

PEDRO DÉNIZ. A GENERAL THEORY OF LOVE, UNSEEN SWELLINGS

Love is born from a desire to make the fleeting eternal
Ramón Gómez de La Serna

As I contemplate this text I am amazed at having needed to take such a roundabout path to arrive at something that must have been obvious from the outset for Pedro Déniz, and that is the conviction that Making Art is Thinking, forged in the most unlikely sphere: everyday life. A body which develops without a method, becomes erratic, doubts, evolves and surfaces, enriched by principles of connection and heterogeneity; the starting point is that nothing human is alien to him.

But we are also what we are due to the place in which we dwell. We look at the territory and forget that it also looks back at us; our differences, even the intimate ones, also reflect the place where we live. Place and time construct us, and in our being feeling transpires; we are ourselves and the landscape.

The island of his childhood is, in itself, a means of introspection, isolation; a place in which to strengthen a relationship through "conversion" into a "foreigner". These are decisive moments in which a certain revelation comes about that guides thought; his own needs that trouble him and into which he delves lead him to a subsequent development full of losses. These trace the true routes in a scenario that becomes "its own field", in which Deniz produces an interesting compendium of works and suggestions that allow one to glimpse a complex discourse. Elaborate and reflective, his work features a degree of metaphorical composition full of ethical-poetic suggestions rife with difficulties.

With contributions taken from cultural anthropology, art, literature, and his own experience, a mosaic is built that confirms something that we had suspected: love is also learned.

His craft, between sculpture and the domestic, boasts no grandness... closer to the citizen, it fosters interaction with the public and private space, as well as the desire to consolidate the right to a common space, to the territory. A gesture defending the capacity of viewers and visitors to intervene and to harmonies the theory with the reality of the place, and whose objective is none other than pursuing a kind of mental decolonization. And also a social reflection on dwellings that rescues societies and people wrongly classed as "peripheral" from an evident stigma and marginalization.

His works constitute a living testimony of movement, of the shift in paradigms the contemporary world is witnessing. The redefinition of conflicts and their feedback. If Art is presence, it necessarily exists alongside other less amenable presences, given the mixed nature of reality. And this does not require any justification, nor favorable climate or condition. Less favorable social conditions, those periods during which Humanity seems to turn its back on Art, are precisely those in which Art becomes necessary.

His fixation with those who do not have a voice - managing silence is not easy - enunciating silence and recovering the gaze to see again... Creating an opening to listen to or describe the silent act, breaching the shadows and death. Building bridges between people who share a common starting point... not only representing a fragment of landscape, but rather converting, for example, a message in a bottle into a sort of abstract, ideographic writing.

The sign exists only in its recognition, those signifiers in circulation which cannot be linked to a form of speech will never surface, never cross the threshold of anonymity, remaining invisible. There is no representation outside the grand theatre of our universe.

His performative projects yield a condensation of living time, but are also an image of conflicts of the imagination and the representation of the truth. Meaning is only built by fighting for a space amidst alienation, voices have no other destiny than being devoured; and yet, life, like art, demands to be fed by the illusion of reaching essential truth as a reference point.

Words circulate strangely, as if uttered by nobody; a statement exchanged when reality has been retracted. It is then when a whirlwind of questions appears without finding the origin or the end; meaning, subjectivity and action are activated. A reality from which words stem, but that, in its tension, leads us beyond them. This impossible and necessary representation is, according to the logic of words, dramatic, as it consists of achieving what lies beyond our reach. Alienation is inevitable, but it can mean the start of the journey...

There comes a moment in which it is necessary to abandon the clothing that has already taken on the shape of our bodies, and to abandon the roads that always lead us to the same places. This is the time of the journey. And if we dare not begin it we will have forever sold ourselves short.

Fernando Pessoa

Living is a journey and the experience of that lived produces the pieces revealing images that seek to become authentically visible and not to succumb to a torrent of expressions and noise, but rather seeing from silence, fearing that any word might deceive. Something that contains the demonstrable sign of his trip, of his passage; with a gaze known to be fleeting... because with such a vision of images in today's world, only the possession of knowledge amassed by learning which helps us to discern what has been seen makes sense. Even if this means inhabiting the shadow and suspecting that it is already late because what must be found is what the images cannot display nor the voice articulate.

Travel writers may be audacious, ironic and critical when sharing curious discoveries or small incidents, but the journey from one hell to another, or the journey of experience, the juxtaposition and contrast remain vulnerable to eyes that admit to being manipulated by powerful entities. And there is a deep chasm that divides the path of men... fragile to horror, perplexed by the reality that, on the borderline, blurs your view, your target. Puzzled by the lack of rebellion and exhausted from trying to explore the area of the real in the Other... On a confusing map, condemned to the eternal journey that Ulysses undertook. But to let oneself be seduced is not to let oneself be deceived.

