

PRESS
KIT



La Biennale di Venezia

58. Esposizione
Internazionale
d'Arte

Eventi Collaterali

TO LOSE YOUR HEAD (IDOLS)

CATALONIA
IN VENICE

CATALONIA IN VENICE— TO LOSE YOUR HEAD (IDOLS)

EVENTO COLLATERALE
DELLA 58. ESPOSIZIONE
INTERNAZIONALE D'ARTE
LA BIENNALE DI VENEZIA.

A PROJECT BY THE INSTITUT
RAMON LLULL CURATED BY
PEDRO AZARA:
MARCEL BORRÀS, ALBERT
GARCIA-ALZÓRRIZ WITH
THE COLLABORATION OF
DAVID BESTUÉ, LÚA CODEROCH,
LOLA LASURT, DANIELA ORTIZ,
PEREJAUME AND FRANCESCO
TORRES

The Institut Ramon Llull presents
*Catalonia in Venice—To Lose Your
Head (Idols)*, an exhibition curated by
Pedro Azara for the *Eventi Collaterali*
in the 58th edition of the Venice Art
Biennale. This exposition will take
place between May 11th and Novem-
ber 24th. The project is a reflection,
from an aesthetic and art theory
point of view, about the particular
and intense relationship that human
beings have with statues.

The project is located at the
Cantieri Navali in San Pietro Island
in Venice, and includes the partici-
pation of the artist Marcel Borràs
as well as various other artists who
collaborated in the artist book.

To illustrate and contextualise the
statue workshop and destruction
phenomenon in Catalonia and
worldwide, various sculptural exam-
ples are exhibited. The exhibition
space, designed by the architect
Tiziano Schürch, evokes the atmo-
sphere of a warehouse full of fallen
statues.

THE THESIS

The title of the project, *Catalonia in
Venice—To Lose Your Head (Idols)*,
already gives us an idea of the
theme of the exhibition - because of
the double meaning of "to lose your
head". Through history, when a
political or religious system has
fallen, or when conquests and
destructions in wartime have been
held it is usual that the armies or
people destroy the statues that
symbolised or personified the fallen
regime. We all have memories of
statues literal and non-literal ways
being destroyed falling from their
pedestals, by hammers or being
blown up during a revolution, *coup
d'état* or an invasion.

These statues are also often decap-
itated, they lose their heads. In their
euphoria and desire for change and
also with the intention of humiliating
the enemy or regime that they want
to overthrow, the destroyers also
often lose their heads. And the same
happens, but the other way round,
when we passionately worship a
statue or a monument that rep-
resents a historical figure or a god,
as if the object were in fact the
subject of said worship. Iconoclasm
and iconidulism are as current and
as present as in ancient cultures.
*Catalonia in Venice—To Lose Your
Head (Idols)* is an exhibition that
documents the complex lives of
statues, which some present-day
artists recreate and reflect upon.

In the words of the curator Pedro
Azara, "the destruction and worship
of images is a universal phenome-
non" and often it's very difficult to
"keep a cool head" because it's very
possible that "the image is capable

of imposing itself on us and if this
occurs our first reaction is to lose
our head." It is as if the statues have
their own lives, regardless if the
object is more or less artistic.
"Statues are artificial bodies. Like
strange beings they awaken pas-
sions, desires and fears. Statues
dominate us. They expose us to that
which we don't always want to see.
They are pleaded with or they are
decapitated. Desperate before their
disdain, or thankful before an
unexpected awakening, we react,
either by gracing them with our
gratitude or delivering them a final
coup de grace," adds the curator
about the exhibition.

However, Western art theory,
inheritor of the Enlightenment,
maintains a very cold vision of
images. Starting in the 18th century,
and with the new theories about
aesthetic and art, like those of
Emmanuel Kant, the artistic object
began to be viewed as a human
creation capable of reasonably
communicating a message or an
idea, and not responding to any
desire or having to satisfy any need.
With Kant's theory, art work loses its
sacred character and the spectator
has to be able to maintain a certain
distance from the art work. "For
Kant, if you feel that you want to
touch the art, that's fetishism. He
negated spontaneous and primary
reactions provoked by works of art,"
says Pedro Azara. However, older
Western art and art in some
non-Western cultures "belong to the
world of magic, and they are pieces
that were never conceived to be
contemplated by human eyes; only
gods and ancestors, invisible beings,
had access to these and could look
at them."

