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Alejandro Vidal
When it rains, all shines black
February 28 - April 11, 2010

Opening reception,
Sunday, February 28, 7-9pm

From February 28 through April 11, 2010, PARTICIPANT INC is pleased to present *When it rains, all shines black*, the first U.S. solo exhibition of Barcelona-based artist Alejandro Vidal. Known for his large-format photographs, videos, and installations that assert a post-cinematic aesthetic of conflict, seen through a generational lens that distinguishes the obsolescence of transgression in societies obsessed with control, the exhibition will consist of new works in photography and video.

Vidal's new photographs for *When it rains, all shines black* are a loose re-staging of a common form of popular political dissent in Latin American countries, involving the symbolic washing of the national flag in front of government buildings. Shooting at night from a hermetically remote location, usually from inside a car and illuminated only by the glare of headlights, Vidal de-objectifies the original act through distancing strategies, insinuating a subtle yet threatening rupture. The location and actions appear inscrutable, foreboding a dystopic resistance or enacting a B-movie-esque ceremony of an imaginary secret society. The flags are unidentifiable, and the actors are theatrically styled to produce a "vernacular upheaval, insinuating those forms of cultural subversion that are more powerful for going undetected." (Erica Papernik, *Crime and Punishment*, Tallinn Kunstihoone, 2006).

Vidal's *Firestorm* (5 min. video/sound) covertly announces the globalization of the image of terror. Images of fireworks, ripped from the net, burst to the sound of explosions from real, 'live' conflicts. Conflicts of the analog age were generally specific in location and duration, but today's digital media release them into something of almost limitless scope, universal location, and endless loop. Real violence has evolved into a semiotic commodity, pointing the way to a new aesthetic of terror, a new condition of life characterized by personal and collective paranoia, routine disorder, mayhem, and imperceptibly but rapidly eroding civil liberties. "With the end of the classical form of war between sovereign states, it becomes clear that security finds its end in globalization: the idea of a new planetary order, which is, in truth, the worst of all disorders. Because this condition requires constant reference to a state of exception, the measure of security works towards a growing de-politicization of society, irreconcilable with democracy." (Giorgio Agamben, "On Security and Terror," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, September 20, 2001)

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Also included will be a new series of twenty small-scale photographs, *Somewhere in a great country* (2010), comprised of imagery taken from captured low resolution Internet videos. These images belong to popular celebrations and festive acts like Independence Day, political rallies, etc., in which fireworks are used. However, there is scarcely any human presence in the photos, resembling instead acts of dissent or sabotage, car bombs or threats. The image quality is reminiscent of surveillance, or the green tone of a night vision lens. Like *Firestorm*, *Somewhere in a great country* explores the relationship between history and fiction, and the future of the image.

Early of Vidal's works brought together references to activism, early rave period, '80s cult movies, manuals of self-defense, and punk nihilism to analyze states of repressed aggression. It has been noted that, "Vidal seems to delight in a moment prior to the action, the moment of the preparative rituals of fighting, in gestures encoded in the heart of action films... He presents the factual literality of images in a neutral unaffected manner, tossing all this thuggish power around to shake us out of the social dream, wretched self-control, the worst form of repression, a law assumed without resistance." (Amanda Cuesta, *Not afraid of tears*, Galeria Joan Prats, 2008)

Alejandro Vidal (Palma de Mallorca, Spain, 1972) lives and works in Barcelona. He has exhibited his work at numerous international museums and centers such as Kunsthalle Winterthur, Switzerland; Fundació La Caixa, Barcelona; Palazzo delle Papesse, Sienna; Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Taipei; MIS, Sao Paulo; Da2, Salamanca; Kling & Bang, Reikjavik; and Mambo; Bologna. He took part in the Busan Biennial, South Korea, 2006. Recently he has exhibited at Galeria Joan Prats, Barcelona; Galleria ARTRA, Milan; Galeria Elba Benitez, Madrid; Galerie Thomas Schulte and Play Platform for Film and Video, Berlin; and Monitor, Rome. Upcoming projects include *Seven deadly sins* at Zentrum Paul Klee/Kunstmuseum Bern, Switzerland, and *Glück Happens* at Kunstpalais Erlangen, Germany.

SPECIAL LIMITED EDITION

Through the generosity of artists, PARTICIPANT INC co-produces limited edition artworks specifically designed to support our programs. Purchase of Alejandro Vidal's *Wall of silence*, 2009, digital C-print, 50 x 50cm, edition of 20, pictured above) is 40% tax deductible, and proceeds will support the exhibition, *When it rains, all shines black*.



Alejandro Vidal, *When it rains all shines black*, is co-organized by SEACEX, Sociedad Estatal para la Acción Cultural Exterior.

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PARTICIPANT INC is located at 253 East Houston Street, between Norfolk and Suffolk Streets on the LES. Subway: F/V to Second Avenue, Allen Street exit or JMZ to Essex/Delancey.

Gallery Hours: Wednesday-Sunday, noon-7pm, admission free
www.participantinc.org