

# THE 6TH OF FEBRUARY 1970 (ON PAULINO VIOTA'S *DURACIÓN*)

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*For Asier Aranzubia Cob*

At 8 p.m. on the 6<sup>th</sup> of February 1970, at the Ate-neo theatre in Bilbao, a screening was held of the film *Duración* (Duration, Paulino Viota, 1970), publicised in the local press as an “underground film” (López Echevarrieta, 2015a: 280-281). It was a new work by Paulino Viota, an amateur filmmaker who up to that time had made four short films, a native of Santander who had studied in Bilbao for three years before moving to Madrid in 1969 to try—unsuccessfully—to gain admission to Spain’s official film school, the Escuela Oficial de Cinematografía (EOC), a few months before making *Duración*, a film that represented an unexpected new direction with no relation at all to his previous work.

We know very little about its origins, but it isn’t hard to guess that it probably arose from the work done on the screenplay to *Contactos* (Paulino Viota, 1970), which would shortly thereafter become Viota’s first feature film, written by Viota and Santos Zunzunegui, a friend from his Bilbao

years. Writing began on *Contactos* in early 1969 in collaboration with Javier Vega, the filmmaker’s cousin, but when they hit a wall with it at the end of that year, Zunzunegui contributed several pages filled with short scenes practically empty of content, describing only actions: some enigmatic, others simply trivial. The new direction that began opening up seemed to have been perceived by Zunzunegui, who, in a note attached to his first submission of material, asked Viota: “I think it’s anti-meaning, but won’t it be boring?” (Zunzunegui, 1970). The maximum reduction of expression, the primary objective of the two friends, under the common influence of the law of changes postulated years earlier by Jorge Oteiza (1963: 72), ran the risk of boring the spectator, a frequent occurrence when the duration is not concealed by any element, a fact we always find behind the frequent accusations made against filmmakers like Andy Warhol, Michael Snow, and many others (composers like La Monte Young, painters like

Piet Mondrian and Kazimir Malevich, etc.). It is possible that it was in the conversations prior to Zunzunegui's first submission of material that the idea for *Duración*, a film completely immersed in the implications of the new direction, was born.

The film appears to have been shot at some point prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> of January 1970, probably in the director's boarding house in Madrid. With a rented 16mm camera mounted on a tripod, Viota filmed a ticking Leda watch belonging to Guadalupe Güemes, from which he had first removed the hands, except for the second hand. According to a Fotofilm receipt, the film was delivered for development on the 20<sup>th</sup>, and was picked up on the 28<sup>th</sup>. The beginning and end of the film were then joined together on an endless tape to form a continuous loop.

In principle, any description of the film is necessarily succinct: it consists of a fixed frontal shot in black and white of the face of a watch with only a ticking second hand, and with the usual inscriptions legible on its face: the brand, Leda, on the top half of the face, and the words "antimagnetic" and "waterproof" near the bottom. Starting in the top position, the second hand ticks on and never stops, while we hear the sound of a metronome.<sup>1</sup> When does the film end, then, if it is on an endless loop? When the last spectator leaves; a decision which, according to Zunzunegui, they had made between them (2015: 103).<sup>2</sup>

## I. STRUCTURAL DURACIÓN

### I.1. Pleasure and time

Two of the features described above are also two of the four that P. Adams Sitney identified as characteristic of what he labelled *structural film*: the fixed shot and the use of the loop (2000: 348). According to Sitney, structural film is "a cinema of structure in which the shape of the whole film as a whole is predetermined and simplified, and it is that shape which is the primal impression" (Sit-

ney, 2000: 348), a film created on the basis of "an elaborate preconception of its form" (2000: 370). According to Esperanza Collado, structural film is thus characterised by its "tendency to simplify the content of the film, to demystify the medium through the raw presentation of its materials and properties, and [by] the new importance that contemplative and/or creative experience was acquiring as process" (2012: 40), which, as will be shown below, allows us to consider *Duración* to be a case of Spanish structural film, making it notably unique.