What the project wants to explore is
the fact that despite the 18th centu-
ry interpretation of art as object that
has been upheld up to the present
day, human beings have not at any
moment lost that "magic" connec-
tion with images, and they continue
to workshop and destroy them with
the same resolve as in antiquity.
When they are harmed the damage

that is done is very similar to that
which is inflicted on humans: mutila-
tions, beheadings (very often),
throwing of corrosive liquids or hot
oil, blinding (paint thrown in the eyes,
often the colour red to symbolise
blood), etc. "Statues are living
beings: they seem alive to us. They
are either worshipped or bother-
some witnesses," says Azara.

The project documents and pres-
ents various examples of statue
worship and destruction that
correspond to the Catalan reality.
"A community such as a Catalonia,
with its sacred mountains and
identity myths, does not escape
these human reactions in the
presence of images," affirms Pedro
Azara.

In a historical moment such as now
where humans are completely
immersed in the world of images, of
every shape and size and type, the
idea the project proposes is also a
reflection of this human condition
from the point of view of art theory,
but with anthropological, sociological
and psychological connotations.
Furthermore, the exhibitory presenta-
tion directly appeals the spectator to
confront this phenomenon head on.

IMAGE WORSHIP is a sentiment that dates back to ancient times, and at the same time it is complex and ambiguous. Plato was already distinguishing between icons

(images that make us see supernatural spirits and beings without

confusing the two), and idols (images that are considered to be super-

natural beings), which gave rise to different attitudes: reverence and

"idolatrous" worship. With religious statues the line between veneration

and worship is very undefined - it is difficult to know if one is praying

before the statue or directly at the defined effigy, like for example what

currently happens with the Easter "pasos" (processions of lifelike

wood or plaster sculptures that show individual scenes of the events

of Jesus's arrest and burial, or of the Virgin Mary showing grief) or with

the "Maredeus" (wooden sculptures of the Mary, Mother of Jesus,

and to which there are celebrations and worship). In other cases, sculptures do not directly or faithfully

represent the revered person or deity, but this is not a problem.

Francesc Carulla, sculptor of the monument, "The Shot", an homage

to Johan Cruyff at the Camp Nou, home stadium of Football Club

Barcelona, says: "The figure is not inspired by Johan, but that's irrelevant, because Johan is everywhere."

TO BLEMISH INTERVENE OR

DISFIGURE are common ways of negating an image. The face tends to be the most affected area.

Throwing paint - almost always

blood red -, removing or scratching out the eyes to ensure that a statue

does not "wake up,"—as was common in the ancient Near East—or to

neutralise it. Paint disfigures the face and makes it so the statue

cannot look at us.

THE CANCELLATION

of a statues supposes its definitive removal from

the public space, and its concealment, not for aesthetic reasons but

rather political ones. The statue is seen as a dominating living being

that must be seized or imprisoned.

One recent example is the removal

of the *Antonio López Monument*, by Frederic Marés, from a square in Barcelona, because of López's history in the slave trade.

THE VIOLENT AND CRUEL

DESTRUCTION of statues has also

been a common practice through the ages. In antiquity statues that

did not respond to human requests were whipped, demolished or

destroyed. The extreme cruelty in the mutilation and beheading

responds to the consideration that the statue is a living being. If it is

destroyed then its power and influence over us is taken away.

Attacks on monuments are frequent: the *Monument als Caiguts*

(*Monument to the Fallen*) in Barcelona, by Josep Clarà, has received

numerous attacks over the course of history; or the most famous case

in recent years, the mutilation and graffiti on parts of the *Equestrian*

Monument of Francisco Franco, by Josep Vlladomat, during an outside

exhibition at the Cultural Center of the Born neighbourhood in Barcelona. This sculpture had already been

graffitied and beheaded before.

THE EXHIBITION PROJECT

Catalonia In Venice — *To Lose Your Head* (Idols) consists of four main parts:

1

THE PERFORMANCE.

SHE APPROPRIATES IN PRESENT

by Marcel Borràs, in which a group of about twenty people are taken on

a guided tour around the street of San Pietro di Castello island. There

are five stops on the tour where the spectator comes face to face with

some of the images that make up the sculptural and theoretical body

of the exhibition. During the tour the curator Pedro Azara and the artist

Marcel Borràs will contextualise each of the recreated pieces.

