

THE MOUNTAIN
Agrupación Señor Serrano



"We wanted people to understand that they shouldn't take any opinion pre-digested, and they shouldn't swallow everything that came through the tap, whether it was radio or Facebook"

Orson Welles on his radio broadcast *The war of the worlds* (1938)

THE MOUNTAIN

There is a widely shared image that runs through the history of ideas: climbing a mountain, overcoming all the difficulties to reach its summit and once there, being able to see the world "as it is". See the truth and not just shadows or reflections. It is a beautiful image indeed. But is it really so? Often, looking from the top down you can see nothing but clouds and fog covering everything or a landscape that changes depending on the time of day or the weather. What is that world like then? How is that truth? Is there the truth? Is it just a peak that must be crowned and that's it, or rather a cold and inhospitable path that must be continually climbed?

The Mountain blends the first expedition to Mount Everest, which success is still today uncertain; Orson Welles sowing panic with his radio show *The War of the Worlds*; badminton players playing baseball; a fake news website; a drone scrutinizing the audience; lots of snow; mobile screens; fragmented images; and Vladimir Putin discoursing delighted on truth and trust.



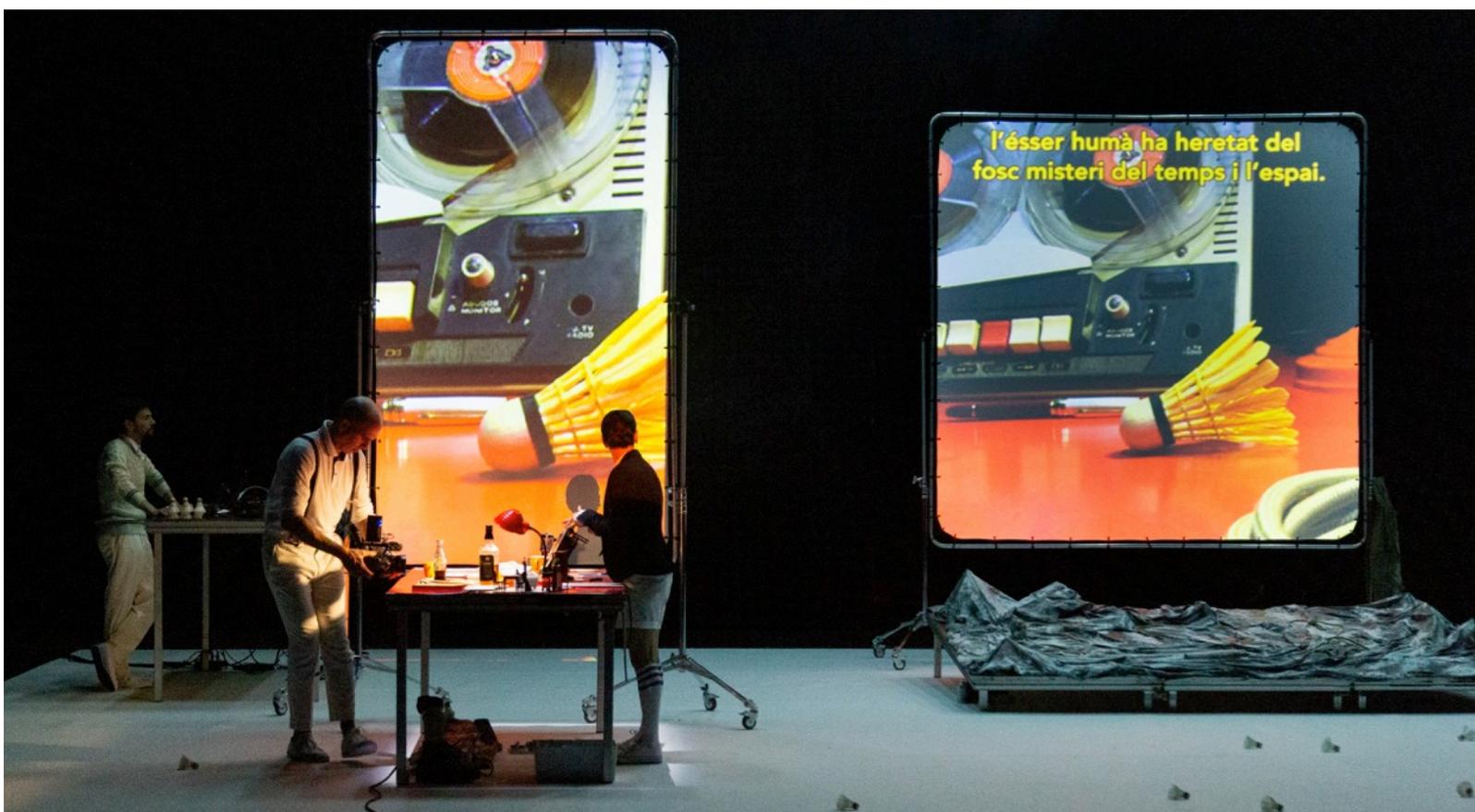
THE EXPEDITION

A network of ideas, stories, images, actions and concepts underpins The Mountain's dramaturgical framework. With these materials, unfolded in layers that intermingle creating unexpected connections, the piece is presented as an exploration without a map on the myth of truth.

George Mallory and Mount Everest. In 1924, a British expedition tried for the first time to reach the summit of the Everest. It was a fabulous adventure with a tragic ending. Mallory was last seen from Base Camp just 200 meters below the summit when a bank of fog covered him. No one knows if he made it to the top. Why was he trying to climb that mountain? Did he reach the summit? What kind of truth was he looking for up there? What certifies that something has really happened or not? Through the voice of Ruth, Mallory's wife and a philosopher, we will be guided over a reflection on truth based on persistence and honesty, on facing our relationship with facts and stories through love as the axis of action.

