

Catalogue: Crossings, The Territories of Reality.

Metropolitan Gallery / Universidad Autónoma de México, Ciudad de México, 2008.

CROSSINGS, TERRITORIES OF REALITY.

CONTEMPORARY ART FROM GRAN CANARIA. DOMINGO DÍAZ, JOSÉ L. LUZARDO, PEDRO DÉNIZ

Galería Metropolitana (Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana), 15th November 2007, México, D.F.

Crossings, territories of reality is a contemporary art exhibition whose pieces form a territory that makes spectators move in a quotidian reality, let's say that takes them from their home or office to a place where the metaphors come to life and become the guides and the set up of this free territory created by art, inviting the spectator to go into and wander through an unusual exhibition of the otherness, maybe radical, aimed to take a position with a social meaning and armed with solid techniques that collect pop arguments (in the way certain objects are presented), minimalist solutions (the clever assembly of the exhibition included) and conceptual atmospheres (the correct set up of the exhibition included) apart from the talent, experience, character, training and education of Domingo Díaz, José L. Luzardo and Pedro Déniz, artists from Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, an island of 40km diameter belonging to that inexplicable archipelago that can be seen as one of the last European bastion on the border of Africa and Europe., or the last African Aleph <1> in the vast European Atlantic.

In Mexico, apart from people who is specialised in art (artists, curators, art lovers, those who are looking for a theme for their thesis, art students and professors) very few people know about contemporary European art. The reviews about the important fairs and biennials seem to be news from another world and the things that finally arrive here are infected with electronic art. That is why that Díaz, Luzardo and Déniz whole work is significant and important. It is important because it offers a window through which we can appreciate in situ the aesthetic and social questions and the forms of displaying them of three Spanish artists that live in the European ultra-outlying territory, apparently a unique place in the world where you do not know whether you belong or not to Europe, whether you are African or not, or whether you are the synthesis of all cultures. That way the reference to the sea in Déniz' work, Díaz' necessity to enlarge the scales and the apparent fetishism of Luzardo's dildo can be understood. Let's say that the three artists lay out a coherent exhibition with the issues they work with, a complete personal inspiration work as well as a work with social references.

But the proposals that they lay out as far as contemporary art is concerned are also significant and it is here where I find the most important contributions of Crossings, Territories of Reality. Conceived as an alternative territory of reality, the exhibition is shown as a crossing through the, sometimes pressing, sometimes nostalgic, sometimes surprising folds of inner reality that each work detaches when you go past. So it is not a traditional exhibition where the spectator takes note of everything that is displayed in front of his eyes in a linear way, it is a route exhibition where each work forms a metaphor that speaks about itself and about the whole, like a territory formed by different (inner) realities that, however, make up an only concept as you are moving through it.

One goes from a first section, a sort of introduction without passport with Déniz, to an intermediate section where the dildo is taken to a pedestal as a fetish object that summarizes the fake pleasures of the postmodernity and where the effects of the purple light projected on a huge Babel Tower made up of fluorescent dildos, let's say with a life of their own, subject the spectator to a "change of routine", by adjusting his sight and refreshing his brain (Luzardo's work). Finally one arrives at a third section where Díaz and Déniz' installations take us to the heart of the territory where the scales and the concepts have

been reinvented in order to go deeply into a new reality (“a new brave reality”): the reality of art, which will be surely more human and more viable than “reality-reality” (or just reality) that one that waits for us at the corner of the street, encouraged by the mass-media, mediocre politicians and the bureaucrat and public prosecutors binding that intend to make all our steps, dreams and duty undergo controls in a more and more effective and cynical way.

But let’s pay attention to the anteroom of this released territory in which four huge photographs stands out and whose main theme is the sea, a sea that welcomes nobody or welcome the time as a red carpet spread across the beach and flows into it or it goes out of the water and spreads across the beach. An open work that goes straight into the spectator sensitiveness who are wondering about what they are watching and do not know if they are in front of a retouched photograph or a capricious land-art installation. In any case the picture of a sea that is welcomed with a red carpet is really fascinating. May the sea also need its 15 minutes of fame? Or is it only the way through which we arrive in this new territory like Argonauts that come from nowhere and land on the territory where everything will be found? Pedro Déniz will clear it up soon with other two introductory works. In one of them there is a case with ten bottles that play with the idea of “throwing a bottle into the sea searching for an answer” (or the bottle thrown into the sea that answers a question that has not been asked) and whose labels warn us about their fulminant contents: “silence can cause a slow and painful death” “individualism causes cannibalism”, “dreaming can alter the blood flow and cause impotency”... In the other one, 30 little red stretchers make up a crossword that tells us about the artist’s solid conceptual training and in which he expresses, by stitching in white some sentences and graphics that without saying coherent things, suggest everything: “thought”, “watering the thought”) a man that is going up the stairs, the same man that falls down the same stairs, etc. It deals with an invitation to the conceptualization of the space-territory, where the nowhere remains outside (outside the gallery, in the daylight) and the “somewhere” formed under the rules of the imagination, with a different vocabulary and a perceptible imaginary only through feelings, the evocation and the fight against boredom. In the end, the spectator will be obliged to define his position by making up his own story about the event.

