

# HOW MUCH DOES YOUR BUILDING WEIGH, PARTIES OF THE PROPERTY OF





# **SYNOPSIS**

The film traces the rise of one of the world's premier architects, Norman Foster and his unending quest to improve the quality of life through design. Portrayed are Foster's origins and how his dreams and influences inspired the design of emblematic projects such as the largest building in the world Beijing Airport, the Reichstag, the Hearst Building in New York and works such as the tallest bridge ever in Millau France. In the very near future, the majority of mankind will abandon the countryside and live entirely in cities. Foster features a unique experiment in the world which is the sustainable Masdar City – a city of 100,000 inhabitants in Abu Dhabi.

# WHY THIS DOCUMENTARY

The project emerged from an idea of the executive producer, Antonio Sanz, who has a multifaceted career in the world of art (photographer, film director and scriptwriter and curator of prestigious international exhibitions). His close collaboration with Elena Ochoa's publishing company Ivorypress led him to propose this project to her: publishing a book with moving images, a film exhibition on the work of one of the greatest contemporary architects.

Over the past five years, Art Commissioners has undertaken the international commissions of contemporary artists like Richard Long, Anish Kapoor, Sol Lewitt and Cai Guo-Qiang and others. In the audiovisual field, Art Commissioners has produced The First Look, presented and screened during the Venice Biennale 2006 in the Italian Pavilion, Ivorypress' short films C Photo or the film Blood on Paper for the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

"How much does your building weigh, Mr. Foster?" is the first feature film focused on the architect Norman Foster and it will be the beginning of a series of productions on the key figures of the art and culture of the XXI century. It continues the tradition that Ivory Press developed with its series of artists books.



# ABOUT THE FILM

The film shows Norman Foster's journey from Manchester to a global practice. It talks about architecture, and why it matters, and how difficult it is to do it well. Norman Foster has rewritten the rules of architecture. His vision and unswerving passion for excellence have created some of the most exceptional structures of our times.

Architecture comes alive. Foster's projects are photographed in a cinematic style that seeks to bring the spectacular nature of their size and scale to the big screen.

It also speaks to the specialists and the priesthood of design, but its not just for them. It speaks to everybody who has ever been excited by a work of art, or who has understood that some spaces have special qualities that others do not share. Its for everybody who has been excited by the daring of a bridge, jutting out into space, or by the spectacle of a skyscraper that can define the identity of a city.

It portrays how the world of art has influenced Foster and how Foster has brought the world of art into his design. Art, for the sake of the pleasure it gives and how, when combined with architecture, it leads to something greater and more uplifting that the sum of the two.

It celebrates the special qualities of some of the most extraordinary structures of our times, and explores what it was that made them possible. It documents the way that great architecture is created, but does not flinch from the disappointments, and the set backs, and even the failures that come with it.

It tells the story through images. Key projects are filmed in detail, conveying the movement of sunshine across the atrium of the Hearst Tower, the exhilaration of crossing the heights over the Pont Millau through early morning mist, whose central column is taller than the Eiffel Tower; or how the restoration of the German parliament becomes the symbol of a reunified nation. The experience of moving through each of these spaces shows what makes them special.

We will also see how cities will be in the future through the example of Masdar in Abu Dhabi, a bold experiment in sustainability now under construction, which strives to become the first zero carbon, zero waste city in the world.

At the same time, we hear the words of remarkable people who have colloborated with Foster such as Bono, Anish Kapoor, Richard Serra, Cai Guo-Qiang, Richard Long or Anthony Caro speaking for themselves, direct to the camera about the parts that they played.

The documentary has won the first jury award of the International Documentary Festival Docville, Leuven, Belgium.





# LOCATIONS

Millau Viaduct, Gorges du Tarn, France Torre Collserola, Barcelona, Spain Swiss Re Headquarters, London, England Hearst Headquarters, New York, USA Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, Norwich, England Foster + Partners Studios in London, Madrid and New York

Hongkong & Shanghai Bank Headquarters, Hong Kong

City Hall and More London, London, England
American Air Museum, Duxford, England
Willis Faber Headquarters, Ipswich, England
McLaren Technology Centre, Woking, England
Petronas University of Technology, Malaysia
Millennium Bridge, London, England
The Sage, Gateshead, England
Al Faisaliah Tower, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
Stansted Airport, Stansted, England
The Great Court at the British Museum, London,
England

