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**Precipitar
una especie
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BARRO

Precipitar una especie (The Precipitation of a Species)

Matías Duville in conversation with Sonia Becce

I am about to have another conversation with Matías, after a similar exchange in May 2011 on the occasion of his first individual exhibition in Colombia. I have followed his work with great interest for years now, after first seeing his drawings in biro - on the silk from swimming pool filters - at an exhibition in 2003, the same year in which he began participating in the Kuitca Scholarship. This entailed a move from Mar del Plata to Buenos Aires, and for the two-year scholarship he based himself at a former school in the Once neighbourhood, in which the reconditioned classrooms were turned into the artists' studios. For some reason, Matías decided to work in the playground, where he constructed his own studio, a sort of wooden capsule that bore a certain connection with his drawings. Immersed in that rather claustrophobic atmosphere, he began to work on his dismembered landscapes of turbulent seas, strong curves and abrupt changes of direction in the currents. All very familiar movements for someone like Matías, who has spent hours on both skateboards and surfboards.

SB: In 2011, you divided your drawings into two groups: the larger works responded to the slogan "that was somewhere else," and you described the smaller ones as the product of "a total loss of direction," "like speaking of plastic surgery in the middle of a skating session." Three years later, do your new drawings still respond to any of these ideas?

MD: The compass is clearly pointing in another direction now. The journey is even more introspective. In these drawings I feel I'm casting light on totally dark areas. It's a parallel between the depths of the sea (understanding ocean as a vast expanse) and the depths of the mind. The idea of expedition remains intact, but I decide when to switch on the light. Darkness rules and it's the mind that directs the voyage. The sum of these illuminated moments provides clues. I delve into the cemetery of ideas; at some moments I only describe what I see, and at others I produce actions, sinking deep into something resembling a bed. It's like launching an Explorer to inaccessible reaches. In one of those drawings, *Manos durmientes* (Sleeping Hands), two gloves appear guided by the action of a mind, and these hands or gloves are busy snapping the dead branches lying at the bottom.

SB: But there's something that appears as a constant between your previous drawings and the current ones, and that's your clear interest in "destroying every emotional imprint."

MD: It's odd. At times I feel I'm walking between an active presence and total invisibility, like on a kind of mountain road, which is where I want to be. I always use the term waste ground to describe this. Seeing oneself in a work as if reflected in a mirror is not always good. However, I do find

it interesting to experience such an unfamiliar road with one's own media. It's what I try to do when I'm right in the middle of a process. I like works that represent a sort of limbo in which one has moments of lucidity, but at the same time amnesia makes its presence felt. So emotion is left in an odd position.

SB: How was the transition between working on just one plane on a variety of supports and incorporating installations into your work? When you returned from the residency in Skowhegan, you planned to produce a piece of art in a chimney flue, which I believe you were never actually able to do. And at about the same time you presented the project for the Guggenheim Scholarship which you won.

MD: The project involving the chimneys was a trigger because it included various media (the object, video, action), but the first idea for an installation cropped up in the exhibition for the MUSAC, which was called *Cover*. I did two large scale drawings on the wall. One was a landscape with caravans, open fires, fences and a high mountain in the background, a sort of Mount Fuji painted on a theatre curtain. On the adjoining wall, I did the same drawing on the same scale but in this case everything was covered in an indefinable substance: volcanic ash, snow, maybe straw. In some way there was a twofold intention in *Cover* of coming up with a version of an existing drawing and showing the passage of time through the strange phenomenon of a covering that's hard to define. That was perhaps one of the first times that the drawing went beyond the limits of the paper itself, rebounding outside the actual work.

As to your question about the objects, the stoves I produced in Skowhegan may have been what led me to think about things from a different standpoint. It's as if the smoke generated by burning wood had taken me up to the heights to see myself from there. Our tutors always encouraged us to move away from our place of comfort. I remember making the stoves in the carpentry shop of the residence and then burning them, watching how the fire shaped itself to the updraft produced by the object. I burnt some of them to a cinder so they simply remained in the memory as an action, while I removed others from the fire like someone who is rescued from a fire with a stick, a fire extinguisher or a bucket of water.

SB: I see the images of the work you did for the Guggenheim Scholarship and it's astonishing how well it's aged, as if you had projected it into the future. It's like you said: "That's going to be my work: it'll reveal itself in x years."

