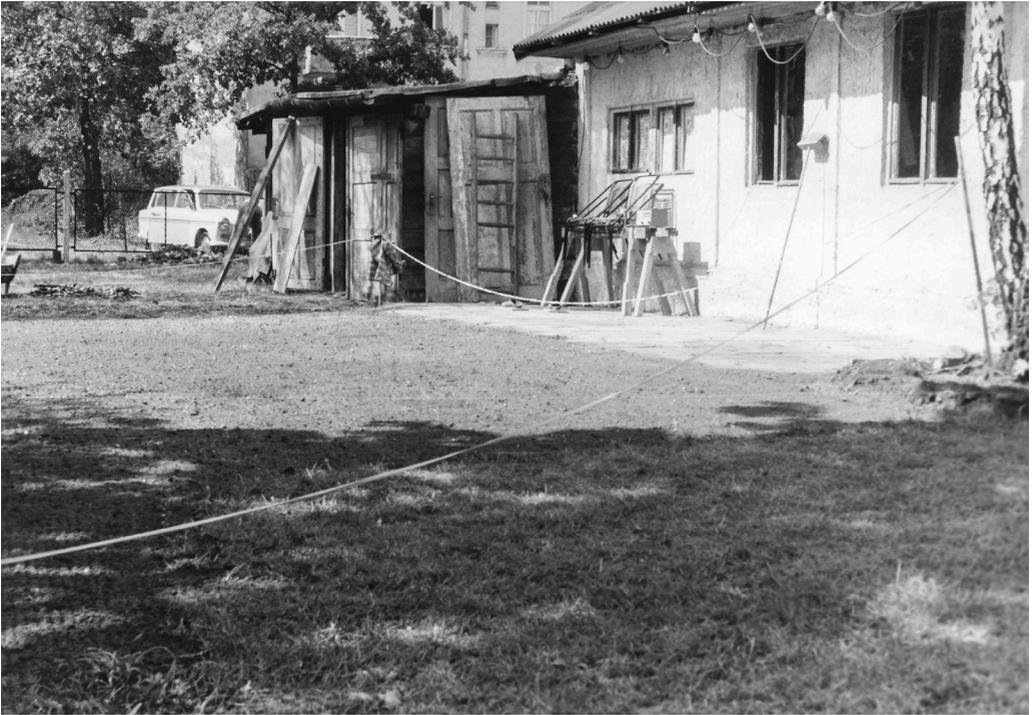


IÑAKI BONILLAS  
CONCEPTUAL GAMES



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## IÑAKI BONILLAS CONCEPTUAL GAMES

Opening: 08.05.2025, 19:00h

Exhibition: 08.05 > 28.06.2025

Guided tour with the artist: 10.05.2025, 13.30h (in Spanish)

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Compared to other 20th-century art movements, Conceptual Art stands out for its notable lack of stylistic cohesion: works within this movement can easily range from a painting depicting nothing more than the date of the day it was painted, an immense spiral of stones arranged on a lake, or a building split in half, to a performance in which the artist must trust the accuracy of a colleague who will shoot him with a rifle in his left arm. Despite their diversity, this series of heterogeneous practices share not only an insistence on breaking away from the traditional parameters of the production of art objects; they are also united by a quest to erase the border “perhaps the most persistent and walled-off in the history of art”, as the poet Luigi Amara wrote, that separates life from art.

Conceptual art thus questioned both the materiality of the work and its status as a privileged object, held firmly apart from the things that populate the space where everyday life takes place. What made it challenging in the eyes of viewers used to traditional painting and sculpture was precisely its insistence on merging with the ordinary environment, which made it blur to the point of almost disappearing—at the extreme of this are all the works that took place, for example, without anyone seeing them, except, unheard of, for the photographer who saved the action from vanishing completely into the air.

