



Derivart's *Burbujómetro* is an interactive display of house prices across Spain which viewers can shoot at.

## Shooting down the bubble of filthy lucre

Festival highlights the rise of "finance art," which explores how money affects our lives

SUSANA URRA, **Madrid**  
Feeling a little angry over soaring housing prices caused by the Spanish real estate bubble? You might try shooting the prices down — at least symbolically — at a new art installation in Valencia.

The *Burbujómetro* (Bubble Meter) is an interactive display of real-time housing prices in different Spanish provinces, seen as bubbles on a screen. Viewers can use a video-game type gun to shoot at a bubble, which explodes and shows the current average price of apartments in, say, Málaga or Madrid. The installation seeks to show the dynamics of the real estate market in a non-traditional way that ordinary people can relate to.

"Our work is a reflection on the socioeconomic dynamics of bubbles, housing and the experi-

ence of living in Spain in the period 2000-2007," say its creators, a three-member collective called Derivart, who specialize in what they term "finance art."

Their works, they say, explore the intersection between art, finance and technology by researching how the world of business and finance affects people's lives, then rendering the results into artistic forms by using computer software and other technologies. The genre has been carving out a niche for itself ever since the first exhibition last summer at Madrid's La Casa Encendida, which brought together artists from several countries.

Other examples of finance art include John Klima's *Ecosystem*, a 3-D video game made from digital representations of global currencies, represented as birds that change their flight according to

volatility; or Natalie Jerimenko's *Despondency Index*, which superimposed the suicide rate at San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge on the Dow Jones index, to show that the dotcom boom did not manage to stem the number of suicides during the 1996-2000 period.

"We try to turn around the issue of finance so it won't seem so cold and dry. We want people to see it as something that affects them directly," says Jesús Rodríguez, one of the three members of Derivart. "The biggest problem in Spain today is housing, so I think people will see themselves reflected in the *Burbujómetro*."

Derivart members say that the soaring rise of real estate prices in Spain is the most notable phenomenon in the recent economic history of the country,

and has been both a boon and a bane.

"Construction has allowed Spain to continue growing while the rest of Europe was stuck. In a country where close to 90 percent of people own their own homes, rising prices have made nearly all Spaniards richer. But for others it is the cause of a lot of problems. The price of land in Madrid and Barcelona is higher than New York or London, while salaries have come nowhere near that type of rise," they explain.

Derivart is also presenting a second related installation, the *Hipotecadora* (the Mortgage Calculator), a critical view on how difficult it is to purchase a home in Spain. Using a handheld electronic device, visitors can punch in their age, salary, city and type of housing they would like to

purchase. The program tells them at what age they would finish paying the installments — often well into their eighties or nineties.

Both works will be on display in Valencia this week as part of Observatori, a "festival of art investigation" that brings together alternative musicians such as John Cale and Chicks on Speed, and contemporary artists who work outside the commercial circuits.

Creating such pieces, says Jesús Rodríguez, takes between four or five months once the subject matter has been established. Working with computer designer Mar Canet and finance sociologist Daniel Beunza, Rodríguez says they always incorporate the latest technologies into their work.

### *Despondency Index* superimposed the suicide rate on the Dow Jones index

"For instance, the gun we use in the *Burbujómetro* went on the market a month ago," he says. "Otherwise we could not do this kind of art, because we work with current data and we need programs that adapt to that."

While finance art is gaining ground in Spain with shows in Madrid, Valencia and Zaragoza, Derivart is also looking to expand its horizons by going abroad.

"When we did the show in Zaragoza, for instance, since it's not a financial city, we found that the audience was not as receptive," says Rodríguez. "But in New York, when we were at Location One [a contemporary arts center in Lower Manhattan], the public showed a real interest and people put us in touch with galleries, to see if they might be interested in our work."

In the meantime, Derivart will sit and observe further developments in Spain, as the media warn about the imminent end of the real estate boom. "We actually thought the bubble would burst much earlier than this," says Rodríguez. "This is certainly an interesting moment to watch."

**Derivart.** May 11, 12 and 13 at Festival Observatori, Ciudad de las Artes y las Ciencias de Valencia. [www.observatori.com](http://www.observatori.com)

## Case closed for controversial Catalan

EL PAÍS, **Madrid**  
A judge in Barcelona has shelved a case brought against the actor and comedian Pepe Rubianes over alleged "insults against Spain," after concluding that "there is no rational evidence of any criminal action" arising from comments on a TV program in which the actor said that the Spanish right wing can "shove Spain up their ass to see if their balls explode."

The statements were made by Rubianes in an interview on the TV3 program *El club* in January 2006. Rubianes was also facing a charge of incitement to hatred.

However, the judge presiding the case stated that "a spontaneous oral statement lasting less than 30 seconds, which is part of the idiosyncrasy of its speaker [...] cannot be called provocation."

The judge went on to say that Rubianes' words were not "directed toward Spain, but rather an interpretation of Spain." The presenter of the program who interviewed Rubianes, Albert Om, also faced a charge of being an accomplice to the offenses. However, the judge also ordered the shelving of that case, saying that the conduct of Om was "professionally irreproachable."

The cases against the comedian and presenter were brought by the public prosecutor, the Association for the Foundation for the Defense of the Spanish Nation and a member of the public. The three parties will now have to share the legal costs of the proceedings, given that the judge considered that they had acted in an "abusive and malicious" manner.

At the time of the controversy over his words, Rubianes claimed he was forced to cancel Madrid performances of his show *Lorca Was Everybody* as a result of pressure from the city's conservative mayor, Alberto Ruiz-Gallardón.



Rubianes: cleared of "insulting Spain." / EFE