

‘ART TO LEARN’.
A VISUAL A/R/TOGRAPHY PROJECT ON DRAWING, VIDEO MAPPING AND VIRTUAL REALITY IN
CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUMS.
A VISUAL ESSAY.

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to describe a of Visual A/r/tography project in contemporary art museums, entitled ‘Art to Learn’ in Spanish [Arte para Aprender], that we have been developing since 2013 at the CajaGranada Foundation Museum in Granada (Spain), in collaboration with the University of Granada (<https://www.arteparaaprender.org/>).

Educational interventions in museums and galleries of contemporary art and the educational function of museums are decisive topics in Art Education for decades. Research has focused both on the types of learning that take place in relation to works of art (Hofmann, 2017, Hubard, 2011), as well as on the different types of audiences, whether small children (Shaffer, 2011; Terreni, 2015), adolescents (Erickson & Hales, 2014; Striepe, 2013), or population groups that do not usually attend museums (Smith & Zimmermann, 2017).

Participatory approaches, many of them based on the concept of ‘relational aesthetics’ (Choi, 2013); as well as those that use Art-Based methodologies based, and more specifically a/r/tography approaches, have been explored in recent years (Garcia Roldan, 2012; Kothe, 2016)

Art to Learn project is based on five methodological decisions about the learning and artistic knowledge of visitors in a contemporary art museum, especially the school ages public.

The first decision, and probably the most defining one of the ‘Art to Learn’ project, is that viewers interact directly with works of art in an eminently visual way: building new participatory images. This is not what usually happens. Most of the proposals of interrelation with the paintings, sculpture or photographs of a museum are usually predominantly verbal: the spectators listen to the explanations of a mediator or guide; they read the explanations written in panels and informative sheets, in other occasions they watch videos, even during more time than they dedicated to contemplate the original works of art.

The second decision is that the visual response to works of art must correspond directly to the concept of the original work and, in many cases, also to the artistic technique. If the work of art is a drawing the visitors will draw, if it is an engraving the visitors will make an engraving, if it is a photograph the spectators will make a photograph. If in the original drawing only lines have been used to delimit profiles and no lights or shadows have been used, visitors will draw with profile lines and will not use contrasts of light and shadow. If the original work is a visual reflection on identity and gender, visitors will elaborate their interventions on this same concept. This second condition for the interventions in ‘Art to Learn’ is quite far from many of the usual activities that are proposed to visitors, especially with groups of schoolchildren, who after visiting an exhibition or a part of the museum, they are asked to make a creative drawing, perhaps remembering what they have seen, but without any additional requirement that relates what they have learned from the works of art with their own creative process.

The third decision is that the images created by the visitors will form part of the exhibition, together with the original works of art. This means that in ‘Art for Learning’ processes are as important