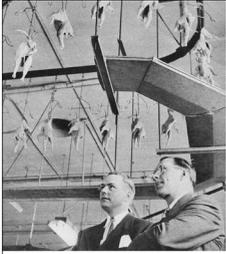
And with this insistence on pushing boundaries to the unthinkable, conceptual art radically changed the way to make and understand art. And also, as happens with artistic forms that shake the foundations of the entire building of collective perception, it profoundly altered the way we see the world. And just as we say that some things are extremely baroque—because art taught us so—it is clear that others are undoubtedly conceptual in spirit—certain everyday gestures that suddenly look like a work in progress. This intuition led Iñaki Bonillas to search for a series of images, openly non-artistic, that, in the right light, could be read conceptually. And perhaps this is the great lesson of that indefinable movement: context is everything. Or, to put it in other words: art is happening all the time; you just have to know how to look at it.

The second thing Bonillas did was approach Allan Kaprow, one of the first artists to make the threshold separating life and art as uncertain and blurred as possible. To achieve this, he decided to work outside of museums and galleries, creating “open” situations, as he called them, to which he gave the famous name *happenings*, because that’s what they were: art that is taking place and of which nothing remains afterward. Kaprow’s artistic practice, when viewed closely, was almost nothing more than that: erasing boundaries. And that’s why he came to characterize mundane actions like sweeping or brushing teeth as works of art, because it seemed to him that ordinary life, when executed as art, “can charge the everyday with metaphorical power”.

Such is the starting point of one of Bonillas’ works featured in this exhibition, *Essay on the Blurring of Art and Life*, which echoes the celebrated book that compiles Kaprow’s writings on the blurring of art and life. But Bonillas goes beyond just taking that title; he also recreates one of Kaprow’s most complex works: the one that took the form of a book in 1966, but which narratively functions as “a dream”, Kaprow said; that is, jumping around, contradicting itself, abruptly changing location, abandoning unfinished scenes, swapping characters, in short, being coherent with a total lack of coherence. For Bonillas, the book, titled *Assemblage, Environments, & Happenings*, becomes a kind of model to build upon, from which it is possible to rethink the relationship between image and text, following the main rules imposed by Kaprow: “the line between art and life must remain as fluid, and perhaps indistinct, as possible” and “the source materials must come from everywhere except the arts”.







- 29 HANGING THINGS
- 30 A FACE IN THE WALL
- 31 SPIDER
- 32 WEB

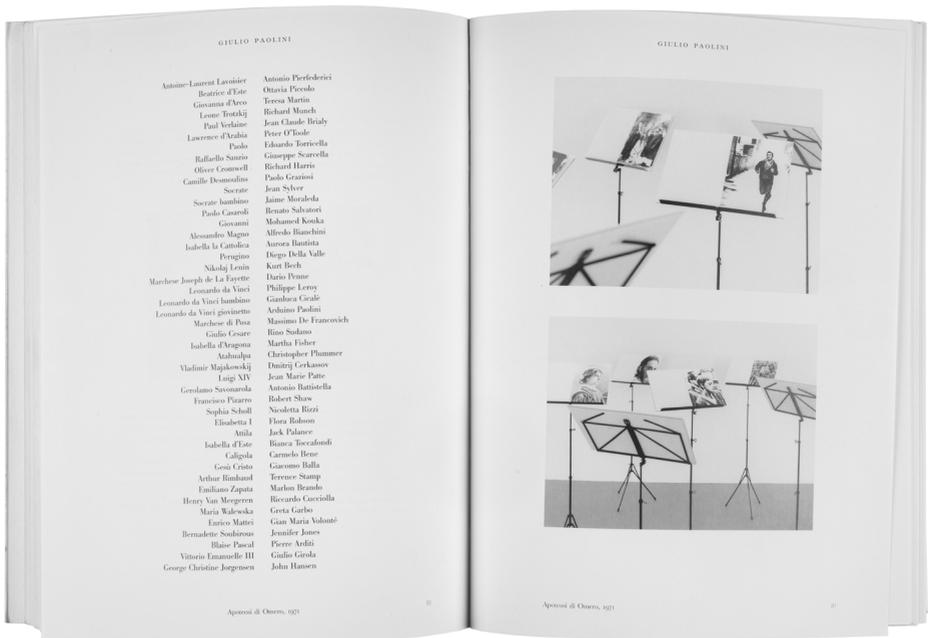
Iñaki Bonillas *Essay on the Blurring of Art and Life*, 2025  
Detail. Digital print on cotton paper, 14 parts  
Each one: 70 x 60 cm



