

# Dossier Pep Vidal

Barcelona, Summer 2019

## 1. CV

Pep Vidal, Barcelona, 1980.

Degree in Mathematics at Universitat Autònoma of Barcelona (UAB) (2008).  
Special interest in infinitesimal calculus, topology and infinite series.

PhD in Physics in UAB and ALBA synchrotron (2014). Thesis research about mathematical algorithms for improving accuracy of instruments used in particle accelerators. I have two important conclusions from here: there are some extremely sensitive and complex systems; and I'm not interested in research that doesn't include my own experience and vital life in the process.

In recent years he has been a resident artist at Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten (Amsterdam), Hangar (Barcelona), FARE (Milan) and Casa Velázquez (Madrid). He has won several awards and grants in recognition of his artistic work, such as GAC (Galleries of Art Catalunya) 2019 Best exhibition emerging artist, the Plastic Arts Botín Foundation International Grant, Montemadrid Foundation Generation Award, Vegap Propuestas Award, Miquel Casablanças Award and the BCN Produccio grant from La Capella.

He has shown his work at solo exhibitions at Abrons Arts Center (New York), ADN Gallery (Barcelona), Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya MNAC (Barcelona), Maczul, Maracaibo (Venezuela), Barcelona Gallery Weekend (Barcelona), Warsaw Gallery Weekend (Warsaw), LMNO Gallery (Brussels), Halfhouse (Barcelona), Capella de Sant Roc (Valls), Rolando Anselmi Gallery (Berlin), L21 Gallery (Palma de Mallorca), Salón (Madrid), Espai Cub La Capella (Barcelona) and Can Felipa (Barcelona).

He has also participated in various group exhibitions at museums and art centers, such as Fundació Joan Miró (Barcelona), CAPC musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux (Bordeaux), CENTRALE for contemporary art (Brussels), CaixaForum (Barcelona), Fundació Antoni Tàpies (Barcelona), Blue Project Foundation (Barcelona), VII Biennial of Jafre, Fabbbrica del Vapore (Milan), La Casa Encendida (Madrid) and OTR (Madrid). He is currently preparing a group show in Miro Foundation (Barcelona).

His works are part of public and private collections, such as Arxiu of the Centre d'Estudis i Documentació del MACBA (Barcelona), Documentation Center and Library of the MNCARS (Madrid), MoMA library (New York).



### 3. Recent work (selection)

#### 3.1. $\text{Pi}/\pi$

Solo show at Contemporary Art Museum (MSU), Zagreb, Croatia. Oct 2018 — Feb 2019





### 3.2. 1000 flores

Group show at Joan Miró Foundation Barcelona, Sept 2017 — Sept 2018.

In Spain we have a honey called 1000 flowers and I thought if it was feasible that a bee goes in flowers of 1000 different types of plants. I am very interested in why, how and when we classify plants. For these reasons, I made the project «1000 flowers» which consists on collect seeds of 1000 different types of plants and randomly sowed in a  $100\text{ m}^2$  rectangle in the meadow of the Miró Foundation during one year and follow the evolution of the grown plants during this year.









### 3.3. Who wants to be an impatient gardener (!?)

The project is running from 2016 to nowadays.

Solo exhibition at Abrons Art Center, New York, Oct 2017 — Dec 2017.

Solo exhibition at ADN Gallery, Barcelona, Oct 2017 — Jan 2018.

Group show at ISELP contemporary art center, Brussels, Sep 2018 — Dec 2018.

In September 2016 I bought<sup>1</sup> all the stock —more than 400 plants and 300 cut flowers— of a neighborhood flower shop in Barcelona, near my former home. I did it because I like this idea of a whole system —a flower shop— with a complex net of systems<sup>2</sup> —the plants— and the interaction between them. I liked the idea of bringing with me all the plants of the place at exactly one time; not before and not after. For these reasons I brought all of them to my studio. The main idea is measuring different physiological aspects (surface, volume, color, quantity of water, among other characteristics) of them and observing the evolution and the interaction between systems, during a certain period of time. The primary idea was that *Who wants to be an impatient gardener (!?)* was a 1-year project, but I change my mind and I want to measure them as long as it would be possible converting the amount of plants in a permanent constantly-changing moveable installation.



Figura 2: Plants in my studio in Barcelona, 2016.

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<sup>1</sup>This project starts with the financial support of ADN Gallery, Barcelona.

<sup>2</sup>Multi-system.

### 3.4. {1,2,3,4,5,6,7...}

Solo exhibition.

Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya, MNAC, Barcelona, Oct 2017—Feb 2018.

For the exhibition is installed a tent in the middle of the Sala Oval —to see what happens— and three amorphic elements that all together is the same volume of the tent, in a 104,56 times smaller hall.