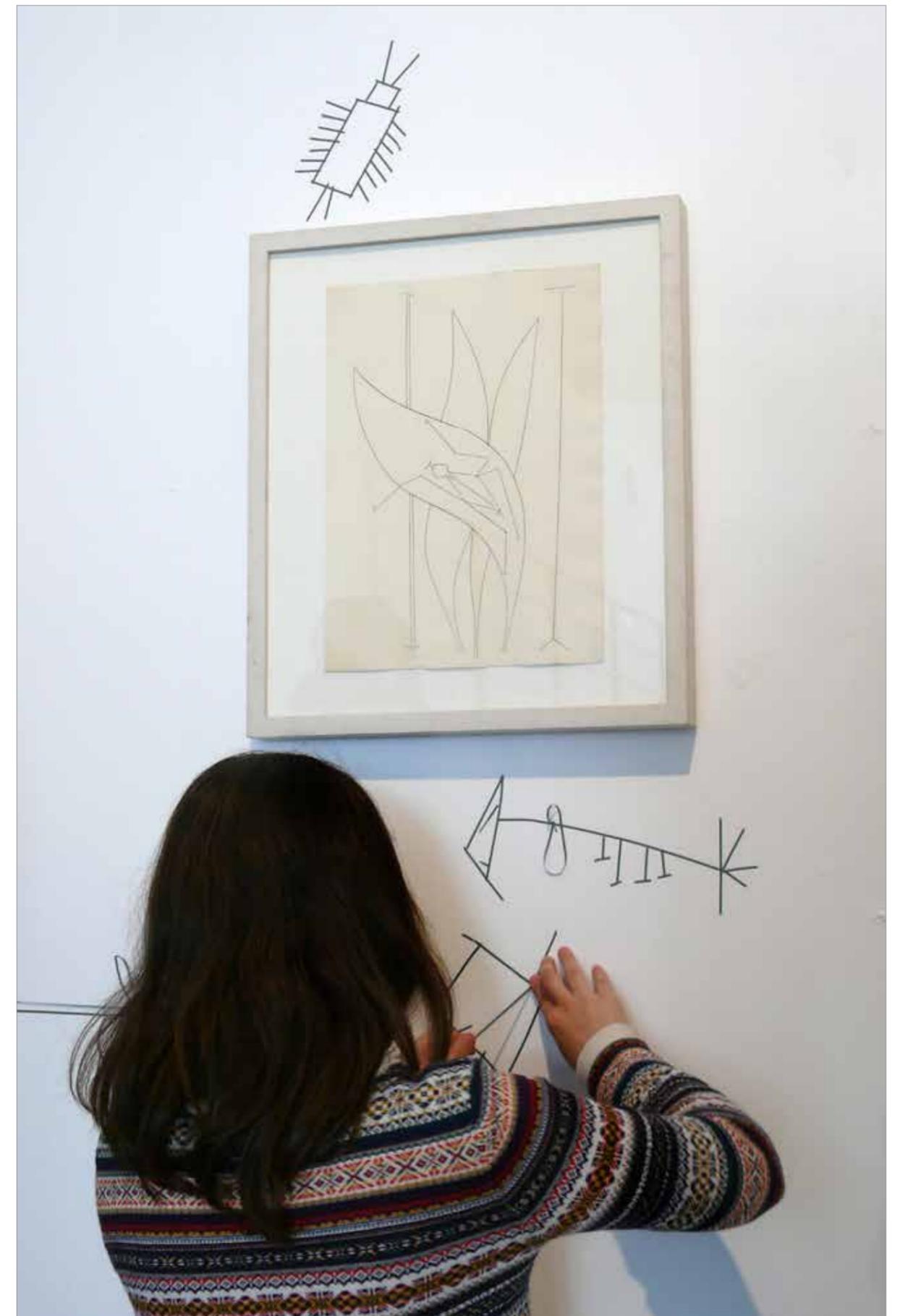


Fig. 1. R. Marin-Viadell. (2016). *Insects from an insect drawn by Picasso # 1*. Independent Photography with an indirect visual appointment (Picasso, 1949-50).



as the final visual results. The images created by the visitors as a result of their learning about such engraving or photograph in particular must be sufficiently consistent with the original work in order to be displayed next to each other. For this reason, the educational activities workshop is not located in a different place of the exhibition, but is part of the same exhibition.

The fourth decision, which although it may seem a minor issue, it is not at all, is that the images created by visitors will be displayed very close to the original work of art. The distance between the work of art and the visual response of visitors is nullified.

The fifth characteristic, which emerges from the previous one, is that the intervention of the visitors along with the original artwork becomes a complete installation, whose general sense must respond to the work of art from which it has emerged.

2. Phases of the 'Art to Learn' project.

Each annual edition of 'Art to Learn' takes place over approximately five months, the most intense being the month and a half or two months that the exhibition is open to the public. During the exhibition there are more than two thousand five hundred visits, the majority of students from schools in the city of Granada and other towns near the city.

Broadly speaking, each annual edition of the 'Art to Learn' follows five major phases.

The first is the negotiation between the museum institution and the research group, to agree on the interests and objectives of both parts.

The second phase is the preparation of educational materials and the contact with educational centers.

The third is the design and implementation of participatory interventions that visitors will develop. During the exhibition, near each of the artworks, a small number of participants is placed, between four and eight approximately, and a verbal dialogue begins on the most outstanding characteristics of the work, from more general topics, such as author, date, artistic movement, etc., up to the most concrete aspects of the particular work of art that we are seeing. Next, we introduce the proposal of the type of action and the materials. This second step is only necessary in the first days of the exhibition, when there are still few

