CAC Brétigny

Bestiario de Lengüitas

17.01-03.07.21

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Mercedes Azpilicueta, Vanina Scolavino Black ink, 5×5 cm



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Bestiario de Lengüitas

"Bestiario de Lengüitas" (Bestiary of Tonguelets) is an evolving project by artist Mercedes Azpilicueta, in dialogue with curator Virginie Bobin. The exhibition follows the thread of a script written by Mercedes Azpilicueta for a performance that has yet to take place. Fueled by workshops, collaborations and rehearsals with artists, researchers, designers, dancers and singers, the works on view invite a choir of grotesque characters to loudly inhabit the stage of that future performance. Using obsolete knowledge systems, "neobarroso" poems, failed translations and ambiguous ingredients, they try to maintain chaos and excess in a world calling for order, efficiency and transparency.

CAC Brétigny presents the final chapter in a series of three exhibitions, which previously took place at CentroCentro (Madrid, 2019) and Museion—Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Bozen/Bolzano (Italy, 2020), before returning to Île-de-France, where the project began in 2017 during a residency at Villa Vassilieff—Pernod Ricard Fellowship. In each location, Mercedes Azpilicueta conducted research and conversations with local interlocutors, which resonate in the works on view. Drawings, costumes, embroideries, videos, sound pieces and sculptures can be approached as scores, prototypes, décors, encoded knowledge systems or even characters responding to each other, rather than as autonomous artworks. They are windows into a work-in-progress that proliferates through multiple encounters, friendships and affections.

"Bestiario de Lengüitas" finds inspiration in proto-scientific knowledge devices, blending European medieval imaginaries with Latin American cosmogonies; and bringing together witches, goddesses and muses from both sides of the Atlantic. The protagonists (be they living or dead; existing or fictive; humans, protheses, animals, demons or plants) converse in a polyphony of languages and voices that obfuscate straight narratives. "Bestiario de Lengüitas" invites the viewers into a "New World Baroque"¹ kind of movement that favors instability and proliferation over the quest for a single truth.

The main collaborators to the project include: Lucile Sauzet (costumes), Ana Ausín (furniture) and Vanina Scolavino (graphic design), as well as Laura Fernández Antolín (production assistance), Federico García Monfort (sound), Hélène Harder (film), Julien Jassaud (computer programming and robotics), Emmanuelle Lafon (performance), Quiela Nuc (film), Ana Roquero (research), Pauline Simon (performance), Javier Villa (research and performance), Tiago Worm Tirone (sound), students from the Master's in Artistic and Cultural Projects and World Scenes (Paris 8 University) and the Master's in Performing Arts and Visual Culture (University of Castilla—La Mancha and Museo Reina Sofía); and participants in different choral schools in Madrid.

Virginie Bobin, curator of the exhibition

¹ The "New World Baroque" refers to rebel, mixed and decolonial ramifications of the European Baroque in the colonies of the Americas.

Biographies

Mercedes Azpilicueta (born in La Plata, Argentina in 1981) is a visual and performance artist living and working in Amsterdam and Buenos Aires. Her practice involves research and production processes that explore the affective qualities and political dimension of language and voice, in connection to notions of performativity, post-colonial feminism and resistance. In 2018 she presented her first major solo exhibition at the Buenos Aires Museum of Modern Art. She received the Pernod Ricard Fellowship, Paris, in 2017 and was artist-in-residence at the Rijksakademie (Amsterdam) in 2015—2016. She has an MFA from the Dutch Art Institute/ArtEZ (Arnhem, 2013), and a BFA from the National University of the Arts (UNA), Buenos Aires (2007); where she also took the Artists' Program 2009—2010 at the University Torcuato Di Tella. She has exhibited her work at Museion-Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art (Bozen/Bolzano, 2020), Van Abbemuseum (Eindhoven) and CentroCentro, (Madrid, 2019), REDCAT Gallery (Los Angeles, 2018), MACBA (Barcelona, 2018), CA2M (Centro de Arte Dos de Mayo, Móstoles, 2017), Onomatopee (Eindhoven, 2016), TENT (Rotterdam, 2015), Móvil (Buenos Aires, 2015), Irish Museum of Modern Art (Dublin, 2014) and Het Veem Theatre (Amsterdam, 2014). The artist is reprensented by Nogueras Blanchard, Madrid.

