

On show through December in the BBVA Foundation's MULTIVERSO space

# Pedro Luis Cembranos presents 'El accidente de Vollard', revisiting the sudden death of the art dealer who discovered Picasso, Cézanne and Gauguin

- Through a work of non-fiction with novelistic undertones, *El accidente de Vollard* explores "a dark chapter where art, death, greed and memory intertwine in the fate of an art dealer and collector whose work contributed in no small measure to the art market system as we know it today"
- This is the sixth instalment of the exhibition series held in Sala MULTIVERSO, a permanent space within the BBVA Foundation's Madrid headquarters dedicated to one of the artistic languages most distinctly of our time
- All these artworks have been created with the aid of MULTIVERSE Grants, established by the BBVA Foundation to provide a wider platform for video art creation

**Madrid, November 30, 2017.-** Starting tomorrow, the BBVA Foundation will screen the video artwork *El accidente de Vollard*, in which author Pedro Luis Cembranos weaves a speculative web concerning the unsolved accident that cut short the life of Ambroise Vollard, art dealer, friend and key figure in the careers of painters like Gauguin, Matisse, Cézanne, Renoir or Picasso.

Ambroise Vollard, born in 1866, had a prodigious gift for spotting talent in unknown artists. He organized the first Paris exhibitions of the three Pablos – Cézanne, Gauguin and Picasso – who went on to lead the transition from Post-Impressionism to modern painting. And he maintained close personal and professional relationships with other key figures in the process of the likes of Renoir, Matisse, Rouault or Daumier. His success was such that by the time of his death – when he was more a collector than a dealer, receiving none but the most select clients – his home in Rue Martignac, Paris, contained between 5,000 and 10,000 works of art.

It is precisely his unexpected death that is addressed in the video artwork that has its premiere tomorrow in the BBVA Foundation's Sala MULTIVERSO, where it will be open to the public until December 31. The event occurred in the most

bizarre fashion in July 1939: his car skidded off the road and a blunt object – supposedly a bronze sculpture from his own collection – broke Vollard's neck. However, among the theories circulating around his demise was that the dealer had been murdered, a conjecture fueled by the dubious circumstances in which his collection was broken up after his death, at times under the shadow of the Nazi menace, and the subject of legal disputes that still rage to this day.

With specialists in art history and sculpture like Jean-Paul Morel, Catherine Geens and Dominique Forest as its commentators, and the original scenarios of Vollard's life as its setting, the video artwork employs a documentary format, Cembranos explains, "to illustrate a dark chapter where art, death, greed and memory intertwine in the fate of an art dealer and collector whose work contributed in no small measure to the art market system as we now know it, and whose priceless collection has been spuriously dispersed across numerous public institutions and private collections. Today, not even the grave where his remains lie bears Vollard's name."

For Pedro Luis Cembranos, *El accidente de Vollard* sits logically within his artistic trajectory, because "I like to work with anecdotes and anomalies, in this case the fact of a gallery owner/collector being literally killed by a piece of art; a sculpture that breaks his neck," while inviting us to reflect on "a series of paradoxes concerning artistic practice and the art market." But on starting his investigation, he discovered that "what lay hidden behind Vollard's death was such a fascinating story that, as the project advanced, I became more and more convinced of the importance of telling it in the straightest, most honest way possible, so the narrative itself rendered the versions of his death – some more believable than others – circulating among biographers and specialists."

This led him to a finished product that the artist describes as "not documentary cinema, although it resembles it; not fiction, although any narrative is intrinsically the retelling of a story, a form of reconstruction. It is more like a non-fiction essay with novelistic undertones, that can also be read as a biography, a poem or a travel notebook..."

The 60-minute video is the fruit of months examining in depth the original scenarios of the milestones in Vollard's life. "The Multiverse grant allowed me to work with a bigger budget than I am accustomed to handling. And while it was barely enough for a project of these characteristics, I was probably able to approach it in a more ambitious way."

Laura Baigorri, exhibition curator and an associate professor specializing in art and new media in the Fine Arts School at the University of Barcelona, singles out the "exhaustive investigation" undertaken by Cembranos, who turns to the documentary genre to tell a story that retains a firm grip throughout. One in which "intrigue and mystery hang over the death of a celebrated French gallery owner, publisher and art dealer. This beguiling tale, whose progress is accompanied by images of the landscapes where Vollard lived and died,

unveils little by little not only the concrete details surrounding one man's legacy, but the complex personal and legal dealings that went on on in the darkened back rooms of the collectionism and art market of 20th-century Europe."

