

Ian Waelder – Is it like today?

July 1 – September 3, 2022

ethall, Barcelona

Ian Waelder's practice explores memory and trace by isolating material histories and language in relation to his biography, working through the poetics of the accident and the repurposing of the discarded. The exhibition *Is it like today?* brings together a series of recent works that focus on the search for the Opel Olympia, a 1930s car that belonged to the family of his paternal grandfather, the pianist Federico (Friedrich) Waelder, and which enabled him to flee Germany during Nazism.

Through the works that compose the exhibition, Waelder has carried out an investigation centred on family genealogy, recent history and the parallels between body and machine. This line of work emerged as the artist's response to moving to Frankfurt in 2017 and realising that he is the first member of his family to re-settle in the German country since his grandfather's exile, residing a mere 30 minutes from the original Opel factory.

The first part of this story began in 2020 after he found a tape containing a piano melody of his grandfather's, to date the only existing trace of his music. During that year, once a month, Ian aired this recording on a local radio station in Frankfurt. Already in 2021, he made together with his father a series of clay sculptures copying the model of the car, as a four-handed search. More recently, he began to search for and acquire original Opel Olympia parts, now scattered in different parts of Germany and in poor condition.

These acquisitions include a headlight and an owner's manual for the 1935 model, the same one that belonged to his family. The manual contains illustrative images of the steps to be taken to repair the car's mechanics, with anonymous hands carefully holding different parts of the car. Waelder prints these photographs on acetate and then cuts out the gestures of these hands, placing them in different parts of the exhibition space. In the background we hear a whistling sound. This is a 13-minute recording in which Ian, in a single take, whistles his grandfather's piano melody from memory. With this sound as a backdrop, two original 1935 Opel Olympia headlights are held in tension at eye level with the artist, turning their backs to each other and dazzling the visitor, at first making it difficult to see and understand the object itself. The first room of the gallery is divided into two spaces that one must pass through. On one side a sculpture with a remnant of the mould used during the process of the sculptures made with his father, which retain his fingerprints. The inverted void of the car against the wall in front of a familiar nose deformed by the shadow cast by the light of the Olympia. In the second room of the gallery we find a sculpture formed by two remains of old plinths where the interior is used to preserve the other half of the mould and a photograph of his father's hand taken while the sculpture was being made in his studio. This work, which includes the word *Torso* in its title, becomes a sort of body that one has to go around to discover, held in place by metal filing cabinet boxes pointing in opposite directions. Before leaving the room, we see an analog black and white *Monstera* plant. Part of a series of portraits of this plant, which was given to his parents on the day Ian was born, and which is still growing today.

Bio:

Ian Waelder (Madrid, 1993) is a Spanish artist and editor currently based in Frankfurt am Main where he studied at the Städelschule Frankfurt under Profs. Peter Fischli, Mark von Schlegell and Haegue Yang.

His solo exhibitions include Why aren't they all like that, as I should be? (L21, Palma, 2021), Teo's Pink Panther (Las Palmas, Lisbon, 2019), We feel untied, but why? (curated by Sonia Fernández Pan at Centro Párraga, Murcia, 2018), Who Would Be Interested in an Empty Parking Lot? (The Finnish Museum of Photography, Helsinki, 2018) and The Noise, The Traces and Marks (LOCAL Arte Contemporáneo, Santiago de Chile, 2015).

He has held group and duo exhibitions in venues such as Nassauischer Kunstverein (Wiesbaden), Spoiler (Berlin), Galerie Rolando Anselmi (Atina), Salón (Madrid), Tabacalera (Madrid) and La Casa Encendida (Madrid).

Parallel to his artistic practice, he's the founder of the publishing house Printer Fault Press.

Photography: Juande Jarillo, Eva Carasol, Juan David Cortés

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Opening Hours

Tuesday - Friday: 11.00am - 15.00pm
Saturdays by appointment

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