These sculptures are: *Monument to Lluís Companys*, by Francisco López, in Barcelona; *The Shot*, by Francesc Carulla (dedicated to Johan Cruyff, at the Camp Nou stadium), the *Monument to the Fallen*, by Adolf Florensa; Joaquim Florensa and Josep Clarà (which was removed from Diagonal Street in Barcelona); the *Equestrian Monument to Francisco Franco*, by Josep Vlladomat, removed from inside the Montjuïc Castle, and which was beheaded and later vandalised a number of times during the exhibition; *Franco, Victory, Republic: Impunity and Public Space*, in the Born neighbourhood in Barcelona; and the *Monument to Jordi Pujol*, by Xavier Martos, removed from Premià de Dalt.

The visitor is invited to recreate acts of worship or destruction to the pieces on the actor's body with materials (eggs, paint, lollipops, flags, candles, spray paint, bouquets

of flowers...) which they will have

gotten from a vending machine of

objects to worship or destroy

statues. The interactive sculpture (a

refurbished vending machine) by 'E.Y.M (a f***** vending machine)'

will be physically at the exhibition,

and will be complemented by a

series of photographs that reflect

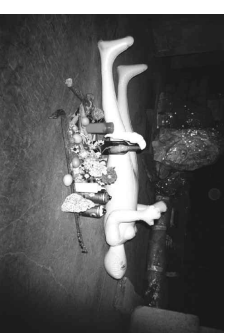
upon the idea of the appropriation

that the actor/ quietist makes of the

sculptures.

The visits start at the vending machine and will take place over the course of three days - May 8th, 9th and 10th, during the vernissage of the Biennale.

Registration required at
idols@lilil.cat

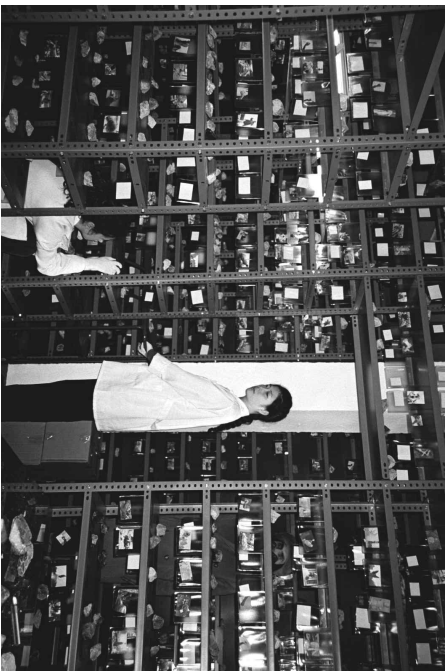


Video EYES/ EYES/ EYES/ EYES. by Albert García-Alzóriz, duration: 30 minutes. Filmed, in part, at the statue depository on Via Favencia in Barcelona. The poet Gabriel Ventura collaborated in the script.

In an archive fragments of demolished statues are conserved. Next to each fragment there's the stone that was originally thrown and did the damage. Through audiovisual language, the video explores the ambivalence of the image, the material and subjectivity, "Two symmetrical calculations, born from one sole gesture. Identical in some ways; it is not known shards one claimed the destruction," explains García-Alzóriz. This is starting point image from where a spiralling narrative will unfold, to which the spectator assists over and over again. A story explained through variations.

The four chapters that make up the video all begin with the myth of Prometheus written by Franz Kafka. The characters (subjects and objects, indifferently) are united by the routine of the archive: archivists, photographs, statues, stones, fans, lamps, fluorescent lamps, neon signs... they all form part of a spacious and temporary labyrinth that houses all of the demolished statues in history. A dense ambience, saturated with reflections and shadows, where another reality is offered: one where reason is suspended, tensed between the image of resistance and the resistance of the image.

