

Jaime

25 artists you need to know



Dust to Dust, 2006, video, 20 min. Courtesy the artist and Galería dels Angels, Barcelona

Pitarch

FIVE YEARS AFTER LEAVING THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF ART, in 1996, Jaime Pitarch was exhibiting with Lotta Hammer and the fashionable Hales Gallery. But a traumatic attempt to rescue a drowning woman from the Thames marked an abrupt end to his London period. Two years of introspection followed, spent in Grenoble and the remote mountains of southern France, before an eventual return to his native Barcelona.

That could have been the end of the story, but since his return, Pitarch's artistic reawakening has been little short of remarkable. Typified by punishing periods of work, his oeuvre now embraces video, sculpture, collage, installation, photography and graphics. Clearly the medium isn't the message. Rather, Pitarch interrogates the precarious balance behind the comfortable order of things, engineering moments where the gears slip and our reassuring world dissolves into anarchy.

Although precedents can be found in the surrealist object, and also in Spain's unique political history, the conviction behind Pitarch's unnerving vision lies in first-hand experience. A minor disorder in which perception becomes momentarily dissociated from meaning has led to an archive of sorts that documents the fragility of the conceptual framework we call reality. Many of his installations balance precariously, absurdly defying gravity, or their supports are chiselled away to an impossible thinness. Inexplicably, toy soldiers begin to melt or, filmed through the window of a microwave, become enmeshed in a battlefield of exploding popcorn. Photographs of fetishistic heads turn out to be spent matches, salvaged from bars and streets. A wineglass rests impossibly close to the edge of the table and a coffee spoon is the apparent victim of demonic possession. Small statements, but having the power to disarm with all the incisiveness of peripheral vision. In the video *Dust to Dust* (2006), the artist takes a broom and begins sweeping a vast, empty industrial space. As the dust rises, an all-consuming mist dissolves the scene. Over 15 minutes the now-empty space slowly re-emerges in a kind of uneasy truce: the calm before the narrative is repeated in an endless cycle.

However, the true mark of an artist whose career is on the move lies in the work's ability to attract patronage and support. Aside from being represented by one of the leading galleries in Barcelona, in the last year Pitarch has been selected for exhibitions in Montevideo, Cologne and most recently New York, in a solo show at the Spencer Brownstone Gallery. *Dust to Dust* was chosen by María de Corral, co-curator of the 2005 Venice Biennale, for her presentation in last year's ARCO, and has since been acquired for MACBA's permanent collection.