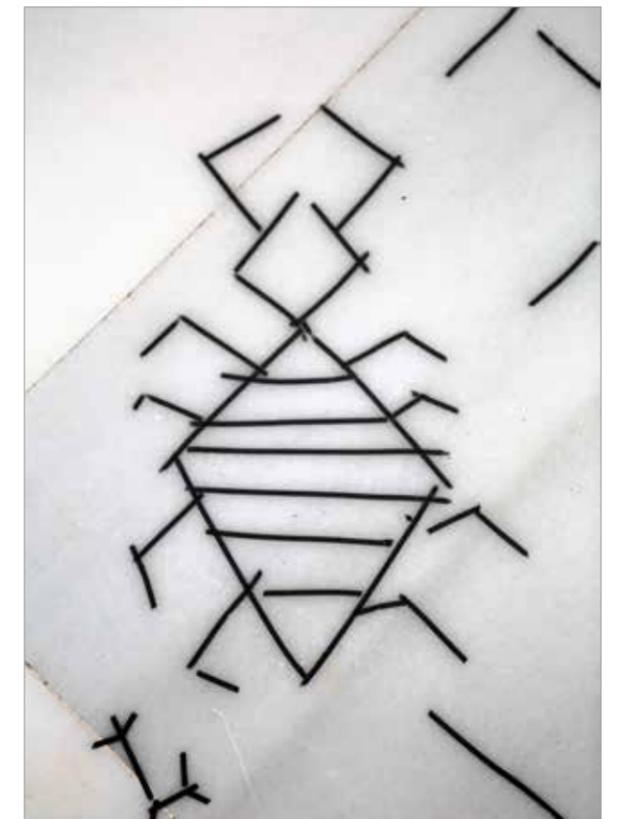
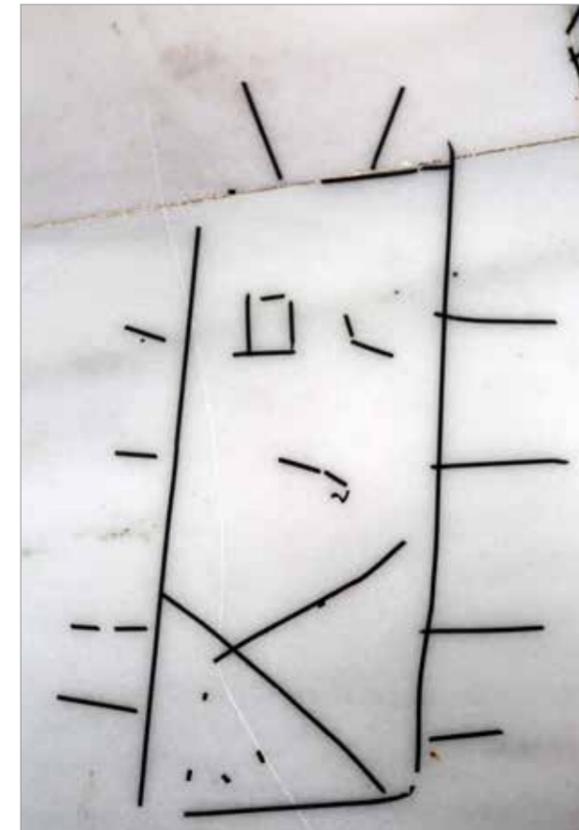
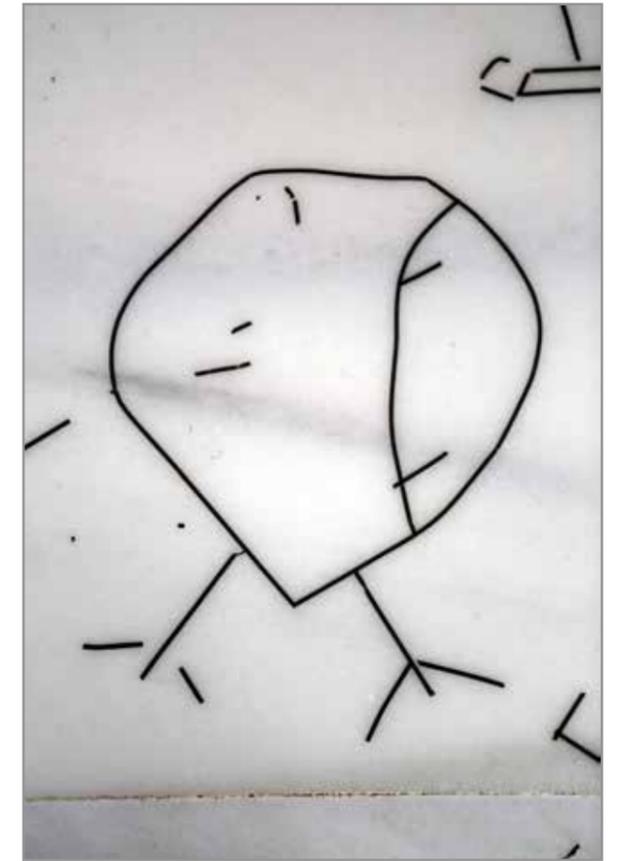
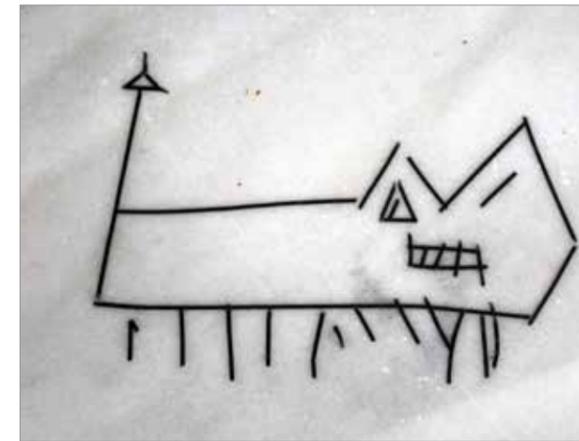


Fig. 2. Ricardo Marin-Viadel (2018). *Insects from an insect drawn by Picasso # 2*. Photo essay composed of eight digital photographs by the author with an Indirect Visual Quotation (Picasso, 1949-50).

