

Jordi Colomer

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At the back of a dark space in what were once the cold storage rooms of the old Madrid slaughterhouse, or *matadero*, seven glass doors opened onto a corridor leading to a dark chamber. Here, looped on screens arranged like placards, were the episodes of Jordi Colomer's *Prohibido Cantar/No Singing (Obra didáctica sobre la fundación de una ciudad paradisíaca)* (*Prohibido Cantar/No Singing [Didactic Work on the Foundation of a Paradise City]*), 2012, which together construct a fragmented narrative of the rise and fall of Eurofarlete, a fictional urban paradise, which can be read forward to the end or backward to the beginning, as you please.

Jordi Colomer, *Prohibido Cantar/No Singing (Obra didáctica sobre la fundación de una ciudad paradisíaca)* (*Prohibido Cantar/No Singing [Didactic Work on the Foundation of a Paradise City]*), (detail), 2012, still from the seven-channel video component of a mixed-media installation additionally comprising portable screens, speakers, wooden corridor, lights, and aluminum doors.

Visions of urban space are typically based either on the idea of a social contract, on the one hand, or on theories of conflict, antagonism, informality, and ungovernable flow, on the other. The complexity at the core of the contemporary city, however, must be analyzed in terms of both perspectives; its meaning lies in the tension between these two extremes. This is the underlying premise of Colomer's history of Eurofarlete. As it unfolds, his little epic clearly references two urban precedents, one also fictional and one all too real. In 1930, Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill presented the story of *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, a capitalist dystopia in the middle of the desert that foretold the rise of Las Vegas after the legalization of gambling in 1931; Colomer incorporates verbatim quotes from Brecht's libretto into his videos. In 2007, a dubious consortium began developing the Gran Scala project, to be built in the desert of Los Monegros, Spain. The plan has

had considerable effect on the city of Farlete, known until that time as the heroic front line held by the Republicans against the advance of Fascist troops during the same years when, in Las Vegas, roulette wheels were starting to spin. But this enormous project was brought to a halt in 2012 when Sheldon Adelson, owner of the Las Vegas Sands Corporation, declared that the great leisure center EuroVegas would instead be located on the outskirts of Madrid. The project ensured such large-scale investment that all the political class could do in response was shamelessly offer tax exemptions and legislative benefits. Colomer's title pays tribute to Farlete's fluctuating fortunes, while the gloomy Brechtian lessons we've learned from Las Vegas (in both its American and European incarnations) converge in his installation.

Perhaps cities can only become spaces of happiness insofar as they are relentlessly undermined by non-



hegemonic economies of desire and ideas of justice. Colomer registers the rise and fall of his “paradise city”—a typically contemporary oxymoron, come to think of it, of the order of “repressive tolerance,” “altered identity,” or “mobile home”—under the gusts of a ravaging dry wind reminiscent of those blowing through the Nevada desert. Ultimately, economic machinations—obedience before the power of the golden calf—lead to the downfall of Eurofarlete as well. In keeping with the closed loop described by all oxymorons, the narrative of this ruin may in fact only represent a moment of stillness, a specific incident in a dynamic that portends still more hellish paradises.

—*Martí Peran*

Translated from Spanish by Jane Brodie.