

**MARCO  
GODOY**

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*Sometimes a turning point fits in a minute  
Sometimes it takes years before we know  
What happened to us a lifetime ago*  
- Moya De Feyter

An unsuspecting passer-by might never notice Marco Godoy's evocative intervention in the magnificent magnolia tree that grows in front of the French manor unless the sun's blinding reflection hits the golden leaves. Godoy gilded a few magnolia leaves as a site-specific extension of his newly made video piece. In this short film, he slowly, smoothly follows the intricate process of covering some leaves of a local plant on the residency site in gold leaf. Gilding has traditionally been associated with religious and symbolic sacredness, with perceived value.

Does Godoy then show an act of sacralizing nature by humankind? Of artificializing nature? Commodifying it? However, the gold leaf does not destroy the plant, it does not turn the living subject into a dead object, the plant lives on. Might the gilding then be a means of shielding it from hardships, protecting it? Saving it from precisely that same humankind? These questions might arise when watching the work, but for Godoy, the essence lies beyond narrative interpretations.



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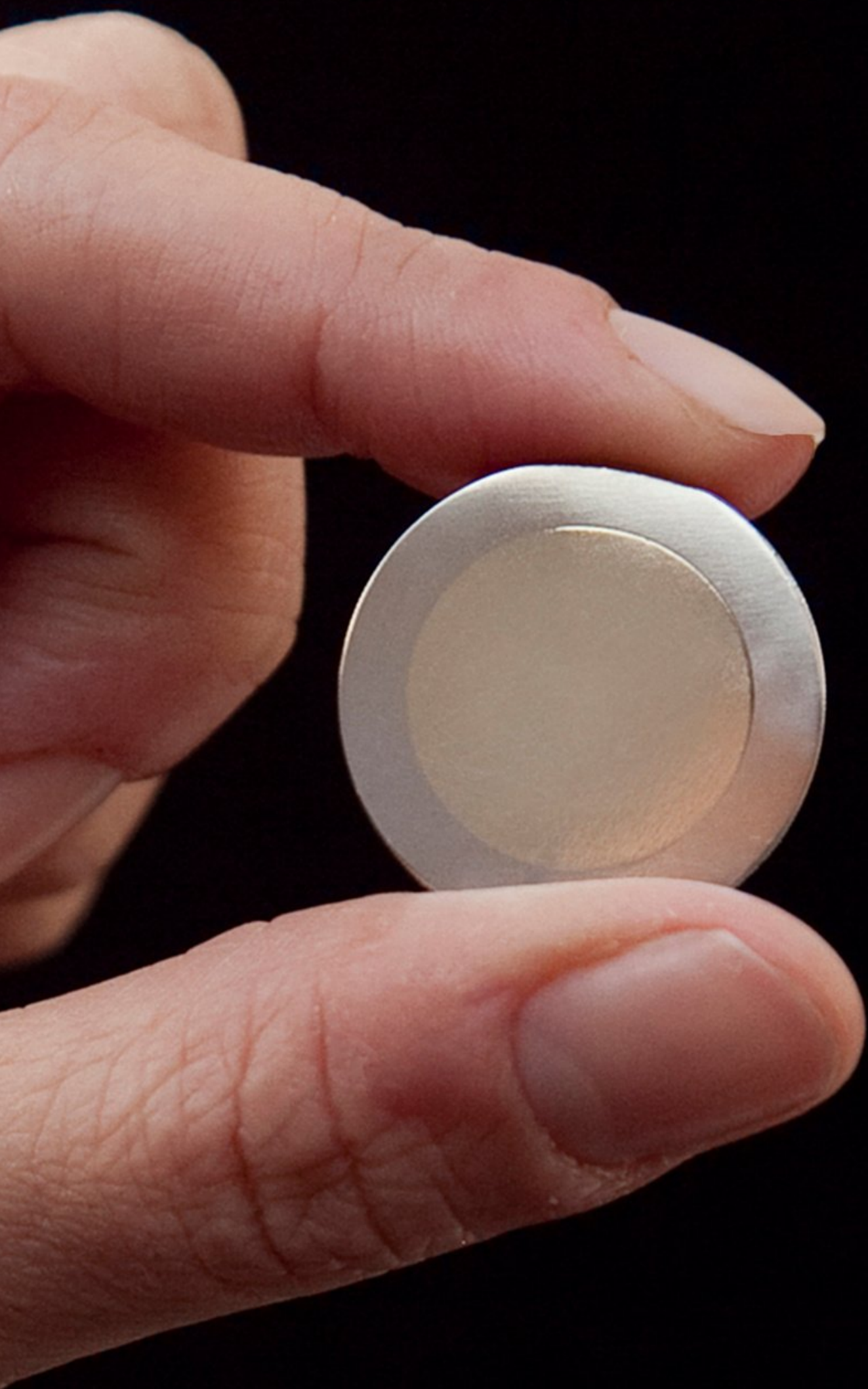
What the video work elegantly captures is the delicate caressing of the leaves. Soft fingers stroking the leaf veins, gentle hands pressing the gold leaf on the plant's leaf. The piece speaks of something that cannot be spoken, unveils the sensorial rather than the ideological. It focuses on the power of embodied knowledge, of knowing by sensing in the moment, as a counterweight for the (predominant) power of detached analysis afterwards. Turning the camera to the intimacy of treating something with time and care, Godoy composes a sensual ode to touch. He honours the personal transferral taking place, and when a second pair of hands is introduced in the video, he adds a layer that opens up the possibilities for these experiences of exchange to be shared. He translates this in an appreciative, golden gesture.