Then we arrive at the block in the middle by José L. Luzardo, who starting from a supposed apology of the dildo, a gadget of these modern times and the replica of a condom in the climax, builds up a ludic-conceptual atmosphere that speaks, with some irony, about a postmodern identity based on a tiny part or the body. First, with some photographs and then with a surprising installation that may summarize the series, Luzardo shows us his own vision of things, where the simulation of pleasure becomes autonomous to tell us about the territories of identity. Here “Don-de Babel” stands out, it is literally a Babylonian installation of eleven levels formed by countless fluorescent dildos that the dark light programmed with a timer is telling us fragments of a speech that may also talk about fragmented identities: “transvestism”, “blood”, religion, “stigma”... the trap is not in the diversity of languages but in the way they are used to build truncated, unfinished, segregated, official and ruled realities. He seems to tell us that the labyrinth is not in the languages but in the language itself and it is curious that the bearers of it are depersonalized anonymous assembly-line production dildos as if they were the substitutes or heirs of the ancient modern subjects, those whose own existence derived from the thought. With this work Luzardo suggests the quite troubling idea that the fetishes without a face are the bearer of consciousness.

Finally in the colophon of the territory, that is the cathartic part of the exhibition, we can find Domingo Díaz’ installation. When I write cathartic I refer basically to the game that both artists recreates with their works. Without going against each other they turn the space into a place where Alice could be in the Wonderland, or in the other side of the mirror. For example, Díaz spread a huge installation of a wound that makes the wall bleed with three-metre drops, or a slender agave that is interwoven on the wall competing with two other little installations or art objects that strengthen the aesthetic message: in

one of the cases, another wound on the wall, this time a small one with a drop of blood that if we watch it together with the giant drop in perspective we would conclude that the wall, apart from being alive, is wounded. The territory comes to life with agony here. In the other case, the final counterpoint is two black eyes that are hung on the wall and seem to see everything, including the spectators' amazement. With the eyes white suspiciously red, Díaz has called it "unease" and it is used as the bottom and context of the last Déniz' installation.

This installation is an enigma that he baptizes as "the thought trench" and it is a outer well or a tower formed by sand sacks that invite the spectator to go up both stairs and peep in the middle where he will find an Eden as artificial as kitsch. Let's say an empty promise. A sentence that framed on the wall seems to give us the key: "Indifference seriously harms you and others around you", although some tin shoes scattered on the floor, on the red carpets that lead to the stairs and that make you wonder: Whose shoes are those? Why did they not reach the finish line? Are they replicas that belong to African immigrants that, except for their shoes, never arrived in Canary Islands-Europe because the dinghy boats that wrecked in the sea of indifference (that one that harms your health)? Or was it in the real and deadly sea that Déniz welcome with a red carpet at the beginning of the exhibition? Anyway, the metaphor is eloquent: a utopia (Europe?) that takes the life when they want to achieve it, that demands new languages and ways of thinking that implies the lost of identity, it is not a utopia. This is the trench from which Déniz take possession in front an insolent world where feelings, consciousness, imagination or thoughts have been turned into brand advertising slogans or desperate sentences of politicians in the election campaign.

Crossings, territories of reality is an exhibition-itinerary of contemporary art (I would say current art) that proposes two levels of analyses: an alternative territory where metaphors show the typical conflicts of the postmodern society, through bloody or fetish utopias imposed by a world of big asymmetries and unfair coordinates; and, at the same time, a ludic aesthetic territory where the spectator verifies the possibility that art has to generate alternative realities that takes the viewer out of the real world by inviting him to get rid of his being to be able to share, with the perceived feeling, the spiritual rebuilding of the world.

Jorge Morales Moreno

*Professor of Art History at the Painting, Sculpture and Engraving National School "La Esmeralda" and at
la Div. CyAD de la Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana – Azcapotzalco*