Carré d'Art, Nîmes, France
Free University of Berlin, Germany
New German Parliament, Reichstag, Berlin, Germany
Hong Kong International Airport, Chek Lap Kok, China
Beijing International Airport, Beijing, China
Masdar, Abu Dhabi, UAE
Bilbao's Subway, Spain
Engadin Valley, Switzerland

Casa de Campo, Madrid

# WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF

#### **Norman Foster**

Tony Hunt/Engineer

George Weidenfeld/Publisher & writer
Richard Rogers/Architect
Bono/Musician U2
Deyan Sudjic/Writer & architectural critic
Paul Goldberger/Writer & architectural critic
Carl Abbott/Architect
Alain de Botton/Writer & broadcaster
Anish Kapoor/Artist
Richard Serra/Artist

Anthony Caro/Artist
Richard Long/Artist
Buckminster Fuller/Inventor and visionary architect

Ben Cowd/Architect
Cai Guo-Qiang/Artist
Ricky Burdett/Professor Architecture &
Urbanism LSE

And from Foster and Partners team (in order of appearance):

Spencer de Grey/Senior Partner, Co Head of Design David Nelson/Senior Partner, Co Head of Design Narinder Sagoo/Architect, Design Board Member Nigel Dancey/Senior Partner Design Director Loretta Law/Architect, Resident Partner, Beijing Mouzhan Majidi/CEO Stefan Behling/Senior Partner Design Director Jurgen Happ/Associate Partner Gerard Evenden/Senior Partner Design Director



Nigel Young, Foster + Partner

# **CREDITS**

An Art Commissioners production (UK)
In association with Aiete Ariane Films (Spain)

Producer Elena Ochoa

Executive Producer Antonio Sanz

Directors Norberto López Amado & Carlos Carcas

Written and narrated by Deyan Sudjic

Music by Joan Valent Director of Photography Valentín Álvarez Film Editor Paco Cozar

Associate Producers Imanol Uribe & Andrés Santana

Music performed by Bratislava Symphony Orchestra

Shooting date 2007 – 2008 Locations UK, Spain, USA, Germany, France, Italy, Switzerland, China, Saudi Arabia, Arab Emirates and Malaysia.

International Distribution Spain



United Kingdom



With the participation of

# CANAL+

With the support of



# **TECHNICAL DATA**

Nationality UK – Spain (2010) Format 35mm – 1:85 – Color – Dolby digital Language English Length 74' + 4' credits



# INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTORS

# What can cinema lovers find in this documentary? Why a documentary based on an architect?

Norberto López Amado (NLA) I've always been attracted by architecture, by being able to relate the mystery that is hidden behind the creation of the master pieces that trascend the era of their creators. This will happen with Norman Foster and I expect this documentary could be seen in 50 years and the audience could be able to recognize the person who is behind all these buildings.

Carlos Carcas (CC) I'm not an architect, nor do I consider myself someone who knows about architecture. So for me, the main question in this film is "Why should I care about architecture and what does it matter to me?" I think the film addresses this question and shows the audience that architecture is not just about building a pretty building, but that the difference between intelligent and mediocre design has a huge impact on peoples' lives, especially if it's in a major city.

#### When/how the idea of this documentary came up?

CC Antonio Sanz (executive producer and "father" of the idea) and I have worked together on several projects for over ten years. The idea for this project is something that we had talked about on more than one occasion. In 2007, Foster was awarded the Aga Khan prize for architecture and I was asked to cover that event. That trip coincided with a visit to the Beijing airport before its opening. Foster had been given permission to film there for the first time since that start of construction. I was hired to shoot both the award ceremony in Kuala Lumpur and Foster's visit to the Beijing airport, and it was during that trip that the idea for the film really clicked. We had good chemistry working together. It was during that trip that Elena, who's more from an arts background,

understood that the idea of making the film was, in the end, a good one.

# Making documentary is something like solving a great puzzle without seeing the final photo before ... Could you explain us about the preparation process in this case?

NLA It has been a demanding, rigorous and slow creative process (more than two years) in order to draw the conclusion that" less is more", as Norman learned from Buckminster Fuller (one of his mentors), this exact quote has become the exact metaphor for this project.

