

# Manuel Saiz

## One True Art – 16 Answers to the Question What Art is

14 October 2013 - 6 January 2014



The phases in an artist's life could be traced out as a succession of attempts to define art, each from a different perspective, and each inevitably a failure. The task, it might be said, is an impossible one. Nevertheless, the failures are only partial, for while they do not succeed in apprehending art in its totality, they at least serve to attain a new viewpoint from which to test a new and more convincing definition. In every change of perspective, art shows itself briefly, and that seems to be its sole recurrent character: a tragic effort to redefine itself.

The work presented here by Manuel Saiz is a new attempt by the artist to understand the parameters within which he carries out his work as an artist, and thereby also those encompassing his life and his relationship with the world. While this concern is common to all his earlier work, it acquires full protagonism in this case. Here it is the premise, the raw material, and the final result. This work might be said to find its precise orientation in the questioning of its own intentions.

The video shown in the room is the record of an event that took place on September 28, 2013, in the museum's Nouvel Auditorium. Throughout that day, sixteen art specialists, people whose interest and occupation is similarly to understand, question, make and remake art on a daily basis, were interviewed in rapid succession for 30 minutes each.

The work, which announces itself as an artistic performance, deals with habitual themes of lectures and symposia with the theatricality of a piece of drama, the precision and haste of a talk show, and the dedication of a documentary essay. However, as might perhaps be said of any work of art, this one is first and foremost an experiment, and as such its fundamental characteristics are a certainty of the qualities of the elements set in play, and an uncertainty as to what will result from their combination.

Indeed, many of the conditions which hold in the experiment, that eminently technical manner of approaching the nature of things, have been reproduced in the creation of these images. An effort has been made, for example, to procure a space where that definition of art will be free of economic, social and moral pressures; the habitual routines and protocols of artistic presentations, such as introductions, expressions of thanks, questions from the audience, and all the agents extraneous to the reactions under observation, have been reduced to a minimum; the questions, the order in which the guests appear, and the issues to be dealt with have all been carefully gauged; and a tight schedule has been drawn up, allowing all the principles to be active simultaneously, the different aspects of the question to remain in the closest possible contact, and their interaction to be consequently intense and immediate.

Yet no matter how much pressure is exerted to keep everything under control, and no matter how many security systems one attempts to implement, the energy that is set in motion makes the result unpredictable. Error in the experiment may be small, but it can be extremely revealing, and the subtler it is, the more significant it can be.

In the course of these eight hours, the interviewers and interviewees devote themselves with brilliance, efficiency and dedication to defining all that can be defined, so that the indefinable will stand out with greater intensity, and its power to perturb will accordingly be accentuated.

**Museo Nacional  
Centro de Arte  
Reina Sofía**

**Sabatini Building**

Santa Isabel, 52

**Nouvel Building**

Ronda de Atocha

(with Emperador

Carlos V Square)

28012 Madrid

Tel. (34) 91 774 10 00

**Museum hours**

Monday to Saturday

and holidays

from 10:00 a.m.

to 9:00 p.m.

Sundays from

10:00 a.m.

to 7:00 p.m.\*

Closed Tuesdays

Galleries close

15 minutes

prior to Museum

closing

**[museoreinasofia.es](http://museoreinasofia.es)**

\*From 2:30 pm onwards only the Collection 1 can be visited (Sabatini Building, Level 2)

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