The sculpted hand, being touched so lovingly, expresses this longing for a connection as well. The sculpture fits into a series of new works in cast and resin, created parallel to the video. Varying in scale from smaller to bigger than life-size (and perhaps begging for even more monumental dimensions), these archetypal pieces are characterized by an emotive stillness. The sculptures of heads and hands explore in a solemn manner the ways they relate to each other, being presented in isolation, in repetition or in combination. Both head and hand carry innumerable metaphorical meanings and symbolical projections; some associations also pit them against each other, with the head representing the bodiless mind, the rational, and the hand the mindless body, the physical. Maybe unintentionally, this reading resonates with Godoy's practice: instigated by an intrinsic need to do manual work, to learn from materializing objects, these pieces are Godoy's first attempts at intuitive sculptures made by hand in a very long time.

However, they have been in the making equally as long, as they are based on drawings Godoy has been doing for the last ten years. For the Launch Pad LaB Residency, he finally committed to confronting these images and ideas in depth.

The resulting works, or perhaps propositions, mark an arguably radical shift for Godoy. Known for tackling societal issues, Godoy has long balanced art and activism - at risk of being the artist among activists and the activist among artists. In his films, photography, and mixed media installations, he has scrutinized the visual language of ideologies. Often based on thorough-going research, collaborations with local communities and/or personal engagement, he has addressed the performativity of power and the representations of hierarchical structures in his works. Exposing the hidden vocabulary of political, institutional or social relations, he thereby offered insight in how to unhinge their very construction. If the game is not a given reality, but a chosen fiction, then the rules can be bent or broken or altogether set again. In line with this, Godoy has also been interested in the real versus symbolic value of objects - what makes a piece of a paper a passport, a decisive instrument to approve a person entering a country, and why? In these earlier works, tension arises from his desire to render visible what is invisible. Moreover, Godoy has done so in a most appealing way, luring people in in his discomforting, threatening, sometimes even violently themed works with a refined, polished aesthetic. Referencing advertising, cinema and other clean-cut image sources, the seemingly visual pleasure of the pieces opens up common ground to get a conversation started.





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Seeing this older body of works next to the works started during the Launch Pad LaB Residency might give the impression of incoherence. There is no overt activist engagement in these new pieces, and the formal language of the sculptures, in all their raw honesty, differs greatly from pristine looking previous works. However, the same blood runs through their veins. Whereas before Godoy might have concentrated on the mechanisms that divide, with the message of how to overcome those divisions implied, now the mechanisms that unite have explicitly taken over. The urge to connect lies at the heart of Godoy's practice. The same ideas about social relations have now merely manifested themselves in a different, abstracted appearance. How this will further pan out for Godoy's practice remains to be seen, for Belgian poet Moya De Feyter's lines could not be closer to the truth.

**Marco Godoy** (b. 1986, Madrid, Spain) works and lives between London and Madrid. He studied Fine Arts at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and later Photography at the Royal College of Art in London. Recent solo exhibitions include 'In the service of vision', Galeria Max Estrella, Madrid (2021); 'Heterarquía: Ven, seremos', Patricia Ready, Santiago (2020); 'My we, your we, our we', Copperfield Gallery, London (2019); and 'La distancia que nos separa', Sala de Arte Joven, Madrid (2018). His work was included in numerous international group exhibitions and is held in public collections such as Stedelijk Museum, 's Hertogenbosch; the INJUVE Collection; and Centre d'Art La Panera. Godoy won the INJUVE Prize, received scholarships from Bancaja and the Letrou Family, was a resident at the British School in Rome and an international fellow at Kioska, Santa Cruz, Bolivia with Gasworks & Triangle Network.

