

Series of Conferences  
Panoràmic – KBr Fundación MAPFRE

# Rethinking the face

Directed by Joan Fontcuberta

PANORÀMIC  
FESTIVAL DE CINEMA, FOTOGRAFIA I MÉS



Barcelona Photo Center

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An ontological emblem of the human, the form and meanings of the face have evolved over time. Its representation, the portrait, has travelled a very long way from the Greek mask to current facial recognition programmes and constitutes the figurehead of the mutant notion of identity. Although physiognomy is given by genetics and biological morphology, the face appears historically as a construction; a construction subject to political, social, and cultural vicissitudes that shape it even more than plastic surgery.

In the history of images, the face has occupied an undisputed centrality. The portrait as a genre for painters, and the questioning of identity in contemporary art and film, show the extent to which the reading of faces is framed by norms and meanings that vary widely from one generation to the next, from one society to the next. Each era has to invent its own specific idea of the face. We find ourselves in the first quarter of the 21st century subordinated to post-capitalism, globalisation, the environmental crisis, biotechnology and artificial intelligence, among other determining factors. Are we perpetuating the 19th-century obsessions of codifying, classifying and judging the face, or are we granting ourselves the freedom to design our appearance à la carte? Has control through the face increased? Despite the artifices of pretense, is the face still our most public and perceptible DNA?

The statement "rethinking the face" opens up a generous array of approaches: facial expressions and emotions; beauty standards and the social pressures that impose them; rituals of facial modification, such as surgical interventions, prostheses, scarifications, tattoos and a whole string of derived practices; masks and disguises; identity and cultural belonging; and the phenomenon of life in the image, that is, how the media, advertising and social networks shape the appearances we project.

In this condensed series of three lectures, the artists Alison Jackson and ORLAN, whose work is presented in the current edition of Panoramic, will voice their thoughts on these matters, and the philosopher and essayist Marina Garcés will provide a rubric. The parody of the cult of celebrity and the ownership of appearance has spurred the sharp and provocative work of Alison Jackson. For her part, ORLAN has been the undisputed pioneer of a feminist critique of the face, whose subversion of the established canon of classical painting has continued to attack the drifts of new technologies and robotisation. Finally, Marina Garcés will contribute a humanist vision of the face in relation to shame and the experience of learning. In conclusion, three original approaches that will help us today to rethink the face in a productive manner.

*Dates*  
**From Thursday  
November 2nd to  
Saturday November 4th  
2023**

*Time*  
**November 2nd and 3rd  
at 7:00 pm  
November 4th at 12:00 am**

*Simultaneous translation  
into Spanish will be  
available when  
conferences are held  
in another language.*

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**02.11** **Alison Jackson**  
**2023** ***Truth is dead***

In person and online

Get a glimpse into what really goes on in Donald Trump's meetings with Putin; the inside scoop into New British Royal Power Couple Charles and Camilla; or into Harry and Meghan... Alison Jackson, BAFTA and multi-award winning artist, talks about the behind-the-scenes details of her work; the concept of how we can't tell what's real or fake anymore; styling, and how she finds lookalikes; and celebrities themselves set to the backdrop of her photographs and videos. She reveals how she created a fake reality based on the 21st-century obsession with celebrity and the most secret moments of the rich and famous. Crazy castings, lookalike back stories, from sky-high aspirations in contrast to mundane reality, the transformations - wig and all - to becoming a 'celebrity' - as long as they look the part. Images we have all imagined but have never seen before.

**Alison Jackson** (Hampshire, UK, 1960) is a contemporary artist, photographer and filmmaker who explores the cult of celebrity – an extraordinary phenomenon manufactured by the media, publicity industries and the public figures themselves. To raise questions about this, Jackson creates celebrity 'news' that seems realistic and plausible but isn't. She has published numerous books including *Private* (2004), *Confidential* (2007), *Kate and Wills Up the Aisle: A Right Royal Fairy Tale* (2011), and *Stern Fotografíe Portfolio No. 70* (2012). Her work has been acquired by many public museum collections including the Parliamentary Art Collection, London; the National Portrait Gallery, London; SF MOMA, San Francisco; Musée de la Photographie, Charleroi, Brussels; the Frances Foundation, Paris; and the International Centre of Photography amongst others.

**03.11** **ORLAN**  
**2023** ***ORLAN in capital letters***

In person and online

"I'm ORLAN, among other things, and as far as possible. Every letter of my name is capitalized, because I don't want to be given into the ranks, I don't want to be given into the line. I'm an artist who isn't bound by any one material, artistic practice, way of saying things, technique or technology, old or new. I try to say things that are important to my time by questioning social phenomena from a critical distance. I work on the status of the body in society, examining all the cultural, traditional, political and religious pressures that are imprinted on bodies, especially those of women. I've fought all my life, privately and publicly, in my life and in my work, for change. I've always wanted to shake things up, try to build a better world. I began my work with sculpture, drawing and painting, then considered the body as a material among materials, because I'm a body, nothing but a body, a whole body, and it's my body that thinks. Everything we are and do is political, the body is political, the private is political".

**ORLAN** (Saint-Étienne, 1947) is a leading and internationally recognized French artist. She works with sculpture, photography, performance, video, 3D, video games, augmented reality, artificial intelligence and robotics (she has created a robot in her image that speaks with her voice) as well as scientific and medical techniques such as surgery and biotechnologies, and other media. Always mixed with humor, sometimes parody or even the grotesque, her work questions social phenomena and upsets pre-established codes.

**04.11** **Marina Garcés**  
**2023** ***Politics of the face***

In person and online

There is a philosophical tradition for which being present implies being able to come face to face. But do we ever get to be face to face? For Emmanuel Lévinas, for example, presence is an insuperable ethical principle because it contains a demand for responsibility and care. The face-to-face, with all its fragility and violence, would then be the zero degree of the face understood as the principle and foundation of ethics. But Deleuze and Guattari force us to ask ourselves a question that shakes the evidence of this foundation: what if we do not have a face? What if it is imposed or denied to us? What if someone destroys it? Or what if we wish to escape from the one we have? How can we draw another one? Being present is not just a matter of being able to hold ourselves face to face without violence. It is a matter of common grammars, of politics and, therefore, of education.

**Marina Garcés** (Barcelona, 1973) is a philosopher and lecturer in philosophy at the UOC, where she directs the Master's degree in Philosophy for Contemporary Challenges. She is the author of several books that have been translated into many languages. Her most recent publications include *Nueva ilustración radical* (2018), *Escuela de aprendices* (2020) and *Malas compañías* (2022).

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