

# JESUS PALOMINO. SLIPPING TOWARDS DIALOGUE

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*“When life abandons the house a process of destruction starts up”*  
Jesús Palomino.

Interview with Francisco del Río, Seville. 2003

The path drawn out is the following from hand to hand. Jesús Palomino (Seville, 1969), begins his career building houses with them and now the question that appears in all of his interviews and dialogue project seems to roar out towards a very concrete issue: what hands are for. He starts his journey assembling materials in order to make a house, until he now wonders today about the modern worker situation nowadays, which is that of the issue of being the owner of the hands. Who I am and what I do. Among his latest projects we find *Acantilado* (Cliff), a series of interviews filmed in 2008 on the edge of the Dun Aengus cliff on the Inis Mór island in Ireland, where several different people reflect on working conditions: “If you had to explain to your son what work was, what would you say? What is a man’s work?”. Man works with his hands, Palomino walked alongside them until he erased the trace of his slums and lived in perpetual dialogue: “I would like to be recognised as a promoter of imaginative artistic situations of human interest events and of pertinent and hopeful readings.”

**Hands.** “On the second floor there was a room that received the name of ‘garden room’ because in it there was an attempt to compensate for this lack through some plants placed in front of the window”. Re-reading Jesús Palomino’s dwellings through this scene narrated by Goethe in “Poetry and Truth”, we think about tools that each person develops in order to overcome lacks and desires through symbols that cause a fictitious pleasure. Invention, the supplement designed by creativity or frustration, the capacity to adulterate at any price a need or a whim. Those who do not harbour the possibility of a worthy home build a house with whatever they find rubbish, wood, survival in the end. Surviving, building with one’s head and with free elements, thrown away by those who only see absence of value in unnecessary objects. A house is not a place. In order to inhabit a territory is not indispensable, but only a space for what can be carried around.

Jesus Palomino explains a key comment in his career as a creator of montages, devices and machines: “I started working from my hands; Mitsuo Miura once told me: ‘One has to start making art from that which one knows’. And I knew about my hands. So I started working from my hands, casting my gaze on my hands. Unexpectedly, what emerged had to do with the world of the house, with domestic matters and its relationships”. What business can be done without them? That which Palomino carries out nowadays.

***Fictions.*** Look at the façade of an apartment building in the early hours of the morning. Some people are asleep; others are watching TV. Look at the composition of the windows that are lit; the rectangular façade, unbalanced due to the illuminated points, will maintain a halo of exactness, a compositional decision that is difficult to adopt from an individual awareness. Because at that time of night the designers don't work with their windows lit. This manner of balance even in imbalance, "perfect by chance" to our eyes, is reproduced in Jesus Palomino's landscapes. With the containers being filled with green or yellow lights, the installations function in the light, in the atmosphere: "When I set out to build a house, wherever it is, the first impulse is to create a FREE SPACE, to free a space through this fiction, one clearly linked to the reality of the shanties and poor houses; I always try to fill them with the best atmosphere possible within their fiction, (a fiction that has to be raised from a very concrete reality of construction), I try to harmonise them". This is a free space through being random, through interchangeable elements and lights that work in a way independent to colour and context.

At the end of the nineties he still insisted on those domestic constructions, creating amalgams of houses that did not possess a home on the inside. Or, quite the opposite, plastic, neon lights, soap, flower pots, canvases, lights, any kind of objects scattered around the floor or heaped up according to a non-hierarchical order, where no element was more important than any other, anything would fit in and be out of the place at the same time. The elements rested, as if supported on a big sideboard where indispensable places are brought together, the one for eating, for drinking, for washing clothes (*Prosperity*, 2002). Landscapes without walls, scenes and paintings as constructive responses that radicalised the discourse of each installation, refined the subject of a space in which to live, a possible place, solitary site-specifics, montages of the most removed Diogenes syndrome: the hygienic. The beauty of the surfaces borders on obscenity when we discover that the author defined his houses as shacks, shanties, places for the homeless, even stating that the colours were the only property of the indigent. When he builds his first house, Jesus Palomino states: "I had defined my first house, not building its walls, but suggesting the important or essential things it should contain. Let us say that I already had my house without having built it". Machines that detect the need of a place, laboratories that the light cleans and disinfects, cellars with a wide, luminous appearance where there are no real walls. As takes place in unemployment lines or in banks, the queue is limited with a line which despite being visible one does not cross, no one goes too close to the customer who is being dealt with. These invisible walls belong to the spectator, given that there is no separating wall. There is no courage to tread on a frontier imposed by oneself: "A house of invisible walls: they could not be seen by the eye, but they operated in fact".

Full or empty spaces, still empty when full. In both cases Jesús Palomino refers to the man abandoned by the world, as much as when we talk about the four walls that symbolically mean the empty man, as when we stress the accumulate the leftover rubbish of a pure Diogenes sufferer. In Palomino's work it is possible to make out the environmental installations derived from empty, warehoused houses, those other montages or open salons decorated by an inventor without any craft. Two options: to hide the invented dwelling from the spectator, or to show the inside without doors or walls. In order to occupy a place it is not necessary to possess a space: we can only build if we are able to inhabit, that was Heidegger's legacy: everything mobile. There is

nothing immobile in Jesus Palomino's nomadic course except portable houses which over time become on-air dialogues.

*No hands.* Among the scenes of tragic-comedy and social critique that are evident throughout his career we can distinguish three types: the construction of house interiors, the storing of blocks of which we cannot see the inside, and the documentary aspect, in which his informative radio programmes stand out. Over recent years Jesús Palomino has moved towards explicitly favouring dialogue, the fluidity of information, communication between anonymous collectives or those linked to subjects of radically current matters. In 2006 he carries out *Anticongelante & 8 programmas de radio* (Antifreezing & 8 radio broadcastings), an installation in which Palomino writes the words "History" in Spanish and "Sadaka" (friendship in Arabic) in ice. Inside a frozen cabinet the doors were opened in order to defrost the words in the sun of Cadiz during the sixty minutes that each of the eight radio programmes lasted when they were broadcast each week during July and August. Pleasant, informative radio broadcasts, meeting points for interviews, music, etc., made out by volunteers. The aim of the symbolic action was to generate a debate among the Moroccan Andalusians and the Spanish Andalusians: "We hope that these summer on-air words are able to break the ice of some discourses and transform them in water". He no longer hides the invented house from the spectator's sight, nor shows the inside without walls of a house inhabited by ruin, but keeps on installing stories in the space of dialogue and in the possible encounter of doubts and ethical improvisations. The craft that is carried out without any hands is that of talking.

As a visual chronicler of recent events Jesús Palomino doubles himself up in the figure that sets off the instigation of dialogue, creating a double space in which the narrations and other's points of view form his work. Wrapped in the possibility of speaking about the socio-political context, Palomino comes to a medium that survives on documenting conversation, interviewing and verbal friction between different opinions. He has no vocation for radio art, and so from that attraction for ruins and the way homeless people live he slips into exercise the function as a social entertainer. He himself defines his activity as "reading-reparation". Because we always read with our eyes, and it is possible to talk about what happens through them. The possibility of finding a solution is not contemplated in his work, but rather the need to express certain ill-beings: "I have discovered that art cannot solve unsolvable issues but only describe symptoms, establish relations and aid consciousness to become aware". Thus that will for a home, or at least the question about home, is still present in Jesús Palomino's work, and signifies his space of trust: "(...)certain qualities of the human that interest me: humour, resistance, ingeniousness, the hope for a place (...)". A well set out problem is a problem solved, Henry Bergson would say.

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