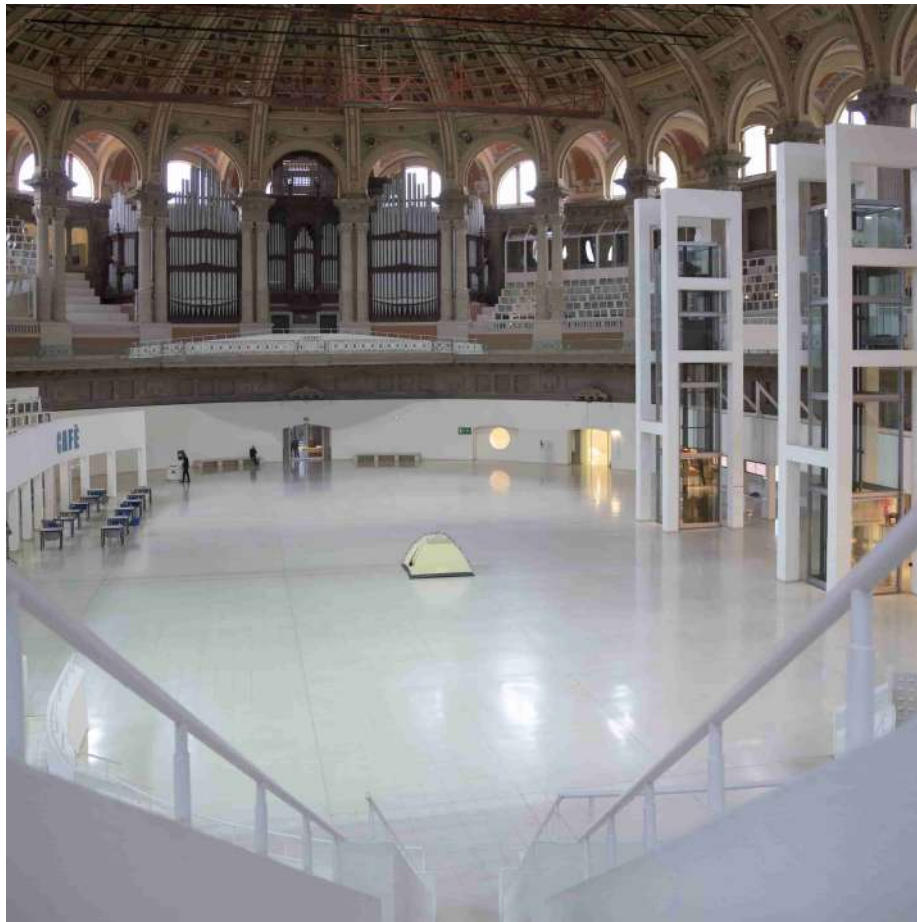


Figura 3: Tent in the Sala Oval of MNAC.

### 3.5. Waiting to be interrupted.

Barcelona Gallery Weekend, 28 Sept 2017 — 1 Oct 2017.

Measuring with classical measurement elements a water tank, waiting to be interrupted by the rain.

