



IRON: HERITAGE AND ACCIDENT

By Sofía Dourron

Iron is so deeply embedded in the Argentine psyche that it barely needs explaining. Perhaps all that one has to say is that Luciana is part of a female ironworking lineage – Noemí Gerstein, María Juana Heras Velasco and María Simón, among others – that challenged the gender prejudices of their time as well as the canons of modern sculpture.

Having inherited a fascination for industrial materials alongside a congenital inclination for transgression, Luciana prefers to work with iron: transforming, bending and twisting it as she desires. These processes expose the interior of iron pipes, their B-side, their entrails; accidents waiting to happen. This form of latent accident, in contrast to catastrophe as a *fait-accompli*, is a foundational part of the bio-social-technical world in which we live, one that is present in every material and tool with which Luciana chooses to work. Shipwrecks, said Paul Virilio, are born with the ship; in the work of Luciana, we might say, the rupture is born with the pipe.

The use of industrial materials in her work contains within it that latent catastrophe: scaffolding forever about to collapse, pipes might always buckle. Each work has an air of potential accident. And, in this exhibition, as in her 2011 show, that potential encompasses the entire gallery, threatening its very walls. However, this time she isn't seeking to depict the aftermath of an act of individual violence but to channel that violence into a series of iron pieces in which rupture is transformed into sculpture.

In *Prefiero Fierro* (I Prefer Iron), parts of industrial pipes of different sizes, thicknesses and densities are left intact: they're still pipes but Luciana has destroyed and reconstructed them until she has revealed the potential for explosion and catastrophe hidden within them. Virilio said that hiding or downplaying accidents is a form of ideological control that perpetuates an amnesiac faith in progress by ignoring its violence. Exposing this aspect, then, is a subversive act, a pedagogy of risk.

Accidents are an integral part of every system, almost a link in the structure itself. The drawings of hand-tools – red lines on white melamine – are embedded in the walls that the hand and tool have destroyed, almost as a warning about the essential risk of the system that we have built for

ourselves. Through the fragility of the melamine and the monumentality of the oil pipes, Luciana focuses on the material and political power of the infrastructure that sustains us; of which we ourselves are a part. Thus, the exhibition doesn't just present a way of relating to the non-human that transcends the logic of dominion, it also demands, through sheer physical imposition, reconsideration of what is at play in contemporary landscapes – both urban and extractive – and their material regimes, which are often invisible but extremely powerful nonetheless.

Like her predecessors, Luciana is responding to the systemic violence of our present by harnessing the power of tools and materials which are forced to subvert their usual uses and functions to interrupt the systems they belong to. Now, in overwhelming scale, Luciana's works continue to expose – and sometimes threaten – the fragility and violence of our lives. What they offer is not the promise of redress or resolution but a radical new path forward. A gesture that refuses to perpetuate the illusion of seamless progress and instead presents an aesthetic of risk.

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LUCIANA LAMOTHE
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BARRO