The War of the Worlds. It was a radio broadcast made by Orson Welles in 1938 based on the novel by H.G. Wells. The program put in check the credibility of the radio and the trust that the public had placed in it: thousands of people believed that some Martians were attacking the United States. Did the radio broadcast reveal anything about the public's vulnerability to new news media sources? Does this program tell us something about our time? What is trust and how does it work? Does trust have something to do with truth?

Putin, the showman of truth. Vladimir Putin becomes the M.C. of the piece, the master of ceremonies. Using a direct and incisive style, he reflects on the sense of truth and trust, the relationship between facts and stories, the role of the media in telling the story, etc. Putin approaches the truth through seduction and tries to draw us towards the dark side of the truth, towards suspicion, mistrust and deceit. But why Putin and not another face? Perhaps precisely because it is the face we want to see defending this type of thinking, rather than the face of someone we admire or feel closer to.



THE DEVICE

A white and diaphanous stage. Scale miniatures atop platforms, a radio studio, a reproduction of Everest, portable projection screens and tripods make up a space halfway between a recording set, a museum and a badminton court. It is the ideal space to build the various dramaturgical lines of the plot and also to show the mechanism that interconnects them. A space that allows us to play with hindering or fragmenting the vision of what happens on stage, in the same way that the truth is often presented to us, hindered and fragmented.

Three mobile screens distributed throughout the space, between the platforms and the pedestals, function as a projection surface, fragmenting the visual discourse when they are separated or unifying it when they are joined to form a large screen. These canopies also function as reflectors, chroma backgrounds for special effects or space dividers with which to deliberately hide what happens behind them, creating a constant interplay between what is shown and what is hidden from the viewer's eyes.

On the platforms, objects and scale models creating scenes compose the different situations that visually and dramaturgically construct the piece. A model of a Midwest city where an alien ship has just landed; the lifeless body of mountaineer George Mallory among the eternal ices of Everest; a large-scale reproduction of Mount Everest; public and private spaces of a United States captivated by radio; baseball players who claim to be playing badminton with the complicity and consensus of the spectators. All these materials are used to narrate the different stories that make up the plot of *The Mountain* through video cameras and projection screens.



