

Universo vídeo. El espacio de la ilusión [The Space of Illusion]

ANIMATIONS TO FORM AND DEFORM A PLACE

CONCEPT

The boundary between the physical and the virtual is an increasingly porous place. Notions such as scale, dimension or measurement that used to define space in an allegedly objective way are currently overwhelmed and it is urgent to find a new definition, a laxer one, of the concept of experience, i.e., a way of defining places that is not so dependent on the separation between reality and fiction that has always conditioned image.

Following the scientific and technical development of the XIXth century, when industrial innovation claimed a place beside art and leisure, successive animation techniques were developed, such as cartoons, silhouettes, stop motion, rotoscoping, graphic design or computer aided 3D that changed our relationship with time and space.

Today it is possible to combine real-world elements with elements designed from the absolute immateriality of a computer. This operation of turning the material into immaterial and vice versa, that our perception understands as a natural extension of the real, or as the opening of a mental space that despite its virtual nature, has a body.

Animation amplifies some experiments that started in the Renaissance and has become the keystone of a flourishing industry that has made video games a mass phenomenon that once was cinema. Thus, the use of projective geometry by XIV century painters marks a series of milestones in the building of an illusory space. Painting, today the screen, has played over the centuries with the idea of deceiving our eyes to eventually show the movement, as we can see, for example, in the seminal *Nu descendant un escalier* (1912) by Marcel Duchamp.

The works included in this exhibition are not aimed to be any sort of anthology, even though they swing around two historic pieces by Lotte Reiniger y John Whitney that mark two pioneering moments in the development of animation. The idea, on the contrary, is to explore how illusion and space relate when time becomes flexible and subjective. The *Space of Illusion* aims to show the versatility of a set of techniques in order to provide alternative answers, and even contradictory ones, to personal space configurations that are ultimately able to trigger some changes in the experience that, in principle, were supposed to belong only to time.

CURATOR: Alfredo Aracil (A Coruña, 1984) is Responsible for Projects at LABoral Centro de Arte y Creación Industrial in Gijón, where he has curated *Usos y formas*, *Traslaciones* and the *Universo video* exhibitions serie that includes *Prácticas experimentales*, *El otro audiovisual español* and *Geopolíticas and La Vidéothèque*. Official master's at the Visual Culture and History of the Art Contemporary Programme of the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid and the MNCARS Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, he has also curated audio-visual programmes as *Leer las imágenes*, *leer el tiempo* for the Reina Sofía and *El primer viaje*, an exhibition of the artist Irene de Andrés, in Galería Espacio Líquido, Gijón.

ARTISTS: Misha Bies Golas, Cristina Busto, Fernando Gutiérrez, Joe Hamilton, Emmanuel Lefrant, Mario M. Martínez, Lotte Reiniger, Natalia Stuyk, James Whitney

PRODUCTION:

laboral

Centro de Arte y Creación Industrial

IN COLLABORATION WITH:



VENUE: Mediateca Expandida LABoral Centro de Arte y Creación Industrial

Aporias of Realist Illusion

By Alfredo Aracil, Curator of the exhibition

The central panels of Palaeolithic caves paintings were rendered on irregular stone surfaces. Produced over thousands of years of erosion, these prehistoric canvases were built up by layers of dripping sediments on an uneven stone surface strewn with cracks and protuberances. Used over a period of time that sometimes spans 30,000 thousand years, these caves came to be ceremonial places where successive human groups communed with the collective imaginary of their respective cultures. This contact, half way between figuration and abstraction, was enabled thanks to the sensation of sentient experience emanating from drawings that are anything but static. That said, the forms of the deer and horses depicted, for instance, in the Tito Bustillo caves adapt to the features of the wall they occupy, accommodating to their precise location on the stone, acquiring an illusion of movement and volume that brings to mind contemporary 3D. The phenomenon was also dependant on the beholder's viewpoint, as well as the viewing technology used during the rituals: the red or black mineral paint was lit by the light of torches using marrow fat.