For Sitney, the great precursor to the structural film movement was Andy Warhol (2000: 349), a filmmaker whose first period, comprised of films dedicated entirely to skyscrapers (*Empire*, 1964), sleeping men (*Sleep*, 1963), dancers' shoulders (*Shoulder*, 1964), and human faces (the *Screen tests* series, 1963-1966), where the thematic dimension is reduced and redundancy, immobility and duration predominate, is very easy to associate with *Duración*, despite the fact that it might be hard to imagine Warhol doing a film like Viota's, as all of his work was based chiefly on a curiosity about or fascination with his objects. Warhol never made endless films and only occasionally used loops—for example, in a few sections of *Sleep*—but we could make the connection, not merely for the highly inadequate descriptions made of his films, but for his use of film as an opportunity to look calmly and in detail at singular events and objects, like the Empire State Building lighting up and disintegrating into the night, or Robert Indiana eating a piece of fruit with evident relish in *Eat* (1964). Warhol's films, as the sensual *Sleep* shows very clearly, are based on a pleasure in the gaze achieved through a slowing down of the pace (not only of what is filmed but of the projection itself, at 16fps), a reduction of elements and a consequent rediscovery of texture—which in *Sleep* or some of the *Screen Test* series may recall the eroticisation of bodies through the use of lighting and soft focus by filmmakers like Pabst or von Sternberg.

Some of these elements may be contrary to the components of *Duración*, but as both filmmakers' works are notable examples of a concentrated, intense gaze, and of a type of filmmaking that views duration as its basic raw material, the Warholian example might encourage us to suggest that, although pleasure is not found among Viota's objectives, this should not prevent us from concluding that it is not among the consequences of his work.

Indeed, although the description of the film offered above is brief, it is true that, as in all cinematic work entailing concentrated attention on a single event or object, a more intense description could be given. Thus, we might begin to observe how, possibly due to its position in front of the

watch, the camera produces two zones of shadow set against two others that are more illuminated. The first two occupy the centre of the upper and lower half of the face, as two triangles whose points converge in the middle, thereby creating the possibility of imagining an hourglass drawn over the watch. Two useless timepieces that cannot tell time, combined in one.

These zones of light and shadow generate changes in the only moving element of the image: the second hand, "a sword whose colour is transmuted, acquiring an amazing brightness when it reaches and passes the 30-second mark. The line from JRJ's poem<sup>3</sup> should be inverted to say: 'time with light within it'. [...] It is an amazing moment, when the hand shines. Just before it, between the 20- and the 30-second mark, it is completely black, like the time lines, which are also black between the 55-second mark and the apocatastasis of time, its seam and its loop. In *Duración* there are astonishing metamorphoses" (Richard, 2015: 98). However, the moment of greatest brightness actually comes between the 10- and 15-second marks [Fig. 1] and the 45- and 50-second marks [Fig. 2], i.e., the beginning and the end of the upper half of the watch, where the light on the second hand is so brilliant that it almost blends into the background.

It is just before the 15-second mark that the hand begins to darken, becoming "totally black", as Richard suggests, not so much between the 20- and 30-second marks, as between the 20- and 25-second marks, when we begin to discern a new lighting effect that really takes hold after the 30-second point. But in the next half, darkness returns between 40 and 45 seconds. Although accidental, the symmetry seems perfect; although the symmetrical light is on both sides in the upper half, it is not so in the lower half. This is a difference that can be observed without even the need of movement, simply by noting the identical lighting on the markers for the numbers 2 and 10, and the different lighting on the 4 and the 8 markers.



Fig. 1. *Duración* (Paulino Viota, 1970)



Fig. 2. *Duración* (Paulino Viota, 1970)

These are not all the points of interest that make *Duración* a film that is anything but boring and even pleasurable to watch—despite the intentions of its creators—at least for a few minutes. In this respect, Richard calls attention to the second hand, but there are three other key elements: the centre, the shadow and the time markers.