CC Besides studying a stack of books, the most important thing for me was to spend time with Foster and the architects who work with him. This came about in a natural way from day one, during the trip to Asia in 2007. Visiting the Beijing airport, it was easy to see the amount of pressure the team of architects there was facing to build the world's biggest building in record time. I remember driving up to the terminal for the first time - and keep in mind that it was almost finished but it still wasn't open. There were no lines of taxis or passengers with baggage, so out front it was kind of empty. Driving up I saw this huge, futuristic blade curving out against a rare, clear blue sky in Beijing. My breathing stopped. It was like landing on Mars and discovering a lost colony. I realized at that moment that I was surrounded by a very special group of people. So once the project for the documentary began, the first step was to spend some time in the main office in London. I began to attend design meetings and conduct interviews, but instead of taking notes with pad and pencil, I used a camera, which is the way I think and work. So in the beginning, I shot a lot of footage that doesn't necessarily appear in the film, but the very act of



Valentín Álvarez

# INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTORS

filming is my way to get to know them and for them to get to know me.

# You have done before some documentaries/feature fims/and several TV series. Have you found big differences making this documentary?

NLA No I haven't, there's always underneath everything the aim of finding the emotion, and this is what has exactly happened.

CC I think the main difference in this film was the challenge of capturing the portrait of a man who is constantly in motion, traveling great distances at great speed. Add to this the fact that deep down inside, Foster didn't really want to have a film made about him. He has a huge list of priorities and a movie about his life is probably second to last on the list. He's not interested in having his picture taken. He doesn't have that need. For Foster, the high comes from design, and the main preoccupation is how to make the next design a little bit better. So how do you keep up with someone who's going from country to country faster than you can keep up with and who's not going to wait to make sure you get a good shot. That, and to spend time traveling together in close quarters knowing that the person in front of you would probably be happier if you weren't holding a camera - that was the main challenge and in the end he was great, very generous.

# What do you find more difficult: working with actors or working with buildings?

NLA Filming architecture is very difficult. I started the shooting with one premise: "Let's shoot like no one has ever done before" so what we first did was understanding the building to be able to explain it without any words, caressing every part of it with the care and detail to make the audience not only feel but understand.

CC Rather than having actors hit a mark, for me the hardest thing is being invisible when you're working with a camera. It's something close to impossible. The minute there's a camera, and I don't care if it's a home movie, people change, they become self-conscious. And if you become a nuisance with the camera, it's over. An actor is someone who is trained to work with a camera; they know where to stand, when to speak. In a documentary, the filmmaker has to take on that responsibility. You have to hit the mark and capture the moment when it happens. There is no rehearsal, no "take two." And that's exactly what makes documentary filmmaking exciting.

# About the impeccable aesthetic of this film, the images show the buildings from privileged and unusual angles ... What have you wanted to show from the buildings in particular? What shooting techniques have been used? Has this affected the shooting plan?

NLA We looked for different emotions from each building: from flying to finding spirituality, or risk. I dealt with buildings as if they were carachters, with their conflicts and virtues.

CC It was obvious from the start that this film had two very distinct and very different needs. On one hand, the filming of the architecture deserved a cinematic approach, with all the equipment, time and care that this implies. On the other, the filming of the characters had to be quick, lightweight. So a lot of the time, when I was with Foster, I was with a small hi-def camera or else we simply would not fit into the car. As far as the architecture was concerned, I think Tito knew early on that he had to choose a selection of buildings to tell the story. I remember him saying, "I want to be able to caress those buildings, to show the poetry intrinsic to them." For me, the thought



# INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTORS

making a film about huge structures that don't move is terrifying. And that's where I think Tito and Valentin Alvarez, the director of photography, have done a spectacular job because they've managed to create a dance between the audience and the buildings. They make you fly.

CC Foster's background encompasses a wide variety of works. In all of them there is a lot a lot of thought, but also a lot of heart and soul. This is what we want to show.

# Working with an artist of this size is always impressive ... How would you describe Norman Foster after spending so much time with him?

NLA Norman Foster is a man who never gives up, he knows what he wants, he never feels fulfilled with his creations because he thinks that everything can always be improved, based on the word risk.

