

Patricia Claro: "I steal 8 seconds of the river's time"

The artist moves to Rio Bueno to start her work. She has a space there, between two rapids. "My journey takes up the time the river needs. I must enter the cycle of nature, if I don't I stay outside", she says. Her last rigorous artwork - which also has a lot of technique and theory - opens Tuesday.

By CECILIA VALDÉS URRUTIA

Those peaceful and esthetic waters painted by Patricia Claro transmit a special quiet. However, they are much more than ordinary or simple. The artist even resorts to a physics doctor, Diego Maltrana, to work formulas and mathematical drawings that support her work and technique. She is also accompanied by an art degree, Olga Giménez, for her theoretical basis; along with an immersion in dozens of books. Today Taoist aesthetics captivates her. "The concept of emptiness is my project. Taoism understands water as the great void," she says, referring to her artwork.

Because her field artwork is as much or more intense, she travels to her "scenario" in Rio Bueno, very close to where its born - being the same place for seven years - and camps or lodges in a small cabin. She remains days and hours, without stopping, observing and capturing in digital images the river's course and its surroundings. "My journey takes me as long as the river needs. It is exhausting. I insert myself into it, because I also have to be a little water to be able to perceive the image, its rhythm, its lights; if I do not adapt to that cycle and its times, I'm out," she clarifies.

Her year-long work has just been translated into eight large format paintings and video art on her river piece. "It has meant a minute-by-minute delivery," she says, and it is enough to see her in her enormous workshop surrounded by models, puzzles on local maps, drawings, paintings, physical formulas, etc. Her new artwork - that surpasses the old realism - will inaugurate next Tuesday, in "Galería Animal", in what will be the space's last exhibition before its closing.

Patricia Claro (a graduate in visual arts and design at PUC) has already been visited by collectors interested in her new paintings. Other artworks will have to be reserved for the exhibition in which she has been invited by curator Selene Wendt at the Oslo Contemporary Museum in 2012. She also participated in the End of the World II Biennial, selected by the renowned German expert and former director of the Sao Paulo Biennial, Alfons Hug; among other recognitions.

Her artistic obsession:

What does this insistence with water imply?

"Being attached to the water subject becomes a process with images in permanent change. Because everything starts with the change process that the river offers me. There is a model that fades: images that appear in every fraction of a second and deform the environment, all at the same time. It offers me images for a theoretical and practical study. "

- What are you looking for?

"To paint a distorted landscape, which is water, which cannot be painted by itself. It's transparent, has no shape, but adopts the environment. "

- Your scenario, to what extent it is determined?

"It has always been the same place, even with a single branch, which I have been following its evolution and changes. I have all the space bounded and I know every corner. This scenario had to meet certain characteristics though: to be fresh water. It is clearer than sea water and being so crystal clear does not change the actual colors around it. It has a closed environment and a stable movement. The model is caught with the camera, otherwise I could not paint it. I need to shoot more than a thousand images during the journey. It is so fleeting that I do not like to lose an instant. "

- The time element is a central point.

"Yes. I concentrated on the time factor for these paintings. I have witnessed the river's flow changes. The main character is the journey, to follow the nature's rhythm. I steal from the river and nature a moment, **to** and I continue working in the workshop. There is no artwork without the river. And my inspiration lies in the patience of waiting for the light effect. "

- How does your work start?

"It starts by throwing a stone in the water, until it becomes calm. I manipulate and work the time equivalent to eight seconds, but I put the painting to a full day of luminosity, from a maximum light to a dusk light. Light defines me and redefines the image. I draw the contour painted by the light. The water's contour is distorted. I'm interested in that distortion. The abstraction of that distortion, which is also attached to the photographic model. What I'm trying to do is another water that comes from my mind. "

"I left the images perfectly esthetic"

- Do you make real scenarios with mini-photographs that you place over a floor plan in Rio Bueno?

"It's a very slow process. I set out to achieve a personal technique, which starts with photographs selection. Only 8. They show a sequence. I left aside the images that were perfectly aesthetic to be painted: they were not framed in this quest for water movement. "

- Do you deconstruct the image?

"I try to be faithful to water, but I separate the reflected light from the refracted light ... And through a mask I paint both. The patience showed in my technique is very much related to the Oriental, hence the reference to the Chinese chiseled paper cuts. Because I create a puzzle that represents each of the image's and light's fragment, with a special clip I then separate the images that correspond to the different lights; I separate lights and shadows. But in doing so I lose the color reference. **Here comes the color rebuilding. So, I develop pictures: the shadows and on the other the lights.** The light draws me. "

-The color that you work with is very limited: blue, white, green. Is it restricted only to what's real?

"I keep the environment's colors. But in forest and the sky I give myself certain liberties. The next stage will have a greater experimentation with a more monochrome painting, such as this one titled "18.06.23", which corresponds to the exact moment of the day I captured the image.

From Leonardo to Chuck Close:

- What artists are your referents?

"My relationship is with those who work on their own techniques. I am interested in Vija Celmins, Mark Tansey, Paul Noble, Chuck Close. And by the way, Richter: he does it with a very thorough color manipulation technique "

- And from the national scene, who stands out?

"The work that Emma Malig does is very delicate and ethereal. She does it with paper. I am very interested in the strength of the color that Pablo Chiuminatto has. He is very studious".

- In your obsession with the subject of water, do you recognize anyone that has helped you as a source?"

"More than the water theme, there are landscapers that interest me. Monet with his observation of the pond. The romantics like Friedrich. But Leonardo was the first occidental who first had a more Taoist conception of nature. "

- *His most minimalist aesthetic is related to the Oriental.*

"I am doing a rereading of the Chinese landscapes. I'm interested in that minimalist aesthetic. I see these ideograms in these pictures. They are more mental landscapes. And the concept of emptiness is my work: I found it in a Taoist text. Water as the Great Void".

- *But in your mental landscape, where are the feelings, the passion?*

"I recognize that I am very mental. And I am as interested in the work's final result as well as the process. But I have the sensitivity to see the other side. There is a lot of study, because I like to commit to the whole project, but that does not mean that there is no feeling. My work captures the hazards of nature. I see what is potentially possible: feelings have an entry there. I feel sensibly connected to the river. Also through the layering process I do. I go back many times, I repeat and erase. I don't plan it. It's like a meditation ritual. I have a lot of communication with the subject. I put up to 30 layers on a painting".

- *And the more abstract video, what does it represent?*

"It's the source of my actual moving images: my scenario. In the edition I also realized a dejection of images which I will exhibit it on the ground in a box of light. All will be accompanied by electronic sounds, which I had made to evoke water sounds.