This journey back through time gives us a chance to discover the basic functioning of all animation developed since then. Ultimately, the multiplicity of techniques featured in *El espacio de la ilusión. Animaciones para formar y deformar un lugar* [The Space of Illusion. Animations to Form and Deform a Place] does no more than underscore the instrumentality of a number of procedures applied, time and again, to a single goal: generating an illusion that can compete in truthfulness with reality, relying on a spectator willing and eager to see, on a place conditioned for the viewing to take place, and on technology which finally brings together the spheres of seeing and of believing. This exhibition addresses an amalgam of spheres, subjects and tools, showing how a place may leverage its own physical qualities to become a different one, changing in accordance with how it is perceived and who perceives it. Four points linked by four straight lines may convey the idea of a home, just as, over and beyond their depiction on a map, a church or a museum can represent different ideas about the meaning of life and the public dimension of our world. The crystal palaces of the nineteenth century were a correlate of the cosmopolitan illusion of colonial powers. Behind the transparency of the glass architecture, they represented the Empire's control over the exuberance and variety of its conquered territories. Travelling without leaving home: the ultimate example of how sometimes illusion does not even need motion to gestate within our mind.

Einstein once said that "reality is merely an illusion, albeit a persistent one", something that does not manage to undermine the solidity of its

appearance; on the contrary. After all, fiction is neither a mimetic tension nor a replica of the real, but of the strategies that bring it to light, that verify it. Now, the threshold between the physical and the virtual is increasingly porous. We have gone beyond notions such as scale, dimension or measurement, which used to define space in a purportedly objective fashion, making it urgent to redefine the very concept of experience, that is, a new way of conceiving places that is less polarised by the separation between truth and fiction. Animation has contributed to this process of expansion that, for instance, has finally taken shape in experiments such as augmented reality.

Spawned by nineteenth century scientific and technological advances, at a time when industrial innovation defended its place alongside art and leisure, successive animation techniques that include cartoons, silhouettes, stop motion using static photographs, rotoscoping, graphic design or computer-aided 3D, have transformed the way we relate with time and space. Nowadays, interaction between real elements and others designed from the absolute immaterialness of the computer has become possible; our perception understands the operation of transforming the material into immaterial and vice versa as a natural extension of the real, if not as the opening up of a mental space that, notwithstanding its virtuality, has a body.

A cornerstone in the development of a thriving industry that has turned videogames into the kind of mass phenomenon that cinema once was, animation in turn expands certain experiments which can be traced back to the Renaissance. The use of projective geometry by fourteenth century mathematical painters furnished a number of landmarks for the construction of an illusory space: throughout the centuries, painting, the screen of our days, toyed with the idea of deceiving our eyes until finally depicting movement, as seen, for instance, in Marcel Duchamp's seminal *Nude Descending a Staircase* (1912).

Similarly to *Measurements*, in which the conceptual artist Mel Bochner systematically measured—inch by inch—all the distances in a gallery emptied of art objects, animation embodies a tool that turns a number of techniques and abstract ideas into sentient information. One thing is thus expressed through another, giving rise to combinations with the ability to translate, down to their tiniest nuances, all the diversity of the sentient experience, where physical and mental properties are at the same time expressed as the attributes of a place.

Misha Bies Golas (Lalín, Pontevedra, 1977)

El corto burgués, 2013

1'43" Stop Motion

A "bourgeois" couple visits what seems to be a contemporary art museum, recognisable through the grid-like plan that transmits the elementary architecture of the celebrated white cube. The two chatter away, one imagines without a lot of idea.

Through this simple action, animated in minutely calculated stop motion, Misha Bies Golas prompts a whole chain of visual and textual references embracing everything from minimalist sets to kitsch sculpture, though in the foreground, clearly out of place, there is the continual presence of the plasticity of a turd.

The technique used connects with other mediums like film, enhanced by an elementary soundtrack that alludes to the mechanism and theatricality of the *mise en scene*. Layer upon layer of meanings are piled on top of the literalness of the title that is open to manifold interpretations. After all, a "bourgeois corto" (dumb bourgeois) is not the same as a "corto burgués" (bourgeois short), playing with the double meaning of *corto* in Spanish.

Cristina Busto (Avilés, 1976)

El fracaso de la inteligencia, 2014

13'12" Stop Motion

Despite its outwardly naïf and likeable appearance, this stop motion short serves to channel more personal stories in which the narrative functions as an antidote to traumatic experience.

Throughout her practice Cristina Busto has always lent particular attention to this kind of visual strategy that, while removed from grandstanding effects and big budgets, operates via a *brut* and DIY aesthetic. At once, this freedom enables the artist to develop a highly personal style underpinned by a clearly tragic sense of humour and love.