- 33 MIRROR THE WORLD
- 34 DRINK PAINT
- 35 ENJOY WORK
- 36 BATHTUB

Iñaki Bonillas *Essay on the Blurring of Art and Life*, 2025  
Detail. Digital print on cotton paper, 14 parts  
Each one: 70 x 60 cm

Finally, Iñaki Bonillas presents the work *Vidas breves* (Short Lives). Here, too, the starting point is a conceptual artwork, in this case, the 1970 piece *Apoteosi di Omero* by the *povera* artist Giulio Paolini. In this apotheosis, thirty-three music stands are displayed in the exhibition space to show, instead of scores, a set of portraits of actors dressed as historical figures. Taken from film stills, the faces convey the theatricality of the act: rather than appearing like heroes or villains of history, one finds them strangely familiar: Peter O'Toole as Lawrence of Arabia, Marlon Brando as Emiliano Zapata, or Greta Garbo as Countess Walewska speak more to the history of Hollywood than to that of the world. An apotheosis, therefore, very far from the majestic painting of Ingres, which inspired the Italian artist, who was precisely interested in highlighting these paradoxes of representation.



Reference to Giulio Paolini's work *Apoteosi di Omero* (1971) in *Many Colored Objects Placed Side by Side to Form a Row of Many Colored Objects: works from the collection of Annick and Anton Herbert. Programme*

Bonillas, however, returns to the theme of identity and acting, but goes to the other extreme, to tell a story that runs parallel: that of the lives of film extras. Those people, as the dictionary defines them, who appear “in a film or television series without being identified, without a single line or understanding action”. Simple extras whose role, however, is by no means minor, since it is to lend authenticity to the main action: the man behind the fruit stand, the girl at the ticket window, the woman smoking a cigarette in the train, the young man who passes behind the protagonists in the café.

This is, then, an apotheosis of the peripheral becoming the focus; the insignificant becoming central. All of them are the protagonists of that second, of that instant. They have no lines, perhaps they are not even actors, many aren't even mentioned in the credit lines, but for a very brief sequence they occupy the entire screen and make it seem as if the film is theirs and that they are the center of the plot. The still image expands the imaginary that can exist about these characters, as just seeing a sufficiently expressive face is enough to conjure all kinds of stories: Where is she going? Where is he coming from? What is she thinking? Who is he afraid of?

Instead of Charlton Heston playing Moses, we have before us the messenger whom the prophet didn't even look at; or the girl whom Queen Victoria let comb her hair; or the boy whom the main actress asked for a double espresso. In the picture, none of that matters; what truly matters is the gesture, the gaze, the instant in which the camera captures a brief but powerful life like any other.



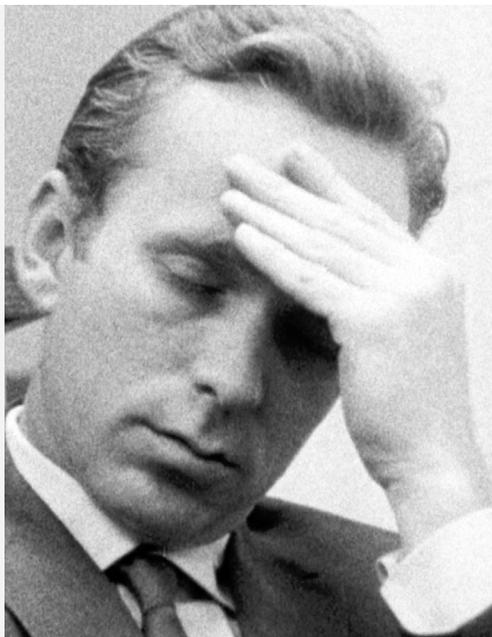
*Conceptual games* organized by Vladas Vildžiūnas and Marija Ladigaitė (1978)

These are, then, the *Conceptual games* Iñaki Bonillas proposes for this exhibition at ProjecteSD. The title alludes, once again, to other artists and to another time. In this case, it's the Fall of 1978, and the artists are Vladas Vildžiūnas and Marija Ladigaitė, who at the time were using the garden of their studio in Vilnius, Lithuania, to engage a group of colleagues in a series of open situations, like those of Allan Kaprow, but on the other side of the world, which they called, simply, conceptual games. Only one image of these exercises is known, a picture that shows the trees in the garden intertwined with a white strip; in the background, people observe the ribbon, calmly.