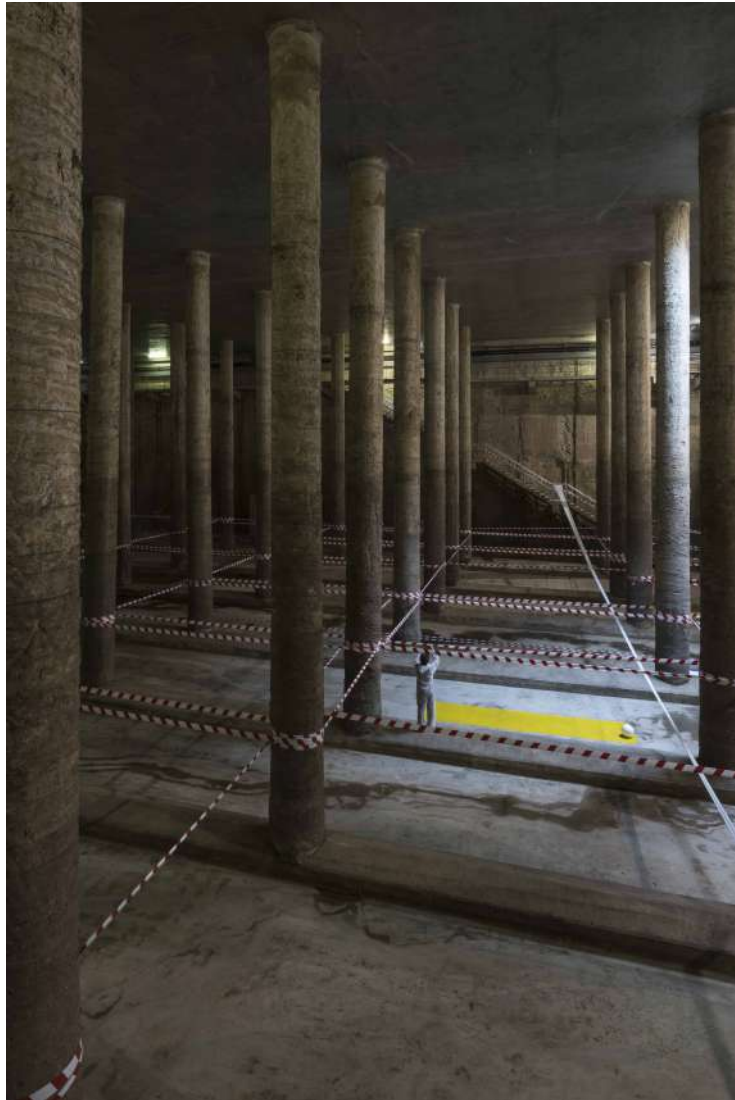
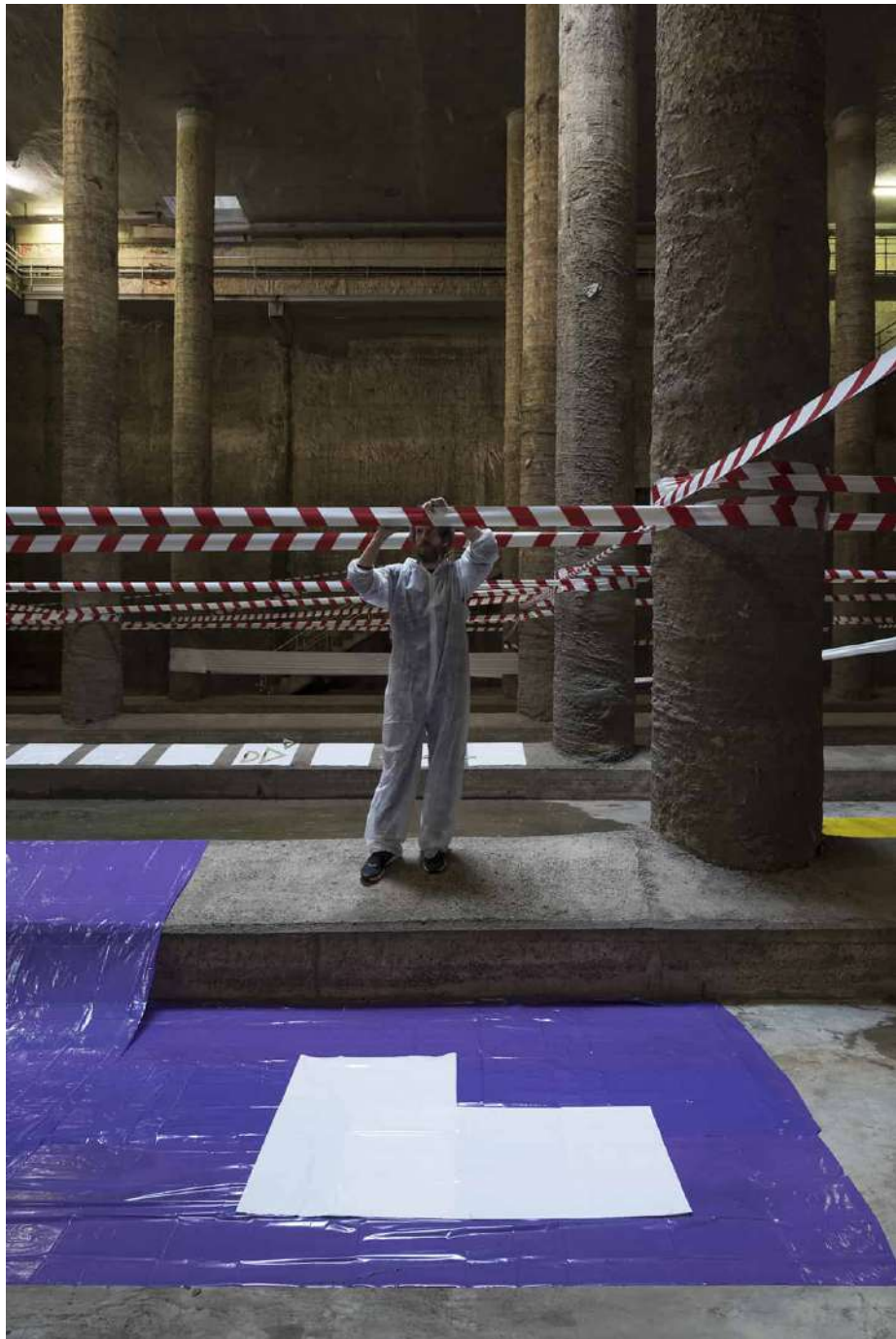


Figura 4: Me measuring a non-human scale water tank.





### 3.6. From nothing to void — Del hueco al vacío. Project Winner of Propuestas 2015 VEGAP (Plastic Art)

In Spanish, we use the word void to describe a space without anything, an empty space, but we also understand void as a space where all matter (air and other particles) has been removed. There is an infinite difference between a hole nothing and a space with absolutely nothing void or vacuum but at a mere glance we cannot distinguish between A void and THE void.

For the { } project, see corresponding section, an ultra-vacuum capsule was made by removing 99,999999% of its matter. No one was able to see the capsule except for the artist and the people at the research center where it was made. The project, From nothing to void – Del hueco al vacío — aims to deepen the understanding of what lies between nothing and void; it visibly shows the difference between the two.

To do this, 5 capsules were constructed, like those shown in the image, each with a distinct degree of emptiness. They appear identical but are radically different.