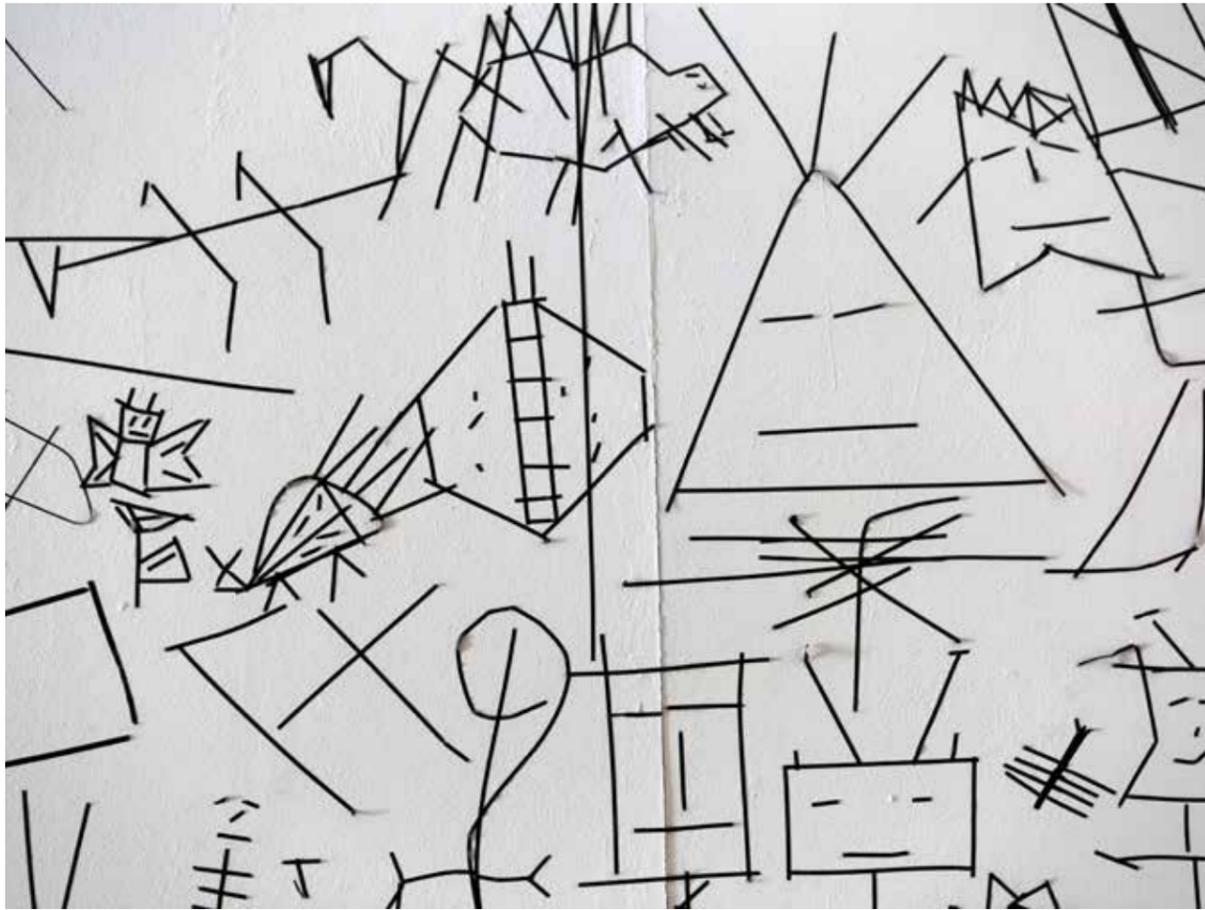


Fig. 3. Ricardo Marin-Viadel (2018). *Insects from an insect drawn by Picasso # 3*. Two independent digital photographs by author.

interventions around the original artwork. Normally, once the walls of the museum begin to be filled with the interventions of the visitors, the way to continue intervening is very intuitive. Sometimes the image created by the visitors has to be built on a table, to facilitate its execution, and then the result must be placed in the general installation. On other occasions, it is drawn directly on the wall or on the floor of the museum. The intervention concludes with the evaluation of the final result: to what extent have our interventions contributed to the coherent development of the installation? Are some rectifications necessary?