Viewers should pay close attention to the centre of the watch face, which begins to light up around the 4-second mark, with a brilliance that opens up from a small point of light to spread over the whole circle so that it shines brightly. This new brightness returns after the 30-second mark, but this time without spreading out over the whole face, although the intensity of the reflection of the rays of light on the surface are perceptible. Between these two moments, we see not only the dimming of the brightness but a myriad of nuances, as the centre is not a simple, smooth surface that reacts evenly to the light. In reality, most of the visual nuances in *Duración* are concentrated here, in a kind of slow and constant music that brings to mind the cadence that will mark all the footage of *Contactos*.

But it should also not be forgotten that, just as there is always light, there is also shadow, the protagonist here of a dance that introduces dynamism to the movements. The second hand is followed by its shadow up to the 15-second point, and then precedes it up to the 20-second mark, when it falls behind it again until it reaches 30 seconds. Preceded again by the shadow, the hand advances, and just after the 45-second mark the shadow falls behind again, almost disappearing in the dark zone that begins at 55. But above all, these shadows interact with another element, more varied than it appears, made up of the minute markers, all of which are of course fixed elements, but which give the image some variety due to the different degrees of light, which is also distributed in different ways due to their location. Thus, the marks for 11, 12 and 1, and for 4, 5 and 6 are the darkest, while 3 and 9 are divided into two

identical halves of light and shadow, and the rest are dissymmetrical. Following these progressions brings to mind the cycles of the moon, that perennial celestial sphere whose light grows and wanes with each passing day; but above all, the main element of action would ultimately be the way the hand creates a double play over each mark, preceded or followed by its shadow, which turns each routine encounter into a dynamic playing with light, particularly rich on the marks where light and darkness coincide.

*Duración* is, inevitably, both moving and immobile. Its repeating minute-on-a-loop never changes, but that minute is at the same time replete with movements, changes, and displacements that can be examined closely, making it possible for spectators to familiarise themselves with each and every one of them thanks to a constant repetition which, furthermore, will never end until they want it to, because this film called *Duración* lacks a defined duration: it will last as long as the spectator decides it will. The film is immobile because it never changes; its minute repeats over and over again, but that minute contains changes that only the repetition and a fixed gaze will be able to see, notice, recognise, because in any other film this footage would never be studied with the same intensity or interest.

Films like this one, or like Warhol's—or Frampton's or Sherwin's, also mentioned by Julius Richard in his article (2015: 98)—demonstrate the inevitable sensitisation of the gaze when a film compels spectators to concentrate all their attention on a single object, just as the hearing is sensitised by the minimalist music created by composers like La Monte Young since the early 1960s, and which have more than an incidental relationship with the subsequent structural film movement. Young, for example, worked with “the richness contained in a single sound event maintained as equal to itself as possible over a long time” (Barber, 1985: 60), while Terry Riley, in *In C* (1964) maintained “the initial beat throughout the

work, without interruption or change" (Barber, 1985: 60). Such descriptions recall the characteristics of highlights of structural film like *Empire*, *Wavelength* (Michael Snow, 1967), *One Second in Montreal* (Michael Snow, 1969)... or *Duración*. Curiously, the confinement of eye and ear ultimately results in their liberation: their hypersensitisation to the fluctuations of sound, to the grain of the film, to the light, the shadows, the movement... all this is there and, judging by the descriptions of the screening, some spectators must have enjoyed it. Zunzunegui recalls that there were "those who argued for the continuation of the projection as a way of attaining a Zen-style 'mental void'" (2015: 103), which the slow musicality of the movements of light and shade over the different parts of the watch would have aided considerably. The emptying out of the subjectivity of the self can be achieved through the loss of oneself in intensive contemplation of an object, especially if it possesses a cyclical movement, like what happens with the repetition of a mantra or the circular dances of the dervishes. But on the other hand, if *Duración*, as will be explored below, aims to raise the spectator's awareness of his or her nature as such, could not the detachment of the gaze from all the parameters, generally plot-related and discursive, that govern the attention to what is happening on the screen, hegemonising its relationship to every filmic object, form a part of this? For John Cage, a fundamental influence on minimalist composers, this was precisely what constituted the liberation of the listener, which entailed something similar to that of the composer: to realise that everything is music, that there is no such thing as silence.

