



*Epiphany. Mise-en-scène* is the staging of an action in the real context, inspired by a true story that seems fictional.

The city of Ghent keeps alive a mystery about a stolen altarpiece. The enigma is already as attractive as the artwork itself.

On the night of 10-11 April 1934, two panels of the 15th-century Early Flemish polyptych altarpiece *The Adoration of the Mystic Lamb*, made by Jan and Hubert Van Eyck, were stolen from St. Bavo's Cathedral in Ghent, Belgium. The alleged thief returned one of them to the police, in order to prove that he had the other one (the panel known as *The Just Judges*) and thus negotiate a ransom. That same year, in the middle of the negotiations, the thief revealed on his deathbed that he was the only one who knew where the masterpiece was hidden, and that he would take the secret to his grave. To this day, the whereabouts of the *The Just Judges*, a piece of the great altarpiece, considered one of the most precious works of art and object of desire in history, is still unknown.

The garden of Gerald the Devil's castle in Ghent was transformed into a strange land of archaeological exploration halted in the process. The installation was presented as a stage, as some details were far from seeming real: the elevation of the green land and the aura of the golden threads, similar to the divine light painted by the Van Eyck brothers in the *Mystic Lamb Altarpiece*. Lobera "activated" the installation with the inclusion of a stranger who unearthed a package "there for all to see", a package of the same appearance to the stolen one. He walked through the city to the Museum of Fine Arts MSK, being recorded by pedestrians with their phones. Everything was documented in an unorthodox fictional documentary film which was shown for the first time in the crypt of the Gerald the Devil's castle.

The package that is presented next to the contract belongs to a series of six never-shown drawings, that the artist made on panels of equal size and appearance that the disappeared one. The packages must remain closed.

They can only be opened when the original Van Eyck brothers' table appears. In case it never happens, the work of Almudena Lobera will be hidden forever.

Recurrent topics in the work of the artist arise in *Epiphany. Mise-en-scène*: what we cannot see, the look and desire to see and capture, the relationship of the present with the historical heritage, as well as the practice of fiction. As the curator Marta Ramos-Yzquierdo cites in one of her texts on the work of Almudena Lobera: «"perhaps, it is only in fiction that the truth can be found", Eric Selbin,» [...] Lobera's work «becomes an invitation to fiction—no longer written or filmed, but lived—that poses a critical gaze at the story, whichever one, presented as fact».

\*Project produced with the collaboration of HISK Higher Institute for Fine Arts, YART / Thief In The Night, MSK Museum of Fine Arts Ghent, KIK-IRPA Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage, LUKAS Art in Flanders and TUINJAN. Presented for the first time in the collective exhibition *The Empty Foxhole*, curated by Philippe Van Cauteren at HISK, Ghent (Belgium), 2016.

Almudena Lobera (Madrid, 1984) is a visual artist. She has a BA Fine Art and an MA in Arts, Creation and Research from the Complutense University of Madrid. She was laureate from the HISK High Institute for Fine Arts in Ghent, Belgium (2015-16). Her work has been exhibited in numerous national and international collective exhibitions. She has presented solo exhibitions at Arróniz Gallery, Mexico City (2018); Island, Brussels (2017); Flora, Bogotá (2017); Max Estrella, Madrid (2016); ECCO Cádiz, Spain (2015); ABC Museum - ARCO (2013), among others. Among the acknowledgments she has received are: the INJUVE Youth Creation-Projects Award 2011, the Generation 2012 Award from Obra Social Caja Madrid, the ABC Museum Award Project-Sala4 2013, the Academy of Spain in Rome Grant (2014-2015), the Matadero Residency Grant at TOKAS Arts and Space (Tokyo, 2018) and the Leonardo Grant for Researchers and Cultural Creators from the BBVA Foundation (2018-2019), in whose project she is currently working.