

Murray Guy

453 West 17 Street New York NY 10011 T: +1 212 463 7372 F: +1 212 463 7319 info@murrayguy.com

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“Patricia Esquivias”
Murray Guy
by Manuela Moscoso



Reads Like The Paper (Group 2), 2005-2007, video stills.

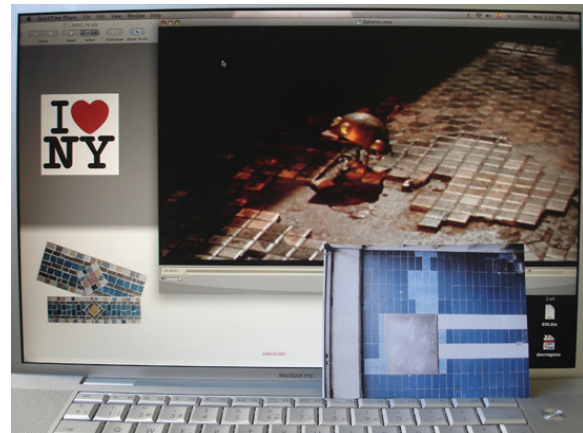
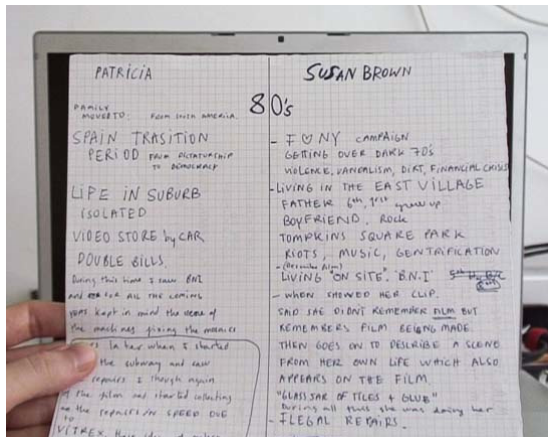
Narrative is an essential tool for understanding thought—it invites us to examine the ways in which we interpret history as well as generate meaning. By engaging in storytelling, Patricia Esquivias utilizes narrations to re-signify situations and events filtered through her own individual and particular viewpoints. She starts with disparate folk and historical knowledge that she then researches and weaves into ingenious stories reflecting on modern Spain, its political identity, and its contemporary daily life. Esquivias openly voices her consideration of the world's state of affairs in the form of deadpan authorial hypotheses on key philosophical concepts such as history and truth.

Esquivias's medium is almost exclusively video. For the ongoing series *Reads like the Paper*, begun in 2005, she has been interlacing assorted images—both collected and found—in brief clips grouped according to the year in which they were made. Here, with shrewd humor, the artist muses upon real events that, despite their apparent pettiness, she deems relevant to collective history. For the videos in the series *Folklore* (2007-2010), Esquivias tells stories that follow itineraries of sorts laid out on her desk. Her computer becomes a little theater with images traversing the screen and following the artist's voice as she expands upon the construction of the Spanish identity in the 20th century.

In *Folklore I*, for instance, she maps out her own interpretation of the Spanish baroque through the political scandals of the right-wing politician Jesús Gil (a protégé of Francisco Franco) alongside anecdotes of coastal Valencia's ruta destroy (“destroy route”). The ruta destroy, also known as the ruta de bacalao (“cod route”) is a term for the 48-hour raves, highly popular in the '80s and '90s, which emerged in the context of the nation's return to democracy after Franco's death. With disarming sincerity, she links the seemingly unrelated excesses of Gil with those of the irrepressible club-hopping youths, and accompanies her

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The Future Was When?, 2009, video stills. 20 minutes. Images courtesy of Murray Guy.

commentary with images and video clips found mostly, but not exclusively, on the web, depicting some of Valencia's most flamboyant traditions. These include the hairstyles of falleros, townspeople who participate in a yearly feast where scrap wood and cardboard monuments and papier-mâché puppets laced with firecrackers are set on fire, and the elaborate rituals that go into making the region's specialty paella. To Esquivias, these traditions are but another side of same coin.

Along similar lines, the video *The Future Was When?* (2009) stems from Esquivias's obsession with documenting the disappearance of the tiles in Madrid's subway stations—by now entirely replaced by dull, monochromatic metal plates. Weaving elements of her own biography and events in Madrid with the biography and activities of Susan Brown, an artist who has devoted herself to the restoration of New York City's subway tiles (first of her own accord and now for the MTA), Esquivias probes the effects of modernization in two very different places, giving rise to a host of unsolvable questions: How do we project ourselves into the future? What is progress?

Esquivias inserts her own takes on truth within the official version of events, destabilizing so-called historical truth and exposing the mechanisms that construct meaning. In so doing, she gives her carefully curated photo archive a highly idiosyncratic spin.