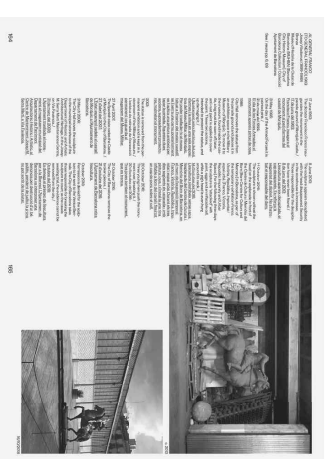
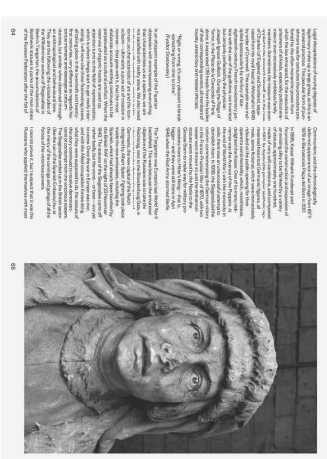
The video is in black and white, with the exception of the epilogue which is in colour. Black and white fuses "the beings that are apparently alive and apparently inert into a chromatic common denominator, participating in the ambiguity of that which is alive and that which is not." The narration is achieved through subtitles and the ambient sound in every scene.



A collective **ARTIST BOOK**, published by Tenov Books, which includes various written and artistic reflections on the exhibition's theme. The artists David Bestué, Lúa Coderch, Lola Lasurt, Daniela Ortiz, Perejaume and Francesc Torres collaborated in the book. The pieces and the texts present in this publication complement the exhibition and create a dialogue with it. It is like a long visual and textual essay that poses questions about iconoclasm and iconidism from the point of views of doing, of creating, constructing a counterpoint to Pedro Azar's theoretical and historical discourse. Sometimes this counterpoint enriches the discourse and sometimes it overflows it from the world of contemporary art.

DAVID BESTUÉ connects to architecture and art work of the past with a certain devotion, but, as you can glean from his text, he does it in a very natural way, free of nostalgia, from a present continuous. At the exhibition, *Rosí Amor*, which he presented at MNQARS, the artist displayed pieces made with resin (like the ones in the book) that contained dust from other elements. This process allowed him to give new shapes to historical sculptures.

LÚA CODERCH created the piece, *The Magic Mountain*, a plausible story about one of the most venerated architectural icons in the 20th century: the Barcelona pavilion of 1929. The Mies van der Rohe building relived through photo offerings made by tourists, or from a reconstruction, an inflated version, of the famous onyx wall. In this publication she also presents a mainly textual piece that questions the comparison of all works of art with the monument, and patriarchal heroic verticals, at the same as discussing magic and tricks that the artist uses.



The work of LOLA LASQUET also presents a certain ambivalence, somewhere between distance and worship, with pieces from the past. *Exercice of Rhythm* uses journalistic fragments (published after the assassination of Francesc Layret in 1920) and put them in the mouths of the four sculptures that were erected in honour of the politician. The piece presented in the book closes a project that began in 2010 with a movie that alluded to a story of love and heartbreak between the four statues, and that converted the inanimate figures that form the monument into desiring subjects.

Throughout his career, FRANCESCO TORRES has repeatedly worked with the idea of destruction, fascinated by crashed cars, devastation caused by war, and the rubble of the World Trade Center skyscrapers. His work speaks about collective memory and looks to awaken critical reflection. In the book Francesc Torres visits some statues in Berlin, St. Petersburg and Barcelona that have been attacked, and thus opens up the geographic reach of this exhibition. His piece is called, precisely, *Lose your head*.

DANIELA ORTIZ works from a belief in the power of the totem and the conviction that an image is power, whether it be a photo shared on social media or a museum piece. They are never politically neutral. The work she presents in the book hopes to raise awareness, stating that at the survival of a colonial icon in the middle of Barcelona has connections to Catalan immigration policies.

PERE JAUME decided to write without any images, in order to give them a rest, and because we don't need the to explain the intimate relationship that links artists to their work, both solemn and relaxed at the same time. In this text and in his last book, *Bring a Maredeus to the Dance*, he talks lucidly and ironically about wanting and the subjectivity of icons.

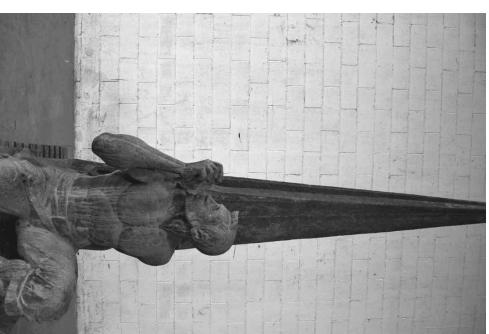
In addition, the book documents the Catalan monuments that will visit Venice, accompanied by interventions from the filmmaker Albert Gascó-Alzórriz along with the poet Gabriel Ventura, the playwright Marcel Borràs and the architect Tiziano Schürch.

