

## Itziar Barrio

I met Itziar back in 2009 in NYC and in 2010, I invited her to participate in the first Rincón Projects' show "Now or Never", a pop-up exhibition in Bogotá. Since then, we have worked on various projects such as People in the City (Pop-up show, New York 2011), The Music You Want Me to Hear (Rincón, 2015), The Perils of Obedience: CASTING (Fundación Teatro Odeón, Bogotá, 2015), Untitled (Miami, 2015), The Perils of Obedience (El Parqueadero, Museo de Arte Miguel Urrutia, Bank of the Republic, Bogotá, 2017).

In this interview we will talk a little about the projects that Itziar has developed since 2017 to date. You can learn more about her work at [itziarbarrio.com](http://itziarbarrio.com)

Margarita Rodríguez  
RINCON-Director



*Itziar Barrio in her studio in NYC, 2021*

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**Tell us a little bit about your latest projects which in a way are distant from the last project you and I worked together, THE PERILS OF OBEDIENCE:**

In 2016 I started a trilogy of projects analyzing the intersection between work, technology, identity and matter. These projects are a collaboration with different experts: scientists, astronomers, body builders, and a robotics engineer among others. I am currently finishing ROBOTA MML, the second project-chapter as a member of the NEW INC program of the New Museum in NYC.

ROBOTA MML uses smoke, robots, bodybuilding, RUR, Buñuel's *Exterminating Angel*, the painting *The Raft of Medusa*, and the classic narrative structure of science fiction to talk about class consciousness, biopower, social structures and identity.



ROBOTA MML (In post- production) Itziar Barrio

The filming was carried out in MATADERO Madrid, and in a performance-shooting format since at times there was an audience. We could say that ROBOTA MML is the rewriting of a *trope*, and thus a dominant narrative: the conflict between human and machine. The script that I wrote in collaboration with Sonia Martí Gallego places the characters of *RUR* (1920) - Karel Čapek's Czech play - in the future, in 2050, where gender and identity are neither static nor defined.

It could be said that this re-visit is done through the lenses of queer theory, feminism, Marxism and other contemporary theories around agencies and bodies such as the new materialism. In the play *RUR* the word robot appears for the first time, which is a derivation of *robot* and which in Czech means work.

This was very interesting because of its semantic and thus labor connotations. ROBOTA MML places its characters in a robot factory, where there is a conflict between robots and

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humans, followed by the uprising to the dominant power, the human. Other protagonists of the film are a professional bodybuilder - José Cano - who carries out his daily training, and smoke, a lot of smoke.

## - Where did your interest in approaching science and technology come from?

Among recurring issues in my work is the rewriting of dominant narratives and the deconstruction of the cinematographic mechanism. A few years ago, I became interested in the use of drones as a cinematographic tool, a technological body, and an extension of our bodies.

The history of the aerial image together with the construction of the scientific image originate the first project *Drones, Failed Stars*. These interests had already appeared in other projects such as *The History of the Fist* where a 3D printer building a fist is one of the narrative lines within a non-linear structure.

I am interested in science as a dominant narrative and assumed as 'objective', when in reality, is in constant construction and is the result of human work as the anthropologist Lisa Messeri comments in my film. Along with technology, its presence in our lives and the ability to be part of ourselves - techno-people -, I became interested in aspects related to the subject. Each chapter of the trilogy is related to different states of matter, a matter or materiality.

In the first chapter, it is the liquids, fluids and water that appear as a sign and with symbolic force. Along with all this, ideas around agencies, hybrid bodies and the non-binary run through the trilogy.



*A Demon that Slips into Your Telescopes while You're Dead Tired and Blocks the Light* (4K, 54 min) Itziar Barrio. 2021

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**-By watching the videos, I can recognize certain elements that you have maintained in your work and various projects such as the relationship between fiction and reality, in some way the theatricality or the representation and interdisciplinarity ... however I would like to know what new concepts or fields you explore in these new projects?**

With the project *Drones, Failed Stars* (2016 ), I started an investigation and a series of projects around matter and its contemporary definitions from the *more than humanism*, new materialism and cyberfeminism. Previously, my work has revolved around bodies, identity, subjectivity, means of production, materialism and power dynamics.