CC I consider myself fortunate to have been able to work with some remarkable people, but I don't think I've ever met any so driven, so passionate, and so dedicated to his art as Norman Foster. Foster is a man who loves beauty and who likes to share that beauty. In my opinion, that what a good architect does because a building is not like a painting in someone's living room. A building is something that many people have to live or work in and that everyone sees. At the same time, I think Foster is a great teacher. He likes to share his knowledge. He's not someone who comes from a privileged family. He has worked, fought and risked for everything that he has achieved and I think he has also inspired everyone who works with him. I can honestly say that even my way of making films has been influenced from the year or so I've spent with him.

# What side of Norman Foster have you highlighted on this documentary?

NLA I wanted to become Norman's mirror, the best thing is in the latest edition of the documentary Norman said, "this documentary is me". This has been my main challenge.



# INTERVIEW WITH THE SCRIPTWRITER

# We wanted to ask you about the title. Why did you choose this question "How much does your building weigh ...?" to be the title of the documentary?

Deyan Sudjic (DS) I was very struck when Norman told me about the day he took Buckminster Fuller to see the Sainsbury Centre, the art gallery that was his first big hit. It's like a very sleek, gleaming temple. Fuller looked him in the eye, and asked him the question: "how much does your building weigh"? And I knew that was going to be the title. It asks us to look at architecture in a different way.

# What can architecture lovers find/discover in this documentary?

DS Film is the best way to appreciate architecture without going to see a building. And this film captures in the most beautiful, powerful way, some of the most extraordinary and compelling buildings in the world. You get to see what its like to move through and around them. You are taken in a flight over the amazing Pont Millau Bridge, up the Hearst tower in Manhattan and through the departure hall of Beijing's vast new airport.

# How did you make the selection of Foster's projects for this documentary? Why these buildings and not others?

DS We wanted to show the most important landmarks, of a long and rich career. There are modest scaled projects from the early days, as well as skyscrapers, feats of engineering, and designs of huge symbolic importance, such as the German parliament in Berlin.

# Making documentary is always the same as resolving a great puzzle without seeing the final photo before ... Could you explain us about the preparation process in this case?

DS We began with a lot of talking about how to

capture architecture on film, but also how to capture the essence of a gifted, and talentented individual, and how he works with his team. We wanted to make a film that wasn't just for specialists; It's a human story, as well as an architectural one.

# How would you describe in general terms Foster's architecture?

DS Perhaps the best way to understand Foster's architecture is in the clarity of his vision.

# From high tech to the sustainability architect, how does this documentary describe Foster's evolutive and artistic process in this line?

DS The remarkable thing about Foster is that though he has established a large and successful office, and seems very businesslike, there is also a utopian streak to his personality, even before he met Buckminster Fuller, the guru of the space ship earth idea, Foster was thinking about making the most of precious resources.

# In this film we discover a portrait of Foster concerned by the environment and the future development of the cities. Could we talk about Foster as a compromised architect? In which sense?

DS It's true that in the course of a 50 year career, Foster has moved gradually away from operating at the scale of the individual building, and understanding architecture at the larger scale of the city of which it is part, and the spaces between buildings. It's a choice between making a few exquisite individual objects, and having an impact on the way that the world is developing.

You are the author of a big amount of publications and you're one of the most prestigious architecture critics ... but we can see that, at the same time, you have a deep friendship with Foster. What has it



Kirkwood

# INTERVIEW WITH THE SCRIPTWRITER

## mean for you to portrait in this film Foster's human/ personal side and not only his professional role?

DS I have always wanted to understand not just what architects do, but how, and why. This film gave me a chance to do that.

# By the way, we know that you have finally been the narrator of this story ... is it your cinematographic debut?

DS Initially I wasn't going to be a narrator, but as we started filming, I found myself gradually becoming a voice in the film. It was a bit unexpected, its a very different experience from being a writer, where you can hide behind a book. This way around, you have to think a lot harder.

## Could you tell us some anecdote from the shooting?

DS The day I remember best was watching Foster, and the artist Richard Serra, working out where to put a vast sculpture, by getting a team to move wooden postes staked out in the ground back and forth. They both knew what they wanted, but they were both being very respectful of each other. It felt like being in the middle of a moment of art history.