- Capsule 1: Nothing has been done. Therefore, there is air and other particles inside. A hole. A void.
- Capsule 2: A partial vacuum has been created by removing 50% of the matter.
- Capsule 3: An intermediate vacuum has been created by removing 70% of the matter.
- Capsule 4: An even greater vacuum has been created by removing 90% of the matter.
- Capsule 5: An ultra-vacuum has been created by removing 99.999999% of the matter, the maximum amount possible in a scientific facility. It is the closest thing to nothing. THE void.



Figura 5: Installation of capsules of Ultra High Vacuum.

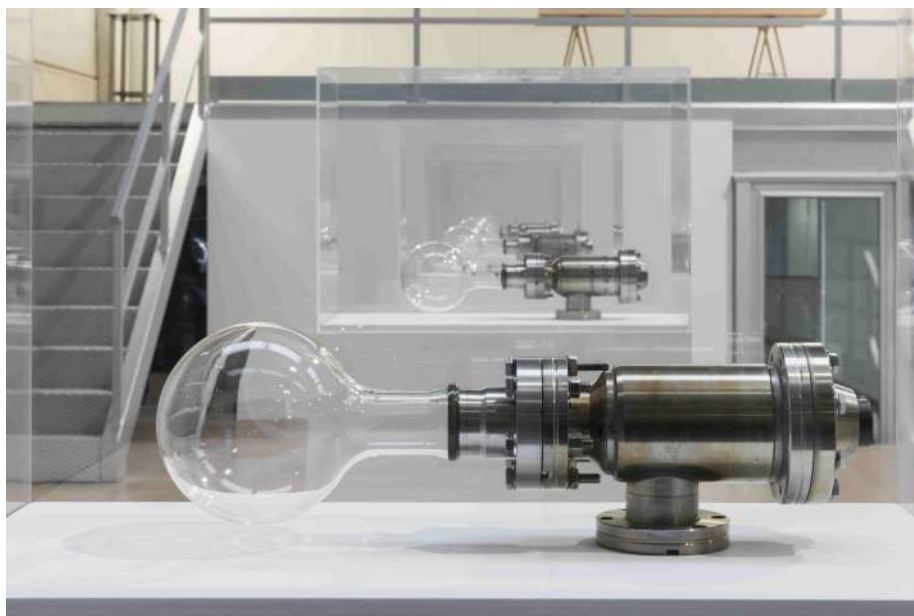


Figura 6: Capsules of Ultra High Vacuum.



Figura 7: Capsule of Ultra High Vacuum.



### 3.7. Flat flatness almost flat really flat

Solo exhibition.

LMNO Gallery, Brussels. Mar — Apr 2017.

The exhibition runs with this idea and concept of flatness. What is really flat? Why we do things apparently flat? The exhibition shows a selection of drawings and sculptures. These ideas were born when I was doing my PhD in physics measuring mirrors in the nanometer scale at ALBA Synchrotron Facility.



Figura 8: General view of installation. Photo: Philippe Dagobert

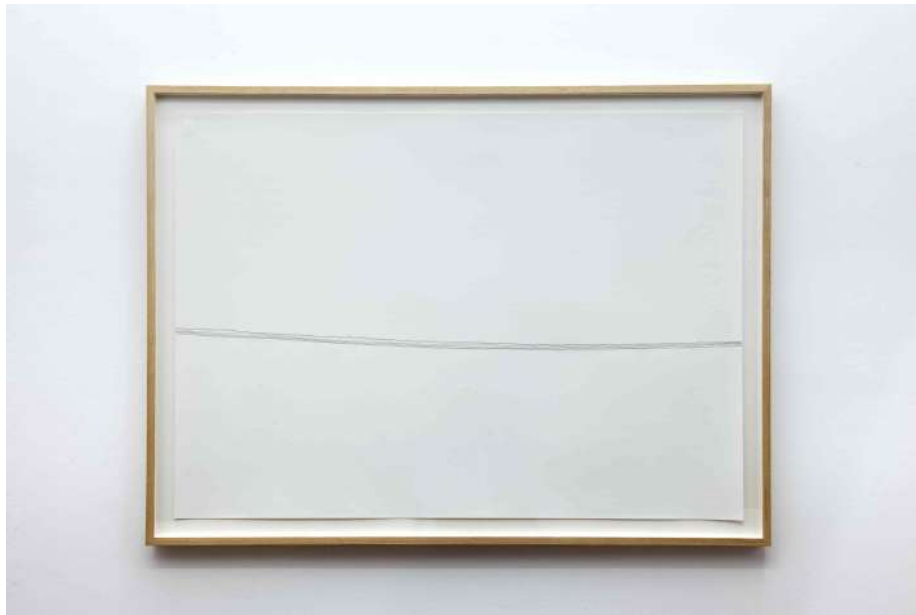


Figura 9: General view of installation. Photo: Philippe Dagobert



Figura 10: A very flat mirror (below) and a really flat mirror (on top).

### 3.8. Cabaña de madera, cabaña de plomo

Group show *Hablo, sabiendo que no se trata de eso*, curated by Juan Canela. Caixaforum Barcelona. 2015-16.