0:10:56



0:02:57



**Iñaki Bonillas** *Vidas breves*, 2025  
Digital print on cotton paper on music stand, 33 parts  
Each one: ca. 42,5 x 21,5 cm

## THE COLLECTOR IS PRESENT IÑAKI BONILLAS IN ÁLVARO LÓPEZ DE LAMADRID'S COLLECTION

Exhibition: 08.05 > 10.05.2025

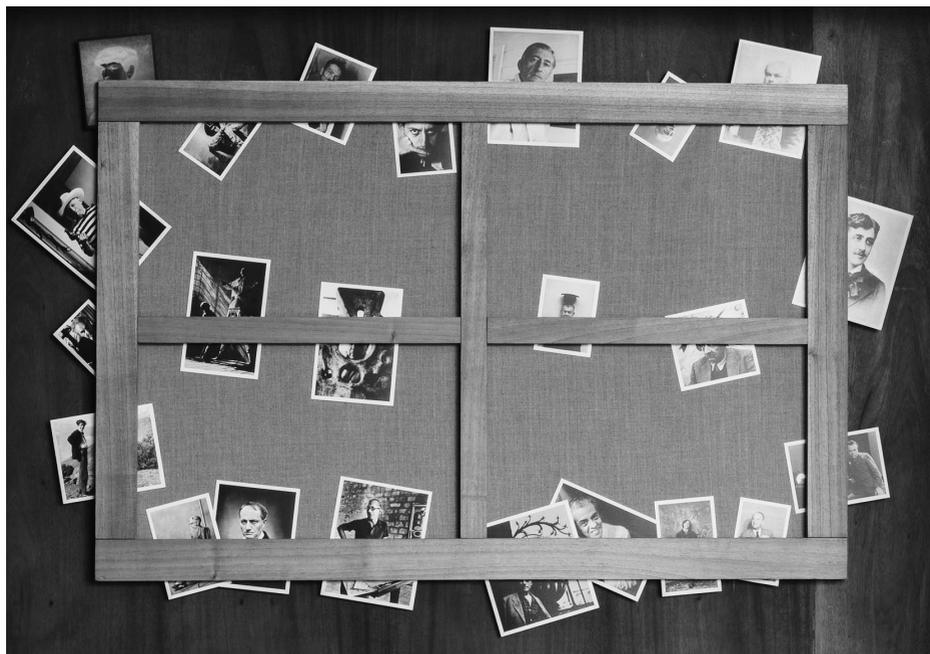
Opening hours: 8 y 9.05, 11-19h | 10.05, 11-15h

The artist and the collector in conversation: 08.05, 20h (in Spanish)

*The Collector is Present* is an initiative launched by Art Barcelona in 2023 and linked to the annual Barcelona Gallery Weekend, which will take place again this year from 18 to 21 September. The programme is the result of a collaboration between collectors, gallerists and artists. For this occasion, and coinciding with the exhibition *Conceptual games* by Iñaki Bonillas, we have counted on the complicity and generosity of Barcelona based collector Álvaro López de Lamadrid.

*Secretos: Men I Love* by Iñaki Bonillas is part of the collection of Álvaro López de Lamadrid. This work was presented in the exhibition *Secretos*, an audiovisual essay by Bonillas on the idea of secrecy for Casa Luis Barragán in Mexico City (2016). *Secretos: Men I Love* takes its title from the work by Spanish artist Dora García (presented at ProjecteSD in 2010) and is, indeed, an appropriation of the work *Antologia* (1974) by Italian *povera* artist Giulio Paolini. The work consists of a frame and 23 postcards depicting some of the male figures that have influenced Barragán (Mathias Goeritz, Chucho Reyes, Edmundo O'Gorman, Marcel Proust, Valle Inclán, Oscar Wilde, Giorgio de Chirico, Pablo Picasso, etc.). *Secretos: Men I Love* was exhibited "hidden" inside the closet of the main bedroom on the first floor of the house where Luis Barragán lived.