MD: From the outset I saw the work as a sort of concrete platform about to be subjected to the violence of the climate for all eternity. Erosion began its work soon after it was built, causing many changes on the surface. The platform follows the logic of a disassembled house, laid out on the

ground, but it is also an abstraction, and it perfectly suits the Pampas near Junín, in the province of Buenos Aires, where it is located. It can be visited on foot and certain vestiges of a home are apparent. It has a central ground plan with four walls that were built directly on the ground. Each wall has its own features, ranging from the spaces for doors and windows to the empty space that would have been occupied by a stove. Keeping to the logic of the rest of the work, the roof is buried back to front in such a way that water collects in it during the rainy season. The piece sits beside a lake, to which it is connected by a long channel that is no more than the projected chimney. So when the lake rises, the water flows in through what would be the fireplace.

I began work on it in 2011. Once finished, it underwent a myriad of changes: the inverted roof was transformed into a pond with underwater life; different species of plants grew in the holes in the walls, living and dying according to the season; the inclemencies of the weather dried, soaked and even rotted parts of it, like the carpet that was there at the beginning but which has now disappeared.

SB: In some way it's artwork-cum-experiment that'll be with you all your life.

MD: Yes, it's a work I always think back to. Actually I remember it every day and wonder what state it must be in. The platform is lost in the countryside but it's still there in my head. Its perpetual nature reflects the changes it underwent. Not a day goes by without something happening, however small the changes. I'm just a spectator of events. At times I do make a minimal intervention, so as to become invisible and be changed into an action.

SB: The title *Precipitar una especie* has a double meaning: the scientific idea of clotting a sort of alien species by chemical means and that of giving birth to a new being. Science and nature.

MD: It's one of those titles that appears and sounds like the songs that nobody cares who they were written by any more and that go out on air anonymously. *Precipitar una especie* came to me in one of my ears, just as if it were aboard a small pirate ship. I was getting worried because a title wouldn't appear, so I simply stopped thinking and out it came. I can't really explain it, but of course it has a lot to do with chemistry, science and nature.

SB: The installation for this exhibition, in which you expand into space, appears to be taken from your drawings. The trees deliberately incorporate nature, when in previous installations nature was present but more incidentally, for example, in the erosion that acted on anchors, hooks, chains. What made you bring nature into it now?

MD: In this installation a pipe runs the distance that joins two possible and distant landscapes. The idea of a unified time comes to my mind in this picture. Nature here functions as a universal landscape, or rather as

a natural universal garden. It's almost a state of mind. A precursor could be *Union Garden*, a drawing I did for an exhibition at the Luisa Strina gallery. It's a big rock where two rivers of different substances converge. In this installation, in contrast, it could also be a question of possibly bringing together two realities that are continuously being superimposed on each other (at least in my mind), from an impossible desire to be here and there to the idea of multiplying atmospheric or emotional states, or of historical events, within the four walls of a gallery. So the pipe can be seen as a timeline that also unites distances.

SB: The MUSAC exhibition was called *Cover*, the most common definition of which is musical. *Whistle* is the title of the exhibition in Colombia in 2011, inspired by an animation in which the smoke coming from the chimneys of a row of houses produced a nocturnal melody, as if the houses were whistling. It's pretty common for you to include a musical reference in your work. At the next exhibition in Buenos Aires there'll be live music.

MD: Music is one of the most important influences in my work. As children my siblings and I would play music at home. Pablo was the instigator. He's been playing keyboards since he was 8. We used to share a bedroom and every night I fell asleep to the raucous sound of a *Casiotone*. It was a sort of antechamber to sleep. Then the sound became softer and softer until it faded out altogether, and I fell into the darkness of sleep to that eternal soundtrack. Much later, we formed groups with brothers and sisters, and with Bernardo, the youngest.

Sound will be a leading protagonist at this exhibition. What I did was take the parameters that led me to produce the central installation and think of an appropriate soundtrack. I noted down certain narrative guidelines and invited Flavio Etcheto and my brother Pablo to create a piece based on those indications. The spectrum of sounds is infinite, so the task was to find a certain harmony that would connect in a relevant way with the atmosphere of the exhibition. As the intention in this new project is to link two remote places, I wanted to extend the idea to the plane of sound. Music is always the best medium for travel from one place to another, connecting cities, countries, minds, changing like the weather, every day, all the time.



PRECIPITAR UNA ESPECIE

MATIAS DUVILLE

BARRO