

# Picture yourself as a block of melting butter

Eva Fàbregas

From 17.03.2017 to 30.04.2017

In her work, Eva Fàbregas addresses the secret life of everyday things and objects, exploring their role as social agents that channel our desires, emotions, and affects. For this exhibition at Espai 13, she has transformed the room into a space of visual and somatic experimentation inspired by the culture of wellness and relaxation: a kind of health spa that provides experiences and induces mental states. *Picture yourself as a block of melting butter* – a classic mediation exercise – is also the curious title of this exhibition that examines the sensuality of consumer objects through an immersive, all-enveloping installation based on the new forms of subjectivity that emerge from the material culture that surrounds us.

The exhibition originates in Eva Fàbregas's interest in the evolution of the marketing industry from the seventies onwards, when it began to appropriate techniques such as psychodrama to reveal the unconscious desires of consumers (very valuable information that would then be used to design products targeted at niche markets, particularly housewives). Since then, the interconnections between personal wellbeing, subjectivity, and consumption have continued to intensify, as exemplified by the proliferation of

therapeutic subcultures on social networks, such as the phenomenon of ASMR<sup>1</sup>, videos on relaxation, emotional therapy and beauty tips (which are increasingly indistinguishable), and the business culture of coaching.

Based on these premises, Eva Fàbregas presents a series of objects and spaces for relaxation that include materials such as massage cushions, silicone prostheses, cognitive therapy suits, memory foam, satin spandex, non-slip floors, inflatable structures, and sensory balls. She works with mass-produced materials that don't just activate desires and affects, but also directly engage the body of spectators who are invited to – almost literally – inhabit the sculptures. In this exhibition, Eva Fàbregas strikes a kind of precarious balance between the materiality of consumer objects and the fluidity of desire, in an attempt to produce specific effects on our bodies.

Drawing inspiration from places in which wellness is consumed on a daily basis (health resorts, saunas, yoga gyms, biotherapy centres, swimming pools), the exhibition creates a space designed to allow desire to flow in all directions, blurring the boundaries between the natural and the artificial realms. A portable audio player with headphones connects the different parts of the exhibition. Some-

where between an audioguide, a personal trainer, and a score that only the visitor can perform, the recording consists of a soothing female voice (based on ASMR culture) that leads the listener through a series of visualisations. Visitors who follow these exercises can merge with one of the inflatables in the exhibition, turn into a piece of chewing gum, or take a stroll through an automatic car wash.

In previous projects, Fàbregas borrowed strategies used in animation films and early cartoons. Her mobile sculptures, for example, inhabit a world in which objects appear to come alive, furnishings rebel, and inert matter arouses passions. This exhibition also reflects the artist's interest in animation, but not in the sense of early cinema. In this case, animation is understood as a cosmic principle that pervades organic and inorganic matter, making it come to life. On entering Espai 13, visitors find that the seats curve and twist, the doors expand and contract, the cushions

stick to the skin and fuse with it... It is a kind of contemporary animism, and its object of worship is the vibrant materiality of an accelerated world.

In line with this logic, elements that we would normally describe as synthetic, industrial, or hyper-produced are presented as second nature or even appear to have become the paraphernalia of a New Age cult. A strange hole in a wall, for example, leads into a secret room flooded by an intoxicating (and almost toxic) artificial fragrance that evokes the familiar smell of a new car.

*Picture yourself as a block of melting butter* is an exhibition in which Eva Fàbregas further explores her interest in the eroticism of the consumer object and the engineering of desire. Through an installation that playfully appropriates the cultures of wellness and relaxation, the project invites us to push the boundaries and think (perhaps even feel) beyond the subject-object dichotomy.

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1 ASMR (Autonomous sensory meridian response) is the name given to an experience linked to a therapeutic subculture on YouTube. It refers to an involuntary neurological phenomenon that apparently takes the form of a comforting, static-like, tingling sensation on the skin which is most commonly triggered by specific acoustic stimuli and can bring about a state of deep relaxation.

One Foot Out exhibitions curated by Jordi Antas

#Peuafora

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