

Flash Art News

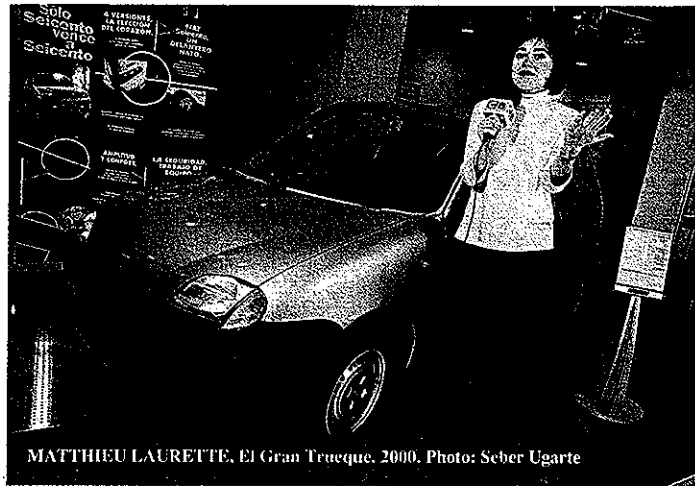
BILBAO

The Great Exchange

Matthieu Laurette's latest project *El Gran Trueque* (*The Great Exchange*) brings bartering to a whole new level. The project, which can be seen throughout the media, offers the audience a genuine process of exchanges: a series of 'multiple swaps.' This project puts advertising rhetoric, television formats, and marketing strategies into practices. Devoting part of his production budget to purchasing a new car worth 6,088.25 Euros, the Fiat Seicento was being offered as the first *Great Exchange*. The audience is invited to propose by phone an object that they would buy for the exchange. Only the highest offer is selected. The proposed object is purchased and then exchanged with the object at stake each week: the bidding, shopping, and swapping process is televised to thousands. The new object becomes the *Great Exchange* of the following week. It is fully expected that the original exchange of a car, over a period of months, will degenerate to a level of ridiculousness. So far the Fiat was swapped to the Munoa family from

Uribari for a computer worth 1,970.12 Euros. The computer was then traded to barter-baron Patxo Echebarria for a Sony TV worth 1,081.22 Euros. Twenty-three year old Elena Anton, who lives in Bilbao, will collect her new television in exchange for a General Electric Fridge (774.70 Euros) in the televised splendour of Pryca Supermarket, located in Erandio. You can see where this is headed... Matthieu Laurette intervenes in what is the basic element of the trading system: the related circuit of products and values. The exchanges will surely decrease in value, turning the logic of profit inside out. By using television as a medium and by questioning the criteria that establish the exchange, Matthieu Laurette goes beyond questioning the status of the work. He bases his work ambiguously on the relations that exist between the media and the market.

A pamphlet distributed in 150,000 homes, throughout Bilbao, provides all the inhabitants of the city with information on the project. The *El*



MATTHIEU LAURETTE, *El Gran Trueque*, 2000. Photo: Seber Ugarte

Gran Trueque programme has presented the object of the week everyday from the 3rd of January onwards, and has been exchanging since January 14th. The programme is aired daily from Saturday to Thursday 6 times a day on Channel 48 (Canal Bizkaia), and the trades

are made Saturdays and Sundays at noon. *El Gran Trueque* is presented by celebrated TV presenter Alicia San Juan and reaches more than 50,000 households every day. Check it out at www.consonni.org/elgrantrueque and place your bid at +34 944 407 707.

MADRID

ARCO 2000

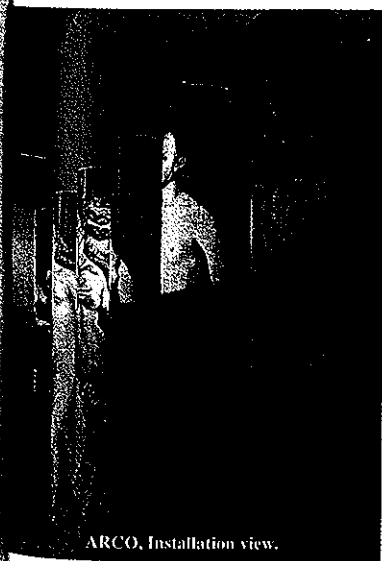
ISSA MARIA BENITEZ DUEÑAS

ARCO was held in Madrid from the 10th to the 15th of February, again counterbalancing the commercial – and otherwise natural – aspect of the fair, with a series of culturally oriented activities. This year the guest country was Italy via the curatorial labour of Achille Bonito Oliva who, with the help of Giorgio Persano, selected the 24 galleries presented at the fair: 12 dedicated to "classic" artists of the 20th century, and 12 committed to showing mostly the work of contemporary artists. Alongside the Italians, were 234 galleries from 28 different countries including Spain.

This year, the organizers have also decided to emphasize two sections that worked both, as a commercial platform for lesser known artists and galleries, and as a somewhat more solid view on how global contem-

porary art could — if ever — be defined. The Cutting Edge Invitational program includes a selection of galleries from around the world that features "Conosur," a selection from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Peru and Uruguay; New Dutch Views, contemporary art from the Netherlands; Köln-Berlin. Emerging Art from Germany; East Wind/West Wind, a selection of galleries from central and eastern Europe; and New Art from the States. Galleries from every other corner of the world, from Cuba to Iceland to Portugal, will be grouped under the "Crossroads" section. The Project Rooms, where the work of a single artist made specifically for the fair can be seen, is presented this year under the title "Other Worlds" and was for the first time curated by an international committee that included Carlos Basualdo, Hou Hanru, Rosa Martínez, Octavio Zaya, and Francesco Bonami. Other areas of the fair include the presentation of institutional and cor-

porate collections of contemporary art, the section dedicated to art magazines, special editions, alternative magazines, and CD-Rom editions represented by 55 publications from more than 20 countries. The more intellectual side of the fair was debated at the Panel Discussions that took as their subjects the different sections of the fair: Bonito Oliva was in charge of the debate on the Italian art system, the Spanish Ministry of Culture and Education organized several table discussions on the acquisitions policies in Contemporary Art museums, buyers met other buyers at the Collectors' Forum, while other experts analysed the situation of contemporary art in Germany, the Netherlands and Latin America. As usual, ARCO seemed promising. Now we can only hope that all these different sides and sections that conform today's art system found the common ground of interaction, discussion and feedback that can never be taken for granted.



ARCO, Installation view.