## 1.2. Time and duration

It is possible that the virtues of the film-in-loop came to Viota after watching *El 17 de Elvira* (Manolo Calvo, 1968), a film screened at the 10th International Festival of Documentary and Short Films in Bilbao, "with an actual duration of 27 minutes out of the equally<sup>4</sup> interminable duration that it

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## THE CONFINEMENT OF EYE AND EAR ULTIMATELY RESULTS IN THEIR LIBERATION

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could have, running a short piece of footage on an endless tape, consisting of four or five costumes that its sole creator—Calvo himself—puts on while going in and out of the door of his house, number 17 on the street Calle Elvira" (Molina Foix, 1968: 76). It is a film whose "monotonous repetition" renders its "obvious intentional suggestiveness" comprehensible (Molina Foix, 1968: 76), which would have an impact on Viota and Zunzunegui. This screening, however, according to the description of both the critic and the filmmaker, was a very lively and enjoyable affair (Calvo, 1968: 82), quite the opposite of what Viota was seeking—and, in a way, would achieve—with his work.

In reality, the loop in *Duración* is simply the necessary method for keeping the watch from stopping on the screen. The spectator doesn't perceive a loop, but a watch that never stops, that keeps on ticking endlessly. The loop is on the film in the projector, not in the film on the screen, as it is in *El 17 de Elvira*. Because of this, the spectators at the Bilbao screening waited for a change, which they would not have done if the loop had been perceptible from the beginning. The technique that produced the image went unnoticed by the viewers; it is not the film's loop but the watch's. In his review, López Echevarrieta remarked that, more than 30 minutes into the screening, "the word spreads that what we are watching is an endless 21-metre tape" (López Echevarrieta, 1970b: 283). This was possibly the moment when the spectators became aware that *Duración* is nothing more than a trap, a prison for spectators: if you want to watch the film, you have no choice but to watch that watch ticking over and over again...

*Duración* lasts, as it could not be otherwise; but it is impossible to say for how long, as it has no fixed duration. That a film called *Duración* should



have no duration is irreproachably fitting. This constant passage of time, this build-up of seconds before our eyes, appears to have no other objective than to continue amounting, to heap up time with no intention at all of ending at any given moment. A film called *Duración* could not exist except on an endless tape; it must be infinite by definition. In this sense, the loop is once again only a technique: it is not that time is circular, but that repetition is the only means of achieving infinity. In this sense, the circularity of the watch would not be related so much to time as to Francoism, in an allegorical, metaphorical dimension that will be discussed below.

The film's title is *Duration*, not *Time*. Time is an abstract category, while duration makes reference to its most concrete dimension, the fact that things, matter, life, films, last. We say that time *passes*, but duration does not, because it *is*: it is the time of objects, time incarnate, materialised. A watch tells us the time, but this means that it is there so that we perceive time only as points or markers on a path. It is worth remembering that Viota filmed a watch that cannot tell the time, but only serves to tell us that time is passing, is slipping away, which is just what watches and clocks normally allow us to forget, instead offering us those specific readings that inform us of the proximity of the moments of the day that really matter to us, and helping us to pass the time without our realising it. The mutilation that lies at the heart of *Duración*, the amputation of the hour and minute hands, turns the watch at last into a machine filled with time, making manifest the duration both of the object and of the film, and even of us while we watch it. The duration of the object, of the film, of the spectator, leaps into the foreground, in a first step towards the raising of awareness that is the aim of the work. The common denominator of all cinema is that its images last, because cinema is the art of images that have duration as their essential element—unlike photography, where the images last as objects but not as images. It is with

duration that cinema shapes time, that it adds or subtracts it, displays or conceals it. *Duración* takes aim at the heart of cinema: the duration of the image, the concrete time of its passing. It is thus a film that reflects that quest for literalism, for tautology that is so typical of a certain type of experimental art of the period, not only Spanish but especially cultivated in Spain, like the work of the ZAJ group, Isidoro Valcárcel Medina, Fernando Millán or Carles Santos, whose work is cited by Vicente Benet when discussing this same film (2015: 91). There is not much that could be more tautological and literal than making a film called *Duración* that consists of gazing endlessly at the ticking of a second hand.