Virginie Bobin works at the crossroads between research, curatorial and editorial practices, pedagogy and translation. She is currently a PhD candidate at the PhD-in-practice in Artistic Research at the Academy of Fine Arts (Vienna). In 2018, she co-founded with Victorine Grataloup the curatorial and editorial platform Qalqalah; and began a longterm collaboration with artist Mercedes Azpilicueta. Between 2016 and 2018, she was Head of Programs at Villa Vassilieff, a center for art, research and residencies, which she co-founded. Previously, she worked for Bétonsalon—Center for Art and Research, Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, Manifesta Journal, Les Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers and Performa. She presented independent curatorial projects in CRAC Occitanie (Sète, with Victorine Grataloup), MoMA PS1 and e-flux space (New York) and Tabakalera (San Sebastián). Editorial projects include *Composing Differences* (Les Presses du Réel, 2015) and *Re-publications* (co-edited with Mathilde Villeneuve, Archive Books, 2015). She also participated in the book *Co-Creation*, edited by Céline Poulin and Marie Preston with the participation of Stéphanie Airaud, and published by Empire Editions and CAC Brétigny in 2019. *To our sole desires*, Virginie Bobin (2018)

ACT 1: TO OUR SOLE DESIRES

The scene takes place in the summer of 2018, in the tearoom of a Parisian hammam, close to the Seine. ARTEMISIA G. and LEA L. are lounging on divans, in dressing gowns, their long, damp hair wrapped in towels. At the time of this meeting, ARTEMISIA appears to be 27, the age at which she painted her second version of Judith Beheading Holofernes (1620), kept in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. LEA, for her part, looks fifty-something, and has already completed Le Milieu du Tableau [The Center of the Painting], a series of four line drawings accompanied by a text, Espace perspectif et désirs interdits d'Artemisia G. [Perspectival Space and the Forbidden Desires of Artemisia G.], dated 1979.

Despite the slight moisture in the air, the walls are covered in a flesh-colored wallpaper with hand-drawn motifs: deformed, fragmented, decomposed, toxic bodies; cannibalistic bodies, cyborg bodies, protective, wet, desiring bodies. There are also drawings of plants, of cigarettes, a headdress in the form of a wolf's head with real fur: a whole repertory of witches, benevolent or not, of those items forbidden by international security norms, which one usually sees in the shape of black signs with red lines crossing through them, before one removes one's shoes and places one's electronic devices in the plastic trays at airport security.

There are no windows. An astonishing clock, whose hand jumps and dances in all directions, marks the century instead of the hour. Three steaming tea glasses rest on a small coffee table.

ARTEMISIA: She takes her time, doesn't she? And yet, she's spent the last four years under restoration.

LEA: You have to understand, she's exhausted from all those travels in Asia. She's no spring chicken.

ARTEMISIA: Speaking of globetrotting women, have you seen Mercedes lately?

LEA: She went to see my son last winter. They talked about me. She asked a bearded curator at the Buenos Aires Museum of Modern Art to do a revival of my performance *Dissolution dans l'eau, Point Marie* [Dissolution in Water, Pont Marie]. I've got the video, I'll send it to you.

ARTEMISIA, *laughing*: She's got a sense of humor, this kid! She came to see me too, or rather, see Judith, at the Uffizi. I saw her reflection in Holofernes' eyes and in the blade of the sword. She spent a long time sitting in front of the painting, blown away, like a young

bashful lover on a long-awaited first date. I had a right old cramp in my right arm but I watched her out of the corner of my eye, she seemed to radiate physical and intellectual excitement...

LEA: I like these moments of grace, when a new intensity of knowledge is born from this sensual, cognitive desire...

THE LADY AND THE UNICORN, a terrycloth towel in her hair, makes her entrance in a riot of gold and flowers, a mirror in her hand.

ARTEMISIA: So, how's the treatment with medieval plants?

THE LADY, *settling gracefully on a divan*: Wonderful. I feel like it's taken four centuries off me. You were talking about desire? I'm all ears.

LEA, *stroking her hand to welcome her*: My Dear Sister... We were talking about the encounter between Mercedes and Artemisia, in Florence. Did you know she came across that painting thanks to me?