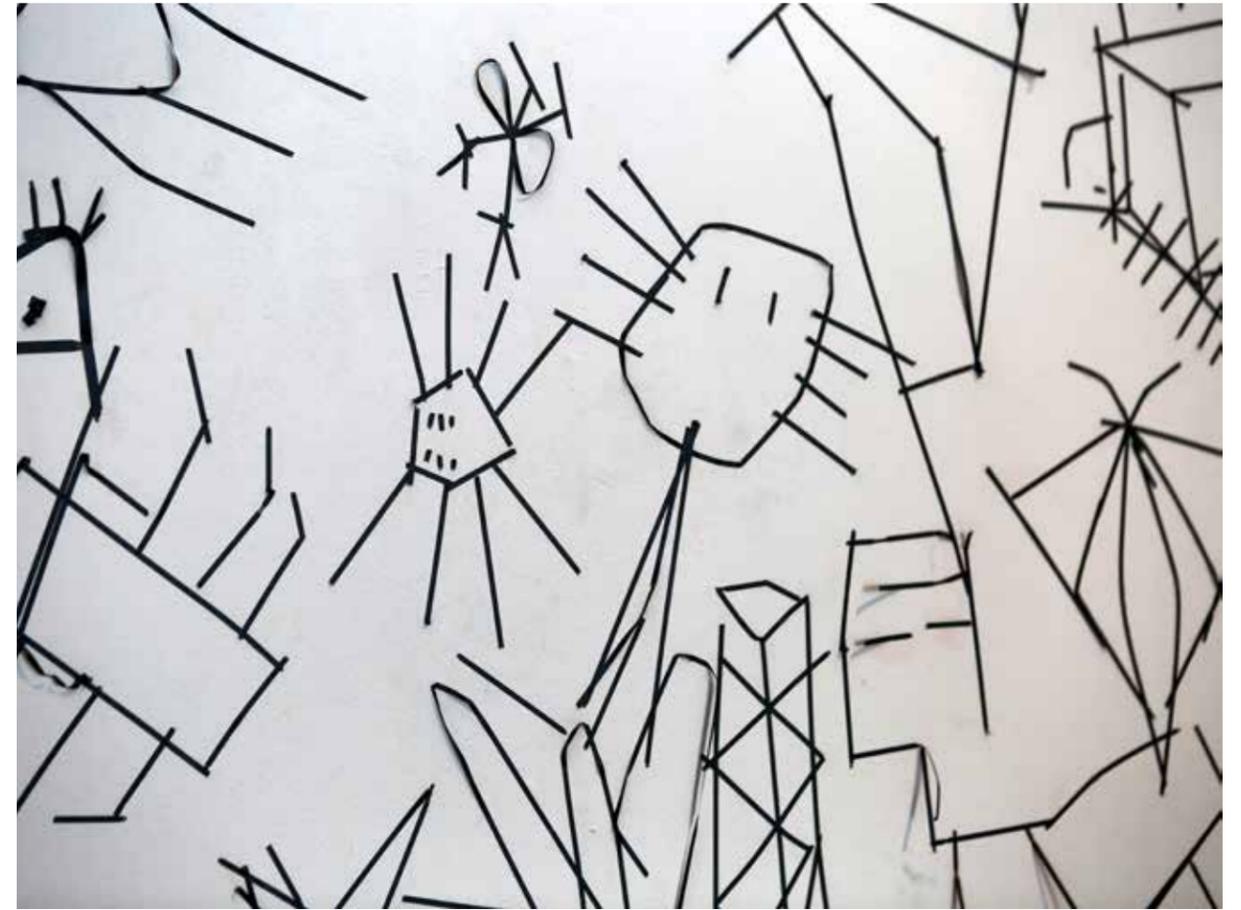
The fourth phase, which occurs when the exhibition has been in operation for a couple of weeks and the first results can be verified, an evaluation of the development of each of the interventions and the general image of the room is required. Reorientations are almost always necessary, because it is impossible to foresee exactly the processes and the final images.

The fifth and last is the follow-up of the subsequent actions that are carried out in the educational centers and how the participation in the exhibition is integrated in the usual curriculum of the school.

3. To draw with Picasso

The CajaGranada Foundation's art collection has several Picasso prints. Figure 2 shows the engraving entitled 'Leaf and Insect', which corresponds to page 29 of the book 'Corps pedu' [Lost body], from which we can learn ways to use a line to represent organic elements. One of the most striking qualities of this Picasso drawing is the economy of means to complete the image: very clear profile of each figure or element, resolved with a single line. All lines have the same thickness.

In order to facilitate these conditions on the way of drawing each visitor was provided with a self-adhesive gray vinyl line measuring one meter in length and three millimeters in width. The thin strip of self-adhesive vinyl is very easy to handle and adhere perfectly to a clean wall. This technical resource would guarantee that the set of drawings made by the visitors had the same line thickness.



In addition this type of material is much better suited to be used with rectilinear shapes. But above these two qualities, the fundamental objective was to provoke surprise. A new material motivates to try a new way of drawing, in that particular case after Picasso visual ideas.

Each of the visitors drew small animals and plants. Some faces and human figures also appeared. Each drawing has its own character, according to the age and artistic experiences of each participant, but these individual differences do not destroy the coherence of the whole image.

When the wall was filled with drawings, the participants continued on the marble floor.

4. Expand the Lichtenstein explosion to video mapping and virtual reality

In video mapping, the interaction is carried out through two computer programs: one that captures images through a camera and another that projects one or several images about what the camera captures. In this way we can adapt an image projected on a face into the forms and gestures of that particular face in real time. The image acquisition program is able to recognize and process the information that the webcam obtains, in our case the movements and gestures of the audience. This information is sent to another program that controls the projection of other images, captured by other cameras. The participatory game consists in projecting on white surfaces framed, as if they were pictures, the images captured by the cameras that the spectators handle on parts of their faces with a delay of a few seconds. The result is a disturbing visual experience that offers participants multiple visions of their face with different time delays. It is an experience far from the camera / mirror / screen convention, which alters our visual conception of ourselves.

In the virtual reality space, participants draw airplanes in a virtual three-dimensional space. Drawing in a Virtual Reality environment allows an extraordinary visual creation experience, both for its novelty and because the viewer can walk around his own drawing.



Fig. 4. R. Marin-Viadel (2018). *Insects from an insect drawn by Picasso # 4*. Independent Photography with an Indirect Visual Quotation (Picasso 1949-50).



