

# Galería Elba Benítez



## JAVIER CODESAL

### *Trompetas*

27.06 – 29.07.2023

The Galería Elba Benítez is pleased to present the exhibition *Trompetas*, a multi-disciplinary project by artist, film-maker and poet Javier Codesal. Centering around the issues of suicide and subjective suffering among youth today, and taking as its starting point the experience of a young trans person, *Trompetas* includes a video projection, a series of photographs, the publication of a book of poems and a for-distribution poster.

Javier Codesal (Huesca, 1958) has had individual exhibitions at DA2 (Salamanca, 2021); Fundación BBVA, (Madrid, 2019), MUSAC (León, 2015), MACBA (Barcelona, 2014), La Virreina (Barcelona, 2009), MNCARS (Madrid, 1999). His publications of poetry and essays include *Canción de Pedro Costa* (La Virreina y Joaquín Gallego editor, 2022); *Retrato y otro* (Libros de la resistencia, 2021); *Textos de obra* (Libros de la resistencia, 2020); *Un eclipse no se elige* (Amargord, 2018); *Dos películas* (Periférica, 2010); *Feliz humo* (Periférica, 2009); *Ha nacido Manuel* (Icaria, 2005); *Imagen de Caín* (Icaria, 2002) and the artist books *Cuaderno de Frederman* (self-published, 2020) and *El ogro* (Caniche Editorial, 2019). His most recent films are *Trompetas* (2023); *Evangelio mayor* (2021); *Calavera resumida* (2020); *Evangelio en Granada* (Meta) (2019) and *Testimonio de Frederman* (2019).

The Círculo de Bellas Artes (Madrid) and the Filmoteca de Galicia (A Coruña) are currently screening film cycles dedicated to Codesal's films.

Image: Javier Codesal

## WRITTEN FROM WITHIN AND WITHOUT

Javier Codesal

The Book of Revelation mentions a book written within and without. *Me muero por vivir* (I'm Dying to Live), a book of poems by my great-nephew Alex Codesal, was written, first, from beyond language and, at the same time, within language. Although it literally means revelation, the common usage of the word apocalypse refers to the end of the world and of all life. An apocalypse is now taking place among young people as unbearable suffering drives them to self-destructive behavior, to the point of considering or even attempting suicide. This apocalypse must be revealed and rebelled against like the sounding blare of trumpets...

Alex wrote *Me muero por vivir* based on his experiences while using the psychiatric services at the Hospital Clínico San Carlos and the Clínica San Miguel, both in Madrid, after a suicide attempt in December 2021. What is most significant is that the writing itself took place during his hospitalization, describing what he was going through but above all confronting it with language, in an extreme effort of intelligence and self-affirmation.

The relation between acts of self-mutilation and individual psychic suffering should be approached, above all, medically, therapeutically and politically. However, art also intercedes in society in its own way, proposing alternative forms of representation that pose political and intellectual challenges. It is here that *Trompetas*, the title of which alludes to one of the central motifs of the Book of Revelation, aims to situate itself.

I conceive of this project as an act of reading, in a literal and oral sense, of *Me muero por vivir*, and even more as an act of interpretation that draws on the stupor that overcomes us when confronted by situations that are so difficult to come to terms with. And I connect Alex's book to fragments of the Book of Revelation, in keeping with a practice that has been characteristic of my work for many years and has recently been seen in the feature films *Evangelio en Granada (Meta)* (The Gospel in Granada) (2019) and *Evangelio mayor* (The Greater Gospel) (2021).

Why relate something so painful and contemporary to a canonical cultural tradition? The magnitude of the epidemic of suicides, as corroborated by mental health professionals, and the difficulty of grasping and discussing it without modifying or betraying the reality of it (for example, through sensationalism), justify a symbolic and artistic approach, seeking a way of dealing with this issue with intensity and respect.

The content of the Book of Revelation, moreover, is not as unrelated to our own time as it might seem. For example, the delirious voices and visions perceived by the prophet are common among many people afflicted by mental suffering. The poetic vision of the book as a whole, or the writing expressed in marks on the body, or the figures with multiple personalities, or the confrontational response to political and de facto power, all these aspects of the biblical text might well be incorporated into a radical aesthetic vision of the present day.

My project takes the form of a video, a series of photographs, a poster and the publication of Alex Codesal's book *Me muero por vivir*. Publishing the book seemed to me essential, since it was the starting point of my own reading as well as because it has been unpublished until now. The video *Trompetas* presents fragments of the Book of Revelation that have been rearranged by me, along with a selection of texts from *Me muero por vivir* as read by young transgender people, including the author. The photographs portray these young people in front of the façades of churches; while the different denominations continue to condemn trans people, the photographic series derives from the simple gesture of affirming their presence in front of walls that symbolize their detractors. The poster, finally, serves to link the different parts of the project as a whole.

In collaboration with:



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