As noted above, in Spain at this time there appeared a few other films with similar characteristics, with a beginning but no specific ending, but it is important to note that the duration of Calvo's film is decided by the filmmaker at each screening and that Aguirre recommended a duration of eight or ten minutes, although he allowed freedom for people to choose the duration they preferred (1972: 43). Filmmakers still hold power over the time of their works to some extent, or they leave it in the hands of a particular performer/projectionist; but *Duración* only ends once all the spectators have left the theatre... a fact which, furthermore, they were never informed of. Herein lies perhaps the most fundamental element of Viota's proposal.

## II. DURACIÓN EXPANDED

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### II.1. Beyond the screen

With his celebrated piece *4'33"* (1952), John Cage created a work that consisted in an opening up of the hearing to what happens during what in music is called *silence*. All sound creation ceases and the piece becomes duration stripped of deliberate activity. Cage only established a time during which something should happen, which

was nothing more than the inaction of the performer and with it the occurrence of what cannot happen when we have ears and eyes, in short, senses: “This work deals with sound, with the sonic silence that always coexists in the space where a musical composition is performed. In this way, it produces a musical silence in the classical sense, but, as Cage intends, filled with noises. The flow of sounds and their own spatiality are made evident, audible” (Pardo Salgado, 2001: 39). Cage’s work was pedagogical, liberating and even revolutionary in its quest for a sensory education, a liberation from listening habits and a consequent rediscovery of the world, which could begin with something as simple as spreading musical silence so that the sound of life could enter into it and the creation could be transferred to the listeners themselves and the world they inhabit—as we have not only the sounds that the audience might produce, but also the different elements of the space itself.

The title of the work was misleading: there was no reason that the performance of the piece should be the duration indicated, as that figure “had arisen by chance and the purpose was not to fetishise chance” (Pardo Salgado, 2001: 39); thus, the duration is left to the discretion of the performer. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that using a specific duration as a title is a powerful invitation to make the performance last for exactly that amount of time, and this has indeed become the custom. In the process of disappearance of the ego that constitutes one of the key points of his work, Cage could not possibly have overlooked the fact that, while not having written a single note for the work, he was still present in it through the establishment of its duration. This is why, ten years later, he published the piece *O’OO* (4’33” No. 2) (1962), for which the composer abandoned “the principle of structuring time” (Barber, 1985: 59), with a work that involved only the performance of a “disciplined action, without any interruptions, fulfilling in whole, or in part, an

obligation to others. No two performances of this work are to be of the same action; nor may any action be the performance of a musical composition.”<sup>5</sup> The composer thus no longer even determines the duration, or the beginning or the end, leaving all this to the duration of the action chosen by the performer. For different reasons, Viota would not determine the duration of his work, leaving it in this case in the hands of an audience unaware that it holds this power.

The minimalist composers mentioned above were influenced by Cage, but Cage himself quickly distanced himself from them. As Barber suggests, “minimalism points towards the centre of the circumference, towards the point. Cage, on the other hand, points towards the outside of the circumference: towards multiplicity. The minimalists are still operating in an aesthetic of the ‘object’; Cage underscores his opposition through the non-dual: the process, the whole” (1985: 60-61). As a result, “the music is filled with gestures, with action, with theatre. ‘An ear alone,’ Cage would assert, ‘is not a being.’ Music is one of the parts of the theatre” (Barber, 1985: 68). Cage, we should remember, invented the *happening*, creating environments, situations, where the spectator becomes the performer, the protagonist, the one who must produce what he or she wants to happen.

