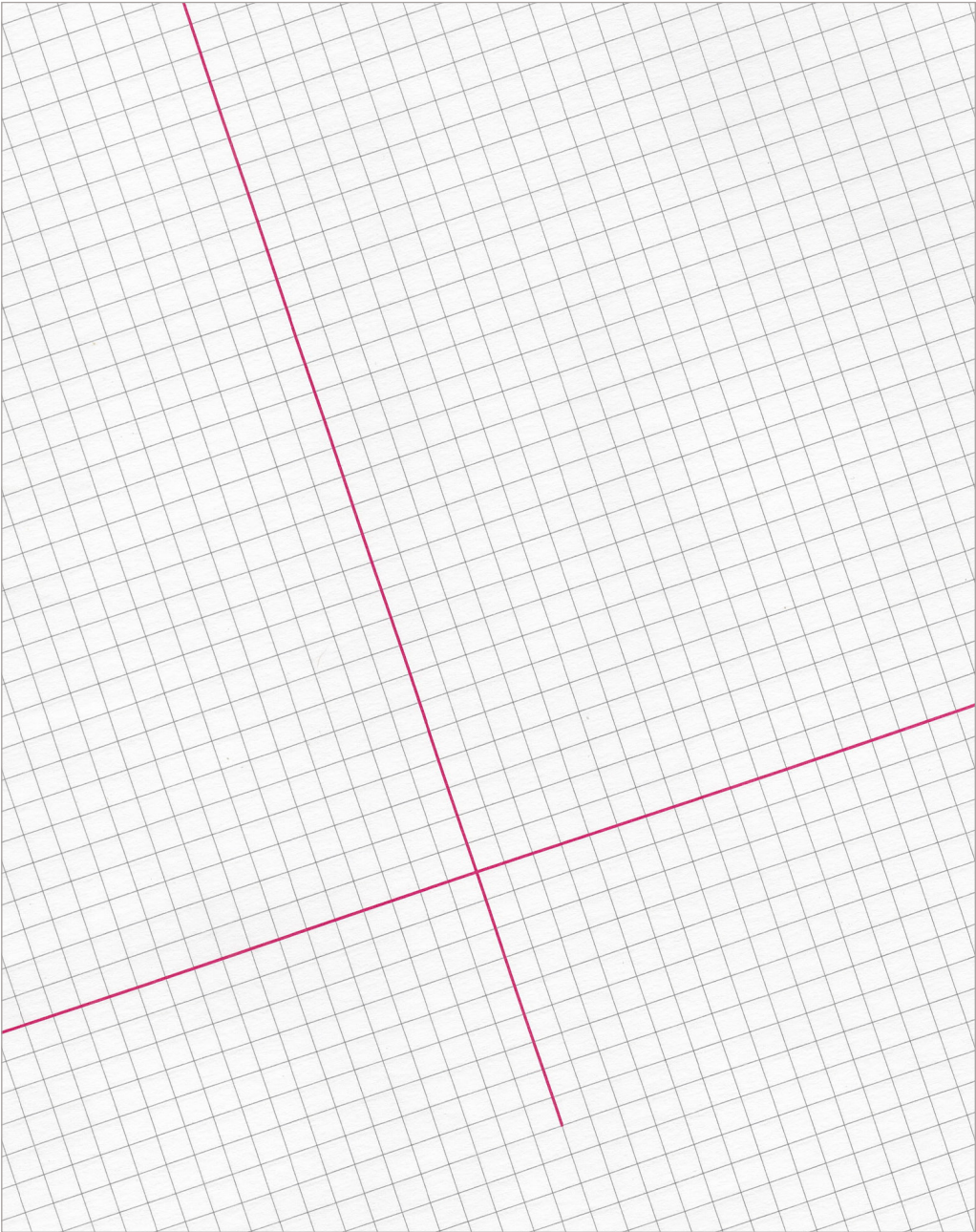


Children and Fools  
Teresa Estapé  
14.09 — 04.11.2023

Chiquita Room



## Impersonal

The old adage of uncertain roots that goes, “children and fools tell the truth,” can be understood in two seemingly contradictory ways. The sentence can be read as an exaltation of truth, deemed to be a practice of transparency and immediacy specific to naive beings. Conversely, that same saying could suggest that there eventually comes a need to lie that, due to their very naivety, the “children and fools” in question fail to acknowledge. In the latter case, under the conviction that lies are able to protect us, it is only the young and the witless who overlook the simple fact that the truth can lead to problems. Therefore, the matter boils down to working out what the problem is: What matter merits being expressed truthfully and, at the same time, requires a certain degree of obfuscation and trickery so as not to cause irreparable damage? If we stay true to the proverb, we can only find the answer in children and fools.