CREDITS

Creation: Agrupación Señor Serrano

Dramaturgy and direction: Àlex Serrano, Pau Palacios, Ferran Dordal

Performance: Anna Pérez Moya, Àlex Serrano, Pau Palacios, David Muñiz

Voice: Amelia Larkins

Music: Nico Roig

Video programming: David Muñiz

Video creation: Jordi Soler Quintana

Set design and scale models: Lola Belles, Àlex Serrano

Set design assistant: Mariona Signes

Costumes: Lola Belles

Light design: Cube.bz

Digital mask: Román Torre

Production director: Barbara Bloin

Producer: Paula Sáenz de Viteri

Technical director: David Muñiz

Management: Art Republic

A production by GREC Festival de Barcelona, Teatre Lliure, Centro de cultura contemporánea Condeduque, CSS Teatro Stabile di Innovazione del Friuli – Venezia Giulia, Teatro Stabile del Veneto – Teatro Nazionale, Zona K, Monty Kulturfaktorij, Grand Theatre, Feikes Huis.

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WE LOVE LOGOS



The media say

The lightness of feathers that bounce off badminton rackets. The eye of a drone, which is a camera, which is facial recognition, which is our eye (both already quite pixelated). The reliefs of the scale models that tell the story of Mallory, the Everest explorer, and Ruth, the writer who was waiting for him at home. Orson Welles and Vladimir Putin addressing us: challenging us to discern between honest confessions and fake news. And a snow cannon that turns the stage into an atmosphere of fake snowflakes that fall on the living and the ghosts. Alex Serrano and Pau Palacios carry out a free version of F for Fake, to explore the boundary between trust and faith, in the context of the internet as an increasingly swampy disinformation machine.

Jorge Carrión, La Vanguardia (13.07.2020)

"If, in the myth of the cave, Plato sheds light on men's blind inclination to mistake the shadows cast on a wall for the real world to which they turn their backs, in The Mountain, the myth of truth rises to try to reach the summit of mount Everest, before immersing - with style - in the machinery of the multimedia theater of Agrupación Señor Serrano, the place of all the manipulations that generate truths as beautiful as lies (or vice versa). [...] The end, showing in a deafening silence (the actor who plays) George Mallory contemplating at his feet (the model that represents) the Himalayas, suddenly takes on gigantic dimensions that reveal the essence of theatrical truth, the making of a (very beautiful) illusion. Impressive immersive experience. Vertigo guaranteed."

Yves Kafka

www.larevueduspectacle.fr

"When do "truth" and "reality" overlap? Is something that seems real to our eyes always true? Should we give our lives value? If the virtualization of reality is now at a point where what was unreal is interchangeable with what is real, what value should we give our life? The Catalan theater company Agrupación Señor Serrano returns to Italy with an international show of the highest level that tries to sound the limits of this reflection; it does so with the sardonic smile of a tyrant badly imitated by a software, with the sweetness of a love story locked in an extreme adventure between rocks and glaciers, with the story of a mythical and spectacular hoax, Orson Welles' radio program from 1938. [...] If the objective is to reflect on the concept of truth in the post-truth era, then the theatrical result is disruptive. The intertwined stories have value in themselves, due to the way they are told and their specific qualities: each level of discourse uses in fact a different theatrical language and a particular relationship with fiction (and therefore with reality). But despite the complexity of the scenic, visual and sound scores, the precision of execution and a general technique of the utmost care are striking: there is no grainy nor out of focus image, and extreme cleanliness goes with the development of the scenes and the composition of this great show. The Mountain is also a baroque box of visual phantasmagoria, in which amazes, however, the ability with which the spectacular suggestion is put at the service of the story and that initial, complex and sticky question: what is the truth? "

Andrea Pocosgnich

www.teatrocritica.net

Agrupación Señor Serrano

Founded by Àlex Serrano in Barcelona in 2006, Agrupación Señor Serrano is a theatre company that creates original productions based on stories drawn from contemporary times. The company uses the richness of innovative and vintage tools to extend the boundaries of its theater. Based on creative collaborations, Señor Serrano's productions blend stage performance, text, video, sound, and scale models to stage stories about discordant aspects of today's human experience. The company productions premiere and tour mostly internationally.

Agrupación Señor Serrano gestates and premieres original intermedia productions using the company's three-stage creative model: Devising of Contents, Dispositive Conception, and Editing and Rehearsal. Creators involved in each work share their primary creative skill sets with one another over the course of the process. This exchanging of abilities empowers each member of the group and consequently the company's project.