Speaking strictly in first person, *El fracaso de la inteligencia* (The Failure of Intelligence) wrestles with the need to deal with a non-spectacular everyday form of abjection. Here, animation plays a key role in capturing in images a truth that transcends time and space.

Fernando Gutiérrez (Oviedo, 1973)

Gimnástica, 2015

Site-specific Project

Built using a series of elemental, dubitative black strokes, Fernando Gutiérrez's figures overstep the boundaries of the space they occupy in the hall thanks to the line that transmutes their mutant forms, borrowed from a multitude of different bodies, into an organism; a living form that moves throughout the space, and even interacts with its fellows, turning the projection screen into an expanded place that transcends such conventions as frontality.

As a whole, over and above their individual particularities, the

compositions construct a spectral space where the figures appear and disappear, and somehow return the animation to its original sphere, in the realm of magic, phantasmagoria and other funfair animations.

Joe Hamilton (Tasmania, Australia, 1982)

Regular Division, 2014

1' Video

Regular Division is a spiral of scenes composed by meticulously layering tiers of visual information with images of various indoor gardens in Europe and Asia.

Like nineteenth-century crystal palaces, the video presents an imaginary space, an artificial paradise of green foliage under a glass dome. In addition, it juxtaposes patches of brushwork lifted from classic paintings that, after being transferred to high definition, conform a whole that connects conventional mediums and contemporary technologies for depicting the landscape.

This work is part of a suite that has been digitally filmed and edited in locations in Europe, Asia and the Middle East, examining the impact of digital technologies in representing the environment and how it effects our perception and relationship with the landscape.

Emmanuel Lefrant (París, 1975)

All Over, 2001

7' 16 mm film transferred to HD video

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The result of treatment with layers of chemical products, the black filmstrip then becomes an open space for any possible form that can be printed on its surface. In this regard, it is a space permeable to the identity of any place and any time, forming and deforming our imaginary.

The similarities with the cosmos are manifold. Film, like a star, bestows light and life through the projector lamp. The drips of colour thus become a constellation of bodies built from different materials that move throughout the limits of the screen.

Mario M. Martínez (Gijón, 1988)

Acecho, 2015

Mural projection

The artist's experience with engraving plays an instrumental role in this work, paying testimony to a specific way of conceiving the image with the freedom of other expressions like fanzines or comics.

Here the image appropriates the space, bracketing the screen's function as a collector of gazes. In this way, animation takes over the place itself and defends its status not as a technique, but as a form of relating figures with the place they occupy, sometimes real and sometimes projected. It is no accident that the simple outlines of the figure contrast with the stain that separates its silhouette from the background, as if wishing to further amplify its participation in the surrounding environs.

Lotte Reiniger (Berlin-Charlottenburg, 1899- Dettenhausen, FGR, 1981)
Aschenputtel (*Cinderella*), 1922
13' 23" Animation with silhouettes,

Lotte Reiniger was one of the leading pioneers in the development of various animation techniques, most notably the use of silhouettes. Using cardboard cut-outs and thin sheets of lead under a camera, the German artist recovered this classic children's fairy tale with a symphony of figures dancing in sets to the sound of music that cannot be heard today. The original prints were probably colour-tinted for screening, as was the case of many films which are only known today in black and white.

Emily Richardson (Reino Unido, 1971)

The Futurist, 2010

4' Time-lapse

Produced by: Lumen and imove, Yorkshire's Legacy Trust programme.

Funded by: Legacy Trust UK, Arts Council and Yorkshire Forward

Acknowledgments: Andrew Nesbit and Colin Bainbridge, The Futurist, Scarborough

This piece is part of *The Cinema Series*, a set of single shot films made in independent cinemas. As the shift from 35mm to digital projection systems takes place, the position of these cinemas becomes increasingly more fragile. It exemplifies how technology interrelates with specific places in creating the cinema-going experience. As could not be otherwise, architecture is the main focus of the video, which endeavours to capture the identity of the space by means of artifice.

The work consists in a single 360 degree time-lapsed shot while a feature film is being projected in the cinema. The sound, recorded live from the projection booth, becomes a cacophony, contrasting with the silence of the empty theatre. *The Futurist* continues the artist's exploration of the cultural meaning of place over the last decade. At once, it pays tribute to The Futurist, a 2000 seat cinema in Scarborough threatened with closure.

