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III

II Premio Galicia de Fotografía Contemporánea

Jose Romay

Jose Romay

Rururbanía Salnés

RURURBANÍA SALNÉS











*Jose Romay*

Rururbania Salnés



*Polígono industrial do Salnés. Concello de Ribadumia. 2013*





Pavillón deportivo. Parroquia de Ribadumia. Concello de Ribadumia. 2013



Paseo entre Vilagarcía de Arousa e Vilaxoán. Concello de Vilagarcía de Arousa. 2012





Parroquia de Paradela. Concello de Meis. 2013



Parroquia de San Lourenzo de Nogueira. Concello de Meis. 2013





Mosteiro. Concello de Meis. 2013



Parroquia de Paradela. Concello de Meis. 2013





Catoira. Concello de Catoira. 2013





Vilagarcía de Arousa. Concello de Vilagarcía de Arousa. 2012



Vilaxoán. Concello de Vilagarcía de Arousa. 2012





Parroquia de Barrantes. Concello de Ribadumia. 2013





Campo da festa. Parroquia de Barrantes. Concello de Ribadumia. 2013



Aparcadoiro do campo de fútbol de Bamio. Concello de Vilagarcía de Arousa. 2013



Parroquia de Curro. Concello de Barro. 2013





Mosteiro. Concello de Meis. 2013



Parroquia de Paradelá. Concello de Meis. 2013





Parroquia de Paradela. Concello de Meis. 2013





Parroquia de Paradela. Concello de Meis. 2013



Parroquia de San Lourenzo de Nogueira. Concello de Meis. 2013





Parroquia de Paradela. Concello de Meis. 2013





Capela de San Antoniño do Pousadoiro. Alto do Pousadoiro. Vilagarcía de Arousa. 2013



Parroquia de San Lourenzo de Nogueira. Concello de Meis. 2013





Parroquia de Tremoedo. Concello de Vilanova de Arousa. 2013





Polígono industrial *Sete Pías*. Parroquia de Oubiña. Concello de Cambados. 2013



Parroquia de Paradela. Concello de Meis. 2013





Caldas de Reis. Concello de Caldas de Reis. 2013





Polígono industrial *Sete Pías*. Parroquia de Oubiña. Concello de Cambados. 2013



Caldas de Reis. Concello de Caldas de Reis. 2013





Parroquia de Baión. Concello de Vilanova de Arousa. 2013



Parroquia de Baión. Concello de Vilanova de Arousa. 2013





Parroquia de Ribadumia. Concello de Ribadumia. 2013



Parroquia de Ribadumia. Concello de Ribadumia. 2013





Parroquia de Baión. Concello de Vilanova de Arousa. 2013



Parroquia de Paradela. Concello de Meis. 2013





Mosteiro. Concello de Meis. 2013



Parroquia de Paradela. Concello de Meis. 2013





Carril. Concello de Vilagarcía de Arousa. 2012







Parroquia de Paradela. Concello de Meis. 2013



Padrón. Concello de Padrón. 2013





Vilagarcía de Arousa. Concello de Vilagarcía de Arousa. 2013



Mosteiro. Concello de Meis. 2013





Parroquia de Paradela. Concello de Meis. 2013





Parroquia de Paradela. Concello de Meis. 2013





Parroquia de Paradela. Concello de Meis. 2013



Parroquia de Paradela. Concello de Meis. 2013





Parroquia de San Lorenzo de Nogueira. Concello de Meis. 2013



Parroquia de Curro. Concello de Barro. 2013





Parroquia de Curro. Concello de Barro. 2013



Parroquia de Paradela. Concello de Meis. 2013





Parroquia de Paradela. Concello de Meis. 2013



Parroquia de San Lourenzo de Nogueira. Concello de Meis. 2013





Parroquia de San Lourenzo de Nogueira. Concello de Meis. 2013



Parroquia de Leiro. Concello de Ribadumia. 2013





Parroquia de Paradela. Concello de Meis. 2013



Parroquia de Paradela. Concello de Meis. 2013





Parroquia de Campaña. Concello de Valga. 2013



Padrón. Concello de Padrón. 2013





Parroquia de San Lourenzo de Nogueira. Concello de Meis. 2013



Parroquia de Paradela. Concello de Meis. 2013





Parroquia de Paradela. Concello de Meis. 2013



Parroquia de Paradela. Concello de Meis. 2013





Centro médico. Parroquia de Baión. Concello de Vilanova de Arousa. 2014



Caldas de Reis. Concello de Caldas de Reis. 2014





Parroquia de Paradela. Concello de Meis. 2013



Altar relixioso nun Polígono industrial. Parroquia de Baión.  
Concello de Vilanova de Arousa. 2014