(Extract of the catalogue for the exhibition. Juan Canela)

1983. Joseph Beuys built *Hinter dem Knochen wird gezählt SCHMERZRAUM*, a small room made out of lead sheets, iron, two silver rings and a lightbulb hanging from the ceiling. In this piece, Beuys explores several symbolic connections between natural phenomena and philosophical systems. As visitors enter this hermetic installation, they feel a sense of enclosure and confinement due to the use of lead, which absorbs the little light emitted by the lightbulb and also insulates and protects at the same time. The two rings are the size of a child's head and the other that of an adult's are made out of silver, an excellent conductor, in contrast to the insulating lead. Materials, bodies, emotions. Here, communication or the lack thereof takes place through different channels, far removed from language but linked to the intrinsic properties of the materials themselves and their capacity for agency. The effect on bodies entering this space is a sense of insulation and protection. 2014. Artist and physics graduate Pep Vidal built a modest wooden hut similar in size to Beuys's room on a plot of wasteland in Barcelona. His idea was to move out of his flat and go and live in the hut to finish his physics dissertation, which he presented in the scientific-academic world and in an artistic context. *Cabaña de madera, cabaña de plomo A* is an action that involves reading this dissertation inside Beuys's room. Whereas the wooden hut was the space for the writing process, the lead room is the space that brings this process to an end, the space for reading the dissertation. Pep undertakes to remain in the space for as long as it takes him to read the dissertation through from start to finish. The relationship with the lead and the characteristics of this space of pain (insulation and protection) draw certain parallels with the wooden hut. Moreover, the project raises the issue of scientific language, which is utterly inaccessible to most people, and questions what it means to write a dissertation on a highly specific subject that only three people in the world are likely to be able to discuss. It also creates a space that brings the agencies of this almost indecipherable discourse as uttered by Pep's body and voice into direct contact with the materiality of the space of pain. A video recording of the complete reading in Beuys's room is set up in the exhibition space and a live session open to the public is held in the space of pain itself.



Figura 11: Re-reading and re-writing on my thesis inside the lead box of Beuys.

Me acuerdo de la librería que iba siempre tan movida.  
 Me acuerdo del verde de sus mesas del cole.  
 Me acuerdo del tejadillo de la biblioteca.  
 Me acuerdo de sus banderines del comedor.  
 Me acuerdo de Ricardo el conserje.

20 **CAPÍTOL I. INTRODUCCIÓ I PROPÒSIT**

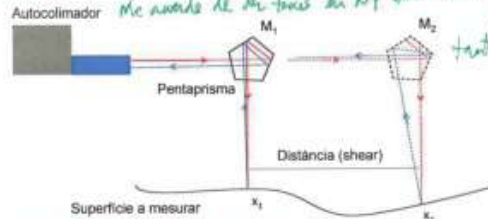
precisa caracterització i calibració de tots els elements, en especial el sector, és essencial per aconseguir la màxima precisió del dispositiu. El NOM també ha estat implantat al sincrotró Diamond, a Anglaterra, obtenint resultats del mateix ordre de precisió que el de BESSY [ASS<sup>+</sup>10].

Me acuerdo de haber visto balletos en el cole.  
 Me acuerdo de comer un rollo por primera vez.

ESAD Me acuerdo de la Barcelona.

L'ESAD és un dispositiu que es comença a desenvolupar al Physikalisch-Technische Bundesanstalt (PTB), a finals dels anys 90, per a l'obtenció del pendent i la topografia de superfícies òptiques [WS99]. Aquest dispositiu aconsegueix una precisió i repetibilitat sub-nanomètrica en les mesures [GW02]. És una combinació de deflectometria i tècniques de shearing, utilitzant la diferència d'angles en la reflexió de la superfície, seguint el principi deflectomètric explicat a la secció 1.1.1.2. A nivell estructural segueix l'esquema de la figura 1.11, és a dir, un pentaprisma que es va desplaçant al llarg de la superfície i un feix de llum incident i reflectit que dona l'angle corresponent a la superfície a mesurar en aquell punt.

Me acuerdo del moment de tocar les puntes del pollo.  
 Me acuerdo de ser fofós en NY com a hola visto en las pelis tantas veces.



Me acuerdo del Guggenheim de NY.

Figura 1.13: Esquema de l'ESAD, on  $M_1$  i  $M_2$  són les mesures necessàries per obtenir la reconstrucció en el punt  $x_1$  de la superfície a mesurar.

Me acuerdo de mi primer curso de fotografía.

La diferència està en el tractament que es fa de les mesures. A la figura 1.13 es mostra l'esquema de funcionament. L'ESAD no reconstrueix el perfil de la superfície a mesurar.

Me acuerdo de la Domènica 15.

Me acuerdo de la foto de Abu y Livia a la dreta.

Me acuerdo del Colegio de España en París.

Me acuerdo de ir a comer sushi con Angel en Place d'Italie.

Me acuerdo del T3 Pouch de la Montserrat.

Figura 12: Detail of one of the pages of the thesis, re-written during the stay in the lead cabin.