Natalia Stuyk (London, 1987)

Visiter ビデオ, 2014

2' Digital Video

Visiter ビデオ is an abstract love letter to Tokyo, a city highlighted in red on postmodernism's map of synthetic dreams, where the imaginary of machines meets human dreams. With the city's neon lights in mind, the artist created a sequence of patterns influenced by the Internet aesthetic.

The soundtrack alternates with various motifs like a dolphin, a bicycle or a bathtub that, together with different geometric forms, parade against a backdrop which seems to emulate the effect of audiovisual noise. The end result is a piece that anticipates a future where landscapes will probably not be exclusively natural.

John Whitney (Pasadena, California, 1917 - Los Angeles, 1995)

Matrix III, 1972

11' 16mm, (colour, sound) film transferred to HD video, 11'

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John Whitney is the father of computer-generated graphic animation. During the 1950s Whitney explored the visual and audio potential of different devices which he developed himself. Imitating the functioning of an analogue computer used during the Second World War to fight against air raids, he started to create his first visual effects which he would later develop using the Whitney-Reed RDTD (Radius-Differential Theta Differential) program he had invented. Whitney was awarded IBM's first artist-in-residence position.

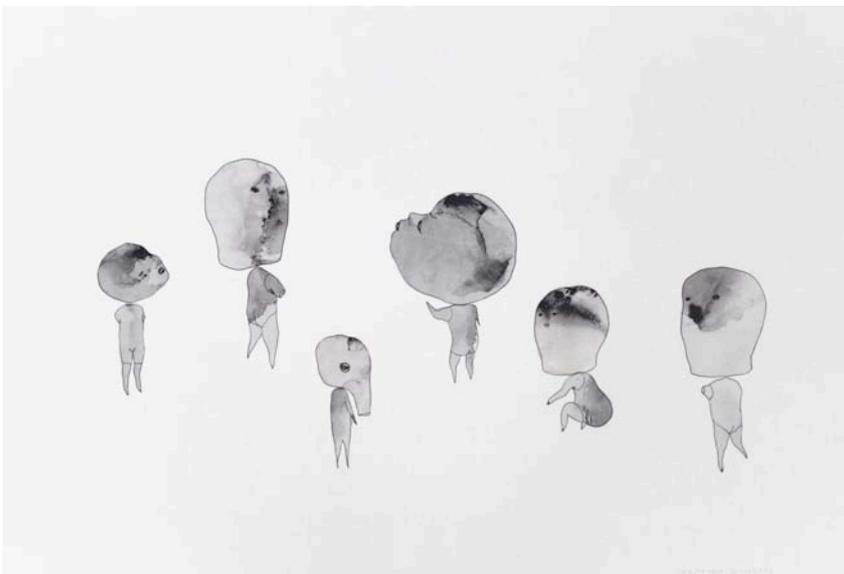
Matrix III foreshadowed many of the futurist animations of the 1980s. The music by Terry Riley, an extract from his *Rainbow in Curved Air*, from 1969, accompanies a poem revolving around a series of geometric patterns: dots, triangles, squares and hexagons which, in a formal succession connected by what's known as a Lissajous curve, are transformed into other more complex figures with a three-dimensional appearance. In this way, the abstraction of mathematical formulas is expressed like a virtual architecture that, in certain arrangements, takes on a physical appearance.