Countries' most interesting parts' tend to be their borders. These can be found on their geographic peripheries, or in the depths of their inner selves. It could even be said that their most vital dimensions are found beyond their geographic boundaries, far from their centers of culture and power.

But the tense company of the journey that is Life is that of the Other who accompanies us, and that does not always respond to us with certainties in the mirror of his gaze; we have become the stranger to him. The great humanist tradition suggests that knowledge of the Self is the You... We are written by the Other, like a drawing scribbled on the blank sheet of our lives by an alien hand, and any attempt to avoid it is useless. The intention to mold ourselves based on our desires is frustrated, because they are never entirely ours.

If something fuels Deniz's path it is the space of the Other, from the reconstruction of his territory based on constructions of fragments, to the displacement of his immersion in daily life. Therefore he conceives his projects thinking about the place and also with creations that are somewhat "contaminated" to highlight the residual nature that these ideas take on in the museum space. From simple interference within the aseptic architecture to the contagion of the whole space.

This expressive need, aimed at a display of how something located beyond mere aesthetic experience has helped forge an image removed from formal dilemmas and has strengthened the link between the idea of the artist and his work, introducing the sculpture-installation, built/ found dilemma, sowing doubt regarding the idea itself of the installation, performance or video, and facilitating an understanding of artistic activity as something related to the context of the work itself.

We are before a path akin to the logic of interpretation, alluded to by Umberto Eco as a form of plastic hypertext inducing the observer to enter into his own form of reading, upon covering the proposals made by the artist and which open up a wide range of opportunities for debate and reflection. Pat meanings are abandoned as interpretation is yielded to the viewer, who must decode what is presented, always featured in a sober manner, with minimal descriptions and an absence of narration, which speaks to us of his intention to highlight the speculative, the questioning of the granted, and identity itself, whether that of the object or the viewer. Works which provide and will provide fuel for thought, and admit attention, beyond the pitfalls of current events.

The importance of Deniz's works is revealed as linked to the era in which he lives and that he experiences. It is not a mirror or reflection of the world, exactly, but in it there appears that stubborn presence of things of which Rilke spoke.

Fluctuations of a stubborn spirit that refuses to succumb in the well of uneasiness, seizing as a handle the scraps of a multiple whole in which we all fit. The interstices of a spirit that reveals to us its great empathy with the Other, with the utmost modesty. Border constructions, gods of everyday life, mendicants...

The metaphorical embodiment of desolation, not only physical and geographical, but spiritual. In the art that moves us and matters to us, in the essential art, coexist pain and beauty without melding, without baring their flesh...

The wound as the stitching of a skin pierced amidst the body's first experiences. Daily minutiae, one's own or anonymous pain, are linked to a discourse that incorporates them as the pain of the world. Understanding the pain of the Other as startling demonstrates that our reality is not a question of facts, but rather our gaze.

In summary, if there is no prior knowledge of reality the work of art is not born. Perhaps we can also say that the work needs to be rooted in a part of reality that has become evident for the artist. Almost invariably the work of art only reveals the obvious... This is the sign of a social attitude rooted in a concern with the realm of tomorrow; the dissolution of the established that incites one to cultivate and assume difference. This is the open adventure proposed by Deniz. And that invitation to think through that effort and the generosity of he who observes. This is the key to his plastic intentions.

In this lies his whole universe, all his photographs, his videos, all his installations, actions, objects; but it is when this whole variety of disparate elements comes together that their meaning appears. What ought reality be like if this is its appearance? Concerned with the mechanisms of meaning, with the notion of the beauty of everyday objects, with political issues and the use of alternative procedures... All this is present.

His work spans the time of men, tracing maps on the chaos. This is an art that transcends the museum, a tour driven by man's compulsion to confront questions and to think, the history of the gaze lost amidst the flow of events. However, the museum is justified by the fact that it makes possible these types of experiences, that not are not only related to scholarship, or its appreciation, but with experiences that take place outside...

From childhood to life there is but a light bridge. Some just barely cross it, in such a way that they retain and carry across their children's garb, ridiculously patched up and elongated. A few, when crossing, give away all their things to the beggars who huddle next to the bridge, and enter the foreign country poor and renewed. These are the ones to whom the last gates of the Sancta Sanctorum of eternal life are opened.

Rainer Maria Rilke

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