



Y no hai remedio (Press Conference), 2016

*video installation, 19 mins, endless loop,
vocal by Darren Francis*

Installation: The video is to be projected in near life size (approximately 10m wide) in a darkened space. Museum barriers keep visitors at a distance from the projected image with some visitor benches in front of the barrier. In the in space between the barrier and the projection roughly in the middle of the scene is a small speaker on the ground from which an a cappella version of the Spiritual 'Motherless Child' can be heard.

The visual set-up of *Y no hai remedio (Press conference)* references a large press conference – and at the same time Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper. I am personally always stunned by the fact that in the aftermath of atrocities or other catastrophes not only witnesses of the events but also close friends and family members of victims who died manage to appear at press conferences. The media machine is eager to report to us gruesome details of victims' last minutes (i.e. last phone calls or text messages) and on showing grieving bereaved and survivors – private individuals who are dragged into a media limelight in a moment of utter desperation.

It has been suggested that our knowledge of such details causes what is called 'vicarious trauma', a term usually used for the suffering of psychotherapists who are 'witnessing' a patient's trauma. Our knowledge of such details causes a sadness, which is cathartic to our vicarious trauma.

The title is taken inspired by one of Goya's prints from the 'Disasters of War' series, and could be translated as '*And there is nothing to be done*'. Regarding the reference to da Vinci's Last Supper, the position of Christ is left empty (the speaker could be seen to be in its position). All protagonists are played by myself; all are displaying a range of emotions, mostly of distress and sadness, visibly edited into a slightly absurd stream of changing and performed scenes.

Whilst witnesses and bereaved doubtlessly suffer real emotional trauma, the appearance and presentation in the media becomes a *performance* of emotions. Affect cannot be represented, only its appearance – which can *cause* real affect in the viewer. In contrast to the 'loud' circus in the limelight that is the 'press conference' is the muteness of the gestures of the protagonists. Also in contrast to the buzz of the public performance is the overlaid a cappella version of the Spiritual 'Sometimes I feel like a motherless Child', intended to appear like a pained and lonely 'inner voice'. Whilst its origin is a Spiritual of devout Christian believers who are displaced suffering slaves and find comfort in their belief (the song is thus also a form of performing catharsis), the lyrics with emphasis on the words 'feel', 'motherless child' and 'almost gone' for me have more general psychoanalytic reverberations. The recording used here has also altered the original song and leaves out some lines like 'True Believer'. This way, this version of the song somehow matches the absence of Christ in this 'Last Supper', whereby this referral to the decline of the role of Christianity in the Western world is more to be seen as a referral to the absence of overarching meta-narratives that provided a framework for the self and a suggestion that the vacuum this leaves behind is hidden by a seemingly trivial heavily mediated self performance – that nevertheless is a cathartic expression of real trauma and deeply seated melancholia.