ARTEMISIA: Yes, she explains as much in the soundtrack to her forthcoming exhibition in Buenos Aires. She let me read the script in Google Drive, it was quite moving. I like the way she shares the source of her references, her notes, her obsessions, which reappear from one work to another, irrigating them. I too have tried to embody a reflection on the painting process in my artworks. What I mean is: painting as work, the effort of the whole body, not just The Hand. Under the shimmering of the silk, in the quivering flesh and tensing muscles, I want to show the economy of the productive body, the power to act in women's bodies, my body as a woman artist allied to the body of the servant woman in a shared labor. I believe Mercedes has grasped that. If I was her age in this century, I would do performances kitted out in Adidas armor too. I would have learned feminist self-defense techniques to kill Holofernes, instead of giving myself tendonitis with that enormous sword. Mind you, less might then have been written about the painting's sexual symbolism.

THE LADY, *blasé*: Don't say another word... We haven't all been lucky enough to receive a visit from Linda Nochlin. Furthermore, the arts of tapestry and embroidery are considered essentially feminine, she said so herself¹. This reminds me of a scene in a recent documentary on "the greatest artist in South Africa." This imposing white man signs tapestries made exclusively by black women workers in the workshop he owns, managed by a white woman. *Ite, missa est...* In short, whenever a new aspiring medievalist approaches my tapestries and leers at my hand caressing the horn of this poor animal, my threads grow pale with apprehension. I dream of becoming unrepresentable. It isn't because I've been reincarnated, as you have, in novels, in paintings, in films, and having skimmed the history of

art and gender studies departments around the world since the invention of the university. Covering my tracks, multiplying the skein of possible readings, sowing riddles and games of mirrors... Fortunately today's artists, like our young Mercedes, embrace research and reread the history of art with such irreverence. It's most rejuvenating.

LEA: "As regards the painting, I want to talk about the screen, to raise the question of the projection screen, the traces, the images projected, inscribed, that freeze the image, the images that tell us stories, places where stories take place, which print the figures that freeze us. [...]. The viewer is supposed to be at the bedside of the victim on the other side of an invisible wall that contains the stage of representation. It is an invisible wall in a one-way mirror placed between the viewer and the painting, in the place of the complicit voyager on the stage, enjoying the act performed, perceived as the reflection in the mirror on the other side of the painting [...]. Desires and the rest of the unconscious processes triggered: punishment, castration complex, guilt, killing, transgressing the forbidden space, through the laying bare of a body to show the course of desire and the limits of a symbolic space that veils it, violates it, erases it."²

ARTEMISIA: I still wonder whether there was a misprint in your text: "Complicit voyager", shouldn't that actually be "complicit voyeur"?

THE LADY: At the risk of sounding pedantic, I must remind you that the Latin etymology of the word desire, *de-siderare*, means "to cease contemplating (the stars.)" Then we enter the realm of fantasy, like you Lea when you redraw Holofernes in childbirth, returning our attention while at the same time returning his body and his sex. In Mercedes's fantasies, we are heroic women, resilient, mothers, lovers, muses, but above all, friends. As true friends we disregard time, history and truths. We take body and voice through the bodies and voices that she summons, draws, films or collaborates with. We are affected forever, just as her work is affected, and thus we contaminate the gaze and the bodies of this century's viewers.

LEA: By the way, I asked Alejandra to join us, but she divides her time between Argentina and the Netherlands at the moment, to haunt Mercedes during the preparations for her exhibition. When she found out we were meeting at the hammam, she sent me this poem:

L'obscurité des eaux

I hear the sound of the water falling in my sleep. The words fall like water as I myself fall. I draw in my eyes the shape of my eyes, I swim in my waters, I tell myself my silences. All night I wait for my language to configure me. And I think of the wind that comes to me, that dwells in me. All night, I walked in the unknown rain. I was given a silence full of forms and visions (you say.) And you run disconsolate like the only bird in the wind.³

ARTEMISIA, *raising her glass of tea*: To Alejandra!

LEA, raising her glass: To the bird-bodies!

THE LADY, smiling: À nos seuls désirs!

Blackout.

