



XIL BUFFONE, CRISTINA COLL,
JOSEFINA LABOURT, MARUKI NOWACKI
Espíritu nómade

By Guadalupe Creche & Martín Legón

BARRO presents a new edition of *Cámara*, a series dedicated to the composition of short curatorial essays, the selection criteria for which represent exercises in free thinking. This time we decided to explore the intersection between four artists of different and distant generations, which we consider to be related by shared themes beyond their works. We find this meeting of artists to have the beauty of the greek word hapax, the phenomenon of a word that occurs only once in a language and of which there is only a single record. In the proximity of their ideas and the affinity of their ways of thinking, we experienced echoes of alliteration, consonant pairs that replicate and return to evoke a drifting tone, sharing a latitude and language.

In the late nineties, Xil Buffone (1966) was finishing a series of soft paintings. Lacking in initial recognition, they seemed to be a satirical approach to the sensuality of Georgia O’Keeffe and the sculptural pictography of Claes Oldenburg: from O’Keeffe she would take the organic sexualization of natural shapes; from Oldenburg, anamorphic reliefs and relations of consumption, though less ironic and more transcendent. Akin to Grippo or Steiner, the interest of the artist was in the transmutation of energy more than in the proper flow of merchandise. Lacking a visible emphasis, its metaphorical sinister nature can be seen to border on the monstrous. Things do not only resemble one another in their homophonic games (papa, which may stand for potato or father; “the eyes of the potato” as literal eyes; the old saying “verle el ojo a la papa” referring to sexual desire and literally translating to “to see the eye of the potato”), they are also made equal by their similarity; in her mushrooms, cabbages and pea pods, the voluminous shapes clearly appear as sexual organs.

Similarly, related by the space given to deformity (which in her case includes food and organic elements), Josefina Labourt’s (1985) works fundamentally share a certain perspective. As in

dreams, her pieces sketch archaic linkages with symbolic variations from different periods: a uterus with guts of rags and leather may be a bloated skeleton; a lip made from chewing gum provides context for the contortion of an entire face, expanded plastic that supports the dominant shapes of cosmetic publicity. In most of her works, these material reflections correspond, thanks to their innocently obscene inventiveness—sometimes repulsive and despicable—with an intentionally bleak femininity that coexists with an almost dreamlike vigil tension.

As an unintentional echo of this, Cristina Coll (1956) began, at the end of the 20th century, a series of homemade video-performances: she set a fixed camera, generally in her home, and recorded whatever took place. Unknowingly, she was in her own way a pioneer of a certain type of videography, even before art shows and contests accepted this type of material as artistic production for competition. In fact, her material was screened in the short film section of independent film festivals because it did not fit with the norms established by the exhibition spaces of the time. In *Baño*, one of her first pieces, she is seen in front of the mirror of her bathroom lathering her face with a shaving brush and then shaving with a razor. *Persona*, the nine minute video we are presenting, documents the process of putting on and removing makeup, seemingly with no purpose beyond recording the action. In its insistence, just like the person who fights against the memory of a material, the face is submitted and deformed, confronting the classic images of the act of putting on makeup. During those years Coll’s activism was solitary, without any concrete consciousness or theory, a muted scream on the margins of the genre. In parallel, she exhibited some of her drawings from her series *Tortines*, unfinished characters the artist would conclude years later.

Sharing a star, Maruki Nowacki’s (1981) work utilises its title to recall a passage of transformation: in *Real, absurdo, irreal* (from her first individual exhibition *Soñé que me rapaba, me convertía en varón y*



desfilaba con un papel entre los dientes) a precise character cannot be determined. The order of her world is indiscernible: the mummified white hand, hard and heavy, runs aground covered in lime and in an ethereal structure which leaves a slight and opaque passage between physics and chemistry, between amorphism and anthropomorphism, between the active and the passive, between the metaphor and the concrete. It is hard to even determine if the artist's voice holds some sort of strange bliss. From her delicate panels and hanging clothes we can decipher feminine skins, something of Eva Hesse finally processing the unstable remembrances of pop, something of Meret Oppenheim's iconoclastic simplicity in everyday surrealism.

Translation by Fabrizio Arias Lippo

Cámara#2
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August/October 2019
www.barro.cc