# **BIOGRAPHIES**

#### **Norman Foster**

Norman Foster was born in Manchester in 1935. After graduating from Manchester University School of Architecture and City Planning in 1961 he won a Henry Fellowship to Yale University, where he gained a Master's Degree in Architecture. He is the founder and chairman of Foster + Partners. Established in London in 1967, it is now a worldwide practice, with project offices in more than twenty countries. Since its inception, the practice has received over 500 awards and citations for excellence and has won more than 86 international and national competitions. Current and recent work includes the largest single building on the planet, Beijing Airport, Millau Viaduct in France, the Swiss Re tower and the Great Court at the British Museum in London, the Hearst Headquarters tower in New York, the Robert and Arlene Kogod Courtyard at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington and research centres at Stanford University, California. He received the Order of North Rhine Westphalia in 1995 and the Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1999. He became the 21st Pritzker Architecture Prize Laureate in 1999 and was awarded the Praemium Imperiale Award for Architecture in 2002. In 2009, he became the 29th laureate of the prestigious Prince of Asturias award for the Arts and was awarded the Knight Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany 2010. In 1990 he was granted a Knighthood in the Queen's Birthday Honours, and in 1999 was honoured with a Life Peerage, becoming Lord Foster of Thames Bank.



Valentín Álvarez

# **BIOGRAPHIES**

### Norberto López Amado - Director

Tito López Amado has been working for the past 20 years as a filmmaker on diverse projects in cinema, television, and advertising. Born in Orense, Spain and based in Madrid, he studied law and film direction. In 1989, he joined the Spanish EFE news agency as a correspondent, covering diverse stories around the world such as the first Gulf War. He moved into the field of cinema directing a number of documentaries and short feature-films. His first full-length feature film, "Nos Miran", was a commercial success and was well received by critics worldwire. He is currently considered one of the leading directors of episodic television in Spain. Lopez's second feature film, "Zig Zag" is in pre-production.

## Carlos Carcas - Director

Carlos Carcas is an independent documentary filmmaker based in Madrid. Born in Miami, Florida in 1968, he began working in film production after graduating from Boston University's College of Communication. He worked for several years for the international press agency Worldwide Television News (WTN) as a freelance cameraman and news producer in Peru, Haiti, Bosnia, Liberia and Spain. He has collaborated with Spanish director Fernando Trueba on several projects. Among them, Carcas shot and edited "Blanco & Negro" which won the Latin Grammy in 2006 for the best long-format music video. Carcas also worked with Trueba on "The Miracle of Candeal", winner of the Spanish's academy's Goya prize for best documentary. In 2008, Carcas released "Old Man Bebo", his first featurelength documentary, which he wrote, directed and edited. With this work, he was awarded the prize for best new documentary filmmaker at the Tribecca film Festival in 2008.

#### Elena Ochoa - Producer

Elena Ochoa was a Fulbright Scholar at the University of California, Los Angeles (USA) and Visiting Research Scholar at the Universities of Cambridge (UK), Chicago (USA), Kraków (Poland), Hamburg (Germany) and Pennsylvania (USA), amongst others. She was Professor of Psychopathology at the Complutense University of Madrid (Spain) for almost two decades; she has also worked in the Spanish National Television, Spanish National Radio and as well as newspapers such as El País. Until 2001, Elena Ochoa was Honorary Professor at King's College London (UK). She founded Ivorypress in 1996 and acted as the co-Editorin-Chief during the making of the ten-volume C Photo Collection. Since the beginning, Ivorypress has been devoted to producing artist's books and other publications related to contemporary art, photography, design and architecture. In 2008 Ivorypress opened Ivorypress Art+Books Bookshop in Madrid (Spain) as well as Ivorypress Space, commissioning exhibitions of artists such as Miroslav Tichý, Ai Weiwei, Michal Rovner, Claes Oldenburg and Buckminster Fuller, among others. Elena Ochoa was Chairman of the Tate International Council and trustee of the Tate Foundation for five years. Currently, she is a trustee of the Isamu Noguchi Foundation and is also the main advisor and trustee of the Art Trust Foundation. Elena Ochoa is the Founder and current CEO of Ivorypress and Art Commissioners.



