

**Extract of the curatorial text for the exhibition catalogue:
PowerPoint Karaoke. MARCO, Vigo 2011.**

“The textual form rehabilitated by conceptual art between 1960 and 1970 and the acceptance of institutional criticism as a genre in this period are some of the things upon which the work of Rubén Grilo is based. The use of visual media such as PowerPoint, laser animation or other digital presentation software allows him to formulate new translations or meanings of information. These are technical formats that combine drawing or installation with performance in an attempt to question the processes of creation and reception by reflecting on the work’s ‘display’, its reproducibility or the new IT media that, together with narrative or conceptual strategies, determines the meaning.

Grilo, who champions visual technology as content, tries to investigate the interpretation process as well as how pieces acquire meaning in relation to different codes or presentation strategies within the institutional framework. He calls on Daniel Buren and the latter’s thoughts on the Museum’s function (1970) — the way it installs, collects and adds value to the object as an inherent condition, and which is a determining factor when it comes to attributing meaning — and on rethinking the concept of autonomy in art; a judgement that, since modern times, runs parallel to multiple (and sometimes contradictory) relationships between the concepts of alienation, emancipation of the subject, mass culture or disappearance of the spectator. The artist asks himself: ‘What if instead of it being the museum that explains the artwork, it was the artwork that explained the museum? And what if the museum was not the medium, but the message?’

His project for MARCO, Museo de Arte Contemporánea de Vigo, brings together a series of pieces — some already existing, others made specifically for this exhibition — under the title ‘PowerPoint Karaoke’. In 2006, the Berlin collective Zentrale Intelligenz Agentur ‘invented’ an event by the same name in which the participants had to improvise in public a conference through the ‘PowerPoint’ program. This form of improvised theatre, as its creators called it, consisted in crafting different presentations with material chosen from their own files or collected randomly from the Internet. The departure point was a critique of the program for standardizing information transmission systems, which can affect determine decisions made at different levels and with serious consequences.

The audience reacts in the exhibition space by associating and relating the different elements distributed throughout the rooms. Elements found, images projected and altered visual codes are the object of a displaced meaning that is the fruit of new relationships established between them. Thus the installation *Sin título (Total Self)*, 2011, is composed of four laptop computers located in a regular, square space, one in each corner, and adapted to the space by shape. The formal references to *Untitled (Corner Piece)*, 1964, by Robert Morris, as well as to minimalist self-referentiality, are widened, alluding to the involvement of a spectator who absorbs the experiences and filters them until they become conscious. Rooted in Carl Jung’s theories as to how the ego works, the artist organises the piece based on the four mental functions that allow us to form judgements or make decisions — thought, emotion, sensation and intuition — in an ‘attempt to deal with all the possible levels of experience that a spectator may have in one space.’

The laptop content is organised into PowerPoint presentations, which follow one another throughout the exhibition space, displaying completely autonomously. Without a speaker or lecturer to put forward the information, the spectator becomes the only interlocutor and interpreter of the information.

Thus the PowerPoint projections bring together the performative, visual and textual element that Rubén Grilo uses as a metaphor for the relationships that are established and dislocated — they are open, manipulable systems — between the elements confirming different realities: ‘I’m interested in the intersection between visibility, understanding and performance, which is highlighted particularly well by the idea of ‘PowerPoint Karaoke’, which I believe is a nice way of rethinking the modern idea of image autonomy through a very contemporary medium; with codes that people know, and constructed with a technology to which anyone has access.

Laser technology is something that Grilo is using for the first time and allows him to create abstract, non-existent, unrecognizable and indescribable forms and give them their own autonomy or body in the real world. Within the exhibition, the *Pieza-láser*, 2011, shares space with *El beneficio del ignorante*, 2009-2011, a collection of objects bought at street markets from different countries, and which conceal the secret of their function in their strange shapes and industrial manufacture. It is difficult to grasp the purpose for which they have been designed, something that broadens their semantic possibilities. ‘The title refers to the idea that if you don’t know the rules it’s easier to transgress them. That is to say that for someone who knows what they are, the objects will only be for one thing, while for me they have infinite uses hypothetically. The objects will disappear from the collection once I discover their purpose, or when someone tells me what they are,’ explains Grilo.

Again, Rubén Grilo resorts to language as a medium by which to represent these relationships, returning to Buren — on changing the pre-established mode of presentation — and to Joseph Kosuth’s *Art after Philosophy* (1969): that the nature of all artistic proposals is linguistic — the fact that the artist names the object as a work of art is what actually makes it art.”

Agar Ledo 2011.