### 3.9. Trees, treelines and global patterns

Solo show at ADN Gallery, Barcelona. 2015.

[Extract of the press release]

There are things that seem to be by chance or out of control, when actually they are not ; and vice versa . Pep Vidal Pep Vidal, a mathematician who recently received a doctorate in physics, focuses his research on the infinitesimal changes that can happen at any time and in any place . In other words, on changes that are imperceptible to the human eye and, precisely because of this, enormously surprising . Another branch of his research focusses on the false randomness of certain natural phenomena that are erroneously perceived as chance occurrences because of a lack of information . What is the rule that defines the randomness? Surely it is too complex for us to decode because of our limitations, so we will therefore continue to perceive these phenomena as something that happens by chance .

[More information here](#)



Figura 13: Part of *Tree of 19 meters cutted in 7 equal volumes*.



Figura 14: View of *Tree of 19 meters cutted in 7 equal volumes.*





Figura 15: *Random but real*, drawing, 2016.



Figura 16: *Slice of tree*, drawing, 2016.

### 3.10. As a Whole

Solo exhibition at Rolando Anselmi Gallery, Berlin. 2015.

(Extract from Mousse Magazine)

For his show *As a Whole*, Vidal will present a site-specific installation in the first room, transforming the white wall gallery space in a coordinate system. From a distance it appears as an obsessive repetition of points, with a blurry effect, but after a closer look, one realizes that these points are actually a regular succession of yellow smiley faces, covering the four sides of the room. Thousands of eyes pointed toward the center, staring at the visitor. Starting point for Vidal is the often-imperceptible impact that all gestures have on their surroundings and the consideration that each space with any kind of interaction is a system that can be modified, or destroyed, in order to create new systems. Systems are constantly modifying due to infinitesimal changes. In this occasion Vidal builds a coordinate system where spectators, as dynamic elements, are the main focus, together with other static elements, which are working with the accuracy and limits of control of the system. The viewer, moving around the space, is in a way continuously repositioning itself in relation to the system created by the artist. The repetitive, controlled, measured nature of the coordinates confronts with the lightness and friendly appearance of the yellow smileys, as a reminder of the numerous dichotomies that characterize our reality.

[More information here](#)

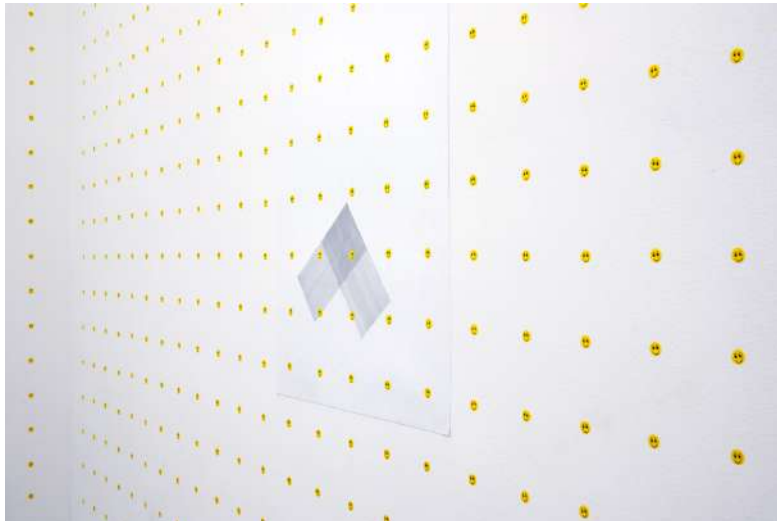


Figura 17: Detail of the installation of almost 20.000 smiley stickers for making a  $\{x,y,z\}$  coordinate system.



Figura 18: Collapse.

### 3.11. $f(t) = t(t-t_0)$

Solo show, curated by Marina Vives. Capella de Sant Roc. Valls. 2015.

[Extract of the press release]

$f(t) = f(t - t_0)$  is a function that indicates repeatability, a shift, a jump or a suspension in relation to the impact of time variability on any system. For example, a book that we put on a shelf and suddenly one day we find laid down: from the moment we left it until the moment it fell, it has been sustained over time, only influenced by a number of infinitesimal changes imperceptible at first sight. These changes, however, will at some point, make the book definitively lean and fall down.

In another order of progression, if we plant two ficus tree on the same day, we might think that, in equal conditions, their growth will be similar. But what happens if, having its space intervened; one of the two trees is a miniaturized? The Bonsai occupying the central space of the Chapel has been planted in the same amount of land that the roots of an 8 years old ficus tree (the same as the bonsai in the room) would need. You perceive this way a physical expansion of time, a juxtaposition between what this tree actually is and what should be, if it hadnt been meticulously cut and controlled.

[More information here](#)



Figura 19: General view of  $f(t) = f(t - t_0)$

### 3.12. Following the (Magnetic) North Pole

*Following the (Magnetic) North Pole*

Generaciones 2015. La Casa Encendida, Madrid. 2015.

Blueproject Foundation, Barcelona, 2016.