It is they who tell the truth and they who are unaware of the alleged benefits of lying, because they are impersonal; thus, they can maintain a *nonmoral*<sup>1</sup> relationship with both concepts, one that remains beyond any conventionalism. Impersonal beings. Childishness and foolishness as two modalities of existence emancipated from the *apparatus of personhood*<sup>2</sup>. The truth that these exceptional beings tell—one out of naivety, the other out of foible—is that the force of being does not require the construction of a personality. In turn, deep within this truth, the lie they are unaware of is the alleged need to establish oneself through a clearly defined, final and conclusive personal identity. Children, we tell ourselves, are not yet people; fools, we add, are *flawed* people. By passing this kind of judgement, we protect ourselves from their impersonhood so that we might still seek comfort in the moral and social mandate to construct our own personhood. But could we approach existence along other premises? Where does this complicated injunction to establish oneself as a defined and closed-off subject stem from? What if the apparatus of personhood did not lead to any loss but rather gain?

As Roberto Esposito has meticulously analysed, the apparatus of personhood is little more than a construct with the intention of grounding power in the form of the Law. In fact, the concept of personhood stems from the fiction that we are all made up of an animal aspect and a rational condition that are, to a certain extent, at loggerheads. This form of struggle is what lays the groundwork for differentiating between whole persons (those able to quell their animality) and defective persons (those who, due to a range of circumstances—such as the primitivism of the child or the derangement of the fool—are still visibly mired in their natural condition). Once this differentiation has been established, each segment of this personalist regime will hold greater or lesser rights depending

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<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche. *Sobre verdad y mentira en sentido extramoral* (1873). Ed. Tecnos. Madrid, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Roberto Esposito. *El dispositivo de la persona*. Amorrotu Editores. Madrid, 2011.

on how whole they are. Whole persons are granted certain privileges, while defective persons are stripped of their rights. Of course, the fragility of the borders that define each side is what allows for the emergence of a form of power that sets out to clarify the terms at any given moment in history. Thus, it seems that establishing ourselves as persons does not in fact ensure us a life underpinned by freedom of thought and deed; rather, it is what can make that life vulnerable to unforeseeable forms of bondage. The impersonal—be they a child, a fool or any other defective mode of subjectivity—is one who does not split themselves between their metabolic being and their rational being. Along these lines, the impersonal is deemed to be a simple being insofar as it conserves the unity between its animal being and its potential for thought. The child is a simple being. The fool is a simple being. However, their simpleness is not a lack in any way. Instead, in the condition of not being somebody (an established and closed-off self) but rather nobody, some “anybodies”—for that very reason—embody the possibility of a full existence that upholds the bond between the animal body and its capacity for imagination.

In much of her work, Teresa Estapé confronts us with what we could call the “zero point”: that place where nothing has crystallised yet but shows all of its potential for configuration. A blank page. White as a sheet. *Blandness* is what she now calls it: the pulp of an incipient blankness. Beside it, panels of lined paper for putting together schoolbooks exist alongside others made out of medical tape and unfolded pieces of gauze. They are all canvasses made up of pure warp and weft: a territory that is open to any possibility. This insistence on the zero point could be interpreted as an evocation of the impersonal that “*Ser nadie*” (To Be Nobody) attests to: a set of jewellery for donning the guise of indeterminacy. If in “*Forget Me Not*”—a set of mourning jewellery—Estapé already touched on the need to reestablish rituals of departure, this time round, the jewels act as tools with which we can invoke ourselves in the flight from our personal condition, entering into a form of powerful anonymity. Donning the guise of the simple being, the child, the fool, of a blank somebody, of a blank anybody. Against the injunction to establish oneself by means of a personality that shines through in thought and deed in a coherent and recognisable manner, we are now grasped by the opportunity to become nobody—a blank page lying in wait—as the only guarantee for a subjectivity that is not captured but rather vulnerable and open to unpredictable becomings. Hence the delicateness of the material: Estapé uses talc, the softest and most fragile mineral on the Mohs scale, since the very transition toward the impersonal does not guarantee any endpoint, only the spirited and naive salvaging of our childhood and genuine simpleness.

**martí peran**

**Thursday 14 September, at 9:30 a.m.**

Guided visit with Teresa Estapé to the installation "Safe Haven (II)" included in the exhibition *MACBA Collection. Prelude. Poetic intention* at MACBA.  
Activity for Barcelona Gallery Weekend professionals.

**Thursday 14 September, at 12 p.m.**

Guided visit with curator Zaida Trallero at Chiquita Room.  
Activity for Barcelona Gallery Weekend professionals.

**Thursday 14 September, at 6 p.m.**

Opening of the exhibition *Children and Fools* at Chiquita Room.

**Friday 15 September, at 7 p.m.**

Presentation of the artist's edition *Plums, Decoding Sparrows and Sweet Bread*, as a collaboration between Teresa Estapé and poet Mariano Zaro.

**Saturday 16 and Sunday 17 September, at 12:30 p.m.**

BGW Familiar. Active visit for families with children by independent curator Alexandra Laudo.

Limited capacity. Registration: [bgw@artbarcelona.es](mailto:bgw@artbarcelona.es).

Recommended age: 7 to 12 years old.

**Friday 6 October, at 7 p.m.**

*Handschmeichler* launch, special edition of the sensory object made by Teresa Estapé with talc and diamond, the softest and hardest mineral on the Mohs scale.

**Thursday 26 October, at 7 p.m.**

Artist talk between Teresa Estapé and Martí Peran, art critic, curator and author of the exhibition text.

# Chiquita Room