

THE POSSIBILITY  
OF AN ISLANDBÁRBARA SÁNCHEZ BARROSO  
*THE ODYSSEY*  
FROM 23.3 TO 17.6.2018EXHIBITION SERIES CURATED  
BY ALEXANDRA LAUDO

Based on a childhood memory and a reworking of the myth of Odysseus, Barbara Sánchez Barroso's *The Odyssey* recounts the sea voyage of a character who is on a quest to find a place supposedly linked to her origins: a specific cave on a particular island. But rather than a geographic landmark, it turns out to be a place of the mind, an archetype that functions as a symbolic and metaphorical representation of various concepts: the space of fiction, the unconscious, the mythical notion of origin, and even intrauterine life. The visual narrative is accompanied by a first-person voice over recounting the childhood memory. In a series of digressions, it explores aspects such as the intersection between fiction and biographical narrative, the role of foundational myths in the construction of the collective imaginary, and the inherent human drive to transform experience into stories. Sánchez also turns her attention to the myth of Odysseus, recognising its role as a literary archetype, and drawing an indirect analogy between the distortion of history through myths and the reconstruction of a life through memories. In the voice over, the artist reformulates and adapts phrases and fragments of fiction, poetry, and essays by such diverse authors as Joseph Campbell, Joan Didion, Éric Pauwels, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Emily Wilson. Sánchez Barroso incorporates these reformulated excerpts into her discourse as if they were unmarked quotes, without specifying their sources, and mixes them with her own reflections, constructing a narrative about fiction and literary archetypes through existing texts.

There are echoes of Plato in *The Odyssey*. The play of light and darkness, the reflections and shadows, the contrast between day and night, and the ambiguity between the real and the imaginary run through the video. The sea voyage ends in a cave, and once inside, the protagonist shines a flashlight on the walls and hollows, projecting a dim light that reveals its morphology. But then she puts it down and makes her way into the depths of the cave in total darkness. Thus, in a reversal of the myth of the cave, Sánchez Barroso's *The Odyssey* seeks to reinstate the space of representation and defends fiction as a paradigm.

*The Odyssey* also springs from the artist's interest in storytelling and the basic plots that, when adapted, have generated all the literary works and films ever made. The writer John Gardner once said that there are only two plots in all of literature: either the protagonist goes on a journey, or a stranger come to town. Given that women were not allowed to travel throughout much of history, stories with female protagonists usually follow the second, and tend to be above all stories based on waiting. Along similar lines, Ursula K. Le Guin pointed out that epic stories featuring male heroes are based on struggle, competition, domination, triumph... and are structured around the concepts of conflict and resolution. For her film, Sánchez Barroso chooses the first of Gardner's two plots, the one in which the character goes on a journey. But in this case, she herself, a woman, is the protagonist. Moreover, the story follows an anti-heroic approach: there is no conflict, no

struggle, no domination. Sánchez Barroso's odyssey is above all an inner, psychological journey that does not involve resolution. In fact, its ending can be interpreted as a new beginning. With a title that is a direct reference to one of the earliest works of European literature – an epic poem that is actually the story of a return – this Odyssey reminds us that, in many cases, we travel in order to return to an origin, to go back to a beginning.

In the exhibition space, a boat accompanies the film. It is an object that is linked to the experience but not in a triumphant sense, as if commemorating a heroic feat. Lying on the floor, it is presented as flotsam or debris, suggesting a shipwreck of some kind, a loss.

Alexandra Laudo

#ILLAESP13

---

## Fundació Joan Miró

 Barcelona

Fundació Joan Miró  
Parc de Montjuïc  
08038 Barcelona  
T +34 934 439 470  
info@fmirobcn.org

With the collaboration of:

 Sabadell  
Foundation

With the support of:

 Han Nefkens  
Foundation

 ADDAYA  
CENTRE D'ART  
CONTEMPORANI

 amengual  
ARTESA NAUTIC

 FECOMON

 MUSEU D'HISTÒRIA  
CARRIERS

 MUSEU DE LA CIUTAT DE GIRONA