

Patricia Claro and her Matto Grosso´s Water artwork

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Paintings, photographs and videos about lagoons and rivers - that originate in expeditions to unexplored areas of Brazil - are part of Patricia Claro's great exhibition, inaugurated in the Brasilia Museum. The project - which is part of the trend that matches art and science - will be exhibited in about 10 cities in that country.

On the interview day, Patricia Claro (1960) was arriving to Brasilia from Amended Waters: a reserve that only scientists access and from where waters that reach the Atlantic and the Pacific are born. The reserve, with 10,500 hectares of extension, focuses on the ecosystem's conservation, with a rich flora and fauna that are located around enormous water expanses.

On Tuesday - International Water Day - the artist inaugurated her large art exhibition at the Brasilia Museum, which emerged from other recent expeditions at the Mato Grosso areas. "It was an effort worthy of a movie to go through uncharted rivers and vegetation, with machetes, through a river that lost its course, in the middle of reeds, and finally discover the entrance to these lagoons ..." she says.

The exhibition moves the spectator into sensations, shadows, colors and movements of these esthetics interpretations on water. Paintings, photographs, prints and video sequences speak of new ways of observing, which move between an abstraction and certain figurative elements. And it is situated within one of the prevailing tendencies of today: the union or matching of art with science.

The exhibition also includes the celebrated and delicate paper installation, "Water Shades", which Patricia Claro exhibited in Venice in 2015. "Now the size of each sheet is greater and I chose a mineral paper free of cellulose, which besides having weight, an unbeatable fall and zero absorption of moisture, also winks to the ecological problem."

The German-Brazilian curator Rafael Raddi - who brought to Chile the Joseph Beuys show at the Museum of Contemporary Art - was the project's promoter. He followed the artist's rigorous steps on the subject that obsessed her. And he invited her to be the author of the ambitious work "that explores a kind of language of the art of water which is also linked to

the subject's international problem, in a country that has the largest fresh water reserves. It is an artwork that is born from its direct contact with the represented place, through the photographic capture, which crosses the social problems produced by the current water crisis," he says.

The artist's exhibition - with close ties to music (she is the daughter of the outstanding musicologist Samuel Claro) - also incorporates a sequence of videos with experimental piano music, which she had made with Max Zegers. All these artworks - and new ones that will be added - will be routed through Brazilian museums in the cities of Campinas, Campo Grande, Belém, Sao Paulo, Curitiba, Rio de Janeiro and perhaps in Paraguay, in a place close to the Iguazu Falls, as it is being asked " she tells us. The exhibition would also arrive to Santiago.

"I detected water eyes: Río Perdido Lagoons..."

- Your recent trip to "Aguas Enmendadas", a reserve that is out of sight for common people, How do you insert in this Project centered in the Mato Grosso?

"It is a symbolic place for the beginning of this exhibition's circuit: "Water Shapes", which, in this first exhibition, focuses on the 'Integration by dispersion' theme. That is, they are waters that unite territories and nations, which nascent are around this museum ".

- What were the major challenges at the Matto Grosso explorations?

"My first residence on this water search, in Mato Grosso, was Bonito, a water zone in which there are many sources of absolutely transparent groundwater, and the Ministry of the Environment showed me, in Google Earth, strategic places. In the midst of large, impenetrable green expanses, I detected watery eyes, the lagoons of the Perdido River. We organized an expedition there, accompanied by three brigaders with large machetes and kayaks, so upon entering the river, we could go through the dense vegetation ... It was a 'cinematographic' effort. At times I was left alone, knowing that it was a place of yacarés and anacondas, while the brigaders were distributed in different directions opening traces, where the geographic references and the data that we had of the maps were lost ... But the biggest scare, in my case, was to fall in the water with my camera! My work would end right there and then, and I had to cross the river several times walking with the water up to my waist and with a backpack full of my equipment.

- This wild, changing and unexpected landscape.. How does your artistic view on water change?

"Rafael Raddi's invitation to this project took me out of my comfort zone, from my piece of Rio Bueno (in southern Chile) which I have traveled in all the seasons of the year, at different times of the day and climatic conditions to develop my artwork. Brazil is a breaking point in my career, where I am registering new waters, which are both new problems and creative challenges to be solved. The idea of the image of water now is limited to its characteristic deformation code: on how it deforms the environment with its movement and how it presents it on its surface.

There are other fundamental differences that have to do with the geographical place, with its colors, its transparency and its flora. In every place that I have been, I need an observation time to be able to define how to approach, within the art, those fleeting images that appear in infinite form in that moving screen that is water”.

“I search to extract from water its layers of meaning”

-What are the emphases now? Does the search for lights and movements go on ...?

"My emphasis continues on the search for different ways to represent water, and to extract new layers of meaning from it. Light, movement and color are the basis to obtain that image. With this image, I can start an artwork that opens now to new perspectives, thanks to having been so obsessive in the observation of this single element”.

- But your work is also embedded in a rich history of art on water ...

"Yes. In 1435, with Konrad Witz, the problem of the reflection of water and the inversion of its image in landscape painting appeared. In Caravaggio's painting "Narcissus", 1598, reflection was no longer a landscape allegory, but a phenomenon that resurrected the myth in paintings. All those inverted images in that water mirror refers to that myth. And if we follow the timeline we can jump to Monet, who decodes the image with the uninterrupted color placement, but following the reflection line and the image's inversion. This problem is what appears as the essence in my work - reflection and inversion of the image - where the different disciplines used make that semiotic translation of the photographic image in painting, video and engraving transfer in the "Water shadows" installation.

- The Dutch theorist Kim Veltman relates his work with Chinese ideograms ...

“There are matches between the techniques and the disciplines presented in this exhibition, where you can extract some ideograms from the branches' reflections. These ideograms are the beginning of a water language that has its own codes. It is not translatable and it's infinite. There is only the certainty that comes from water”.

- And those associations, Are they the result of chance or is there a conscious job?

"I have followed my work's tracks, closely linked to the use of technique. And from the 'masked' - which is a product of the light's cut in the drawing, and which I can only record with the camera - I have identified these forms. It has been a field observation, transferred to the digital media, where it naturally resembles the Eastern scriptures. But at the same time, looking at the Chinese and Japanese scrolls, in museums and books, I have found images with which I feel totally identified ”.

-These artworks will be exhibited in different cities. But how do you intend to recreate the central theme for Belém do Pará: "Beliefs and religiosity"?

"The project involves different relationships and investigation on water, such as" Water and transparency" and "Water and literature". In each place, the theme will be supported by curatorial texts and seminars. In Belém, the exhibition will be inaugurated together with the Cirio of Nazareth procession, which is an intangible Unesco heritage. There, thousands of boats move with the Virgin's image, staining the waters of many colors with their offerings. The museum will be with its facade towards the course of these waters, with an artwork designed to be seen by the faithful, and the registration of these colored waters, also product of the immersion of multicolored leaves, will be a study material for new projects.