Continuing the "modus operandi" proposed in the exhibition *Conceptual games*, and closely related to it, Bonillas proposes for *The Collector is Present* a new work, *You're the Top*, a visual collage that is conceptually and formally in dialogue with *Secretos: Men I Love*. Another game, a "conceptual divertimento", this time inspired by the lyrics of the famous song by Cole Porter of the same name.



**Iñaki Bonillas** *Secretos: Men I Love*, 2016  
Cedar wood stretcher, canvas and 23 black & white and colour postcards  
81 x 120,5 x 2,7 cm

## BIOGRAPHY

**Iñaki Bonillas** (Mexico City, 1981), lives and works in Mexico City.

Since the late 1990s, Bonillas' work has been closely linked to the field of photography. With approaches close to the conceptual practices of the 1960s and 1970s, the artist has gradually isolated the constituent elements of photography by relating them to other processes.

Since 2003, when he incorporated the vast photographic archive of his grandfather J.R. Plaza into his work, Bonillas has developed various projects that link elements that seem a priori incompatible: on the one hand a personal, biographical narrative that consists of private anecdotes and emotions, and on the other a quasi-scientific element of compilation, classifying and archiving.

He has participated in the National Gallery of Victoria Triennial, Melbourne, Australia (2023); *The Imminence of Poetics*, São Paulo Biennial, Brazil (2012); *The Honeycomb*, San Juan Polygraphic Triennial, Puerto Rico (2009); *Double Vision*, Prague Biennial, Czech Republic (2005); *Utopia Station*, Venice Biennale, Italy (2003); *Locus Focus*, Sonsbeek, Arnhem, Netherlands (2001); *Scape*, Tirana Biennial, Albania (2001).

Selected solo exhibitions: *Two Spaces*, Espacio artkunstarte, Madrid, Spain (2022); *La larga exposición*, Biquini Wax, Mexico City (2017); *Secretos*, Estancia Femsal/Casa Luís Barragán, Mexico City (2016); *Archivo J.R. Plaza*, La Virreina Centre de la Imatge, Barcelona, Spain (2012); *Doble claroscuro*, Les Rencontres d'Arles, France (2011); *La expresión de las emociones en los hombres y animales*, Hermes und der Pfau, Stuttgart, Germany (2010); *Pensamiento circular: Una antología*, Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City (2009); *El topoanalista*, Matadero, Madrid, Spain (2007); *Intervención al pabellón*, Mies van der Rohe Pavillion, Barcelona, Spain (2005); *Pequeña historia de la fotografía*, MUHKA, Antwerp, Belgium (2003); *Sala de proyectos*, Museo de Arte Carrillo Gil, Mexico City (2000).

He has participated in numerous group exhibitions in museums and art centres such as: Museo Amparo, Puebla, Mexico (2022); CAPC Bordeaux, France (2020); MoMA, New York, USA (2020); MARCO, Monterrey and ESPAC, Mexico City (2019); Cantor Arts Center, Stanford, California, USA (2018); Arts Santa Mònica, Barcelona, Spain (2018); MOPA, San Diego, California, USA (2017); MUSAC, León, Spain (2025 y 2017); Pori Art Museum, Finland (2016); The Galleries at Moore, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA (2015); MACBA, Barcelona, Spain (2015); Kunstmuseum Basel, Switzerland; Malmö Konsthall, Sweden (both in 2015), Fabra i Coats, Centre d'Art Contemporani, Barcelona, Spain (2015) y CA2M, Móstoles, Spain (both in 2015); Frac Lorraine, Metz, France (2014), Salzburger Kunstverein, Austria (2014), among many others

His works are part of public collections such as: Museo Amparo, Colección Gelman, Museo Tamayo, Fundación Televisa, MUAC, La Colección Jumex, Colección Coppel, FEMSA, all in Mexico; CGAC de Santiago de Compostela, MUSAC de León, MACBA de Barcelona, all in Spain; MoMA de Nueva York, MOPA de San Diego, SFMOMA de San Francisco, Museo de Arte de Nevada de Reno, all in the USA; Musée Départemental d'Art Contemporain de Rochechouart, FRAC Lorraine de Metz, FRAC Île-de-France/Le Plateau y CNAP, all in France.