Despite its extreme concentration on its object, what matters to Viota in *Duración* is not the object, and is not the film, but that which the film can give rise to. This is why Julius Richard cites the films of Isidore Isou and Guy Debord in his discussion of *Duración* (2015: 98), because these artists demonstrated that there could be a cinema without images but not without time; but above all, it is important to remember that one of the central elements of situationism was not so much the creation of works as of situations, which “didn’t involve effecting a total destruction of cinema, but integrating it into life” (Collado, 2012: 121). This is why in the end there is no better criticism of *Duración* than the descriptions that exist

of its screening: not an analysis of the film, but of what happened during the projection, the event that it gave rise to over the space of its duration.<sup>6</sup> When Richard inverts the line from Juan Ramón Jiménez's poem, he expresses time as a box that contains us all, a cage for everyone, a space that encompasses everything, the conversion of time into space which, whether in memory of Wagner or not, is central to Viota's two works of that year, albeit with the peculiarity that while *Contactos* is a straightforward (and even blunt) object, sealed almost hermetically, *Duración*, although it appears to be the same, points only outside itself, to what happens outside it while it is projected.

## II.2. The public, the politics

According to Viota and Zunzunegui, *Duración* is very much a film about raising awareness, something that for the Marxism of authors like Lukács or Sartre is of great importance. In this case, the awareness to be raised is the spectator's: "We are dealing with a didactic work that seeks to help make the spectators aware—remembering that the film was shot and presented under a dictatorial regime—that they need to 'construct their lives'. And it does this with a creative set of instruments reduced to their minimum expression. Turning the foundational elements of the filmmaker—space, time—into its basic weapon, radically dismissing any reference to 'cinematic narration'. Again, we need to remember that it was planned that the film would end at the moment the last spectator left the theatre. In this way, a creative minimalism corresponds to a political maximalism. Herein lies its implicit political potentiality insofar as it aimed straight at the heart of that which was being stolen from us by the dictatorial regime: time" (Zunzunegui, 2015: 106-107).

Thus, Viota and Zunzunegui thought little about the light radiating from the centre of the watch or the way the second hand played with the shadows over its varied surface. For them, their film was as boring as it was for their most

outraged spectators, but the idea was to recognise that, to put it clumsily, the focus of the work was not the work. The watch that cannot tell time only speaks of a duration empty of content on the screen which, nevertheless, cannot avoid filling up with content in the theatre of predictably scandalised viewers who contemplate it. Is the purpose then to astonish or torture its spectator? No. In a certain way, *Duración* possesses a discourse, "an idea that was very much in vogue at the time; the idea that when you watch a film you renounce your own life, your own living time, and you live vicariously through the lives of the film characters" (Viota, personal conversation, 30 December 2015). In this sense, *Duración* would be a simple criticism of a mediocritising cinema that immobilises its audiences in the contemplation of a spectacle against a vacuous backdrop, camouflaged under its appearance of reality and its various mechanisms of identification, but that offers us nothing other than the chance to *waste time*. *Duración*, on the other hand, has only one character, a watch that cannot tell time but that tells us that while we watch it time is passing and is the only thing that is passing, turning that which happens without anything happening into the protagonist. Thus, we end up contemplating how we are using that time, *what is happening*, now, to us. The tautology implies a vacuousness that could rightly be taken by some spectators in the most Zen sense of the idea, but that for its creators instead represented a way of calling out the spectator who has surrendered to fascinated, alienated and helpless contemplation—a critique that would enable Zunzunegui to use the "minimalist iconoclasm" of this film to denounce the "baroque iconophilia" (2015: 107) of *The Clock* (Christian Marclay, 2010)—and, secondly, of making a metaphor by extension for the way that Francoism was stealing time from those who lived under it.

It is here that we return again to the circularity of the clock, the infinite loop. What political system other than dictatorship allows the com-



plete union of the aesthetic and the political? How could spectators attend a screening that progressively reveals that they are trapped in the perpetual ticking of a second hand, without this alerting them to the other manifest entrapment in which they live every second of their existence: that of Franco's dictatorship? It is thus the fact of the projection that produces this extension that turns the film into an allegory, and even more so when "any cultural activity, however trivial it might seem, was, in those dying moments of Francoism, not only cultural but also a possible focal point on which to activate an opposition—as furtive and limited as one might wish it to be—against the dictatorship" (Zunzunegui, 2015: 102). The article by Zunzunegui quoted here is an excellent example of how it was enough simply to live under a totalitarian system for the mere screening of the image of a ticking clock to take on unexpected political dimensions, in addition to being a singular representation of the trends that could be found in these types of events.

