



# Casilda Sánchez

ASPECT / **RATIO**

September 6, 2013 - October 5, 2013







**ASPECT RATIO:** *Insides* (2006-2008) focuses on non-fictional interiors – private apartments in Chicago and Madrid. Illuminated windows allow intimate moments occurring in private spaces to be watched and recorded from afar. Your voyeuristic gaze is anonymous and the subjects are unaware of your presence.

Projects like *As Inside as the Eye can See* (2009), *The touch of proximity* (2011), *Ojos que no ven (What the eye sees not)* (2009), *Los labios de su boca [...]* (2010), and the *Quisiera ser tan alta como la luna (I wish I was as tall as the moon)* (2012-2013) series, also focus on exploring intimacy. However, these projects are studies of body parts shot against a white background. Unlike the photographs of real-life residences and offices, we see human body parts suspended in a white void.

I am interested in exploring the two different approaches to investigating themes of intimacy and seeing.

How do you make sense of the different approaches?

Left and Cover: *Quisiera ser tan alta como la luna (I) (I wish I was as tall as the moon)* (2012)  
5 channels HD video, 5 channels sound 9'13", loop

**CASILDA SÁNCHEZ:** The photographs and videos of interior spaces came first. I was living in an apartment in Madrid that was surrounded by neighboring units. Windows were everywhere and at night the windows would become illuminated. The lights emit a type of warmth; inside of the windows people were living their lives and in a way we were all living together. However, I wasn't interacting with my neighbors and we didn't know one another. But we were sharing a type of existence and while we inhabited our private bubbles, we were aware of one another's presence. There is a strange sense of familiarity. I wanted to break down the boundaries between our public and private spheres and allow these spaces to interact with one another.

*Insides* is an exploration of intimacy and asks whether we can experience intimacy just by looking. Taste, touch, to some extent even smell, require a point of contact. We taste or touch thereby establishing an intimacy with another person or thing. But can intimacy be achieved just through the act of looking? Can looking become as charged and as sensual as touching — so that we are as close to a thing through looking as we can be through touching?

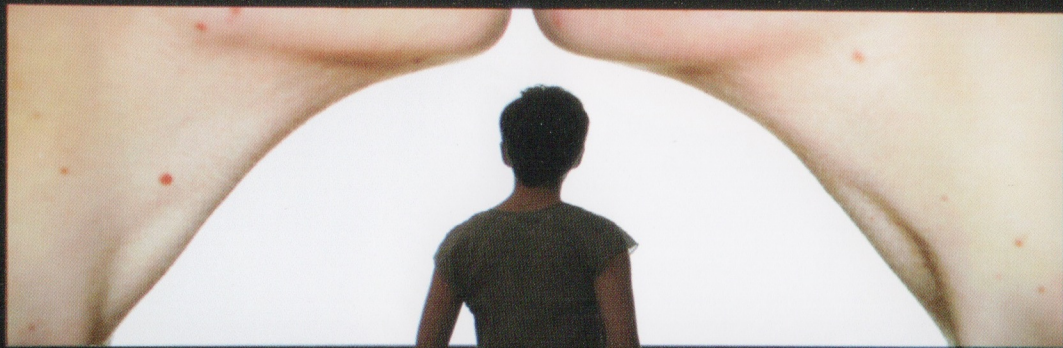
After gazing into private spaces, I began to consider my own eye and the mechanics of my look. I am intrigued by the physical and biological aspects of looking, in addition to the related concepts of perception, intimacy and identity. Using lights, a stationary camera, and post-production techniques, I worked on making videos about looking at the body: for example, an eye looking at an eye, in *As Inside as the Eye can See*. The magnetism of looking and a desire to understand the self by looking at the self are important elements in my work.

*As Inside as the Eye can See* (2009) | channel HD video 07' 00", loop









*The touch of proximity* (2011) | channel HD video 12'00", loop



**AR:** How do you cast and direct the people performing in your work?

**CS:** In order to probe the topic of identity, I have frequently cast my own body in my videos. In *The touch of proximity* (2011), the two necks are two different sides of my own neck. By doubling myself I am exploring ideas of mimicry, multiplicity, formation and the paradox of making myself into the other.

Other times I will work with close friends, family or loved ones. In an effort to capture an intimate and intense moment, I choose to keep the on-screen interaction as real and as honest as possible. By making videos that are like slow moving photographs, I am trying to record the pulse of being.

**AR:** You photograph and frame the human body in such a way that we cannot always be sure of what we are looking at. It takes time to register that we are staring at the space between a person's two eyes or a set of two nearly touching chins and necks. Are you intentionally trying to make the body appear strange and unknown?

The framing is an important part of the work. I am seeking to decontextualize body parts and to use the bodily fragments to make something else. The specificity of the body – the gender; or sex, or age – is insignificant. Hence, body parts such as hands and faces are absent. Instead attention is given to skin, hair; and body marks. I want to emphasize that humans are animals.

**CS:** Society doesn't normally look closely at the parts of the body. By concentrating on the neck I can reveal its vulnerability. By isolating the neck and drawing attention to how the neck breathes and swallows, I can underscore a kind of weakness.