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Exhibition of 4 ORIGINAL MONUMENTS, scenographic examples of public statues in Catalonia that in the past years have provoked passionate reactions, either because they are worshipped or because they've been vandalised and removed from the public space. These works are:

EASTER "PASSO" OF SAINT BURIAL (1942-1944), by Salvador Martorell. Made of polychrome wood and embroidered fabric, it is composed of seven figures that represent the burial of Christ. It belongs to the *Gremi de Marejants* of Tarragona and it is one of the most spectacular "passos" of the Saint Burial procession of Good Friday in the city. It has been declared "a traditional festival of national interest" by the Government of Catalonia.



MONUMENT TO THE FALLEN (1963), by Genaro Iglesias, currently residing in the city depository of the city of Balaguer. The monument, inaugurated by Franco in 1963, was made by the Barcelona sculptor, Genaro Iglesias, who fought for the Republicans and who had settled in Balaguer because the dictatorship sentenced him to a forced exile of 150 kilometres from his house. The first version of the sculpture, a nude male figure, was not accepted. The commission was a soldier with a weapon and a flag, but the sculptor, skilfully, converted the sculpture into a bare-chested peasant with a hoe, a helmet and a pyramid, which is an indefinite representation of a flag. In 1982 the statue was removed for its connection to Francoism. Today, however, it is being reclaimed for its republican past and could be reinstated.



MEMORY OF A NIGHTMARE (1991), by Joan Brossa. Currently part of the permanent collection of the Museum of the History of Immigration in Catalonia, located in Sant Adrià del Besòs. The piece, a local commission by the la Mina de Sant Adrià neighbourhood, shows the decapitated head of the ex-mayor of Barcelona, José María de Porciles, on a tray on a chair. Under his mandate all sorts of urban disasters were carried out. The piece was finished in 1991 but it was only exhibited one day before it was removed by the mayor and stored away. It later suffered two more removals from the public space, one from the municipal library, before it was placed in the Museum of the History of Immigration in 2004.



MONUMENT TO LLUÍS COMPANYS (1998), by Francisco López. Since its erection on Passeig Sant Joan in Barcelona in 1998, the sculpture has been painted on three occasions, one time by an artist collective that felt that the sculpture was not expressive.



In the exhibition space there will also be a documentary section where 15 of the most worshipped, vandalised and removed sculptures in Catalonia will be documented with press clippings, photographs and videos. In addition, a video with scenes from different movies throughout history that illustrate the destruction and worshipping of statues will be projected.

BIOGRAPHIES

PEDRO AZARA (Bois-Colombes, France, 1955) holds a PhD in Architecture (1986). Associate professor of Art Theory at the Elisava Design School of Barcelona (1986-87). Associate professor of Aesthetics at the School of Optics at the Polytechnic University of Catalonia, Terrassa (1993-95), and professor of Aesthetics at the Barcelona School of Architecture (ETSAB). He was also the secretary of the Department of Architectural Composition (1996-99), member of the Board of ETSAB (1994-), and of the PhD Commission of the Department of Composition (2017-). He has curated various exhibitions such as, *The House of the Soul* (CCCB, 1997), *The Last Gaze* (Machba, 1997), *Before the Flood, Mesopotamia, 3600-2100 BC* (GaixàForum, Barcelona, 2012), *Mirage City: Bagdad, from Wright to Venturi* (COAC, Casa Arab, COAM), Centre for Architecture, Society of Architects, Riwad Biennale, Barcelona, Madrid, Murcia, Boston, New York and Ramallah, 2008-2012), *Mediterranean. From Myth to Reason* Del (CaixaForum, Barcelona, Madrid, 2014), *From Ancient to Modern, Archaeology and Aesthetics* (SSAW, Nova York, 2015) and *Summer and the Modern Paradigm* (Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona, 2017-2018).