### **Sala MULTIVERSO: a dedicated video exhibition space in Madrid's 'Art Walk'**

This is the sixth instalment in the MULTIVERSE exhibition series launched by the BBVA Foundation on May 12 this year in the room of the same name. Preceding it in the series were *Expediente: Túnel de la Engaña* by Txuspo Poyo; *PIRI REIS. La continuación de un mito* by Rosana Antolí; *Sincronías 2016* by Marc Larré; *The Wolf Motives/Los motivos del lobo* by Carles Congost; and *Mater Amatísima* by María Ruido. The Sala MULTIVERSO will next host *La España profunda* by Isaías Griñolo; *Global Windshield, The Musical* by Momu & No Es; and *Shelter* by Lúa Coderch (see calendar at the end of this press release). All products of the second edition of the BBVA Foundation's MULTIVERSE Grants for Video Art Creation.

The MULTIVERSO Space within the BBVA Foundation's Madrid headquarters is now an established venue along Madrid's Paseo del Arte ('Art Walk'), whose landmark institutions are now joined by a showcase for the latest and most innovative in video art.

With the MULTIVERSE Exhibition, the grant scheme of the same name and the MULTIVERSO Space, the BBVA Foundation has expanded its focus to video art creation, with the dual aim of fostering the development of a language that is distinctly of our time and expressive of today's culture, and encouraging public interest in this artistic discipline through the display of new works.

The nine projects featured in the MULTIVERSO Exhibition were independently appraised by an evaluation committee who made their selection based on the artist's track record and the originality of the submitted project. The committee was formed by **Juan Antonio Álvarez Reyes**, Director of the Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo; **Eugeni Bonet**, artist and exhibition curator; **Javier Díaz-Guardiola**, coordinator of the Art, Architecture and Design sections of supplement *ABC Cultural*; **Nuria Enguita**, exhibition curator; **Chus Martínez Pérez**, head of the Art Institute of the Academy of Arts and Design, Basel; **Mariano Navarro**, critic for *El Cultural*; **María Pallier**, director of the arts program *Metrópolis*, TVE; **Blanca de la Torre**, exhibition curator and art historian; and **Elena Vozmediano**, art critic for *El Cultural*.

The awardee projects, in the opinion of Laura Baigorri, have materialized into "rich, thoughtful pieces of considerable aesthetic and conceptual complexity," because the MULTIVERSO grants have given their authors "the time and resources to delve deep in their research, plan ahead, travel to the locations where they wanted to shoot, and employ the most sophisticated production techniques."

## MULTIVERSO Exhibition

**Venue:** Fundación BBVA. Palacio del Marqués de Salamanca. Paseo de Recoletos 10, 28001 Madrid

**Opening times:** Monday to Sunday and public holidays, 10:00 to 21:00

**Free admission**

**Website:** [www.multiverso-fbbva.es](http://www.multiverso-fbbva.es)

- **Txuspo Poyo**, *Expediente: Túnel de la Engaña* (12/05/2017 – 11/06/2017)
- **Rosana Antolí**, *PIRI REIS. La continuación de un mito* (23/06/2017 - 20/07/2017)
- **Marc Larré**, *Sincronías 2016* (28/07/2017 - 27/08/2017)
- **Carles Congost**, *The Wolf Motives/Los motivos del lobo* (08/09/2017 - 08/10/2017)
- **María Ruido**, *MATER AMATÍSIMA. Imaginarios y discursos sobre la maternidad en tiempo de cambio* (20/10/2017 – 19/11/2017)
- **Pedro Luis Cembranos**, *El accidente de Vollard* (01/12/2017 – 31/12/2017)
- **Isaías Griñolo**, *La España profunda (de Ortega y Gasset a Rocío Jurado)* (12/01/2018 – 11/02/2018)
- **Lucía Moreno**, *Global Windshield, The Musical* (23/02/2018 – 25/03/2018)
- **Lúa Coderch**, *[Shelter]* (06/04/2018 – 06/05/2018)

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