**AR:** Your work frequently examines the eye. Why is the eye a meaningful subject for you?

**CS:** I am a very observant person and I wanted to understand that personality trait. However, the fact that looking is a very universal and basic human action is also important. Making work about the eye helps me to understand and discover more about the meaning of looking and intimacy.

I have studied voyeurism and the subject of looking. The eye is a symbol for seeing. An eye glance can communicate subtle information about emotions and thought. Sight is an integral part of how we amass knowledge and memory.



**AR:** The latest project in the *Quisiera ser tan alta como la luna (I wish I was as tall as the moon)* (2012-2013) series is a sculpture linking an arm to a leg. Why the decision to move away from an investigation of the eye? Why the interest in working with sculpture?

**CS:** The series' starting point was a Spanish folk song that was recited during my childhood. The song is about dreaming and the series is about how our first dreams are both a blessing and a burden. We live with our dreams; they inspire us and help us to survive. However, our dreams and desires also encourage us to believe that we can accomplish anything and this is potentially very dangerous.

The song's lyrics determined the look of the the series' six works. I imagined what would happen if the song's lyrics about being tall enough to touch the moon were transformed into an object.

With the sculpture, I've purposely made a being whose primary function is to stretch and grow in order to be tall enough to touch the moon. Inspired by Greek and Roman sculptures and myths, I've sought to make a body that is mythological-like.

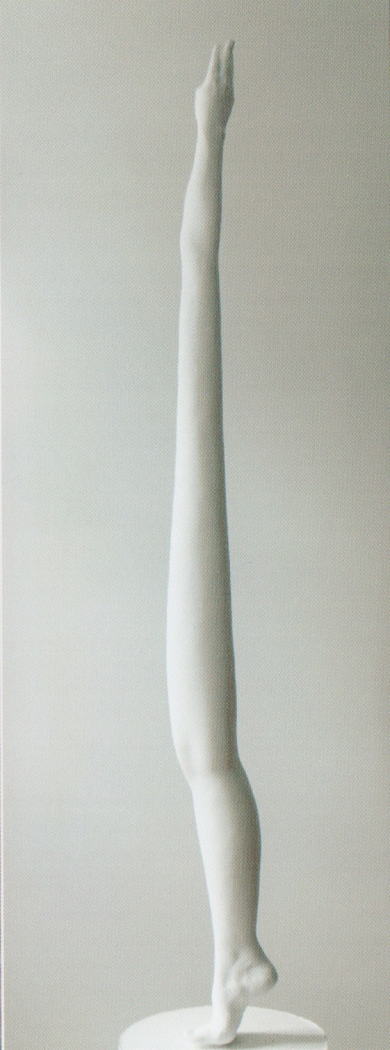
I looked at Gian Lorenzo Bernini's sculpture of *Apollo and Daphne*, wherein Daphne converts into a tree. Detailed, scientific and anatomical drawings along with botanical drawings, also inspired the design of the sculpture. In fact, the sculpture is built to human-scale. I wanted to create a sculpture that is eerie and beautiful at the same time. This reconceptualized body is an unattainable body, and also an undesirable body. The leg extending into an arm is a reflection of the desire to touch the moon, but it's form makes other desires, like eating, an impossibility.

Left: Bernini, *Apollo and Daphne*, 1622-27, Galleria Borghese, Rome

Middle: Process work

Right: *Quisiera ser tan alta como la luna (VI) (I wish I was as tall as the moon)* 2013 Sculpture, Hydrocal 83" x 6"











**AR:** Can you talk about the role that music plays in your work?

**CS:** Most of my works are silent because I don't want the videos to have an obvious beginning or ending. With the videos in the, *Quisiera ser tan alta como la luna (I wish I was as tall as the moon)* series, because the music was the starting point for the project, I had a friend hum the chorus. She hums the chorus for the duration of the video – the music is not looped. The humming emphasizes the idea of the circular and the ritualistic. Because her humming is not looped, you can hear her voice change over the course of the performance.

**AR:** Can you talk about *Winter Landscape* (2013)? There appears to be a shift from studying the landscape of the body with its veins, skin and birthmarks to a study of a more literal landscape. In this work, people move across a snowcovered land. Is this a new direction for you?

**CS:** The video reflects my continued interest in spaces. The video is shot near my home in Prospect Park. The images are inspired by Flemish and Dutch paintings of people enjoying the winter landscape. The video is a fixed shot of people playing in the snow.

Time has passed and technologies have evolved, but people still enjoy the winter as they did many centuries ago. The video is blurred so that the images become timeless. Specific details are lost and the small scale of the work makes the playing people tiny, like insects moving across a landscape. Much of the footage is nearly motionless, like the paintings that inspired the work. The blurry, white and pristine snowscape makes the world appear like a dream.

*This interview took place on August 4th, 2013 & was edited by Jenna Feldman.*

*Quisiera ser tan alta como la luna (II) (I wish I was as tall as the moon)* (2012) SD Video, box and monitor; Mono sound 5'00", loop





ASPECT / **RATIO**

119 N Peoria Unit 3D Chicago IL 60607

[www.aspectratioprojects.com](http://www.aspectratioprojects.com) / [info@aspectratioprojects.com](mailto:info@aspectratioprojects.com)

© 2013

