, a computer application that today Abad would probably have conceived as an app for mobile phones and smartwatches. The work, a visual watch in which the measurement of time is expressed through sign language, is another reference to the hand, to the handspan as a standard of measure, although in this case it has the contortions derived from an established grammar of gestures. Furthermore, it anticipates the projects that Abad has undertaken in the last few years with people with sensory differences, such as *Punt de vista cec* (Blind Point of View, 2010-2011) and, since 2015, more ambitiously with *BlindWiki*.

More recently, we come across a similar proximity in the work made in Rome entitled *La musica* (Music, 2015), a photographic series published in the form of a serial portfolio. In this case it isn't so much a measurement as a trans-codification, perhaps an enumeration of the images (thirty) needed to translate into sign language an Italian version of a sentence (fourteen words) of unsure origin, as it has been attributed both to Nietzsche and Rumi: 'Quelli che ballavano erano visti come pazzi da quelli che non sentivano la musica.' [Those who couldn't hear the music thought the dancers were mad.]

Finally, in between and in response to an invitation to take part in a public art programme involving installations and permanent interventions in Barcelona metro stations, Abad found the perfect occasion to expand one of the projects he had developed in Banff. Thus, in *Mesures d'emergència* (2010) he displayed a series of tape measures in transitional places or non-places in a number of underground stations of the Barcelona metro network. On the edges of escalators, mechanical corridors and lift doors, superimposed on tape measures calibrated following usual metrological standards (millimetres, centimetres and metres) we find concise statements that are like exhortations to passengers, be they in a hurry or absent-minded: 'Allow 1 minute of patience ... Allow 1 minute of dreams ... Allow 1 minute of tolerance ... Allow 1 minute of charm ... Allow 1 minute of dissent.'

So, having materialised the measurement, I now take a minute to return to the beginning of this text and record the figures that indicate its length.

Barcelona, July 1995 [1.0]
Sant Feliu de Guíxols (Girona), April 2018 [2.0]



Time Code

Application program

1024 x 768 pixels

Galería Oliva Arauna, Madrid 2002

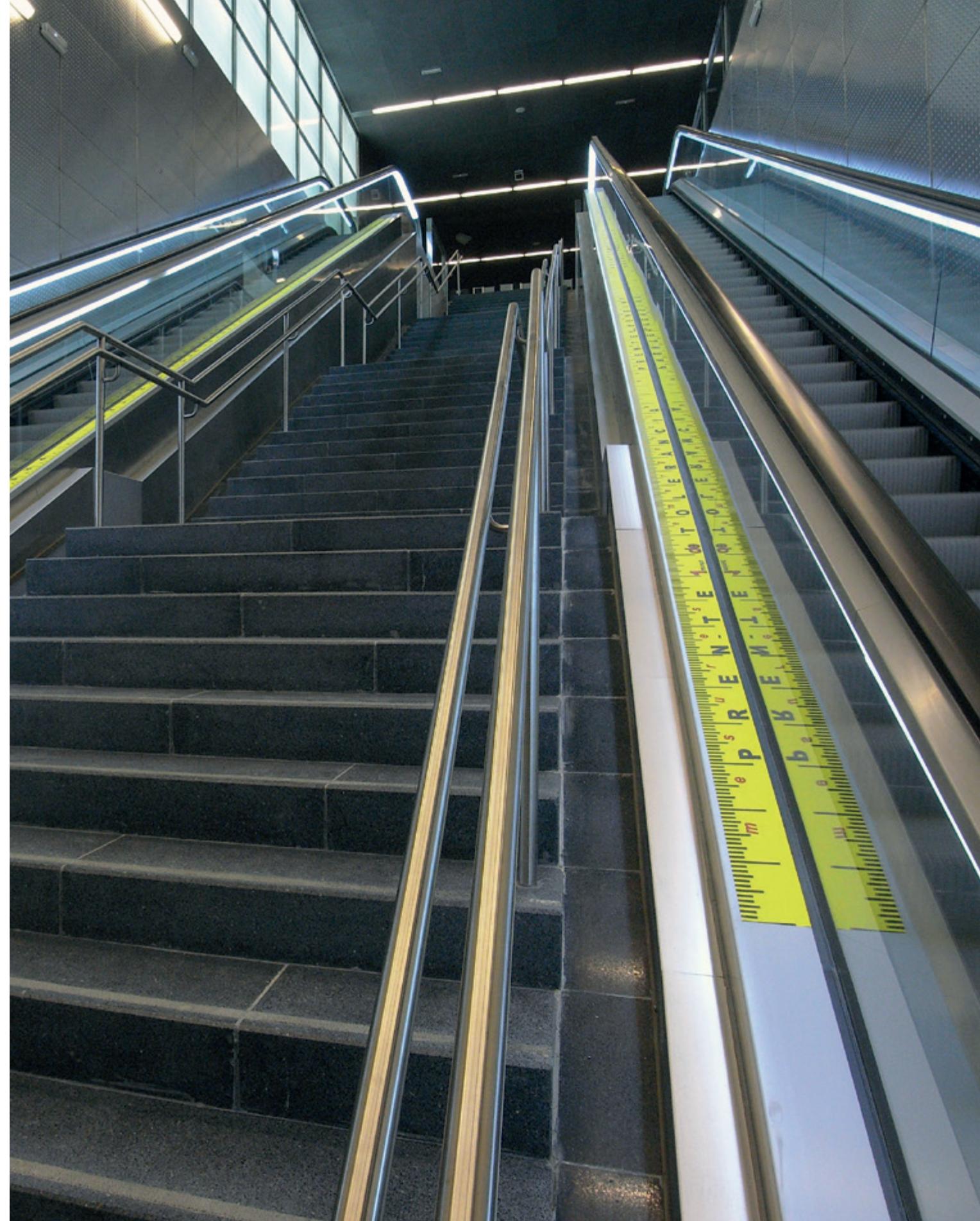
Mesures d'emergència (Emergency Measures)

Interventions in lifts, escalators and mechanical corridors
at three stations of Line 5 of the Barcelona metro

Ink on adhesive vinyl

Dimensions variable

Vall d'Hebron, El Coll / La Teixonera and El Carmel stations 2010





La musica (Music)
12 portfolios with a series of 30 b/w photographs
40 x 29.7 cm each
Rome 2015



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ACTE 39: Antoni Abad. measure X measure. 1992'2015

11.05. – 08.09.2018

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