

Beautiful Scars

The moment in which María Castelló Solbes finds herself, which she shares with her exhibition colleagues, is that of a person who has decided to work on artistic production and has already made an effort in the comprehension of this task. This is the moment to concentrate on the location of lacks in a personal definition of art and of artistic work, to give them response and be able to develop this task with plenitude. The impulse of this effort is the evidence that it is only possible to be cultural producer when previously active receptor of the own reality and of other cultural productions. As individuals that share this same attempt, we know that it is precisely this effort and this apprenticeship that allows us to have, maybe for the first time, a perspective or consciousness of the intricate difficulty that this task involves. In this labour there is nothing for granted, no more (and no less) than what other works, when they speak for themselves, were able to give to the experience of others. And, nevertheless, the work of art as a conscious and responsible action, in words of Isidoro Valcárcel Medina, entails guaranteed success, inasmuch as it is a personal endeavor.

Returning to the life moment that the art institution denominates as emergent or promise, is this a moment which is usually accompanied in the work of the artist, in the point to start making, by a mechanization of the art form, a repetition almost anonymous, and anodyne in the solutions and thematic already known and praised by the institution and the market. Thereafter, when the work is already finished, with its virtues and failures, mechanization also takes place in regard to a feigned strengthening of the discourse, that ends up expressing fixed and predictable messages making use of adequate quotations: I am a renewer but not conflictive, I know the field and its rules, etc.

Perhaps a non-attentive receptor could perceive in the election that María Castelló Solbes makes of photography and video a sign of this mechanization. Nevertheless, the images that she is able of forming and conceiving are interesting just because of the subtle manners, the small decisions, that make them take a turn towards other interpretative fields, outlying technological virtuosity, superficial celebration and the proliferation of the many photographic and videographic, lacking content, images that are offered to us for reception. The works of María Castelló Solbes choose the technical image inscribed in the actual visual culture, distinct by an obvious crisis of representation and the concept of real. Beyond doubt she is conscious of the decay of values related to the photographic image, derived from the effect of the boom and multiplication of capturing techniques and digital treatment of reality, which paradoxically coincides with a tremendous height of commercial photography and audiovisual means in the art field. Taking a look at many of the contemporary art works that use photography, we could observe an accurate interest for space, the absence of persons or their presence as ambiguous propagandistic-advertising icons, and formats not under 100 x 100 cm. that focus their authority argument through the genealogic insertion in the Centro European photography tradition since the Bechers. What kind of subjects inhabits those spaces? In which direction do they move? Could this obsession for space have something to do with our generational impossibility of accessing to a worthy place to live? Or with the more generalized impossibility to inhabit every space, public or private, real or virtual? Could the lack of people in these images signify a getaway from life realities, emotionally and socially hurting, in regard to which it is complex and risky to take a position?

This space is politic. And these people are capable.

The images of María Castelló Solbes are interested about space, they don't show any people, and despite this they are not the same and the subjects we are not allowed to identify are completely present, even giving the feeling of being invited.

Urban Landscape Scenery 1 and *2* shows two sights of a street from a window in the centre of a Centro European city. These images are the disturbing result of an accurate process of puzzle and retouch from multiple images captured from the Berliner windows of her first apartment in this city, a process directed to delete all not exclusively architectonic elements, cars, neon signs, cables, and remarkably, people. The resulting space produces an estrangement sensation, of grey post nuclear scenery, but without ruins, which we feel required to occupy and where everything is possible. A second gaze allows us to glimpse at a kind of ecology of images as we are receded to an impossible pre-advertising state. In this context, as the artist explains, the presence of subjects would be a mistake, subjects today are just one more image, label bearer, pre fabricated styled.

If we choose another way, we can hear dissatisfaction echoes in these pictures, of disappointment that we are fixed to feel as subjects mediated by an image culture, opposed to the sceneries where actually our seconds are to go by. These turns out to be dirty, ugly, and bright less, without intensity or glamour. Sceneries that our preconfigured existences fill with void.

This difference concerning monumental photography is even more evident in *der Fluß 25-38*, where this format is overthrown to show us a series of handmade river docks, raised with planks, uralite pieces or some bricks, where the scale is hard to guess. In contrast with the apology of the late capitalism representative buildings, María Castelló Solbes makes us look at the spoor of this fragile constructions, underlines the fact of their manufacture, she allows us to measure them as the result of the work time of somebody and suggests the necessity of a human habitability, giving magnitude to this precarious habitability in contrast with the denial of it that we find in the over illuminated, polished and shiny, contemporary buildings. And again, if we choose another course, are these images of places for contemplation, which she forces us to contemplate. Places again free from multiplied image, far from the visual "over-presence" that we are exposed to, but that do not represent an idealized or romantic nature, just a little bit of silence. Here also, to interfere with the visibility of what is shown with a strange presence would be a mistake or a turn to narratives.

In *First Stage of the Expedition* the artist shows in video format a long sequence shot that passes through a skirting board in a circular trip, of the contour of a private space that marks an own place in the world. There is something in this minimum demarcation of life space that made us think on the film by Chantal Ackerman *Je tu il elle* (1975) where beginning with the closed space of her own room we are shown her young woman's body acting, behaving and assuming the risk of experiencing herself, of bestowing importance to her own experience. We watch her think and live within four walls and then, afterwards, to go out and live also, but another way, out there. In this work (like those of Agnès Varda, Martha Rosler, Ana Mendieta, and many others) we find a very special kind of risk that carries the result of formal solutions that are surprisingly effective insomuch as they generate affordable aesthetic experiences with a dense poetic. A kind of risk and

self-exposure, of revealing, that we cannot avoid interpreting under a gender point of view. Because they, opposite to their male colleagues, did not expect, did not make according to the will of being framed in the tradition of the masterpiece, they did not even consider themselves in the position to embody the new paradigm of creator.

We do expect that approaches like these from María will be finding their place in the upcoming artistic panorama, in which there are more than enough praising and superficial dodge effects, and there is a need of reflexive works that, as hers, speak out with intention, without resignation or cynicism, of that though reality that we share without inviting us to hopelessness, renounce or fetishism. Presenting simply places for complex contemplation and intelligent action.

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