Notes

- 1 Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?," *ARTnews*, January 1971.
- 2 Lea Lublin, Espace perspectif et désirs interdits d'Artemisia G., Le carnet, 1979.
- 3 Alejandra Pizarnik, in *L'enfer musical*, Ypsilon éditeur, 2012, p.49. Original title in French.

An abstract from: Virginie Bobin, «To our sole desires», in: *Mercedes Azpilicueta: Cuerpos Pájaros,* Buenos Aires Museum of Modern Art, Argentina, 2018. Exhibition catalogue. Bilingual edition Spanish/English, texts: Laura Hakel, Virginie Bobin, Mariano Blatt. Graphic Design: Eduardo Rey. Translations: Kit Maude, Daniel Tunnard, Marcos Maie.

Images



Mercedes Azpilicueta, *Bestiario de Lengüitas*. Curator: Virginie Bobin. Exhibition view, Museion Bozen/Bolzano, 14.02—13.05.2020. © Museion Bozen/Bolzano. Photo: Lineematiche—L. Guadagnini/T. Sorvillo



Mercedes Azpilicueta, *Bestiario de Lengüitas*. Curator: Virginie Bobin. Exhibition view, Museion Bozen/Bolzano, 14.02—13.05.2020. © Museion Bozen/Bolzano. Photo: Lineematiche—L. Guadagnini/T. Sorvillo.



Mercedes Azpilicueta, *Bestiario de Lengüitas*. Curator: Virginie Bobin. Exhibition view, Museion Bozen/Bolzano, 14.02—13.05.2020. © Museion Bozen/Bolzano. Photo: Lineematiche—L. Guadagnini/T. Sorvillo.



Mercedes Azpilicueta, *Bestiario de Lengüitas*. Curator: Virginie Bobin. Exhibition view, Museion Bozen/Bolzano, 14.02—13.05.2020. © Museion Bozen/Bolzano. Photo: Lineematiche—L. Guadagnini/T. Sorvillo.



Mercedes Azpilicueta, drawing from the series *Marginalia*, 2018—2020, Ink and cochineal dye on paper, 29,7 x 42. Courtesy of the artist and Nogueras Blanchard, Madrid.



Mercedes Azpilicueta, *La Femme-Maison* [screenshot], 2019, video, sound, 2 min. 33 sec. Courtesy of the artist and Nogueras Blanchard, Madrid.



Mercedes Azpilicueta, *Paris is breathing* [screenshot], 2019, video, sound, 2 min. 37 sec. Courtesy of the artist and Nogueras Blanchard, Madrid.



Mercedes Azpilicueta, Mama's Casting a Spell [screenshot], 2019, video, sound, 7 min. 54 sec. Courtesy of the artist and Nogueras Blanchard, Madrid.

Agenda

Wednesdays, 2:30pm—4pm (groups) and 4:30pm—6pm (families) Artmaking workshop, from 3 years old "Theater of Lengüitas"

After visiting the exhibition, our young visitors create fantastic beings and experiment shadow puppetry. They have fun conceiving crazy and misshapen shadows in order to tell a story in which strange characters interact.

Registration: reservation@cacbretigny.com or +33 (0)1 60 85 20 76.

Saturday, June 26th, 4pm—5:30pm Family artmaking workshop, from 3 years old "Zapam-Zucum"

Drawing inspiration from characters and sculptures featured in the exhibition, children and parents imagine together a strange character, at the same time human, animal and plant, which they shape in 3D using a range of materials similar to those used by Mercedes Azpilicueta. This character takes the form of a small mobile that they can hang in their homes.

Registration: reservation@cacbretigny.com or +33 (0)1 60 85 20 76.

Online Artmaking workshop, from 8 years old "Beet Red"

After looking at the sculptures featured in the exhibition, made out of various materials, children make colors from food or natural elements. They then create a work of art from these colours previously made.

More information <u>here</u>.

By appointment Visits and workshops (groups)

Our visits are free and open to groups (schools, associations, students...) by appointment. We also organize guided tours and specific workshops by appointment, mornings from 9:30am to 1pm and during regular opening hours.

Information and registration: <u>reservation@cacbretigny.com</u> or +33 (0)1 60 85 20 76.

Radiophonic event "lenguas vivas / langues vivantes / living tongues" with: Mercedes Azpilicueta, Virginie Bobin, Hélène Harder, Emmanuelle Lafon, Lucile Sauzet, Pauline Simon and Myriam Suchet.