*Jose Romay*

Rururbania Salnés



**JURY  
OF II PREMIO  
GALICIA  
OF CONTEMPORARY  
PHOTOGRAPHY**

**Vari Caramés**

*Photographer*

**Juan Curto**

*Director of Cámara Oscura Art Gallery (Madrid)*

**2014**

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*Curator of the exhibition*

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*Teacher, Secretary of the jury*

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*Pages 91 to 94: Carla Andrade, Chas, Marta Moreiras,  
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*o Of photographs, the author*

The II Premio Galicia de Fotografía Contemporánea amounts to 16.000 euros provided by the First Vice Presidency Primeira of the Lugo Council and by the General Secretary of the Culture, Education and University Ordinance Office of the Government of Galicia. In this 2nd edition the *ex aequo* award was given to the Jose Romay and the Berto Macei projects.

## I n d e x

<b>Rururbania Salnés</b>	p. 3
<b>Xesús Vázquez Abad</b> , <i>A common look</i>	p. 75
<b>Mario Outeiro Iglesias</b>	p. 77
<b>Vítor Nieves</b> , <i>Mappings of the non-country</i>	p. 79
<b>Juan Curto</b> , <i>With clarity the cold increases</i>	p. 83
<b>Santiago Lamas</b> , <i>Rururbania Salnés. Photographs of Jose Romy</i>	p. 87
<b>Jose Romy</b> , <i>Wild hearts</i>	p. 91





This second edition of the *Premio Galicia* of Contemporary Photography gives us two winners.

Within the philosophy of the event, and also within the work of the very vital *Outono Fotográfico* of Ourense, from where it emerges as a natural expression, the confluence of Berto Macei and José Romay is especially pleasant and important because of their very different visions of photographic art and the reality they portray.

Photography, from its static silence, shows us elements often unnoticed by the common look. It reveals, with the prospect of a creative look, intense meanings of everyday's life; new harmonic orders, new ways to communicate from the apparently stable, it insists in breaking molds from their stillness. Photography synthesizes the common look and expands it to reach its true dimension of freedom.

This time, Jose Romay -winner in 2014 together with Berto Macei- became creditor to the projection the prize provides thanks to the capture of a roughness of contrasts, taken from the difficult adjustment between nature and tradition against the transformation of the artificial medium. Images of Galicia's

## A COMMON LOOK

beating, with the power of colors and sharp edges of contemporary buildings; inhospitable spaces of abandonment, of the unfinished, where humans inhabit looking for their place, looking for the image to run and turn in a shelter that frees them of these tensions revealed by the camera.

We guess a big trajectory for this photographer that here reveals a bleak face of reality; we feel his ability to highlight the unresolved matters, the smell of dust, the hardness of a sky that gets apart from this modest and stressed experience. Today he leaves us a cathartic exercise of which we need to take note to know that this page is also part of our collective expression.

From the Department of Culture and Education we are confident that each delivery of the *Premio Galicia* opens a door to new artistic approaches to photography lovers.

**Xesús Vázquez Abad**

Minister of Culture,  
Education and University Organization  
Government of Galicia





One of the first times I read about the concept of the rururban it was on a book written by Francisco Rodríguez in which the term was used as a sociological category proper of Galicia in which the analysis was focused. Rururban was understood as that sector of the population that, coming from rural areas, lived in the cities of the 70s and 80s of the last century in Galicia to exercise a paid work of an industrial character; but, in their spare time, they would keep their customs of working the fields; in many cases on lands leased in the surroundings of the urban area, in the border between the rural and urban landscapes.

