

Title	Tamar Guimarães	Author	João Fernandes
Date	2016	Artist	Tamar Guimarães
Publication	FERNANDES, João. <i>The uncorrupted, a film by Tamar Guimarães</i> . Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía.		

La Incorrupta

I'm writing this after watching the latest version you sent me of *La incorrupta* [The Uncorrupted]. The film made me think about the relationship between fiction and documentary in a museum exhibition, and reflect on the place of film in this context, in which both are redefined: the film as a work of art, and the museum as an art institution. Manoel de Oliveira used to tell me that film cannot show reality, at most it can show the conventions that reality presents. This is why he liked to film theatre in his work, or to turn the reading of a literary text into a cinematic exercise: he embraced film as the representation of the conventions that are discernible in a staged scene or in the act of reading a book (which is not the same as talking).

Your film is also a fiction that principally plays out in a museum, although it does not explicitly mention which museum it is. Several of the museum's staff members with varying levels of responsibility, an intern, and a teacher and her students meet with a guest curator, Judith, who broaches an idea for an exhibition. It is interesting to note that, at this point, your film offers a curious analogy with curators and artists who approach a museum to produce a project, and this gives it a somewhat self-referential tone. The cast reinforces this tone: you bring together actors and non-actors, many of whom are museum professionals. There are even some, like myself, who worked with you on the film, under your direction, but at the same time represented the institution and the conditions that it imposes on the curator (and on you as film-maker).

In the film, everybody who interacts with Judith is baffled by her exhibition project. Her idea is to address the very contemporary issue of corruption through an object and a series of film references in which the representation of hands is a metaphor for the concept in question. As part of the research that she undertakes in collaboration with the museum, 'your' curator captures stills from films by Chris Marker, Harun Farocki and Yvonne Rainer, approaching them as documents. Another extraordinary document that appears in your film is the singular *Arte de furtar, espelho de enganar, teatro de verdades, mostrador de horas minguadas, gazua geral dos Reynos de Portugal. Offerecida a ElRey Nosso Senhor D. João IV. para que a emende / Composta no anno de 1652. Autor desconhecido* [The Art of Stealing, Mirror of Tricks, Theatre of Truths, Display of Unlucky Hours, General History of the Kingdoms of Portugal. Offered to Our Lord the King D. João IV for Its Amendment / Composed in the Year 1652. Author Unknown.]. But the discussions between the curator and the museum mainly revolve around an object: a seventeenth-century reliquary containing the famous incorrupt hand of Saint Teresa of Jesus, which is now in the care of the Carmelite sisters at the Church of La Merced in Ronda, Malaga. Museum employees responded in a variety of ways to the idea of displaying an object of religious devotion in the context of a contemporary art exhibition. They raised practical matters such as conservation issues and the authorizations required to include such a reliquary in the exhibition, but they also questioned the status of an object of this nature in a contemporary art museum, and the meanings, readings and interpretations that it may give rise to. The complexity increases on discovering that there were disputes over the hand during the Spanish Civil War, and that it ended up in the care of Franco, who venerated the relic, at the chapel of the Palace of El Pardo, where he lived. In the exhibition, the controversy over the corruptibility or incorruptibility of the hand (and its history) serves as a metaphor of corruption, which is in turn a metaphor of the human condition. The labyrinth of possible

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associations and interpretations extends not only to the current political context of Spain but also to that internationally, with corruption as a common topic of discussion.

From the beginning of your film, the medium itself becomes a play on the staging of fictionalized situations. I myself appear in the first scene, in the role of a museum curator who jokes around with your guest curator about being allowed to smoke at the market where we find ourselves, because it's a film, and film 'gives you a lot of freedom', as I say. Near the end, a conversation between Judith and a group of students who are visiting the museum with their teacher turns out to be a rehearsal with the actors. The conversations between Judith and her interlocutors, and the places where they take place, often express a strange dichotomy between work space and leisure space. Her conversation with me, for example, takes place around a few glasses of wine in a bar at the market, while the staff meeting takes place during a picnic in the museum's gardens. Other scenes show the relationship between the parts of the museum that are accessible to visitors – a room with works by Equipo 57, the corridors, the garden, an auditorium – and those that are not – the offices and the spaces where artworks are stored.

At one point, a museum curator says to Judith: 'You're doing a poetic gesture without the context of the hand. Many hands appear, but we don't understand it is the hand of Santa Teresa, and that, for this museum, is very complex because this is a museum dedicated to contextualizing things. We're not interested in projects which are formalistic... Hands, hands..., the hand in general... Nope... Things that, in a discursive level we are not interested in developing in this house.

This conversation and the subsequent impasse bring us to one of the core issues surrounding contemporary art museums: their relevance is found not only in the works they display but, above all, in the discourses they put forward, offering visitors certain conditions of interpretation.

And on the subject of 'formalisms', I cannot but draw attention to the strictly cinematic aspects of your work: the fixed shot as an element for the construction and deconstruction of narrative digressions; the decision to abstain from the shot/countershot technique, replacing it with subtle cuts between long shots and medium shots, and the edits that coincide with the places that you film. And, lastly, the omnipresence of hands. The numerous shots of hands structure the entire film, creating silences filled by the actions that they engage in: there are hands that write, hands that draw, hands that browse, hands that touch pieces of paper and display cases (one of the museum conventions that 'your' curator violates), hands that open and close wallets, peel fruit, show photographs... A series of gestures in which the hand becomes a metaphor for corruption, which is the point of convergence between the curator's project, your film and your role as artist, and the exhibition that we hear about but never see because it is a fiction.

The absence of other pieces often increases the value of the presence of a particular object in a museum. Your work, in this sense, questions the place of film in the art institution, between the materiality and immateriality of the objects, situations and stories that it contains. Just as the death of statues allowed Chris Marker and Alain Resnais to question the colonial museum, the corruption you show in your film plays on the disclosure and concealment of discourses of representation and interpretation, which reveal their possible meanings.

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This letter is the first part of a conversation that will continue over time with the screening of this film in the museum. It will not just be a dialogue between us, but it will open up to viewers who find that the film allows them to question their own status as viewers, to ask themselves what they know and don't know about museums, about life and the corruptibility or incorruptibility of the experience of engaging with the things found within them. In reality, corruption is also a result of distraction. This is something that you illustrate magnificently in the scene in the bar at the market in which the waiter is whistling, indifferent to the conversations of his clients. I am reminded of Brueghel's peasant, who continues ploughing the land, unperturbed, as Icarus falls...