Fig. 5. R. Marin-Viadel (2016). *Lichtenstein Explosion and two balls of colored wool # 1*. Independent Photography with an Indirect Visual Quotation (Lichtenstein 1965-1966).



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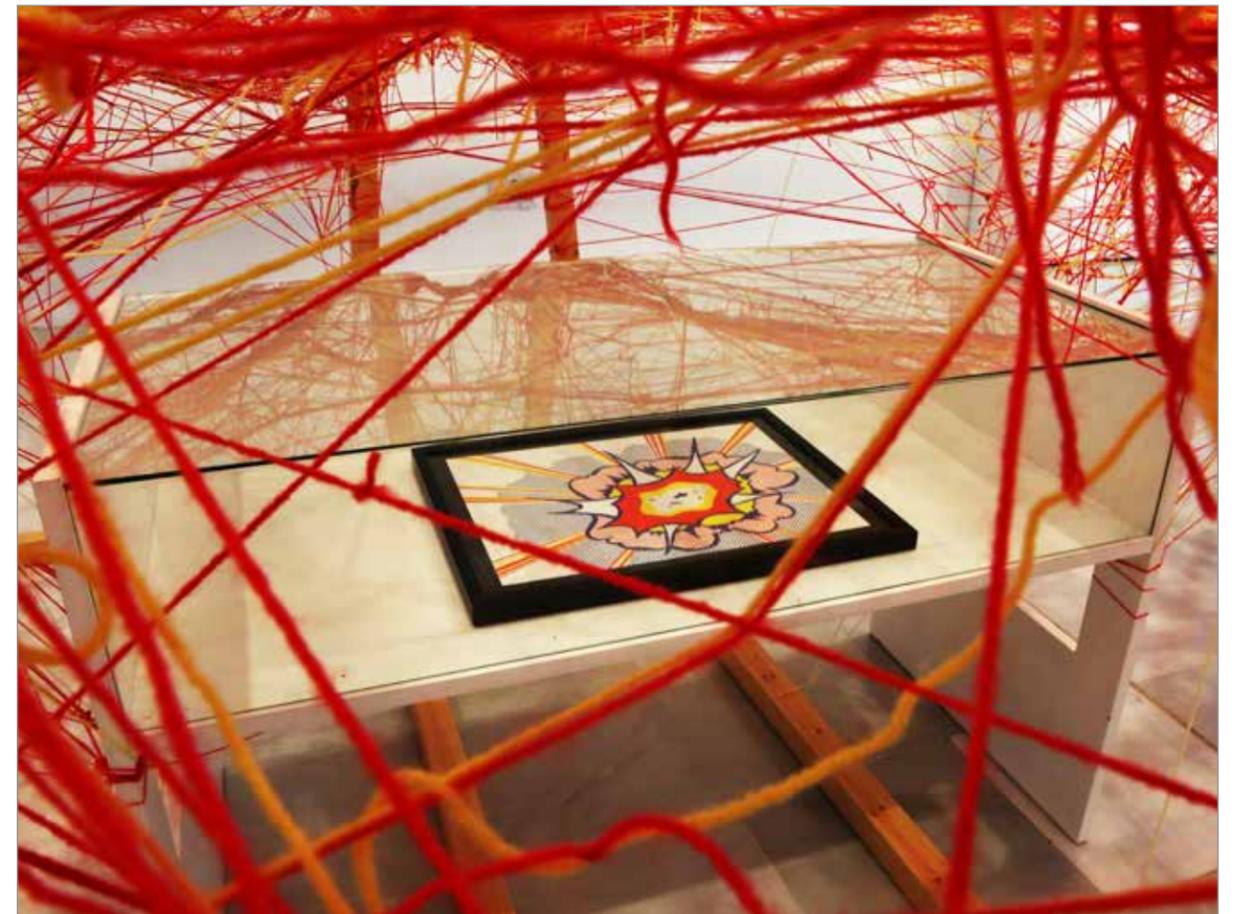


Fig. 6. R. Marin-Viadel (2018). *Lichtenstein and colored wool # 1*. Photo essay composed with three digital photographs by the author, each with an Indirect Visual Quotation (Lichtenstein 1965-1966).

