

“My book. The *My Museum* one”

After the exhibition closed, a conversation took place between Mireia c. Saladrígues (McS), Montserrat Saló (MS), Jorge Luís Marzo (JLM), and Oriol Fontdevila (OF). While the book *My Museum* described Montserrat Saló's experience as a guard in an art museum in Barcelona, in this case we addressed the situations that arose at the Fundació Joan Miró when Montserrat was in charge of watching the copies of her own book and the guard for the exhibition. One of these copies, displayed on a table, spurred interaction between visitors and Montserrat when she forbade them to touch it given its consideration as a work of art.

McS: One of the situations I found most surprising was the reaction you got from a museum director.

MS: She started touching the book, and I said, "No, no", louder and louder. "No, no, no... NO!!!" And she goes, "Well, I'm a museum director." So I went, "Who cares? I said NO!" "But, but..." "But what? I don't care if the King comes in here. NO goes for everyone. Besides, if you're a museum director, you ought to know that you can't touch the art. You're setting a pretty bad example!"

McS: At first, you gave all the visitors a hard time. But then you started interacting with them until they realized what your relationship with the photograph in the show was. From then on, they had to figure out that you had actually written the book. You only gave copies to the people who managed to get past all those hurdles.

MS: Yeah, I always kind of played hard to get. But then I tried to be a bit more flexible. I'd also start singing and give them clues, like going "chet-chet-chet-chet-chet. Clink!" as if I were a typewriter.

JLM: In his book *The Love of Art*, sociologist Pierre Bourdieu analyzed visitors to French museums in the late 1960s. He pointed out that the more educated people tended to be more frequent museum visitors, and that the least educated were more likely to touch the works of art when they went to a museum. Based on your experience as a museum guard, would you agree with this?

MS: Absolutely not. I've actually come across people who say, "You see, I've been to a lot of museums, and in some of them they let you touch the works of art."

JLM: And what kind of people say, "Who are you to tell me what to do?"

MS: One woman called me a *Franquista*, a fascist. So I raised my right arm and sang the fascist anthem, the *Cara al sol*. I anticipate people's attitudes the minute they walk in the door. In the museum where I worked, we'd warn each other when someone looked like trouble. But in this show, everyone headed for the book. I kept on having to remind them, "It's not because it's a book. The issue is where it is. It could be a peanut. A peanut! But it's in the middle of a room in a museum, and it's a piece of art. And you're not supposed to touch the art."

JLM: Okay, but let me ask you—frankly, do you really believe that?

MS: I believe it because it's what I was taught where I worked.

OF: You have different views about security. In this project, Mireia actually seeks to challenge the notion of museum rules, whereas you, Montse, become her accomplice, yet you're in favor of enforcing them.

McS: Well, I'm not for getting rid of the museum rule system altogether. What I do in my projects is just to think of other ways in which a museum could operate and to question its authority, as well as its disciplinary role with the visitors ...

MS: Sorry, but I'm not changing my position. That's how I see it. We don't know how to touch things! [...] One guy tried to steal the book right off the table, and I chased him up the stairs. When I caught him, I said, "Excuse me, that's my book." "What? What book?" "My book. The *My Museum* one. Open up your jacket." "Why should I?" "Okay, then I'll do it." More and more people had gathered around, staring at us... he must have been embarrassed. "It was just a joke." "Well, I don't think it's funny, buddy!" And I said, "Today is one thing, because I'm sort of here with the work, but just imagine if I were working in a museum and this happened. I'd be in big trouble. For your fault, I'd get ten days with no pay, and I've got kids to feed back home."