But this was precisely what the film was about. *Duración* cannot be separated from what happened at its screening, because its quest is a quest for a situation: while, as discussed above, it could be identified as part of the structural film movement, in reality it represents a very peculiar case of expanded cinema,<sup>7</sup> to the point, as Jonas Mekas once suggested, of turning the spectators themselves into film (quoted in Collado, 2012: 94). But what ultimately stops us from understanding it as a sadistic film (as we might consider *Contactos*, for example), or suggests that the sadism is only apparent and that this is a political film in the strictest sense, is the fact that the spectators who find

themselves enslaved by the film can bring an end to it whenever they wish. Nobody has informed them of the fact, but it is a fact nonetheless. Because in reality, the film only exists because they are there. Only the presence of spectators guarantees the continuation of the film, and of the slavery. Ultimately, *Duración* is an orthodox Marxist film: if the film expresses a slavery, the spectator's to it, the vicarious experience of time, cinema as a colonisation of life, the spectator need only leave the theatre not only to break free from the slavery, but for the film itself to end... provided that everyone leaves, of course; the action will only be effective if it is collective. By extension, once again, in the end, the continuation of the dictatorship is in our hands. The slavery is a "paper tiger", as Mao described American imperialism (1977: 334-338); the real power rests with the people.

For this reason, and although the reviews looked poorly upon it, it was fitting that the projection should have ended with a violent takeover: an audience member pulled out the fuses and fled with them so that the projection could not resume, and was chased by other audience members who were unable to catch him. First, the spectators were made conscious of the technological apparatus of the work, its material condition of a loop in which they were trapped—a real loop, an endless tape—and as a result they became protagonists not only through debate, discussion or dispute, but through ending the screening itself. They became aware of their power and the film ended through an act that interrupted not just the event but its means of production. Although it is true that the act in question was not collective, it is no small success for the screening of a film that sought to raise its spectators' awareness of the point to which Francoism, and cinema itself, was robbing them of time, that one of them should rebel and bring an end to the film and even to any possibility of resuming the projection. Working class autonomy, the emancipated spectator, who almost like a hero not only breaks free

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**ONLY THE PRESENCE OF SPECTATORS  
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of domination, but also liberates his companions and comrades. *Duración* is thus transformed from structural film to expanded cinema, as the audience can intervene in the film, and can even end it, but it constitutes a highly unique example of such an approach that they are unaware of the fact, as nobody has told them that the film will end only when everybody leaves. The screening is the story of the spectators overcoming their ignorance and, immediately thereafter, their powerlessness: the cinematic expansion will only occur when the spectators become aware of their power as spectators, without anyone telling them so or authorizing them in any way, a situation that has the virtue of making a work of art of the whole projection and not just the film projected, which overcomes its allegorical or metaphorical nature by being transferred, as Zunzunegui rightly intuited, to the whole situation, making it one of the best portraits ever of the relationship between art and politics in the period. Thus, the 6th of February 1970 can be considered the date when the screening of *Duración* became one of the most important and unique moments in the history of Spanish experimental cinema and art... where the work, as I have shown here, included everything that it gave rise to, even the theft of the fuses. ■

## NOTES

- 1 The film was silent, but a live metronome was used at the screening.
- 2 Zunzunegui was the organiser and presenter of the screening, the only presentation of the film to date. Viota did not attend.
- 3 "JRJ" is the Nobel Prize-winning Spanish poet Juan Ramón Jiménez, whose line "light with time within it" (Jiménez, 2014: 108) had been cited previously in Richard's article.
- 4 The "equally" here alludes to another film mentioned earlier in the article: *Del tres al once* (From Three to Eleven, Antonio Artero, 1968), another film on an endless tape, but screened at the festival without rep-

etitions. Another example of a work using a similar technique, although with different results, is *Múltiples, número indeterminado* (Javier Aguirre, 1970), a kind of variation on the celebrated film *Zen for Film* (Nam June Paik, 1964), where a roll of twelve metres of unexposed film is projected for as long as the projectionist wants, dragging with it all the dust that sticks to it along the way. Here, added to the indeterminate duration of *Duración* is the perpetual variability of the images, so that it no longer has the appearance of a loop. In this first respect, this film is quite the opposite of *Duración*, but in the second, the two films coincide.