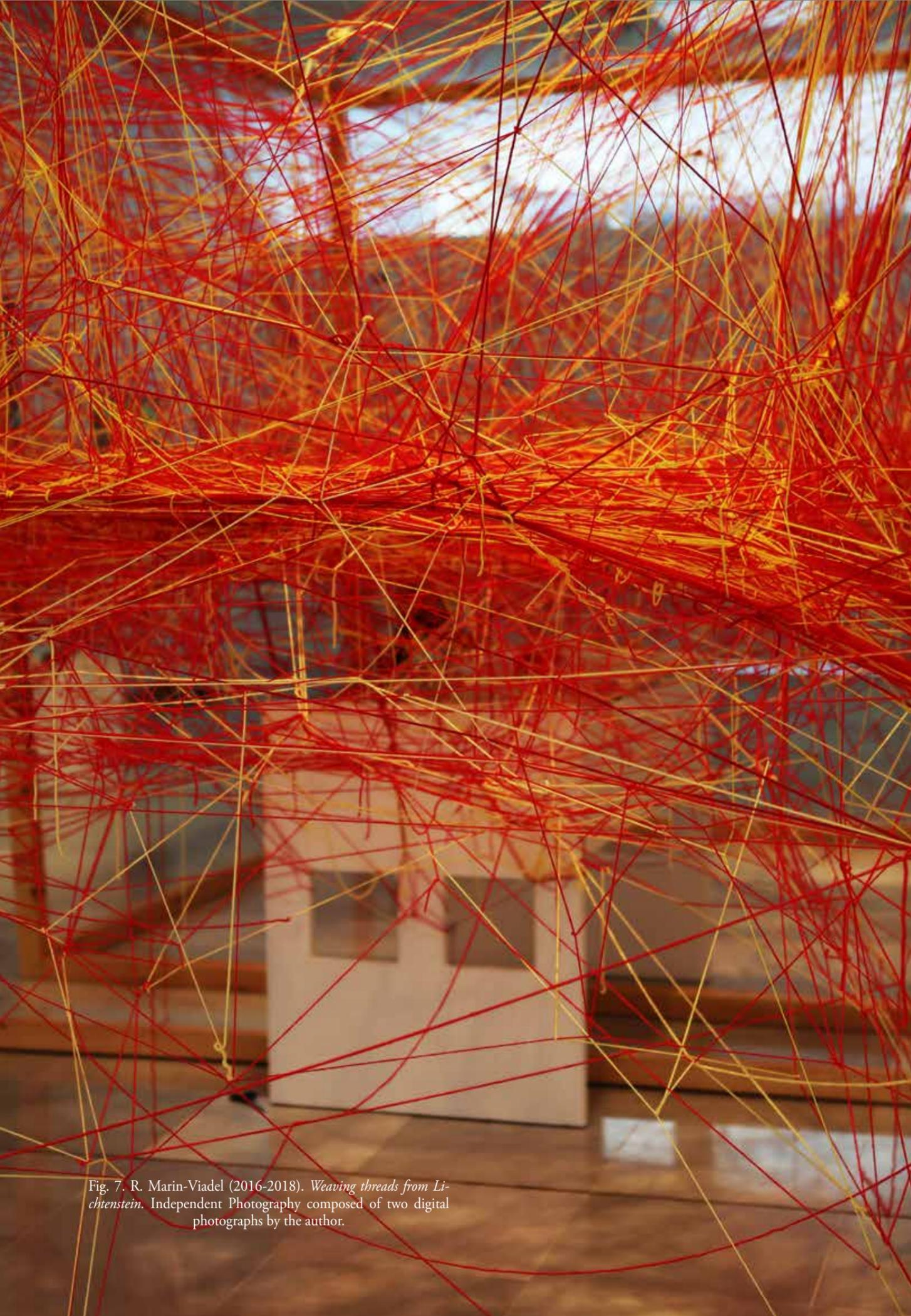


Fig. 7. R. Marin-Viadel (2016-2018). *Weaving threads from Lichtenstein*. Independent Photography composed of two digital photographs by the author.



