

Patricia Claro, from the visible to the invisible

Patricia Claro's pictorial theme is water: its shadows, reflections, deformations and changes. The coming and going of the river is captured in a small fragment of time and space. Her water paintings come from these registered archives; a seemingly banal subject that hides innumerable layers of painting and meaning.

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Patricia graduated as a designer. Years later she studied a Bachelor's degree in Arts, and from there on she has developed her water paintings project. The interest comes from the multiple possibilities offered by this element, which is that its simplicity does not demonstrate the technical and symbolic complexity that it possesses. Water is one of the four natural elements, universal matter, existing in all parts of the world. It represents the waters in extinction, since fresh water is scarce in the planet. It is also landscape, nature, infinite source of images thanks to its ability to speculate; metaphor of change and eternal cycle.

The artist is nourished by different techniques, including photography, video, installation and painting, this last one being the most relevant. All linked to the same problem: the representation of fresh water; an element that can be everything and nothing. Capable of being transparent as well as the reflection of infinite images, always different, because river water flows endlessly while witnessing the different events of the environment: day, afternoon, night, spring, summer, autumn, winter, etc. It goes from the invisible to the visible depending on the light. As it reflects, the shadow shows depth; are two surfaces that converge on the outside. However, such images are not durable; they change at every moment, being necessary to register them through photograph. "Of everything that it delivers, I can only manage to capture a small part. That small detail, I show it as a totality in my work", says the artist.

She personally goes to the river - usually Rio Bueno, in the south of Chile - to enter it and contemplate the water for hours, until the desired images are obtained. There is an observation time towards this element which is later photographed and edited before moving on to the canvas. For Patricia, it is important to maintain the water essence, always seeking to highlight its quality through painting. Light-shadow, brightness-opacity, surface-depth, figure-background, are the dualities that make up her paintings. Layers and layers are superimposed until the final work is done. On this issue, her creation process entails constant accumulation and change, the development of which is hidden over and over by oil painting. She explains: "My process is dual. First the background (shadow) and then the reflection (light). That first stage alone which only I know, is hidden under the light of the reflection. This technique allows me to establish a close dialogue with the painting, having a period of drying, which gives me time to 'hear and observe' what she dictates to me to follow. A time of respect with the artwork, as well as a time of respect with nature".

The relationship she establishes with her artwork is extremely sensitive. She performs every part of the process; from the photograph in situ to the painting. There is an observation towards water, its behavior and representation, which is vital to develop in the first person. She generates this close link with her artwork - not always present in contemporary art - which gives it a romantic connotation, but which also involves a meditative process that begins in the river and continues in her workshop.

In fact, Patricia's work is linked to Taoism and Buddhism. The patient attitude of waiting and contemplation, which implies observing the river channel, photographing it, taking it to the workshop and trying to maintain its identity, are characteristic of traditional Chinese art, where the aim is precisely to extend the essence of the landscape towards painting. It requires an emptying of the "I" to be able to penetrate the object and rescue its primordial characteristics; a "listening" as it points out. On the other hand, water materializes very well the Tao concept. On the Tao Te King of Lao Tse's epigram XIV (translated by Gaston Soublette), it is said: "We look to him but we do not see him. His name is Indistinct. We listen attentively but we do not hear it. His name is Subtle. We tried to catch it but we did not feel it. Its name is Tenue (...) Its superior aspect is not luminous. Its inferior aspect is not obscure. Remain silent and we would not know how to name it. It returns to the non-Being. Form without form. Image without object. It is the dark chaos. If we face it we do not see his face. If we follow him we do not see his back (...) ". These verses allow us to

appreciate how the Tao finds a poetic narration in the water figure, which is also a formless form, image without object, neither dark nor luminous.

Under the same influence of Oriental aesthetics, the artist draws analogies between water forms and Chinese calligrams; "It is as if the water were transmitting something to me, or simply writing the history of my relationship with nature," she says. The work of Patricia Claro is very beautiful in her subtlety and accounts for that empathetic attitude with nature, water and its rhythm; an issue that our Oriental ancestors knew how to contemplate and shape.