

MORE STORY  
**SEX, FLESH AND YOU: SONATINAS FOR PREPARED PIANOS  
(OF, FROM, TOWARDS AND FOR JUAN HIDALGO, MUSICIAN)**

manel clot  
2001

*WISH ME LUCK, WITH A QUIET KISS AND A STRONG EMBRACE*  
martín rojas

*MISS YOU ENORMOUSLY, IMMENSELY*  
roland barthes

*TIME FOR LOVE*  
juan antonio gonzález iglesias

OF

Powerful elegance and something like decided distinction, fruit of *wandering* and infinite passages through the different strata of what is traditionally considered (pure social convention, pure *construct*) *high* culture—gentlemanly bearing, a distant air, calculated indolence, minority tastes, hermetic investigation—he reappears in a wise combination of proportional parts—like that perfect marriage of just so many ice cubes with just so much of the *bourbon* we so enjoy—with a bit of the rascal in his darker zones—or in ambiguous chiaroscuro, the sort of *twilight zones* we like so much too—from the marginal(ized) side of low, mass and consumer cultures—cultures of the sexes, of flesh and objects—and other riffraff, lower than low, so low they are almost submerged: pure sludge. Germinated silt. Mudbanks fecund with creation, ceaselessly fermenting... This might be (and why not?) one of the possible, plausible snapshots—a sort of peculiar and *cinemascope* polaroid perhaps, somewhat erroneous and blurred, maybe a little twisted right from the start, and not only because this rather superficial appreciation is clearly biased, but also because our presentation here is deliberately tendentious—of, from, towards and fore Juan Hidalgo. At any rate, it would be *only one more* of many possible polaroids. This irrefutable polyphony (*symphonic?*), always so clearly evident in Juan Hidalgo's oeuvre, must also be applied, lest we forget, to his own situation, his own definition of borders in terms of his cultural placement; this is true both of his personal evolution and of the very diverse episodes in his career as a creator. In this way, we can emphasize our absolute conviction that it is totally impossible to separate a specific artistic experience from the generic context of experience, inasmuch as both are considered *contemporaneous* and, consequently, capable of transformation. So I would emphasize the term *experience* here, as opposed to *biography*.

## FROM

Lately I have been wondering where Juan Hidalgo's potent musical thought *lies in wait* in his other, non-sonic, pieces, his photographic actions, his objects and texts... because it has to *reside* there somewhere, given its unquestionable importance and considerable volume throughout his years of activity. It is as though these works combined, in a way that is not only unique but also untransferable, the heritage of the *duchampian gesture* ("artistic fields") with the updating of musical activity brought about by technoculture, such as *sampling* ("musical fields"). This is the sum, then, of the different fields of activity in which the artist has been moving, interrelating ways and means and establishing subtle and invisible links that send one from one place to another, and then on to yet another until a fully hypertextual and current network has been established. Therein lies the *sonic mind* of Juan Hidalgo, that *sonic* part of the artist's *polyphonic* life. In his career it is impossible to *clinically* separate the different fields of activity in which his oeuvre is developed, germinated and scattered. In the final analysis, one of the fundamental considerations is that we are not dealing with his works, but rather with his *work*. That is what underlies the constant move from one field to another, the imperceptible, at times almost secret, links that sometimes take the form of subtle and ironic homage to other artists, recontextualizing their ingredients. So that moment of intensifying, when, as we mentioned earlier, *artistic* and *musical* territories are joined, becomes most efficient when using *sampling* techniques. Heiner Goebbels said of one of his pieces from *Surrogate Cities*, the *Suite for Sampler and Orchestra*, that "as a digital memory, sampling is the ideal vehicle for human memory; it offers us the sound of cities: industrial sound, subcultural noises and the sounds of history..." That is, it offers an unbeatable operative symbiosis among the differing elements that make up the broad tissue of contemporary experience: objects, persons, settings, places, stories, fictions, voices, echoes, sexes... As a contemporary evolution of the *duchampian gesture*, the intensive application of what we call *sampling*, constitutes, in and of itself, the epitome of constant processes of *artistification* used to structure a multitude of creative mechanisms and apparatus on the contemporary art scene. And that is the place where, for example, Juan Hidalgo's *photographic actions*—and not only the ones presented here—begin to develop their variable contents of meaning, unfolding and extending their complex conceptual *setups*. That is the place in which the artist will probably never work directly with music, but will build in terms that first appeared, and were verified, in what we consider the contemporary confines of music, especially, electronic music.

## TOWARDS

Juan Hidalgo's *photographic actions* propose two paths with which to enter the multiple nooks and crannies that fill all his work: on one hand, the idea of a stage for performances (for which we must always consider his works as a totality, never as separate, unrelated elements), a *place* where persons and objects appear like the last verification of the enunciated *gesture*, that is, the relocation of elements and the subsequent processes of *artistification* to which they are subjected so they can be offered up to the spectator's gaze, an expectant gaze that, once again, must discern—and even more, choose—between the intensified presence of *feelings* and the anxious search for *meanings*. As Guy Debord put it, "tout ce qui était directement vécu s'est éloigné dans une représentation." This selective *gesture* carried out by the artist is rich in multiple references that we can only list in a succinct fashion: recodification of situations, reversal of values, reference to action, continuous presence of non-normative sex, corrosive sense of humor, displacement of meanings, performance-oriented gestures, veiled homage, dissolving of operative settings, shades of musical equipment, reconsideration of the spaces of reality, discontinuous sense of narration and stories, expectations in time... On the other hand, everything that happens in the representational space of Juan Hidalgo, everything we see in these powerful photographic images—a medium used only as a means—is linked to three interdependent aspects: narration, the fiction on which it is based, and time in the story itself. As short compositions for prepared pianos, that is, for modified and altered instruments, Juan Hidalgo's photographic actions are the photographic results of an action, and as such, they show a plausibly realistic situation that arises from a completely fictitious mechanism, all in a *suspended* time in which persons and objects, references and allusions, seem to float without every colliding. But what is this time? Is it before the visualized moment? Afterwards? Or is it when the action actually took place...? In the same manner, all these persons, sexes, lilies, eggs, bottles, males, glasses, wafers, hats, hands, etc., seem to be emerging from a weightless space, with no concrete surroundings, no base, no frame—perhaps this is the space where the sonic spirit of fiction resides. Time is stopped, space is suspended; there is only an instant, then, for recognition to occur.

FOR

We already know that the separation between *art* and *life* is, and has always been, truly artificial. Although I would say that for that very reason it is a classist separation which is always based on criteria and hierarchies of social status. However, when artistic practice is brought ever closer to the multiple layers of experience, and thus closer to reality, and vice versa, and when the spaces of reality and representation are overlapped, then we fully enter that convulsive space that is *fiction*. Or perhaps we enter an even more slippery space, that of verisimilitude, that modified *no-place*, intangible, in constant, rapid and disconcerting mutant motion, stretching from the apex of reality to the extremes of fiction. Any process of fictionalization, whether simple or complex, whether linked to a narration or not, whether a part of our experience or not, whether involved in a process of *artistification* or not, serves only to create other worlds of life that help us, sometimes only as a crutch, to live in this one. And most of all, they help us to reformulate and intensify our world, producing new suppositions and new voices, new and expanded relations and new areas for coexistence. Thus they produce another individual. One more individual, without stopping. We have only to reconsider the titles of all these *photographic actions*. But when, finally, will we receive, *One more piano?*