Nigel Young, Foster + Partners

# **BIOGRAPHIES**

### Antonio Sanz - Executive producer

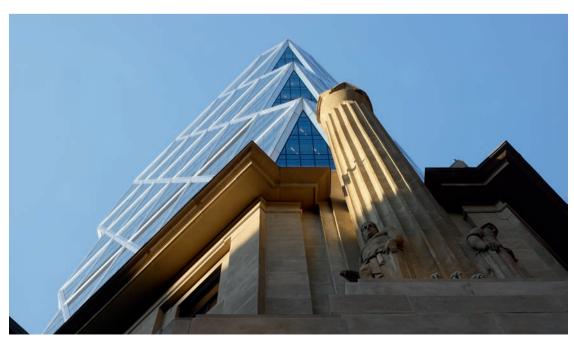
Antonio Sanz has a wide academic background in Art History. He began his career as professional photographer then moved toward cinema where he has worked as director of photography, screenwriter and director. In 2005, Sanz joined Art Commissioners, a London-based company focused on the commissioning and promotion of artistic works. He has curated art exhibitions around the world such as at the 2006 Biennale di Venezia, or the London Victoria & Albert Museum in 2008. He is the managing director of Ivorypress/Art Commissioners.

#### Deyan Sudjic-Scriptwriter

Deyan Sudjic is the director of the Design Museum in London. Born in London of Yugoslav parents, he studied architecture at the University of Edinburgh, but decided not to practice architecture. Instead he became a writer, and critic, and has established an international reputation as commentator and curator. He was the founding editor of Blueprint magazine, and for four years was the editor of Domus, the authoritative Milan based architecture and design revue. He has been architecture critic for three of Britain's leading newspapers; The Sunday Times, the Guardian and the Observer. He is the author of a number of well-received books. The Washington Post nominated his Edifice Complex as book of the year, and it has been translated into six languages. His authorized biography of Norman Foster will be published in 2010. He spent four years in Glasgow, as director of the UK City of Architecture and Design project from 1996 to 2000, and was the director of the Venice Architecture Biennale in 2002. He has commissioned exhibitions in Istanbul, London, Glasgow, and Copenhagen.

### Joan Valent - Musical Composer

Valent was born in Palma de Mallorca 1964. In 1988 Joan Valent moved to Los Angeles where he took lessons in classical composition, film scoring and orchestral conducting at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) and under the guidance of the composer Aurelio de la Vega at the University of Northridge (CSUN). In 1993 Michael Douglas asked him to create and present the piece "Escape From the Century" (screened on TVE). In 1996 Valent relocated to Madrid. While accepting commissions from orchestras around the world he also founded the Ars Ensemble, with whom he recorded the live album "Ars." After the release of "Ars" in 2000, Joan Valent started to perform his music live and was nominated for the Spanish Premios de Música. American pop singer David Byrne included the string sextet Ars Ensemble during his tour of Spain and Portugal in 2001. In April 2002 his second album "Ensems" was released in Spain, Belgium and The Netherlands. Valent & Ars Ensemble took part in the XXVII edition of the prestigious Sfinks festival in Belgium. Since 2002 until the present, he has released several works of symphonic, choral, and instrumental music; 4 CD productions with Montserrat Caballé (two of them awarded with a Grammy); a dvd release of his concert for violin "Four seasons in Mallorca"; a cd release with works combining the violin, piano, and electronic music "Insula Poetica"; the creation of the ballets "Deseo" for Hojarasca danza company, the Ballet "CARMEN" for Sara Baras Company, and many other recordings productions and arrangements for different pop, classical and flamenco artists. Valent is currently working on an Opera, a new piano concerto, a new CD, and several movies scores scheduled to premiere this year.



Nigel Young, Foster + Partners

# **CONTACT DETAILS**

## **Art Commissioners Spain**

Paseo de la Catellana, 13 28046 Madrid, SPAIN T +34 914 490 961 F +34 915 709 864 M +34 677 768 806 antonio@ivorypress.com

## **Art Commissioners UK**

Riverside One 22 Hester Road London SW11 4AN UK T +44 207 801 0933 F +44 207 801 9448 www.artcommissioners.com

## Aiete Ariane Films (Spanish co-producers)

Andrés Santana and Imanol Uribe Avda. Alfonso XIII, 62 28016, Madrid T: +34 915 199 191

## Press & PR UK: Freud Communications:

Sasha Gibson T +44 20 3003 6338 E Sasha.Gibson@freud.com Kate Lee M +44 7771 600 070 E Kate@freud.com

## Press & PR Spain: Relabel Comunicación:

Anabel Mateo & Isabel Pascal T +34 91 4356808 M +34 629 139030 +34 696 446178 E press@relabel.net - anabel@relabel.net

Press releases, photographs, clips and other materials are available on the Art Commissioners website: www.artcommissioners.com



Reinhard Goerner