In the work we have in hand, Romay documents that border. That boundary that today exceeds the concept of limit and that is best understood imagining two vector layers that are superimposed on the same map. We have a primary layer, devoted to agricultural uses and as such it draws and works the landscape. The passage of time came to create a

new one aimed to new uses of factories and services, both public and private. Imagine now any digital map where we have the first layer and with a single touch of the mouse we overlap the new one. In a messy way marks of the places portrayed by Romay will appear. Corridors captured between apartment buildings, tumulus in roundabouts, green gardens and vineyards in industrial parks, landfills in the party field or industrial buildings hidden in groves. The social use and disuse depicted in the structures we built in the past and present; their messy coexistence in a growing environment that keeps alive the dialogue of what we were, are and will be. An objective portrait of our common essence: Rururban.

**Mario Outeiro Iglesias**

Deputy Delegate of Culture and Tourism of  
the Council of Lugo





# MAPPINGS OF THE NON-COUNTRY

Vítor Nieves

Coordinator of the *Premio Galicia* of Contemporary Photography

Curator of the exhibition

Every day we find photographic works that give us a new vision of the land we inhabit built by a foreign photographer. It is clear that having a vision not polluted by the course of looks that fill the lifeline helps to have an articulation of distant perception critical enough to have an analysis not affected by external factors to the development of the photographic project.

This is not the case of Jose Romay, who, living from birth with the landscape he photographs, he is able to reach the distance that puts him on a hill from which he plans a personal mapping of the Salnés and its

boundaries in which he deconstructs the icons that we could have a priori of the region and, despite having clear references in studies of the *unmaking* or *ugliness* in our Country, he sets up a proper language that puts *Rururbania Salnés* far away from the documentaries that have been made in Galicia so far. We are, therefore, facing a milestone in the contemporary history of photography in Galicia, objective for which this award was created two years ago.

The work of Jose is about portraying a country without mirrors to reflect itself. It is about collecting the fingerprints of that citizenship that has no awareness of being. But at

the same time it pursues that country and harangue the citizens. The fact of filling images making an endless continuum generates in those who watch them a clear reflection that crosses transversely the conception of Us. Romay reaches that continuum consciously because, although in each photograph he presents us a limited space, the repetition leads us, in this form of perception, to imagine an all made with the photographed pieces. We know it is a conscious search because of the disposal of his work, the conceptualization, even because of the way he chooses the locations without changing them for others in his roadmap at the time of the photographic shot throughout the two years in which this *rurubania* was photographed. Incidentally it presents itself as an unconscious game, bathed with doses of humor and an exaggerated warmth that sweetens the message, perhaps to subtract aggression and tension in the reading.

In *Rurubania Salnés* we see the neodocumental retaking the classic language of this genre to manipulate it as was already done by the Americans con-

temporary to Romay. The author explores the boundaries between the rural and the urban, the built and the natural. He designs an analysis quite different to what have already been made of our common space. In it he looks a more leisurely reading of the relationship between landscape and territory with some irony in the message that fills the images of side elements that not only geolocalizes the photograph but speak of the intentionality of the project.

That geolocation made to contextualize the work in a space seems to provide no many tips crucial for the digestion of the series; the meticulous gathering that the author does, probably would not occur -at least not in this way- in any other corner of the planet. But, anyway, they are data needed by a reader foreigner to the Galician reality, who, as we know, they tend to idealize the territorial reality from a point of view of tourist consumption more exotically futile.

Jose Romay speaks of a hostile territory where the boundaries between green and gray started to untie to find orange tones that get closer to the humanized and the wild, and that mix the



industrial with the habitable. As had already been done by Robert Adams or Stephen Shore for the North American book *New Topographics in the 70s*, Romy depicts a «real» Salnés looking for a confrontation of a landscape without comparison that turns increasingly into territory. A declaration of intent that puts the region at the opposite end to the postcards sold by the *colareiras mecás* (women that make necklaces out of seashells) or in the old town of Cambados.

The *blurred Galicia* of Santiago Lamas has left heavy scraps in the look of Jose Romy. Perhaps the fact of having a connection with the work published in 2004 by the Publishers Castro has influenced in the lighting of these images in which impose a varnish of a «galifornian» light that ironically contrasts with the *unmaking* grayish blue that engulfs the more touristic areas of our Country. And not only.