This new stage of my work is marked by matter, objects, science and robotics as contemporary bodies and dominant narratives. Yet there is continuity in interests such as queer and feminist theory, the cinematographic mechanism, dissident characters, and the rewriting of dominant narratives. These have gone from being scenes of iconic movies - THE PERILS OF OBEDIENCE (2010 - 2020) - to the scientific theories around light explained in *Drones, Failed Stars*. With these new interests, I set out to make a trilogy. *Drones, Failed Stars* (2016 - 2019), the first project, mixes documentary language with that of speculative fiction to mainly analyze the construction of the astronomical



image and scientific knowledge.

ROBOTA MML (In post- production) Itziar Barrio

It is composed by interviews to the experts Dr. Jackie Faherty (Scientific researcher at the Department of Astrophysics at the American Museum of Natural History) and Dr. Lisa Messeri (Professor of Sociocultural Anthropology at Yale University) and Dr. Steve B.

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Howell (Head of NASA's Space Science and Astrobiology Division, Ames Research Center), which are articulated with archival aerial images as well as others made by drones, and with a speculative fiction by Janani Balasubramanian. This project was carried out with the Multiverse Grant from the BBVA Foundation

**- How has been the experience to work with these scientists from your artistic process?**

It has been a very enriching experience. The scientific community is very generous and eager to share its knowledge. Within my practice there has always been an interest in collaborating and knowing other ways of doing things. Thus within art and from a very young age I have collaborated with actors, musicians, dancers, etc.

What has happened in other projects to me is that the research itself has led me to meet specific communities or professionals from other disciplines such as historians, robotics engineers, etc. At the same time, the research processes in which I usually include interviews with professionals are so important that they are often part of the final film. Their work and showing their different jobs also interest me.



ROBOTA MML (In post- production) Itziar Barrio

**- You have created with other projects pieces and works of art derived from the videos and performances...with these last videos have you worked on a new series of bi-dimensional or tri-dimensional works?**

In a parallel process I am generating a series of sculptures with a new character even though I continue to work with materials such as cement and latex. Formally they are a new exploration based on the *Assamblage* of different materials, materialities and sub-products. The way I am working with cement is by following the forms that the plastics that serve as a mold take. These plastics in turn are filters used in the filming of the film or the packaging of products that I have consumed.



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I have also included silicone, the rests of a latex pants that I have worn for years and was ripped and found industrial objects. The latest are not new in my work inasmuch as they are worn and contain those features. At the moment I am also including robotics in some of them.

I consider these pieces hybrid bodies, difficult to classify or name, undefined or something among many things, and outside the binary: between the used, the not used, the industrial, the crafted, the organic, the machine, the matter etc...



(Work in progress detail) Concrete, vinyl used pants, found objects, costumed hardware, firmware, motor, cables and lighting filter. Itziar Barrio, 2021

## - What are your new projects?

In 2022 I will show the project THE PERILS OF OBEDIENCE at PARTICIPANT INC. It is a long-term project that began in 2010 and has been developed in Bilbao, NYC, Bogotá and Rome, to generate a movie in real time. I will also continue working on *Particle Matter*, the third chapter of the aforementioned trilogy and of which I recently presented an introduction in collaboration with composer and sound designer Seth Cluett.

Particle Matter is an audiovisual creation and a materialist investigation on matter and the multiple manifestations of the micro, addressing this issue in a rhizomatic way and using the dialectical language of montage -dialectical technique of producing a new whole composed from fragments of images and sounds in motion-, to explore the catalytic forces created by the movements of the fragmented and microscopic; the remaining pieces. Many of the sound recordings included in *Particle Matter* have been made in the historical

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anechoic chamber of Nokia Bell Labs (New Jersey), capable of absorbing more than 99.995% of the incidental acoustic energy above 200 Hz, and considered as one of the quietest places on earth.

Particle Matter is a work conceived from the horizontality of all the agents that converge in the creation of this video: images of geological phenomena, steam, gas and particles, recordings of protest sounds, and dust from different origins.

**For more information about Itziar Barrio's work please visit [ltziarbarrio.com](http://ltziarbarrio.com) or contact us at [info@rinconprojects.com](mailto:info@rinconprojects.com)**