

# MONTIEL, Alejandro; MORAL, Javier and CANET, Fernando (coord.) *Javier Maqua: más que un cineasta*. Volumes 1 and 2

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The recently deceased Abbas Kiarostami told, in the documentary by Jean-Pierre Limosin, *Vérités et songes* (part of the series *Cinéma, de notre temps*, 1994) that he never made an effort to become a filmmaker and he never planned to become one. He was just carried away and it was the bends or zigzags of life that brought him close or far from the bank of cinema. He said: 'I am 53 years old and I still don't know what my job is. We live with a provisional job.' Very few times a visual motif, like Kiarostami's path shaped like a Z, defines and illustrates so well the career (and philosophy) of a filmmaker who was also a poet, photographer, audiovisual pedagogue (if his job at Kanun center could be defined as so), among other things.

We recall this seminal image, this Z-shaped path, to try to illustrate two things. On the one hand, the tour suggested by the two-volume book *Javier Maqua: más que un cineasta* (Javier Maqua: more than a filmmaker), which was coordinated and compiled -thanks to an accurate archaeological and research work- by Alejandro Montiel, Javier Moral and Fernando Canet. On the other hand, the (multidisciplinary) career of Javier Maqua himself, an author born in Madrid who abandoned his education as biologist to work, from the late 60s and with a certain activist and resistance attitude, in cinema (as director and scriptwriter), in film criticism, in television, in novel, in theater and in radio. In many occasions, he received awards like the *Premio Ondas*, the *Premio Nacional de Radiodifusión* or the *Premio Café Gijón*. Maqua, the perfect example of what Kiarostami called 'provisional job', is one of those artists that have been carried away by their curiosity and inquisitiveness to learn and experiment without a preconceived plan. For example, he experimented cinema not as an obsession that is going to only one direction, but as just another way to think and narrate; in short, just another way to live, as he himself says in the interview with Marta Sanz that opens the approach to his work.

In this sense, it is interesting to emphasize that the history of cinema is often monopolized by some names that represent lineal careers coming from cinephile passions and obsessions -and both the directors and the critics are responsible for this. But there is also another history of cinema, in which the book *Javier Maqua: más que un cineasta* takes part. This history is less known and its characters are those who approach cinema not as a way to fulfill an unstoppable pulsional desire, but as a chance, an unexpected event, just another step in a path that is not previously planned. This is a history of cinema, against the current, more derivative and erratic, in which the authors' careers are not easily traced under a causal logic. This is the case of Javier Maqua. He represents a cinema experienced as just another piece of a vital and artistic puzzle. This image of the puzzle is very typical of Welles (or rather typical of Kane) and it also becomes a visual motif to define his multifaceted work.

Here lie, then, two of the difficulties involved in approaching such a unique and special person as this artist from Madrid: the fact that most people do not know him (due to his apparently "secondary role" in the Spanish cinema from the transition to democracy until now) and the fact that his work has many points of view. However, the book *Javier Maqua: más que un cineasta* overcomes these difficulties, both in its internal structure (a detailed analysis of his work [films, scripts, novels and plays] by specialists of each one of Maqua's disciplines and a varied compilation of his most representative texts) and in its approach as a dialog between Maqua's life and work (analyzed in the first volume) and his thoughts (in the second volume). The idea of a book in two parts, then, is a way to zigzag into Maqua's universe, not necessarily in a chronological order, so that we progressively discover an artistic and vital coherence: a critical point of view that shows in his stories and in his

reflections. For example, the analysis of his experience in television docudrama, *Vivir cada día* (1983-88), has a dialog with his ideas about borders between genres that he exposed in remarkable and pioneering texts such as *El autor en las fronteras de la ficción* ('The author in the borders of fiction, 1992) or *Apuntes para una historia de las relaciones entre la realidad y la ficción en la televisión española* (Notes for a history of the relationship between reality and fiction in Spanish television, 1996). Another good example is the analysis by Manuel Vidal Estévez about the sordid and grotesque *Chevrolet* (1997), contrasted with the brilliant and visceral text (an alternative chronicle about the consequences of the tumultuous 80s) called *El último pico* (The last shot, 1995), in which Maqua narrates the last days between the actor José Luis Manzano and the director Eloy de la Iglesia. Undoubtedly, it is one of the best texts in the compilation and it shows very well Maqua's point of view, which, as Alejandro Montiel pointed out in *Algo, y solo algo, del cine de Javier Maqua* (Something, and just something, about Javier Maqua's cinema, 2009)<sup>1</sup>, has a trace of Stroheim: it is direct, real, ruthless but, in the end, honest.

The crossed dialog and the movement between Maqua's disciplines (maybe it lacks some reflection about his work in radio) contemplated in these two volumes put him, literally, in the border between genres and between arts, which is a key issue in his work and one of the bases of his artistic ideology.

The Bazin formula of the 'impurity of cinema' has been considered and talked about many times, but the 'impurity' of artists is rarely discussed directly, and probably one of the biggest achievements of the two-volume book *Javier Maqua: más que un cineasta* is claiming this 'impurity'. This claim is not accidental or innocent if we have in mind its contemporary context: on the one hand, the growing specialization of knowledge and the progressive extinction of humanities and of polymaths (word used by authors to define this multifaceted man); on the other hand, a deep economic, political and social crisis, in which the foundations of the Spanish transition to democracy have sunk, as well as the ideals of the left that dreamed of a social change that would come with democracy. Maqua, thus, who lived first-hand and narrated that transition period, is now more prevailing than ever with this review of those times that can help us understand the current times. Political, ethical and moral consciousness reflected in Maqua's works and texts are in nature the spirit that the authors of this book want to shout out to the world: "More Maqua(s)!" •

1. MONTIEL, Alejandro (2009) *Algo, y solo algo, del cine de Javier Maqua*. *El Viejo Topo*, Vol. 255, April 2009, p. 65. Barcelona: Ediciones de Intervención

Cultural, S.L. Marta Sanz, Javier Moral and Manuel Asín also collaborated in this work.