# WITH CLARITY THE COLD INCREASES

Juan Curto

Associate Professor at the University of Lebrija  
and director of Camera Obscura Art Gallery, Madrid  
Representative of the jury of the II *Premio Galicia*  
of Contemporary Photography

This phrase is said by Thomas Bernhard in his thanks speech -something he hated to do- when he collected the Literature Prize of the City of Bremen in Germany. This concept of philosophical scope does not make mediocre the career as a novelist, poet and playwright of this Austrian, famous for his temper and his foresight. Precisely, it is difficult to understand or jump to conclusions from the phrase without some «clarification». Bernhard refers to the progress of science that every day gets a bigger clarity and, inevitably, a coldness every day also larger. Science reveals the mysteries, the arcanes, the archetypes and the myths -in the jungle-like psychoanalytic notion-

but either way it does not provide us more security to be in the world, quite the contrary; it creates in us a lack of emotional heat, affectivity, and consolation. Lets say that it does not «feed» the soul. This food so fundamental to the human being, as it is the thirst and knowledge, is provided to us by art. As stated by Benjamin, art has a strong cult essence and although in his famous essay *Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit* (The piece of art at the time of its technical reproduction) he ensures that photography is scarce - it even lacks- of an aura and thus of cult character, I refuse to think of photography as an art. Not only be-



cause it becomes a merchandising in a strict sense -as Benjamin said- and so, purchasable, sellable, subject to the laws of the market, but because I align myself with Roland Barthes and undoubtedly affirm that photography is an art, like the painting, the sculpture or any other means of artistic and visual expression. Once said this statement so luckily free -more than anything just in case someone still thinks it is not- really, what photography gives us, the photographic? Does it give us at least some «heat»?

Watching the work presented in this II *Premio Galicia* of Contemporary Photography I dare say that my temperature increased a few degrees yes, heat yes, but I would enjoy even more by burning the skin, at least a little bit. The work of the joint winners Berto Macei and Jose Romay are notably different. The own aesthetics goes from a more aesthetically black and white to color, more dirty and realistic. But we really need to go beyond that. Nowadays one should not expect to be taken seriously as a photographer without a conceptual development prior to the field work. Is not that we are saying that

now photography is «conceptual art», is not that, but before shooting, one has to think why, how, when, and where to shoot. And all this needs to be written down in a project text: the project statement. The statement is the egg and the photographs the chicken. There is no a more graphic way to explain it. The statement does not illustrate or explain; it gives clues. Clues that the author proposes so the viewer can do the reading and interpretation. Without it, as Jacques Rancière well says, there is no artwork, no photography. Us, components of the jury, play to be spectators «emancipated» and active, we wanted to understand and feel. And we were able with both Macei and Romay. The work on the circus of Macei does not stop on a simple document -that is the interesting and central- but it builds a parallel and demiurgic universe of the circus throwing away with all the visual codes of the great *film noir* of the 40s and 50s. If there is «theft» there has to be «murder», and lets say that in this case there is.

Meanwhile, Romay climbs the panopticon from which he sights things that are already known, but not well

studied, and he immerses himself in an exercise of social and political criticism, and at the same time he shows his typology the way of the School of Dusseldorf. The author sweeps and transits, not exempt of humor, by that Galician architecture, so deeply *ugly*. An encyclopedia of urban nonsense just on the border of the urban and the rural, in that *terrain vague*, that uncultivated land so perfectly defined by Ignasi Solá-Morales where we crash against half-buildings, bad constructed... damned constructions, obsolete, unproductive, and undefined. In short, interference from the hand of man in nature increasingly damaged and defeated, but that it threatens us to return back the blow. Is it just a matter of time.

But, at the end the question is: being valid jobs, valuable from a critical and photographic point of view, which place does it have in the art market? As a gallery owner I should have an unequivocal and sure answer, but I dare less and less to be conclusive when it comes to assessing a work for its commercialization. The method of trial and error turns out to be

the most realistic and effective one. It is obvious that the collectors are open to quality, and it is equally true that there are some parameters to be taken into account as the conceptualization or the aesthetic component. That makes some photographers more «commercial» than others, but I do not want at all to use this word in a derogatory sense. At the end of the day what any artistic photographer wants is to get to live of selling his/her work, does this makes him/her a commercial artist? Of course not, even if some agents of the art world still considered unworthy or impure that an artist sells well his/her work. Even artists have to eat, is not it?





# RURURBAN SALNÉS.

## Photographs of Jose Romy

Santiago Lamas

«The photographs provide evidence», says Susan Sontag in her book *On Photography*. Some pages later she adds: «Taking photographs is to confer importance». These pictures from the rururban Salnés of Xosé Romy meet these two assertions.