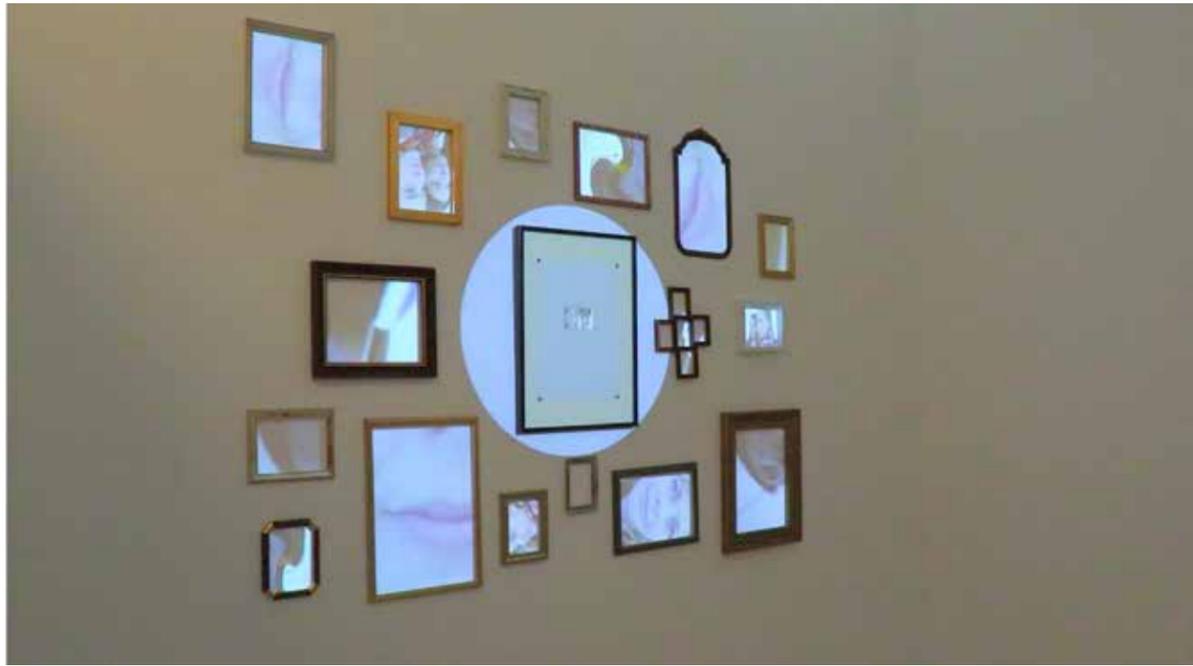


Fig. 8. Rocio Lara-Osuna (2018). *A visual dialog to interact with Brossa*. Photo Essay composed with six photo by the author and a photo by Carmen Ortiz (top left).

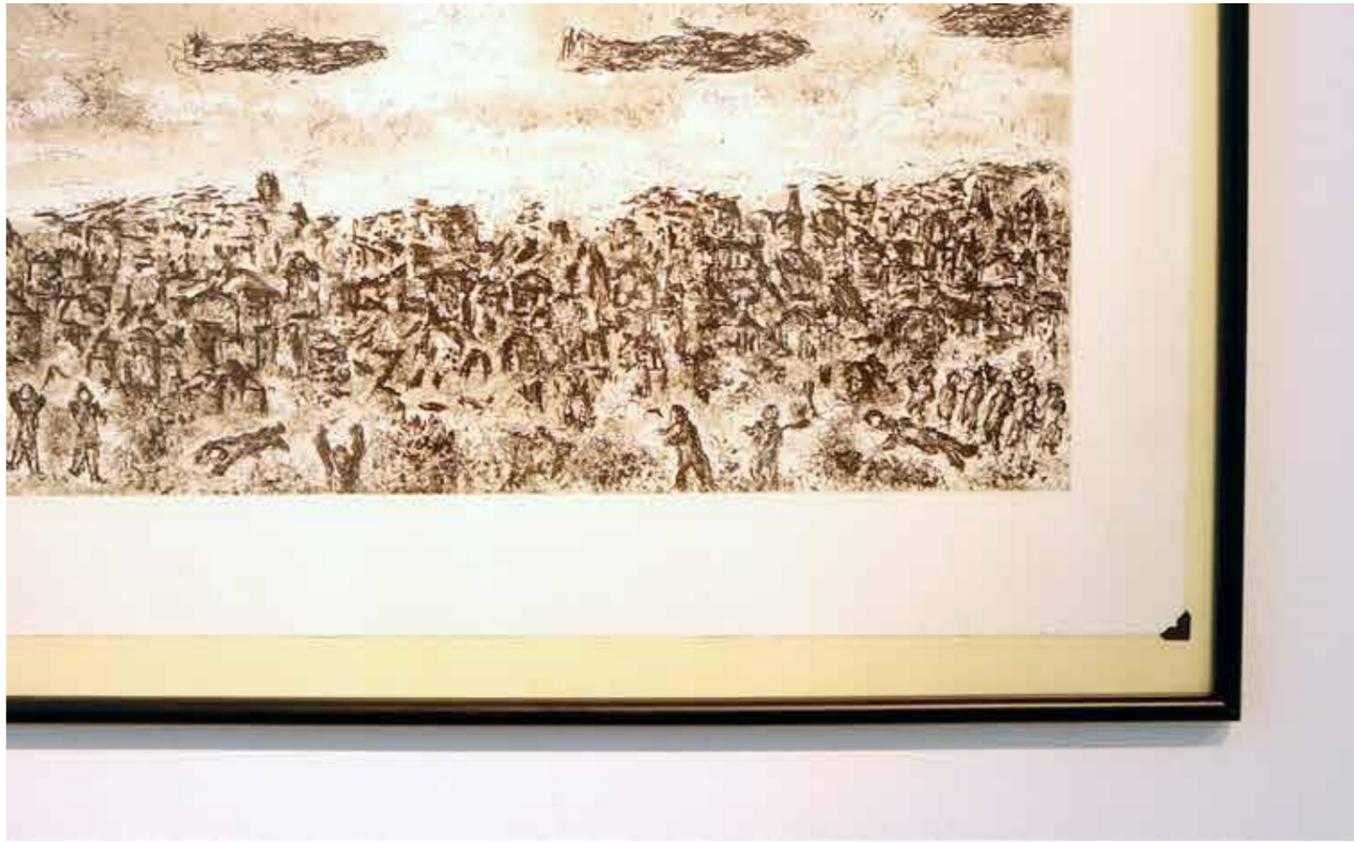


Fig. 9. J. Roldan (2018). *Virtual Reality drawings after Chagal #1*. Photo Essay composed with four photo, from top to bottom and from left to right, by Anan Varea, Guadalupe Lopez-Cuesta, Jaime Mena-de-Torres and author, with an Indirect Visual Quotation (Chagal, n. d.).