El corto burgués, 2013. **Misha Bies Golas**. Stop motion



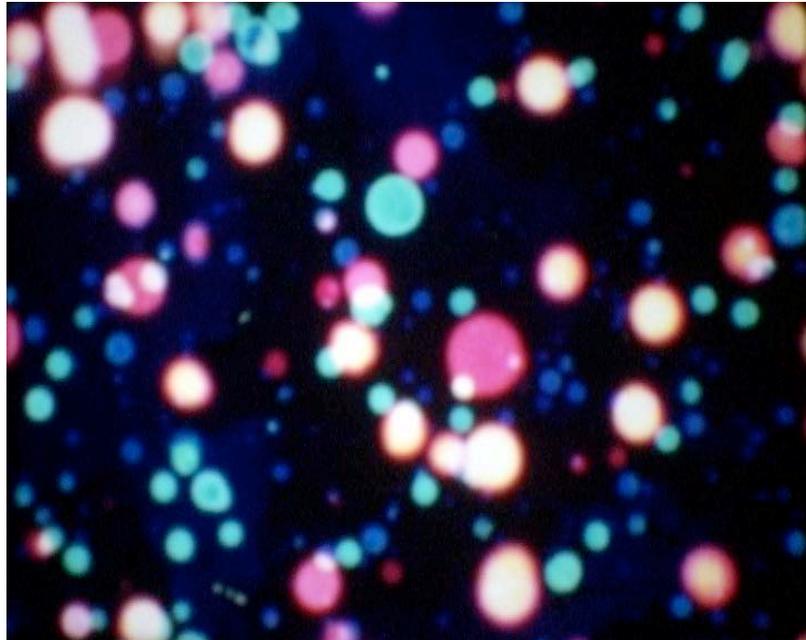
El fracaso de la inteligencia, 2014. **Cristina Busto**. Stop Motion



Gimnástica, 2015. **Fernando Gutiérrez**. Site-specific project



Regular Division, 2014. Joe Hamilton. Video



All Over, 2001. Emmanuel Lefrant. 16 mm film transferred to HD video



Acecho, 2015. Mario M. Martínez. Mural projection



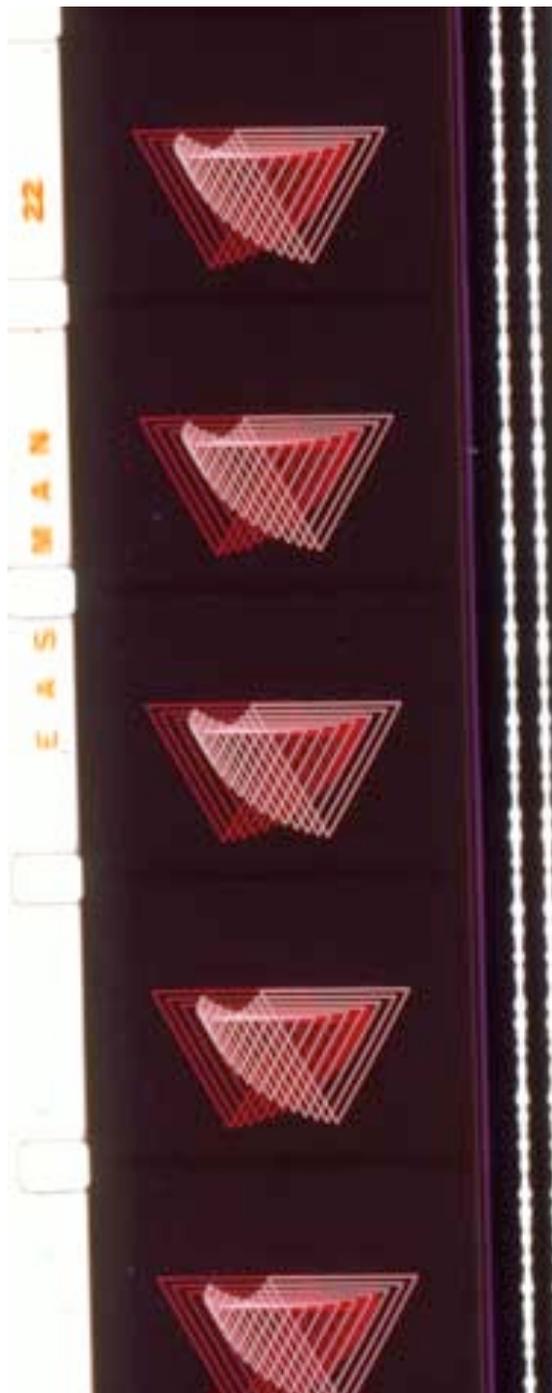
Aschenputtel (*Cinderella*), 1922. **Lotte Reiniger**. Animation with silhouettes



The Futurist, 2010. **Emily Richardson**. Time-lapse



Visiter ビデオ, 2014. **Natalia Stuyk**. 2' Digital video



Matrix III, 1972. **John Whitney**. 16mm (colour, sound) film transferred to HD video

The Laboral Foundation

The LABoral Centro de Arte y Creación Industrial Foundation is a cultural body to serve the general interest, as well as the governing body of the art centre. The aims of the Foundation as described in Article 6.1 of the statutes are “to promote and disseminate art and industrial creation through the management of LABoral Centro de Arte y Creación Industrial.”