- 5 Text from Cage's score, quoted in Barber, 1985: 59.
- 6 There are three descriptions of the screening: two immediate ones (López Echevarrieta, 2015b and Merino, 2015), and one written nearly forty years later (Zunzunegui, 2008) and subsequently expanded (Zunzunegui, 2015).
- 7 Expanded cinema refers to practices that aim to expand, break or subvert the *cinema effect*, and is, according to Sheldon Renan "against the standardisations and conformities represented in the traditional materials and processes of the medium" (quoted in Collado, 2012: 71), and is often associated with the attempt to erase the boundaries not only between different arts, but between art itself and life. In the case of cinema, this could range from changes to the usual structure of the projection space, doing cinema without a film (Jacobs), with multiple projectors (Eames), or in special spaces (Vanderbeek), to involving the audience in different ways, as in certain lettrist, situationist or Viennese actionist experiences like Vallie Export. While the spectator regularly participates in the film, the film does not participate in the spectator, which is precisely what is being proposed here.

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## THE 6TH OF FEBRUARY 1970 (ON PAULINO VIOTA'S *DURACIÓN*)

### Abstract

This article offers an analysis of the Spanish experimental film *Duración* (Duration, Paulino Viota, 1970), vindicating its unique nature as an example of both structural film and expanded cinema, as well as its original political dimension, considering the work not only as the film but also as the event of its tumultuous screening on the 6th of February 1970 in Bilbao. Each aspect of the film's approach is analysed in detail, placing it in relation to the context of experimental film of the time, and considering its similarities and differences to the work of filmmakers like Andy Warhol, as well as contemporary music, particularly the relationship between John Cage and the minimalist music movement, shedding light on the film's thought-provoking reflection on the relationship between time and duration and on the very nature of cinema itself.

### Key words

Paulino Viota; Experimental Film; Structural Film; Expanded Cinema; Time; Duration.

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### Article reference

García López, R. (2018). The 6th of February 1970 (On Paulino Viota's *Duración*). *L'Atalante. Revista de estudios cinematográficos*, 25, 193-204.

## 6 DE FEBRERO DE 1970 (*DURACIÓN*, DE PAULINO VIOTA)

### Resumen

El presente artículo analiza *Duración* (Paulino Viota, 1970), película experimental española de la que se reivindica su singularidad como muestra de cine estructural y expandido así como su original dimensión política, entendiendo la obra como no solo la película sino también el acontecimiento mismo de su accidentada proyección, el día 6 de febrero de 1970 en Bilbao. Se analizan con detalle cada uno de los aspectos que conforman el dispositivo de la obra, poniéndola en relación con el contexto del cine experimental del periodo, considerando sus semejanzas y diferencias con la obra de cineastas como Andy Warhol, y asimismo con el de la música contemporánea, destacando la relación entre John Cage y la música minimalista, lo que permite explicar la interesante reflexión generada sobre la relación entre tiempo y duración así como sobre la naturaleza del cine mismo.

### Palabras clave

Paulino Viota; cine experimental; cine estructural; cine expandido; tiempo; duración.

### Autor

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### Referencia de este artículo

García López, R. (2018). 6 de febrero de 1970 (*Duración*, de Paulino Viota). *L'Atalante. Revista de estudios cinematográficos*, 25, 193-204..

Edita / Published by



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ISSN 1885-3730 (print) / 2340-6992 (digital) DL V-5340-2003 WEB [www.revistaatalante.com](http://www.revistaatalante.com) MAIL [info@revistaatalante.com](mailto:info@revistaatalante.com)