rather than a precise mapping of models, one must also take into
account the matter of location. In the heart of the European Union,
Vienna has long been a hub of refugees and migrants from the former
Yugoslavia, Eastern Europe, and the global South. It is hard to reconcile
this specific backdrop of racialization and racism, which is both rife in
the current European discourse and—as Achille Mbembe and Marina
Grzinić have demonstrated—at the crux of global capitalism, with the
diffidence one feels within the gallery. The connection between capital-
ist abstraction and the arbitrariness of life and death, which is the basic
condition of many refugees, is barely alluded to in these antiseptic
museological surroundings. Instead, what we see is a sequence of for-
mal procedures that try to imbue the emptiness of capitalist abstraction
with formal transgression. The very node in which global capitalism’s
political ideology breeds and propagates unequal relations of power—
abstraction and arbitrariness—is thus depoliticized and offered as a
tamed narrative of modernist aesthetic permutation.
—Nuit Banai

MADRID

El Roto
GALERÍA LA CAJA NEGRA

Though almost a stranger to the art world, El Roto is one of the best-
known draftsmen in Spain. For more than forty years, he has contribu-
ted to a number of publications, among them El País, the country’s
leading newspaper, for which he publishes illustrations on a daily basis.
On the art scene—in which his participation is recent and sporadic—he
signs his paintings with his real name: Andrés Rábago.

El Roto is not the only pseudonym Rábago has assumed. As early
as the 1970s, he used the name OPS to sign drawings with a Surrealist
iconography and spirit that delighted readers of the satirical press. And
he still indulges in parody and even in a certain sense of cruelty. But
while OPS ended up making something like visual poetry, his successor
El Roto engages in a more direct, concise, and biting analysis of social
reality. Though he has constructed a readily identifiable personal style,
El Roto—against the dominant tendency in contemporary art—is not
much concerned with leaving an authorial mark on his work. Instead,
his drawings are guided by an interest in reality and its possible read-
ings. Many newspaper readers look to his images on a daily basis for a
succinct explanation of the social issues that concern them. He sums
up general ideas in single images drawn with acid.

A recent exhibition at La Nau at the University of Valencia, Spain,
“OPS / El Roto / Rábago. Un viaje de mil demonios (y un par de ángeles)”
(OPS / El Roto / Rábago. A Trip of One Thousand Demons [and a Couple
of Angels]), brought together a wide range of work under all three of the
artist’s identities, while a simultaneous exhibition in Madrid, titled “Oh,
la l’art!,” was smaller and more concentrated. Its focus was a critique of
the economic and social networks of contemporary art. El Roto joins the
lineage of artists, from William Hogarth on, who have looked on the art
scene of their times with a measure of skepticism. Like Honoré Daumier,
he expresses that vision in graphic works published in newspapers. And
like Goya, he partakes in a specifically Spanish tradition of black
humor. El Roto formulates a complementary and symbiotic relationship
between image and written word as he renders simple and direct forms in a
tone both didactic and biting. Images like the ones titled Grandes firmas
son las que firman grande (Big Companies Are the Ones
with Big Signatures) (all works 2012–13) and Parecían grandes ideas
pero era la megafonía (They Seemed Like Big Ideas but It was the
Loudspeaker), for instance, address the tangled connections between
commercial and critical success. Turning Duchamp on his head, El Roto
ventures a possible, and defiant, response to the question of what art
is: “Arte es lo que se expone donde se expone arte”—Art is what is
exhibited where art is exhibited, he asserts, in a statement both accurate
and critical insofar as it points out the solipsism of the art world. Some-
thing similar is expressed in a drawing of a row of identical paintings
hanging on a long museum wall, at the end of which are the words ETC.,
Etc. With astonishing force, this drawing describes the link between
assumed artistic value and the stereotype of authorship. The trap of
repetitive style is one that El Roto himself has never fallen into.
—Pablo Llorca
Translated from Spanish by Jane Brodie.

BARCELONA

Black Tulip
GALERÍA ESTRANY-DE LA MOTA

Last year was a difficult one for Barcelona: The ongoing economic reces-
sion in combination with increasing political crisis has turned the once
dazzling Catalan capital into a disheartening wasteland. One of the
very few glittering lights was the emergence of Black Tulip, the enig-
matic umbrella under which a number of artists explore, among other
things, issues of authorship in creative processes. The group has no
fixed membership; each project has different participants. Early in
March of last year, for instance, Black Tulip performed an inspiring
action at Hallhouse, an artist’s association that has become a true space
of resistance against politicians’ philistinism. On a late-winter night, a
good two dozen people headed toward the woods in the hills surround-
ing Barcelona, where they picked up a tall, fallen tree and carried it on
their shoulders back to the Hallhouse headquarters. They lay the tree
on the floor, with its base in the building’s fireplace, and for the next
five days, they oversaw its burning, bit by bit. Some stayed at the house
overnight keeping watch; others arrived each morning with coffee and
breakfast for those who’d spent the night. Together they waited for the
fire to consume the tree and leave nothing but ashes. So much for the
venerable art object; in this work, the vital medium was time.

Time also played an essential role in Black Tulip’s more recent proj-
ject for Galería Estrany-de la Mota—an entirely different context in
which to reflect on production and on the way aesthetic and financial
speculation, the latter always inherent to the art market, may or may
not be intertwined. The undertaking also fostered an investigation of
the possible performativity of the gallery space. Titled “Nou Origen”