

**The poetry of the fruit machine
(Fascination and surveillance)
Nilo Casares**

The fruit machine is the tacky Spanish version of Las Vegas; a kind of pocket Las Vegas that embodies a whole series of elements: a techno colour universe in all its splendour, the blinding flashes of lights designed to guarantee you don't miss a thing, the repetitive sound of the out of season carol that irritates your eardrums and reverberates throughout your body, its omnipresence in low class bars (more select establishments, free from plebs, would never dream of having such a loud machine) and an almost limitless capacity to keep your finger on the button that sends your coin off in search of a better future; a kind of chute down to the plenitude of life you are incapable of achieving; it comes from the same dream factory as the children from the San Ildefonso Children's Home who sing out the Christmas Lottery numbers; and many more that escape me at present but which I'm sure could be added by another. Elements that turn fruit machines into a world which combines entertainment with suggestiveness and the escopic and acoustics in a synthesis that lies somewhere between the fascination and surveillance that are today visible in so many places that listing them all would only seem tedious.

The first thing you notice about a fruit machine is its ubiquity, coinciding with the principal feature included in this catalogue which takes extensivity as its starting point. I see extensivity from the perspective of the difference between the intensive or extensive definition of a whole, but I could have taken it equally as easily from the distinction between intensive cattle farming {fed on fodder and living out its existence in sheds} and extensive cattle farming {the result of accounting for each of the blades of grass consumed by livestock roaming freely}, if what I'm really after is a precise definition. In a similar way, the work that follows tries to extend beyond itself, avoiding the dreadful intension of watertight meanings challenging us from urban and graphic fronts, reinforced by the practically mandatory complement of music in its varying genres (from populist tradition to cult noise, including the styles which are popular today). And, as with the fruit machines, a series of coincidences start to appear, the result of this urban extensivity.

You go into a bar, one of those you can see plebs willing to bet the price of a coffee on a game of cards, women fed up to the back teeth of their husbands who drop in for a minute on the way to the supermarket, or the widower who is desperate for somewhere new in which to drown his solitude, and the female wino who won't get off the bar stool until the booze knocks her off or she runs of money. There's no need to go on listing the possible characters you can find dazzled by the flashing lights in these shadowy bars filled with the smell of fry ups. For all these individuals the fruit machine displays its graphic petulance in a show of ostentation that only deceives those who are already lost to the cause. The fruit machine always takes over some dark corner, filling it with flashing lights and its intermittent wedding march, the start of which is marked by a graphic

display set off by a light that shines out into the depths of the corner. This is something that Óscar Mora understands very well, with his description of the power of invasive repetition (attributable to the graphic work), which takes the work far beyond its initial meaning and converts the resulting forms into an unexpected failure that clashes with achievements and contexts (just like when you put a fruit machine in a bar or take a cockatoo to Sunday mass). It also allows you to set up a series of recontextualisation games under the premise of perennial decontextualisation (the particular importance of this lies in the fact that recontextualisation always demands a semantic effort that forms the key to extensivity by reconciling the object with its new location).

Yet the urban factor, the fact that it is open to all (with the exception of the right to refuse admission—a right that no bar will take advantage of until you become a total idiot), should not be scorned. Nor should the fruit machine itself, a mysterious object that defies definition when removed from the context of the bar for which it has been created. Enter any bar and there it is, you're surrounded, it refuses to leave you alone, just like the city that refuses to allow you to escape from the true public art that disrupts your routine because it blocks your way from the door of the bar to the coffee shop, turning your route into a jackpot of noise and colour you weren't expecting but which you devote your attention to as a means of obtaining the prize of escaping from your everyday routine; in the same way the public and urban vision of OM's work liberates you from the things you repeat every day simply by repeating them in a different manner: just like the fruit machine repeats itself like a parrot, regaling you with the music that you now know is charged with emotion; and similar to the urban excursions that OM chooses to call Metaphysical Tourism because they turn the city you live in into an undiscovered land that you stumble on for the first time, wearily familiar with every nook and cranny. And, like the fruit machine, possessor of a considerably (seri)graphical and loud element.

Fascination has become the best system of control, albeit an incomplete one. In order to guarantee that absolute control, there is a need to resort to the use of sound systems that betray the individual who has been carried away by fascination but who has failed to pay the price. In today's world, the place where this combination is most in evidence is the hypermarket, with its accessible and familiar display of "basic items", where temptation is so strong that it is impossible to wrench your gaze away, unaware of various sound barriers that spend the day lying surreptitiously in wait. Yet your sight is not all powerful, and whilst the eye observes, your ear becomes impatient, or when the eye no longer sees, then shouting is the only option left open. The fruit machine is only too well aware of this, and has the answer to both problems; its gaudy lights are never without rudimentary stereo effects that start to shriek when no-one is looking its way or someone hits the jackpot: just like the alarm systems in the hypermarket when you overstep the mark and consume without paying: you have allowed yourself to be carried away and have fallen into the trap; you have been betrayed. That's why they're watching you; but meanwhile fascination has you snared.

