

What are we afraid of?

A project about self-censorship

Madrid, Tuesday, February 9th 2021. El Instante Fundación is pleased to open on Tuesday, February 16, 2021, What are we afraid of? A work on self-censorship in art. Originally, it started as a collaboration with the Censored Art collection, for an exhibition that eventually cancelled.

In July 2019 the Censored Art collection was looking for a venue in Madrid to exhibit its works during Arco 2020, with a focus on artworks whose censorship can be demonstrated documentarily.

Censored Art started the collection from the purchase of "Political Prisoners of Contemporary Spain" by Santiago Sierra, a work withdrawn from ARCO for political reasons. The collection consists of more than 100 works by artists from all over the world. In words of its founder, Tatxo Benet, the aim of the collection is to create a space for tolerance: "Every time we, the citizens, oppose censorship we are doing a little bit in the fight for a freer society. Through this public exhibition we take a small step on the road to the freedom of the individual" (Líneas rojas. 9.9.20).

What happened since then.

- July 2019. El Instante decides not to be simply a rented space and to participate in the project by sharing the experience of institutional censorship in its own artwork. Censored Art decides to postpone the exhibition in Madrid by presenting the collection in Lleida (La Panera, September 2020).

- In June 2020, conversations between El Instante and Censored Art resume and both decide to carry out an art show on censorship with a small number of significant works and a series of panels coinciding with Arco 2021.

- Between July and November 2020, negotiations, meetings and exchange of information take place to define the guests of the panels and the content of the project: an increase in the number of works is considered. It is decided that the round tables will not only talk about censorship in art, but also on the Internet, especially in social networks, and a panel on censorship in the future will be added. It is also decided to keep the date of February 2021 although ARCO postpones the art fair due to Covid.

- In December 2020, the situation takes a turn and Censored decides to return to the reduced number of works and alters the core of the project by removing among others the works that mark the context of censorship in Spain (those by Abel Azcona, Santiago Sierra, Eugenio Merino, Colectivo de mujeres públicas or Charo Corrales are removed) leaving those by artists

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from other countries and two Spanish ones: by Joserra Lozano, about censorship in bullfighting in Catalonia, and the photographic series by Clement Bernard, Chronicle in the Basque Country. Finally, it breaks the principle of agreement by imposing economic conditions on the production of the exhibition that El Instante cannot assume. Under these premises, El Instante decides to abandon the project and cancels all the negotiations with institutions and people that were contacted.

-El Instante concludes that the unfolding of events suggest a possible self-censorship of Censored Art to control a potential hostile reaction by exhibiting its collection in a space of open debate before the Catalan elections in February 2021. Would this make sense?

- January - February 2021. The Foundation decides to go ahead with the exhibition project, replacing the Censored Art works with photocopied images and maintaining the press headlines indicating the actions, legal or otherwise, taken against them. El Instante also decided to censor itself, a reaction that gave rise to the title of the exhibition: What are we afraid of? It removes from the exhibition the images of the works in the collection and in their place puts a blank sheet of paper and keeps the posters of the absent works and the newspaper headlines that talk about why they were censored. The newspaper headlines create a new work in the imaginary of each viewer.

El Instante Fundación was created in 2017 in order to reflect on reality in the present moment.