Mercedes Azpilicueta and Virginie Bobin invite Hélène Harder, Emmanuelle Lafon, Lucile Sauzet, Pauline Simon and Myriam Suchet, collaborators of the "Bestiario de Lengüitas" exhibition, to meet for a conversation around their practices. They challenge us to imagine forms of engagement and sharing through listening, noise and voice, essential dimensions of the project. Moderated by Virginie Bobin, this exchange is punctuated by excerpts from Mercedes Azpilicueta's pieces, more performative interventions and "small gualichos". At the same time scores of thoughts, voice exercises and sound poems, the "small gualichos" (Tehuelche word for spells) are small auditory spells offered by each of them.

This radiophonic event went live on March, 6th 2021 at the studio *Duuu. It was recorded and is now available as a podcast. Production: Léo Roche.

Listen to the podcast here.

The ABCC of CACB, Charles Mazé & Coline Sunier

The 22 letters springing from the "Bestiary of Tonguelets" designed by Mercedes Azpilicueta and Vanina Scolavino—and used to compose the title of the exhibition "Bestiario de Lengüitas"—are strewn throughout the center's communication supports. Human legs and animal paws, a serpent, an ear, and other letters taking shape return us to the distant figurative origins of Latin script and language. The letters echo the "protagonists [of the exhibition] (whether they are living or dead, real or fictional—humans, protheses, animals, demons, or plants), conversing in a polyphony of language and voices that muddle linear narratives." (Virginie Bobin)

As part of their residency, Charles Mazé & Coline Sunier create an alphabet based on a collection of letters, signs, and symbols from a variety of contexts and time frames involving both CAC Brétigny and the larger territory covered by the art center, as well as artists invited to exhibit their work. This corpus is now embodied in a new typography called LARA. LARA has been activated on each co munication supports, which are considered publication and dissemination points for the collection. By associating multiple voices within the same typography whose glyphs continue to grow in number, with writings that are by turns vernacular, institutional, personal, and public, the ABCC of CACB is an attempt to publish the geographic, political and artistic context in which CAC Brétigny is found. The alphabet is online at www.cacbretigny.com/en/lara

"To Ambroise and Aziza," Neïla Czermak Ichti and Ibrahim Meïté

17.01—07.05.21 Exhibition at the Brétigny Theater As part of the cycle "Family Spirit" (January—March)

I was really very happy to know that the reference meant something to them. When I go back and forth with Neïla Czermak Ichti and Ibrahim Meïté Sikely about the text that has to be written to introduce the exhibition, I bring up with them a very local Essonne expression, que la famille, or "family only." Raised by some to the level of a motto or even a moral principle, "family only" means that our close relations, our sincerest friends come first. Here "family" doesn't refer solely to family ties but rather to all those who have proved their loyalty. The show pays homage over and above to those who are loved, beginning with the title.

Sorry, but I am not going to talk to you about Ambroise and Aziza, to whom Neïla and Ibrahim have dedicated the exhibition. The secret surrounding these two figures helps me clarify what I strongly feel when standing before Ibrahim and Neïla's drawings and paintings, i.e., the aura of their models.

"Everything that I've done to this point has been inspired by my family, even when it has nothing to do with my family. For example, if I draw a vampire, despite myself it will look like someone from my family because they are the faces that have made the deepest impression on me. (...) I am really aware that I appreciate my family as well for their—I wouldn't say mysterious side... but: *So where were you for 7 years then?* Which makes them odder, even more magical."—Neïla

I experience this feeling, between the uncanny and magic, in the eyes and postures of Neïla's characters. The artist adds fantastical elements that lend visible form to her personal feelings for the close family and friends she depicts.