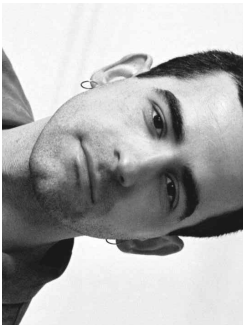


MARCEL BORRÀS (Olot, 1989). Actor, director and playwright. As an actor he has worked in theatre with the directors Luis Pascual, Alex Rigola, Lluís Homar, Georges Laxaudant, Roger Bernat and Carol López, among others. In film and television he has worked under the direction of Agustí Villaronga, Mar Coll and Pau Freixas, among others. As a theatre director he has created nine pieces since 2007 alongside Nao Albert. His most recent ones were *Falsestuff: The Death of the Muses*, which premiered at the National Theatre of Catalonia during the 2018 Grec Festival, and *Mammon* which played at the Teatre Lliure of Barcelona and more recently as the Canal Theatres in Madrid. Along with Nao Albert he received the RNE Ojo Crítico award in theatre in 2016 for the risks taken in their work and their commitment to contemporary language.



ALBERT GARCÍA-ALZÓRIZ (Barcelona, 1992) graduated in Fine Arts and Architecture. He was a teaching assistant in the Department of Architectural Projects at the ETSAB (2014-2017), as well as assistant to the artist Jordi Colomer during the realisation of the Spanish Pavilion for the 57th Art Biennale of Venice (2017). He was a finalist in the second edition of the CCCB's International Award for Cultural Innovation for his collective project <3EARTH (Barcelona, 2017).

Amongst his recent work the following projects stand out: the architectural project for the creation, research and artistic production laboratory, La Infinita, in Hospitalet; the scenography for the play, *Here* (Sala Beckett, Barcelona/Volksbühne, Berlin); and the documentary, *Tras los Eucaliptos* (2018). Amongst other places, his work has been shown at the Valencia Institute of Modern Art, at the Alcanoes 50th Festival of Documentary Film, and at ROVER, a project by Victor Ruiz-Colomer and Joe Highton for Manifesta 12 in Palermo.



THE INSTITUTE RAMON LLULL

Since 2009 the Institut Ramon Llull has produced and organised the Catalan participation in the *Eventi Colateral* of the Venice Art Biennale. The Institut Ramon Llull is a consortium dedicated to promoted the Catalan language and culture aboard.

Like every year, in order to choose the project *Catalonia In Venice, To Lose Your Head (Idols)*, IRL nominated a committee of experts presided over by the artist Dora García, and chaired by João Fernandes, assistant director of the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía; Carles Guerra, director of the Tàpies Foundation, and Celia del Diego, art critic and director of the art center, La Panera.

This will be the sixth time that IRL presents Catalonia at the Venice Biennale, which takes place between May 11th and November 24th, 2019. The director this year is Ralph Riganoff. At last year's Biennale IRL presented the project, *La Venezia che non si vede*, by the artist Antoni Abad, curated y Mery Cuesta and Roc Parés.

CREDITS

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Institut Ramon Llull

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ARTIST
Marcel Borràs

VIDEO
Albert García-Alzóriz

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Sound and video editing: Joan Borrell and Kerman Arranz

SPACE DESIGN
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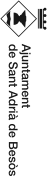
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Ajuntament de Barcelona:
Museu d'Història de Barcelona (MUHBA)
Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Barcelona
Ajuntament de Sant Adrià del Besòs:
Museu d'Història de la Immigració de Catalunya (MHIC)
Arxiu del Port de Tarragona
Arxiu Municipal de l'Ajuntament de Tossa de Mar and anonymous collectors.



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CATALONIA IN VENICE—
TO LOSE YOUR HEAD (IDOLS)
CALLE QUINTAVALLE,
CASTELLO 40, VENICE.
FROM MAY 11TH
TO NOVEMBER 24TH

OPENING HOURS

From May 11th to November 24th
From 10am to 6pm.
Closed on Mondays
(except May 13th, September 2nd
and November 18th)

www.toloseyourhead.llull.cat
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PRESS CONFERENCE

Wednesday, May 8th:
11am, Press conference
12pm, Performance

INAUGURATION

Friday, May 10th:
6pm, Inaugural act

PERFORMANCE

AND INTERACTIVE SCULPTURE,
SHE APPROPRIATES IN PRESENT

Passes open to the public:

May 8th at 5pm
May 9th at 12pm and 5pm
May 10th at 12pm.

Reservation required: idols@llull.cat

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