The company has received support and recognition from several institutions like Departament de Cultura de la Generalitat, GREC Festival de Barcelona, Instituto Nacional de las Artes Escénicas y de la Música, Centre d'Arts Escèniques de Terrassa, Triennale di Milano, Manchester Home Arts Center or Théâtre National Wallonie-Bruxelles among others. Its creative processes include international residency centers like La Chartreuse – Centre National des Écritures du Spectacle, Groningen Grand Theater or Monty Kulturfaktorij

At present, Agrupación Señor Serrano's core is composed by Àlex Serrano, Pau Palacios and Barbara Bloin. David Muñiz and Paula S. Viteri complete the stable structure of the company. Besides them, for each production the company has counted on the essential collaboration of a cross-disciplinary and variable creative team.

On August 3, 2015, Agrupación Señor Serrano was awarded the **Silver Lion at the Venice Biennale**. In addition to this recognition, the company has regularly won awards both nationally and internationally (Premi Ciutat de Barcelona, Premi FAD Sebastià Gasch, etc.) and has received rave reviews in media such as The New York Times, Folha de Sao Paulo, L'Espresso, Tiempo Argentino or El País among others.

Productions and awards**2021 Olympus Kids**

Award to the most innovative show, FETEN, Gijón (Spain)

Drac d'Or Prize to the most innovative show, Fira de Teatre de Lleida (Spain)

Drac d'Or Julieta Agustí Prize to the best show, Fira de Teatre de Lleida (Spain)

2020 The Mountain, Festival International des Arts Bordeaux Métropole (France)

TeatreBarcelona Award to the best show New Trends 2021(Spain)

Drac d'Or to the best show, Fira de Teatre de Lleida 2021 (Spain)

2019 Garden Center Europa, L'Auditori de Barcelona (Spain)**2018 Kingdom**, GREC Festival de Barcelona (Spain)

Barcelona Critics Prize 2018, Best Use of Digital Tools (Spain)

2017 Ciutat de Barcelona Award for Theatre (Spain)**2016 Birdie**, GREC Festival de Barcelona (Spain)

Kazimierz Krzanowski award, Kontrapunkt Festival 2018. Szczecin (Poland)

Butaca Prize, Catalan Theatre Audience Awards 2017 (Spain)

Barcelona Critics Prize 2016, New Trends (Spain)

Barcelona Critics Prize 2016, Best Use of Digital Tools (Spain)

2015 Silver Lion from the Venice Theatre Biennale (Italy)

FAD Sebastià Gasch Award, Barcelona (Spain)

2014 A House in Asia, GREC Festival de Barcelona (Spain)

Award to the most innovative show, PIHT Festival 2016. Warsaw (Poland)

Barcelona Critics Prize 2014, New Trends (Spain)

Award to the best show, Festival Spectaculo Interesse, Ostrava (Czech Republic)

2012 Brickman Brando Bubble Boom, Festival TNT, Terrassa (Spain)**2011 Katastrophe**, Festival TILT, Perpignan (France)**2010 Memo**, Festival TNT, Terrassa (Spain)**2009 Immut**, Adriantic, Barcelona (Spain)**2008 Contra.Natura**, L'Estruch, Sabadell (Spain)**2007 Europa** Festival Temporada Alta, Girona (Spain)**2006 Mil Tristos Tigres**, Neo Festival, Barcelona (Spain)

Company members CV

Àlex Serrano Tarragó (Barcelona, 1974) has a degree in Industrial Design, a master in Interactive Communication and a degree in Stage Direction. For years he worked in different advertising, audiovisual and multimedia companies. In 2002 he founded Areatangent, a platform for contemporary scenic creation based in Raval, Barcelona. In 2006 he founded the Agrupación Señor Serrano.

Pau Palacios Pozuelo (Barcelona, 1977) began studying Political Science at a university, but ended up graduating in Sociology in another. After finishing his studies he worked as executive producer and road manager at the Teatre Lliure in Barcelona until 2005. That same year he moved to Lisbon, where he flirted with video-art. Since 2006, he is a dramatist and a performer of Agrupación Señor Serrano. He currently lives in the Alps, in the Italian Tyrol. He is the author of the novel *Furioso reloj* (Editorial Tria, 2012).