"I remember the first time I drew Lounseny, a friend. Just before that, he had gone with me to some shitty job and I took his photo. Then, on Instagram, I added a filter with angel wings. And when I got back home, I drew him sporting big angel wings because right then, I saw him like that."—Neïla

Her figures appear so familiar, so close to our reality that I get a very special pleasure seeing them moved elsewhere. Lounseny becomes a winged modern hero. It is that play with the border between the real and the unreal that I also see in Ibrahim's works. His paintings are happening elsewhere, that is, sometimes in an imaginary world haunted by the contemporary one, sometimes the opposite. "Actually I want to go to places where you can allow yourself to be bizarre, in narratives where no one is waiting for you at all. In *Dragon Ball Z*, the characters live in a world that doesn't exist but their values are close to our own. That means that with Goku, the dude with a bizarre cloud haircut, you can feel close to him without it being real obvious like that he's from here or there or there."—Ibrahim

The stories told in mangas, comics or videogames are part of a contemporary mythology that has been mastered by a whole generation. Ibrahim includes these references in his paintings and it is not insignificant that he does so. A sort of new iconography, the nods to these narratives become symbols to be decrypted that speak of our values and moral principles.

"As a result, in my work it's real important to convey all that, convey what I know, what I saw, what I saw that was funny and less funny when growing up in my neighborhood. (...) There's always the importance of the context, but there's also a bit of *it's ok, I got the right* to bring my ideas to life outside of the place where I grew up."—Ibrahim

What Ibrahim says touches me a lot and very personally. I share with him the urge, that "right," to go and be elsewhere. When you come down to it, it's that that makes his paintings salutary for me. Behind that shift lies hidden a deeper search for identity. Who am I when I'm not where you are waiting for me?

"For my dreams, Earth is too small."—N.O.S, Shenmue

Camille Martin, curator of the exhibition

Neïla Czermak Ichti was born in Bondy, grew up in Paris, and now lives in Marseille, where she is currently pursuing her studies at the School of Fine Arts. She draws and paints, working from personal records (family photographs and videos) which blend with a repertory of images from a range of film genres, be it science fiction, horror, or even gangster movies. She depicts her immediate family and close friends and the invisible forces living beside her. Spirits, ghosts, angels, and monsters take part in the simple banal moments that are shared with one's family.

Ibrahim Meïté Sikely was born in Marseille in 1996. His early years were spent between Marseille and Pantin. His family subsequently settled in Champigny-sur-Marne, where he passed much of his childhood. Currently studying at La Villa Arson (Nice), he is young graduate and holds a bachelor's degree. Since 2018, his art practice has focused exclusively on oil painting. Following in the wake of his drawings, which he began doing at a very young age, his painting has always been figurative. In contrast with the classic technique he employs and the legacy of 19th-century European painters, Ibrahim Meïté likes to include in his canvases a library of pop and contemporary references, from *Dragon Ball Z* to Tekken to the American comics of the 1950s.

Camille Martin is the Head of production at CAC Brétigny. After a bachelor's degree in art history at Paris Nanterre University and her mediation experiences at the Rencontres d'Arles and at la maison rouge (Paris), she is admitted to the curatorial formation of Rennes 2 University where she studied to become production manager and exhibition curator. Following this master's degree, she joined the CAC Brétigny team, ensuring for over a year the post of assistant exhibitions and residences (civic service).

General informations

CAC Brétigny Contemporary Art Center of National Interest Rue Henri Douard 91220 Brétigny-sur-Orge +33 (0)1 60 85 20 76 info@cacbretigny.com cacbretigny.com

Free admission, from Tuesday to Saturday, 2 pm–6 pm. Late openings during evening performances at Brétigny Theater.

By RER C:

Brétigny stop. From Paris, train BALI, DEBA, DEBO, ELBA direction Dourdan, Saint-Martin d'Étampes. From Dourdan and Saint-Martin d'Étampes, trains LARA, PARI, DEBO direction Saint-Quentin en Yvelines, Gare d'Austerlitz, Invalides.

From Brétigny station, follow the direction of Espace Jules Verne, take boulevard de la République, continue on PI. Chevrier, take slightly to the right on rue Danielle Casanova, and at the rotary take left to rue Henri Douard.

By car:

From Paris, A6 direction Lyon, exit Viry-Châtillon, Fleury-Mérogis, then Brétigny center. From Évry, Francilienne direction Versailles, exit 39B direction Brétigny. From Versailles, Francilienne direction Evry, exit Brétigny center. From Étampes, RN20 direction Paris, exit Arpajon-Égly-Brétigny-sur-Orge-Saint-Vrain.

For car-sharing, join the group BLABLACAC(B) on Facebook.

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