Evidence is something clear and patent that imposes by itself. These photographs leave no doubts nor admit replicas. They are notarial acts that realize the importance of the urban disaster of those territories, so much of the country, in which towns and cities lose their urban shape without becoming open worked or deserted field that awaits to be resurrected and taken

profit off in the way Otero Pedrayo wanted so many years ago.

In a border territory, law and order are late presences but it seems that in Galicia either they never arrived or did never want to exert their function; cabbages at the door of the factories, waste from old boats that sailed the estuaries abandoned by the sea, debris works overcrowding hills and trails, unfinished roads that go nowhere, pedestrian crossings, *pasa-deiras* (as say our neighbors from Portugal) where there is no road, no cars, no village, a random network of poles and wires planted beside old calvaries, unfinished houses, walls made of many

different unknown materials and, even worse, easily recognized ...

Nothing is finished, nothing is in place, nothing harmonizes with anything. I do not know when the aesthetic sense was lost that was able to erect country palaces and *canastros* (small raised granarys characteristic of the region), Romanesque churches, site walls, calvaries, peasant houses with sunny corridors, small bridges, to preserve for centuries following the old order and harmony of the countryside, corn fields and meadows, groves and little gardens now spilled. Perhaps because of a history curse, with modernity and the improvement of life everything resembling how we used to live with the famines, the shortage and the diseases it was forgotten, but with it also left all those architectures that unfairly shared the same oblivion and neglect .

It is not new. Otero Pedrayo already wrote in the 20s of the last century about the «arquitectura che» which he though was filthy and about churches that would be better if they had not been done. They were sprouts, omens of what would happen in the years ahead. Now the disaster is global, an epidemic

that seems to have no fixing and it is not enough to consider economic reasons to understand it. Indeed, untalented architects (when there were any) and shameless politicians were accomplices of the disaster but many of the photos that the uncompromising look Romay presents, do not indicate poverty but a way to do things aesthetically sloppily. The reasons are more anthropological than economic. The social space in Galicia seems to be divided not between «mine» and «everybody's» but between «mine» and «no one's». In what is mine I do whatever I want and in what is of no one, also, because what is no one's property, which is also everybody's has no one to defend it. Neither municipalities nor Councils, nor the region government complied with their obligations in defense of the landscape and the territory and often were the main enemy. This is the Galicia nobody wants to see, the back of the tourism advertising postcards, which, if things remain like this they will have to search their material in the photographs of the past.

On the coast they say «aquelar» instead of sort out, clean, fix what

needs it. We need to wait and see if this series of photographs, scrawny and true of Jose Romy, will not be the work of a forensic surgeon that signs photographically the death certificate of a landscape that is a “it has already been” but the alert of a vigilant that calls for locals and politicians to come «aquelar», if still possible, the undoings of past times. It will not be an easy thing. Even today (20-10-04) in a Galician newspaper, an arrogant neighbor of 82, in front of his house not at all small, warns the region government that threatens to fine him if he does not paint the facade of his house: *Let them come along with the paint that I will put them myself to walk!...*

Miguel Torga said in his *Diary* that after traveling Portugal nonstop, he learned that «there remain only two things: the ground and the verb, the landscape and the language». I would not like to be pessimistic, but if nobody «aquela» and fixes what is left in Galicia, in a short time, we will not have neither ground nor verb.





Jose Romay

I would like to be social anthropologist or psychiatrist to understand the relationship of the Galicians with the landscape in which we live; it makes me feel curious ignoring the causes of the «aesthetics» insensitivity of most of us. I do not think the famous «ugliness», or “unmaking” as they call some experts on the topic, is any funny. I mostly lived in the parish of Paradela, in the municipality of Meis, Pontevedra province. In front of my house there is a large factory of concrete beams; each morning when I open the blinds there it is, towering in the middle of the houses, in an area neither urban nor rural, but that was rural some decades ago when it was installed. So I can not share that feeling of many people that defends the «ugliness» as a characteristic of the Galician identity, who says it is neither good nor bad, but simply it is how it is, and that we must be proud of it and defend it. «Being sad and angry is what leads me to do most of my work» says the photographer Eugene Richards.



