

Irene González

Layers of Distance

14.11 - 16.01.2021

In Praise of Shadows

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The absent and the fragmentary, the empty and the occult, the spectral and the melancholic meet in *Layers of distance*. Stratum of separation where ruptures generate frontiers of stillness and quiet successions of surfaces: as Paul Valéry wrote, what is deepest is the skin. Landscape returns as the core, where the bodily presence manifests as absence, waste, apparition; and which through its repetition and dislocation aspires to an abstraction of the quotidian, the banal, the total. An estrangement which echoes Byung-Chul Han's binary oppositions in *Absence* (2019), as well as Junichiro Tanizaki's *In Praise of Shadows* (1933), the latter being an accurately descriptive title to Irene González's work.

The addition of fragments conceives here a visual archive where memory, in its iconoclastic corrosion, also responds to the subject's fragmentation. An ode to fraction is laid out, where the contemporary iconic saturation inevitably emanates, reassembled and rematerialized in graphite. There is therefore a vocation of register, of ocular inventory, which nonetheless, it denies origins, spaces and times.

The image obscures rather than revealing. This axiom is the one that rules the process of the artist bidirectionally: the *objet trouvé*, the found image which detaches from the obscurity of the total, is manifested as well as veiled in a juxtaposition of unities. Inversely, the image is shown as the result of a tonal and compositional concealment, which origin, however, is equally censored in its material distortion. The image is presented as an anonymous redoubt, which divested from its significant is reintroduced into a process of archival aspiration, a dislocation which culminates in the extraction of the essential.

Here resounds the auratic notion of the image by Benjamin, even if it is not the only spectre in the show. They are glimpsed among disputes of traces, litanies of light and shadow. Martin Hägglund defined the spectral as something that acts without physically existing: that which «signals a relation of *what is not anymore* and *what still is not*».¹ This virtuality, the estrangement of what is without being, is indeed central to the exhibition, having its most evident apparition in the ambulatory homage to Magritte, which equally brings back the *lynchian* interiors in an oneiric wait to the spectacle, an atmospheric bustle turned to itself; likewise, the landscapes of Vija Celmins and the painted photographs of Gerard Richter circulate the room.

We attend to a silent process of translation, a spectral rendering which turns into a melancholic sensitivity. Since Richard Burton's scholastic preach in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), the artistic labour has been insistently associated to the elusive indolence of melancholy, «vaporous halo of Temporality» in words of Emile Cioran.² In fact, the spectral and its inherent melancholy are above all a form of possession, as stated by María Zambrano: a «way of having without having, of possessing things for the beat of time, for its temporary cover».³ A way of possessing the absence.

¹ HÄGGLUND, Martin: *Radical Atheism: Derrida and the time of life*. California, Stanford University Press, 2008. - In FISHER, Mark: *Los fantasmas de mi vida: escritos sobre depresión, hauntología y futuros perdidos*. Buenos Aires, La Caja Negra, 2018, pp.44-45

² CIORAN, Emil: *El ocaso del pensamiento*. Barcelona, Tusquets, 2009, p. 23

³ ZAMBRANO, María: *Obras reunidas*. Madrid, Aguilar, 1971, p.115