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YERBA BUENA CENTER FOR THE ARTS PRESENTS  
**Bay Area Premiere**  
**Mariano Pensotti's**  
***El pasado es un animal grotesco (The Past is a Grotesque Animal)***



*El pasado es un animal grotesco; courtesy of the artist*

Thursday-Saturday, February 16-18, 2012; 8 p.m.  
YBCA Forum, 701 Mission Street, San Francisco, Calif. 94103  
[www.ybca.org](http://www.ybca.org); 415.978.2787 (ARTS)

**Thrifty Thursday, February 16 only – All Tickets \$5**  
Friday-Saturday, \$25 regular; \$20 YBCA members, students, seniors, teachers

*"[Pensotti creates] a compelling portrait of the self-obsession of his own generation that achieves that rare feat of profoundly moving an audience without ever descending into trite stereotypes or easy sentimentalism...The production is also blisteringly funny" -- Maria Delgado, Plays International*

SAN FRANCISCO – (January 17, 2011) YBCA welcomes Argentine writer/director Mariano Pensotti, a rising star in Latin American theater, in his first American tour with Bay Area premiere of his highly acclaimed *El pasado es un animal grotesco* (*The Past is a Grotesque Animal*). Taking place between 1999 and 2009, the piece is a funny yet moving portrait of a generation that follows the lives of four twenty-something characters through a decade of economic and personal turmoil in which their dreams collapse and the world around them changes in unexpected ways. As in many of Pensotti's pieces, the audiovisual elements are integral to the play's structure, creating a cinematic dimension. The action deftly unfolds on a revolving circular platform that both conveys time's ceaseless march and divides the action into four spaces in which vital moments in the characters' lives play out. A cast of four actors represent not only the four protagonists, but also take on an array of secondary roles in each other's stories, often changing character with as little as the addition of a pair of glasses or a shift in pose. Through the carefully controlled, fast-paced, overlapping story lines, characters and action, Pensotti illustrates how quickly and easily real life can transform into fiction and back again. (The work is performed in Spanish with English subtitles.)

"In *El pasado es un animal grotesco* there isn't a central storyline. Instead, it's a collection of brief stories," says Mariano Pensotti. "The protagonists are 25 [years-old] when the play begins, and end up being something different from what they imagined. They spend their time constructing their own personalities."

*El pasado es un animal grotesco* is organized around YBCA's Big Idea - Reflect: Considering the personal.

#### **About *El pasado es un animal grotesco* (*The Past Is a Grotesque Animal*)**

Some of the stories in *El pasado es un animal grotesco* focus on everyday situations, whereas others focus more on the extraordinary. Some include documentary or autobiographical elements and others plunge openly into fiction. In turn, each story drifts and branches into smaller secondary stories.

The play is performed by only four actors, enclosed in a rotating round stage. They alone embark on the heroic task of narrating and presenting a multiplicity of stories, bringing to life dozens of characters and situations in a -- mega-narrative that is executed with minimal stage resources.

The starting point of the four main stories is: a man wants to be an independent filmmaker but for now he works as an actor in pathetic beer commercials; a woman steals her father's savings to go to Paris to live the bohemian life of *nouvelle vague* films and ends up working in a theme park that reproduces the life of Christ; a girl discovers that her father has a parallel family in the countryside and becomes obsessed with them; a student and amateur writer receives a box with a severed hand inside that changes his life.

From a narrative standpoint, the play develops a singular procedure. The situations performed—what's actually seen—are brief moments acted in real time and cinematographically, which show a specific moment in the life of each character. At the same time, a live narrator—played in rotation by the actors—tells the audience what's happening with the characters in that moment, functioning as a kind of voiceover. Sometimes the narrator imparts what's happening to the characters and at other times reveals their own thoughts.

Scenes from *El pasado es un animal grotesco* (*The Past Is a Grotesque Animal*) can be viewed at: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ViC-V\\_BYg2c](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ViC-V_BYg2c)

### **About Mariano Pensotti**

Mariano Pensotti is from Buenos Aires and studied cinema, visual arts and theater. His performances have been presented in Argentina and in festivals and venues in Belgium, Germany, France, Ireland, Latvia, Brazil, Canada, Japan, Austria, Spain, Chile, England, Denmark and Switzerland. He has won numerous prizes for his work including a Rozenmacher, a Clarin and a Premio F, and received fellowships from UNESCO-Aschberg, the Rockefeller Foundation, Fundación Antorchas and Casa de América de Madrid. [www.marianopensotti.com](http://www.marianopensotti.com)

### **About Yerba Buena Center for the Arts**

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (YBCA), located in San Francisco's Yerba Buena cultural district, is one of the nation's leading multidisciplinary contemporary arts centers. With a belief that contemporary art is at the heart of community life, YBCA brings audiences and artists of all backgrounds together to express and experience creativity. The organization is known for nurturing emerging artists at the forefront of their fields and presenting works that blend art forms and explore the events and ideas of our time. As part of its commitment to the San Francisco Bay Area, YBCA supports the local arts community and reflects the region's diversity of people and thought through its arts and public programming.

YBCA programs around four Big Ideas to organize its wide-ranging programs and provide a context with which to engage the art. The Big Ideas are: ENCOUNTER: Engaging the social context; SOAR: The search for meaning; REFLECT: Considering the personal; and DARE: Innovations in art, action, audience. These ideas, which encompass art from all disciplines, are designed to focus an investigation of contemporary art and its relationship to the larger world. Using the Big Ideas as portals, YBCA has established a framework of thought that invites exploration and risk-taking, quiet reflection and active engagement.

Performing arts, visual arts and film/video programs are curated thematically around Big Ideas which illustrate the connections and associations between the works. Public programs and Big Idea Nights, YBCA's popular free open house series, are dedicated to establishing a deeper understanding and appreciation of contemporary art. YBCA presents programming year-round in the Forum, Screening Room, Galleries and Novellus Theater. For tickets and information, call 415.978.ARTS (2787) or visit [www.ybca.org](http://www.ybca.org).

### **Funding**

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