

Gabriela Bettini

Madrid 1977

Her current interests are focused on researching the early stages of cultural colonisation in relation to their legacy nowadays. From a specific revision of the History of Painting and the representation of the landscape - through which she observes how this medium has been used to strengthen the ideas on which Western hegemonic thought-, she analyses the combination of the current environmental crisis along with a extractivist model that places women as a paradigm of multiple caused by the climate change.

He has worked on the postmemory, on a group of works that revise the dominant narratives of the generation that lived the Argentine dictatorship and also link the archive to her own biography. In addition, many of her projects revolve around the domestic space which, on several occasions, has been analysed by her with the curious, astonished attitude of the one who has inherited the process of the exile from the experience of the second generation.

In her drawings and videos, she has approached life experiences on the fringes of the History which reveal the emptiness resulting from the attempt to conciliate the memories, the politics of memory and the official narratives. Gabriela Bettini has approached intermediary places to highlight the way in which certain experiences and their traces remain inscribed on them. She has also been interested in elements that symbolize the journey between realities, whose instertical character has been interpreted by her as a metaphor for the state of liminality, openness and ambiguity of those who pass through them.

IN 2017, Gabriela Bettini won the First Prize at Obra Abierta, Premio Internacional de Artes Plásticas, organized by Caja de Extremadura and the Grant to the Creation in Visual Arts awarded by the Comunidad de Madrid. In 2016, she has obtained the MAEC-AECID Grant for Painting at the Royal Spanish Academy in Roma (RAER).

She lives in Madrid and she is represented by Galería silvestre in Madrid.

Gabriela Bettini _ Primavera silenciosa

13.09 - 10.11.2018

Gabriela Bettini. In the fold of the vision.

David Barro

Recently I alluded to the way in which Gabriela Bettini's work establishes itself in an intermediate space located between two fictions -the historical and the pictorial one- and a truth -that one which is accepted by the artist from her personal experience-. Rigorous, methodical, critical and committed, Gabriela Bettini tackles topics such as the ecofeminism and the colonialism, by revealing the violence that accompanies them like an historical shadow and leading us to look beyond what we see in each of the paintings that are formalised from the fringes or the fissures of those silences. As spectators, we should broaden our vision of the image, just as the protagonist of Antonioni's Blow up film does it to uncover the murder. As in the case of this film, in the artist's work, everything happens in the the fold of the vision and what she proposes to us is to get out of this silence for good.

Gabriela Bettini has managed to find the "appropriate words" to talk about these issues in the field of painting. This interpretative practice is key for the creation of new narratives which don't seem recent but hitherto unheard-of, since they have been permanently omitted or even repressed in a mostly conscious way, but also in an unconscious way, in a kind of disciplinary inertia of the patriarchal system.

Gabriela Bettini is aware that the emptiness and the silence are never a neutral space, nor are they neutral in a History of Art and Life that, in just the last few years, has become aware of the need to reconstitute and reconstruct itself, by adopting less questionable structures and other possible sequences that are less chronological and more capable of valuing interstitial or intermediate spaces - if we follow Rànciere's thought -, which through their digressions and curves, they get us closer to the oral narrative, as a complex alternative which dares to deviate from the established canon.

In this respect, Gabriela Bettini has worked on the idea of Nature as a colonised landscape for several years and she does it pictorially by reviewing different historical models of representation of Nature and also evincing how, at this stage, woman falls within the paradigm of violence. This way, on the basis of a non-linear narrative emerged from her personal research, in her previous pictorial series she critically investigated the images created by the baroque artist Frans Post, while gathering images of current landscapes where feminicides had been committed. In that way, she gave visibility and recognition to women who defended the environmental cause.

The exhibition *Primavera silenciosa* is another example of this. One of its starting points is the homonymous book published by Rachel Carson in the early 1960's. A pioneering publication on the environmental impact where she blames the Chemical Industry for the current environmental pollution and in which she warns against the harmful use of pesticides. Curiously enough, Carson was unjustly accused of lacking in scientific rigour, but it has been proved not to be the case. The other main line of the project is a series of engravings created by Maria Sibylla Merian that were published in *The Metamorphosis of the insects of Surinam*, at the beginning of the XVIII Century. With them, she revolutionized the Western way of understanding the South American landscape, by proving the close relationship between the species and ecosystems where they live. This premise is essential for understanding Gabriela Bettini's Art Work, which constantly reminds us that the Nature isn't natural. On the one hand, because Nature is a cultural construction of images, a memory. This cultural existence, this construct, enables us to look beyond where we see. The place presents itself as a testimony. Nature is not just what is seen, but also what is imposed, what is silenced, what is disciplined, or what is destroyed. And that's how her paintings are. In them, two types of images are mixed together, in her own words, "those that are allusive to the Nature as a space of interdependence between the species and those that are representative of what Vandana Shiva has called "the Monocultures of the Mind", which homogenize, standardize and commercialize all kinds of life".

Thus, Gabriela Bettini's work is embedded in this contemporary and manifest desire to create new spaces of research that will enable us to understand our World from the Old World. As noted by the writer Gertrude Stein, "the problem in narrative is time; in order to tell someone's story you have to relinquish the time so that the time to write doesn't exist. There should not be a sense of time, but an existence suspended in time." And for this purpose, there are very few mediums like Painting, which is able to delay the perception

of the image, intensifying the reception. Memory turns into shade to define new questions, new territories. In this case, based on the conviction that it does exist a seminal coloniality in Latin America. Because Gabriela Bettini sheds light on things, but in order to understand her exegesis, it's necessary to let yourself be carried away by the conditions imposed by her gaze. Painting is thought and, in many cases, it's not a question of generating new images but restoring their sense. Probably, the key is comprehending her works more as a journey than as a landscape. The key is knowing how to go beyond the fissures and understanding that, in this archive created through a personal research, different ways of depicting and linking images are intermingled.

On this matter, the choice of a medium like Painting, whose hegemony has exercised a sort of a dictatorship in the History of Art, is not coincidental. Not a few have made use of this same medium so as to establish a critical stance by understanding its plasticity and capacities as a metaphorical way of "differ", word that, in its original Latin meaning is equivalent to lead in different directions. Possibly the clarity and exquisiteness of Gabriela Bettini's paintings conduct us to believe otherwise, but I personally understand that this way of working on the memory and the place is not far away from the journey towards the blurriness taken by artists such as Luc Tuymans or Gerhard Richter, who also resort to the archive as a key element of their artistic research. The latter is a pioneer in removing or smudging the superfluous details and transforming vegetal foliage motifs into gestural abstract paintings. That blurred vague framing, in Gabriela Bettini's works, lies in the ability to include images belonging to different times in her paintings. It is there where that imbalance finds its meaning as a transition or displacement and offers a rich dual spatial and temporary perspective. That way, Merien's images are covered by chromatic squares that, in turn, correspond to the size of her monoculture paintings. A painting inside the painting. A connection which, in some cases, is maximised by introducing a monochrome painting that evinces even more the deconstruction of the image.

An emptiness full of abstract density or the external intensity of the chromatic transparencies that emphasise even yet the concealment and visibility games between what is physical and what is perceptive. The energy derives from the collision and also from our knowledge. The painting and its relationship to the landscape or the vegetation thereby become an effective and conceptualized metaphor for the contemporary violence. From a deafening silence.