The project *Following the (Magnetic) North Pole* is still on going. It starts when I've been realized by chance that the North that a compass is pointing, it is actually constantly changing. 1400 km in the last 2 centuries. So something apparently static is constantly changing (!!).

From this new (for me) idea of North, the research project is structured in some steps, ending with an expedition to the position of the Magnetic North Pole (very very North of Canada) and following during some days (as much as I can) the random"trace of the Magnetic North Pole.



Figura 20: General view of *Following the (Magnetic) North Pole* in Blueproject Foundation, Barcelona, 2016.



### 3.13. Limits of Control

Solo show at L21 Gallery, Madrid. 2014. [Extract of the press release]

L21 Madrid announces with great excitement The Limits of Control, a solo exhibition by Pep Vidal. In the center of the room we find the Artist's proof, the first non-definite copy which is now encapsulated inside a methacrylic box pertaining to Pep Vidal's doctoral thesis in physics.

[More information here](#)



Figura 21: *Artist proof* and *Me acuerdo*, behind.

### 3.14. A cabin for finishing my thesis

*A cabin for finishing my thesis*

2014. Wood. 2.3 x 2.3 x 2.3 m

Can Felipa Visuals Arts, Barcelona, 2014.

I wanted finishing my PhD in Physics. Its for this reason I've built a 2.3m length wood cube-cabin. A space for being alone, living and writing the thesis during a few months for, finally, finishing my PhD. A (quite) small and (quite) isolated place where living and working. It is located in a empty site, near my studio in Hangar, Poblenou, Barcelona.

I was living here half a year. From April to the day after finishing my thesis in September 2014.



Figura 22: A white horse suddenly appears during a sunny day. Behind my cabin.





Figura 23: Last day of residency in the cabin, a day before finishing my thesis, June 2014.

### 3.15. Numerical algorithms for improving the measurement of topography of x-ray mirrors used in synchrotrons

*Numerical algorithms for improving the measurement of topography of x-ray mirrors used in synchrotrons*

Publication. Winner of Miquel Casablanças Prize (Publication) 2014.

Included in the collection of:

Arxiu del Centre d'Estudis i Documentació del MACBA, Barcelonas

Centro de Documentación y Biblioteca del MNCARS, Madrid

MoMA Library, New York

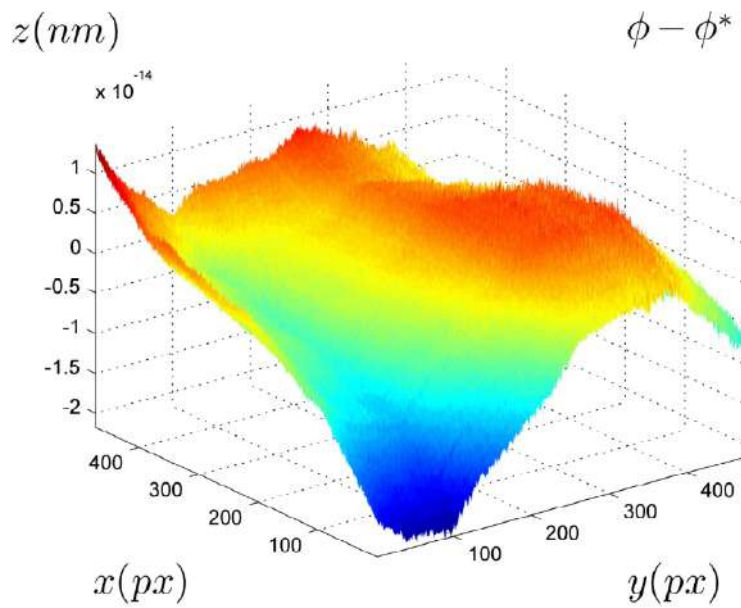


Figura 24: Figure of the thesis.

### 3.16. Beyond

#### *Beyond*

2014. Salt water, brine shrimps, potatoes, stone, foam, among other materials.  
Site specific para el espacio THE WINDOW. L21 Gallery. Madrid, 2014.

*Beyond* is an installation which consists in a partially isolated system. From the street the viewer observes, at first sight, a window blocked with a black paint and, then, as you get closer, a small light emerges from a not very big hole. When looking inside, one discovers a marine microcosm, an unknown and partially hidden place of natural and artificial elements.



Figura 25: General view of *Beyond*.

### 3.17. A humble sock

2014. Resin. 0.021 mm x 0.019 mm x 0.023 mm.  
Antoni Tàpies Foundation.

“A humble sock through which meditation is proposed, with it I represent the importance of the cosmic order that exists among small things”, Antoni Tàpies.

It is because of this importance that a miniature replica is made of the emblematic sock of Tàpies, the smallest, and placed next to the original, to be lost forever. The size of the sock has been changed, from 18 meters in 1991 to 2,85 meters the sock in the Foundation, in 2010. Following this evolution the sock became extinct in May 2013.

The micro-sock, the smallest in the world, is the size corresponding to 2 hours before become extinct. Made with in collaboration with National Center of Microelectronics.