Carla Andrade, “Sen título”  
Malpica. 2011

## WILD HEARTS



Chas, "Tres Picos"  
Muros (A Coruña). 2010



Enrique Touriño  
Val Miñor. 2010

The «ugliness» (as I like to call it) is not a harmless visual anecdote, is a metastasis. To live by the most traveled road in Galicia because according to the popular sentiment houses need to be built glued to the road and facing it ignoring where the South is for lighting, heating and ventilation of the building. Or that anyone who feels like it, with the complicity of the political authorities, builds an industrial estate of two units in the middle of the houses is not something innocent. Living in similar circumstances is not practical, nor healthy, nor economic, and is not to be proud of. We are not talking about how funny can it be to see a photograph of a mattress base used as a land gate, we speak of the paranoia that leads to making a three-story house with a garage for the tractor head of a trailer on the ground floor, surrounded by a two meters high wall, fortifying oneself in an impregnable castle for junkies, sellers of stolen televisions, breaking the communion of its inhabitants with the environment they live in and with its neighborhood, wasting the land to live with the vegetation and focusing so much on a living towards oneself that forces the «independence» which undoubtedly helps the existence of popular sayings like «who makes the common good, serves no one».

«I fought hard for 50 years and finally I conquered this plain, and I raised the banner of the Ichimonji to that castle». (RAN. Akira Kurosawa. 1985).

«Afterwards I put a "closure" a meter and a half tall of country rock.» (Anonymous popular Galician).

This work focuses on the valley of Salnés (and vicinity), «rururban» heart of the Atlantic Axis, the



last border in the development of the Far West, as the poet Charles Black would name it, the Galifornia as Santiago Lamas would say, the knot of knots where part of the last settlers from the labor exile planted their houses on the lands inherited from their relatives, with the most modern materials. «The modern because it is modern will put away our misery, which is something from before...» In the later generations knowledge would come to part of the masses, the word «ugliness» started to be used and some architects started making houses for the people instead of for the roads. Still, the Marshall of the regional government continue to dominate the situation, some say it is because the people in the Far West are like the protagonists of a twilight western that cannot be tame, others say it is because our politicians do not travel to see the world and when they do they go to Cuba to fuck. As a friend of mine says: «These when they go to Brussels enter directly a 5-star and ask “jamón serrano” (salt raw ham) to be brought for them to the room.»

«Your land -said Florinda- was the biggest embarrassment of my life. She was born to serve. It is enough to look to men on the roads. There the filthy mess is an integral part of the landscape. Maybe it is good for a bit of tourism when the day comes when the hotels have running water in Santiago and in some corner of the Rías. Do not talk to me of your Ribeira. Do not get corny with your talk about the autumn in the vineyards and pine forests. You will never be a European, a modern man. Everything in the meadow of my



Iván Nespereira, "Sen título"  
Sabucedo. 2013



Juan Rivas Fernández, "Hinchable"  
2012



Marta Moreiras, "Sen título"  
A Peroxa, Ourense. 2013



Xulio Villarino, "Love Places"  
Lugo, 2013

husband, God rest his soul, reeked of an old age and of an archaeological provincialism». (*Arredor de si*. Ramon Otero Pedrayo. 1930).

The lowest level of this social «dissension» can be seen in these houses, warehouses, sheds, apartment buildings, gates and crumbling walls of many neighbours. «If they want to do something they should first clean up the garbage in front of the houses» said the character played by Val Kilmer in *Thunderheart* referring to Native Americans from a reserve of the United States. There is not need of money to be clean, you only need to dress with a little dignity, as Ramón Masáts showed with his photo titled *Tomelloso* of a woman whitewashing her home in 1960. Does that mean that the lack of self-regulation by society of this lower level make us a population without dignity? It is insensitive not to cover the bricks of one's house thinking that is only an issue of oneself and it also is who thinks that the condition of others bricks is neither their business. This is a land full of *The last of the Independents*.

«Ah! Tourists, pink skins, grey hairs with their fat fellows who walk through the streets. Huge pink hotels erected on areas that were virgin. Ugly, ugly, yes, ugly, ugly forever.» (*Miami Vice*. Chapter 21. 2nd Season, 1986). «We spend all summers in "Sanjenjo" (between quotation marks in the original to emphasize the way some people say Sanxenxo in a more Spanish sound-like), it is so beautiful!» (Anonymous folk).

Paradela, 2013