Barbara Bloin (Auxerre, 1981) has a Masters degree in Performing Arts with a theatrical mention from the University of Besançon (2005) and another in Performing Arts from the Autonomous University of Barcelona (2008). In 2003 she moved to Barcelona to pursue a doctorate in Performing Arts, which she abandoned in an inspired moment. In September 2005 she entered the Institut del Teatre in the category of "Text Interpretation", but in 2007, her life changed when she became a member of Agrupación Señor Serrano.

David Muñoz Rigattieri (Barcelona, 1983) has a degree in Higher Telecommunications Engineering from the Polytechnic University of Catalonia and specialized in live sound (MicroFusa) and stage lighting (Show Technology Workshop). He has been Technical Head of the Maldà Cinema and the Sarrià Theater, and resident technician at La Seca Espai Brossa. He is the technical chief of Agrupación Señor Serrano since September 2017.

Paula Sáenz de Viteri (Eskoriatza, 1984) has a degree in audiovisual communication from the Autonomous University of Barcelona with a specialty in film theory from the University of California Berkeley and a master's degree in film theory and analysis from UPF. She has worked as a production assistant at the San Sebastian Film Festival and has organized film series and concerts. She also worked doing event production. She joined Agrupación Señor Serrano in September 2017.

Last shows

Garden Center Europa



Premiere 15-03-2019 at Obertura Spring Festival, Barcelona

A seed. Everything the seed needs to flourish: earth, water, light, music, love, democracy, listening, sex, culture. A flower. Some ideals, a project, a plan. The hope of creating a better community. The implementation of the plan. And its failure. Humanity, its imperfection, its weakness. The impossibility of transcending. The violence, the fire, the ashes. The rage, the despair. And then, the acceptance of failure. The sadness, a melancholic lament. A break. A moment of reflection. And finally, looking at each other, caressing each other, kissing each other. Trusting that everything can re-emerge. A seed.

Garden Center Europa is an original staging by Agrupación Señor Serrano. An audiovisual dramaturgy performed on the notes of Beethoven's 9th Symphony, performed live by a symphony orchestra, 4 solo singers and a choral ensemble.

Kingdom



Premiere 04.07.2018 at GREC Festival, Barcelona

Kingdom is an irreverent cocktail, mixing bananas, consumerism, virile choreographies, commercials, punk rock, King Kong, supermarkets, growth, confusion, expansion, multinationals, shortages, coups d'état, bestiality, trap music and very macho men in an endless party.

The world is going to shit, let's celebrate. Bananas and King Kong, two totems of the system, two insatiable beasts that need to grow without limits, great devourers of resources, icons of masses but, above all, an inevitable condemnation for a system that cannot stop growing although this pushes us towards extinction. And if this is the destiny of humanity, what are we going to do, crying? No, embracing our bananas and have a party.

Birdie



Premiere 07.07.2016 at GREC Festival, Barcelona

Two mirages. In one: wars, droughts, massive deforestation, polluted coasts, labor exploitation, political instability, poor sanitary conditions, persecution, forced deportation, abuse of natural resources, depleted aquifers, food shortages... In the other: stocked supermarkets, safe streets, family stability, good health services, freedom, paid work, respect for human rights, welfare, recycling and renewable energies, prosperity, social mobility...

And in between, flocks of birds. Thousands of migrating birds constantly drawing impossible shapes in the sky. Movement. Ceaseless movement. Birds... and beyond, planets, asteroids, raw materials, galaxies, blood, cells, weapons, atoms, electrons, advertising, quarks, ideology, fear, waste, hope. Life. Nothing in the cosmos is quiet. Stillness is a chimera. The only thing there is, is movement. If it is impossible to stop an electron, what's the point in building fences against flocks of birds?

A House in Asia



Premiere 10.07.2014 at GREC Festival, Barcelona

The house where Geronimo is hiding in Pakistan. An exact copy of that house in a military base in North Carolina. A third twin house in Jordan, where a film is shot. The largest manhunt in history. A Sheriff obsessed with a white whale. The boy band Take That drilling for a historic mission. Cowboys and Indians. Airplanes and beers. Copies, reflections, imitations and cheeseburgers.

Through its trademark language (scale models, video projections, video editing in real time and willing performers) Agrupación Señor Serrano presents a scenic western where reality and its copies are mixed, drawing a merciless pop portrait of the decade following 9/11 that gave way to the XXI century. Come and see.

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