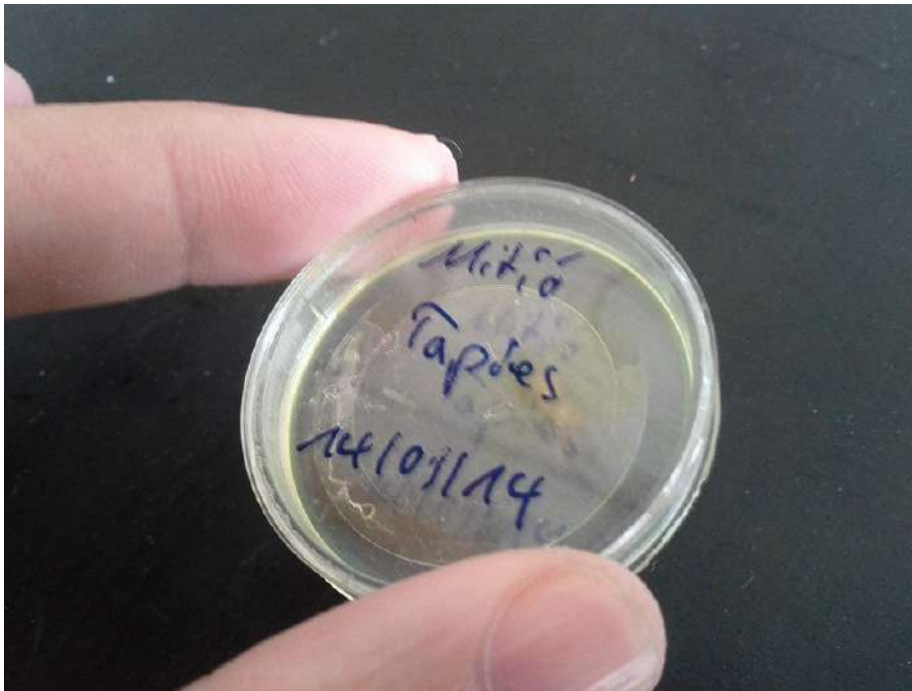


Figura 26: Micro-sock of Antoni Tàpies.

### 3.18. A piece of Land

*A piece of Land*

50 square meters of a spelt field in Milano. Solo project. Milan, 2013-2015.

*A piece of Land* consists on taking the central portion of a recently seeded spelt field and leave it without doing something -no cut, no extra water, nothing- from December 2013 to end of 2015, and see what's happening.



Figura 27: A piece of Land 1, 2, 3.

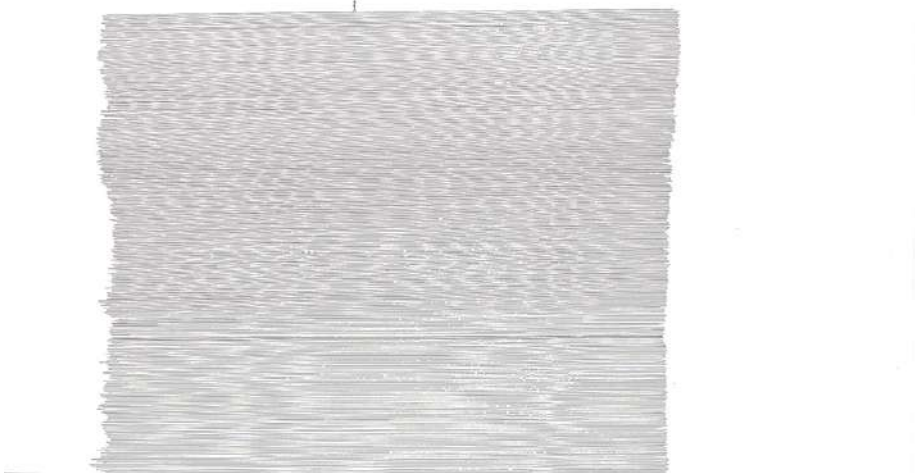


Figura 28: A man in front his piece of Land.

### 3.19. {}

{}

2013. Void, plastics (7), metals (4) and other materials (8). Size: 83cm x 83cm x 83cm. Weight:  $\approx$  1 ton.

Espai Cub, La Capella. Barcelona.

{ } is a singularity in the space.

Firstly I've done a small ultra high vacuum chamber, removing the 99.99999999 % of molecules of air. After, I've covered this space with several isolating materials, for finally having the void forever.

A real and constant void resistant to infinitesimal changes.



Figura 29: {}.

### 3.20. Grass grows

Soil, wood and grass. Variable dimensions.

Espai Muxart, Martorell, 2012. Finalist of Miquel Casablanca Prize 2013. Fabra i Coats 2013.

*Grass grows* of Hans Haacke and *Grass grows* of Pep Vidal are simultaneously showed in Haus der Kunst (Munich) and Espai Muxart (Martorell), respectively. *Grass grows* of Hans Haacke is a cone of grass and it is realized by cultivating seeds in a cone of soil. *Grass grows* of Pep Vidal is an exact copy of the Haacke's piece, during all the show, and it is realized with high accuracy techniques and procedures. For proposing something useless and impossible as copying randomness and simplicity of grass growing.



Figura 30: Front view in Fabra i Coats.