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- LABoral is an aggregate entity to the Campus de Excelencia Internacional de la Universidad de Oviedo
- LABoral is part of the European Science and Digital Art Network (Funded by Creative Europe Programme 2014-2020)
- LABoral is leader of the European Network for Contemporary Audiovisual Creation (Funded by Creative Europe Programme 2014-2020)

Association of Friends of LABoral

The Association of Friends of LABoral Centro de Arte y Creación Industrial in Gijón is a non-profit association with its own legal personality and full capacity to act in accordance with current legislation on associations. Its aims are to promote, stimulate and support any cultural initiatives, which, in the broadest terms, have a connection with the mission and activity of the Centro de Arte y Creación Industrial.

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WHAT IS LABORAL?

LABoral Centro de Arte y Creación Industrial is a space for artistic exchange. It was born with the aim of establishing an alliance between art, design, culture, industry and economic development, and aspires to become a space for interaction and dialogue between art, new technologies and industrial creation. Between its walls, it opens the way to the production, creation and research into the most recent artistic concepts. LABoral Centro de Arte y Creación Industrial is in the old Universidad Laboral as part of the set of projects developed by the Principality of Asturias for its City of Culture. Gijón, Asturias.

LOCATION

LABoral Centro de Arte y Creación Industrial is located in Gijon, Asturias, at around three kilometres from the city centre. Premises originally conceived for vocational training now house the over 14,400 functional square metres that are devoted to the exhibition, research, training and production of new art and creative industries.

Address

LABoral Centro de Arte y Creación Industrial
Los Prados, 121
33394 Gijón (Asturias)

Getting There

By car: A-8 motorway. Take bypass on arrival to Gijon. Salida (exit) km. 385 Viesques. Follow directions to Hospital Cabueñes. Take third exit at third roundabout.

The Centre has a public car park.

By bus from Gijón

The bus stop for the Centre is “Parada Universidad Laboral”. The bus lines available are the following:

Line 1 Cerillero- Hospital de Cabueñes

Line 2 Rocés- Hospital de Cabueñes

Line 4 Cerillero- Viesques- Hospital de Cabueñes

Line 18 Nuevo Gijón- Hospital de Cabueñes

By plane

Closest airport: Asturias (Castrillón). Around 40 km from the Centre.

A8 motorway, direction Gijón.

OPENING HOURS

Winter

Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, 10 am to 7 pm

Saturday and Sunday, 12 noon to 8 pm

Closed Monday and Tuesday

Summer (15.06 – 15.09)

10 am to 7 pm

Closed Monday and Tuesday

ADMISSION

General public

€2

Free

Friends of LABoral, <10 years old, Gijón Citizen Card, journalists, members from ICOM (International Council of Museums), IAC, Visual Artists associations and Asociación de Amigos de ARCO.

Free access

Every Wednesday, May 18th (International Museum Day) and every weekend after openings

Open Doors: 1 July to 6 September

RESOURCES

Plataforma 0_LABoral Production Centre. Platform 0 is a multi-purpose space. It is a centre for production, artistic research, innovation and education. It is a place for implementing ideas and trying out prototypes, with workspaces for experimentation and production with audio, video, light, electronics, processing, movement capture, computer vision and videogames. The intended audience is the local artistic and creative community as well as artists, creators or foreign researchers in residence participating in the exhibitions at LABoral.

fabLAB Asturias. Laboratory equipped with digital fabrication machinery providing consultancy and production tools for individual or collective creation, courses and training workshops.

plat0. Studio set for experimentation and research into expanded performative practices and new audio-visual forms.

Audiovisual Laboratories. Audio and digital video platform, with all the equipment necessary for recording, editing, production and postproduction.

Sound LAB. Designed as a space for experimenting in the various practices of contemporary sound art, the Sound LAB it is aimed at fostering and providing technical and creative support to contemporary art practices related with sound following four lines of action: production, exhibition, research and education.

Media Library/Archive. A place for the investigation, consultation and dissemination of today's art and creative industries. It features the Archive of Asturian Artists, documenting the work of creators born from the 1950s onwards.

Chill-Out. A place for meeting, leisure, active participation and resting.