



MIRALDA  
DE GUST

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## MIRALDA, MASTER OF CEREMONIES, ARTIST OF THE EPHEMERAL

*Isabel Tejada*

The anti-institutional and countercultural sixties, which sought release from any number of restrictions, provided an ideal context for the production of an art with attitude that broke from the norms and the return to order that had taken hold of the field since the forties. Arriving in Paris at the beginning of that decade from a country experiencing an extreme dictatorship must have been like breathing in fresh air for the first time.

Miralda arrived in Paris in 1962 with a fellowship to study fine arts there for four months; except for a brief spell when he had to do military service, he stayed in France through 1972. Indeed, his first works using toy soldiers—fruit of that grueling experience in the military—and the need to go beyond the four walls that limited possible ways of generating art experiences, must be understood in terms of his life story. Such works would not have been possible in Spain under Franco, where even whispers were censored; the street and the university were taken over by gray-clad horses, and political speeches were forced to make use of too many metaphors.

Meanwhile, Paris was a celebration, a city imbued with the desire to change social conventions, a liberating and emancipating place with an enthusiastic atmosphere where everything seemed possible. The world over, neo-avant-gardes of the moment were committed to giving art the character of an event, doing away with its physical nature, including time and space coordinates, as well as encouraging the participation of viewers until they became users. It was in relation to these new formulations of art that Miralda found the specificity he has been able to develop, without compromising common sense, for more than four decades.

He was not alone in this process: in his social milieu, Catalan was spoken in addition to French, as little by little members of a group that the critic Alexandre Cirici has called “The Catalans of Paris” arrived in the city. Along with Miralda, who was from Terrassa, were Joan Rabascall, Jaume Xifra and Benet Rossell, with whom he worked in the sixties and seventies, making some of his first collective productions. Indeed, from the beginning, Miralda’s works made use of a collective structure, which proved necessary when his projects became monumental in scale. Due to shared affinities, he also came into contact during those years with Pierre Restany, the intellectual leader of the *Nouveaux Réalistes*, whom he met through Rabascall. The *New Realists* employed strategies of appropriating the real through the defense of “a fracture that would make way for a new language based on the adventure of the object and the affirmation of urban culture.” In



Green zone, *Situació-Color*,  
Barcelona, 1976

ful, festive and humorous aspects that characterize Miralda's work mingled with the notion and practice of the visit that, since the nineteenth century, has been based on self-control, order, distinction, and courtesy. Behind the subversive and apparently surface-level transformation of these rituals lies a criticism, through parody, of their attendant social behaviors. Miralda and his team respected to the letter the rites of a first visit, and no one felt unwelcome: the host greeted guests at the door, showed them the house and its furniture, offered them music and delicacies. But there were subtle alterations: welcoming people next to the host was Jaume Sisa singing *Qualsevol nit por sortir el sol* (Any Night the Sun Can Rise); the showing of the house took the form of an ascending initiation rite in which the visitors became part of the setting like live sculptures, wearing colored capes that on each floor matched the delicacies offered. And as visitors went up the three floors—mauve, orange, green—they came upon a maid who was ironing as the visitors came into the room, the waiter, the cook and the mattress-maker hard at work.

In Miralda's works, everyone is invited. As at that celebration in 1976, in each of his exhibitions and in each of his projects the words of the song that Sisa sang as he welcomed the visitors resound: "Oh! Welcome! Come in, come in / May sadness go up in smoke / My home is your home / if homes belong to anyone."<sup>23</sup>

23. "Oh! Benvinguts! Passau, passau, / de les  
crisors en femem fum. / Que casa merca és casa  
vostre / si és que hi ha cases d'algui."