

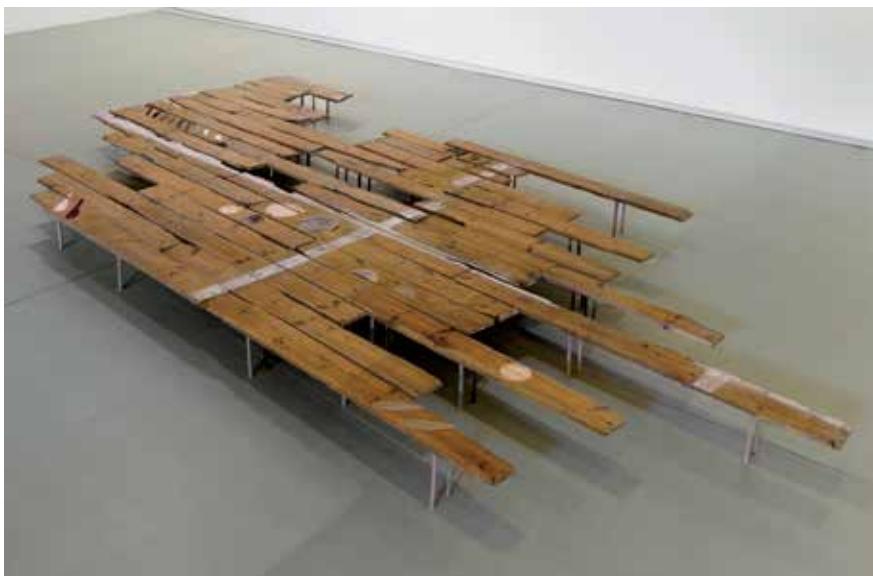
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Patricia Dauder

ARTIUM MUSEOA

Pliny attributes the invention of painting to a young woman of Corinth, who wanted to preserve the silhouette of her beloved by drawing his shadow on the wall before his departure for battle. Seeing her grieving, her father, who was a potter, applied clay on the silhouette, giving it volume. Victor Stoichita recalls this passage at the beginning of his book *A Short History of the Shadow* (1997), pointing out how, in the founding myth, art serves to mark absence and bring back what is no longer there.



Patricia Dauder, *Palafito (Stilt House)*, 2024, ceramic, wood filler, metal rods, plaques, 1' 1 3/8" × 22' 7 5/8" × 11' 7 3/4". Photo: Roberto Ruiz.

I was reminded of these ideas when I visited Patricia Dauder's exhibition "Unform" and reencountered a pair of pieces of hers that I had seen in a previous exhibition at her gallery in Barcelona. One, *Darrere* (Behind), 2023, is a greenish, red-and-gray drawing made with pastel and charcoal, which re-creates the peeling, damp wall of an empty apartment. Its palette evokes those mural paintings discovered by archaeologists, for instance at Pompeii: vestiges of a vanished world, traces of lives that no longer exist. Another, *Tercer Espai* (Third Space), 2023, is composed of two wax moldings, one hanging and the other on the floor, which appear to be the lid and base of an invisible cupboard and whose opening generates a useless and mysterious space.

"Unform" brings together works produced over the past twenty years, united by themes of memory, oblivion, and precariousness. Sometimes these themes are embodied through erasure and illegibility, as in the series "*calendarios*" (Calendars), 2016–, in which press clippings have been transferred to another paper surface, creating haphazard shapes similar to marbled paper. In others, they become manifest through the erosion and weakening of materials—for instance, in *Palafito* (Stilt House), 2024, in which a rickety wooden floor whose

crudely cut slats have been eaten by woodworm has been lifted about a foot above the ground by a flimsy system of rods. The idea of an impassable space is taken up again in *Balsa* (Raft), 2011, where a surface of very thin wooden planks stained with charcoal is wedged between the walls of the room, forming a U that seems on the verge of collapsing.

Ceramic, along with paper and wood, is among the predominant materials in Dauder's works. It can appear as a sort of intruder (embedded in interstices and hollows) or as the main sculptural element, often subjected to charring, as in *Finning*, 2019. Despite the materials' dissimilarities, the artist tends to intermingle them and to homogenize their appearance through the processes of erosion to which she subjects them. This is evident in *Floor*, 2018, a pavement of slats (thinned through fire and sanding) that are covered with paper and charcoal. This confusion (or *trompe l'oeil*) is exacerbated by the coexistence in the exhibition space of works such as *Protoformas* (Protoforms), 2018, and *Decapar-Trasladar* (Strip-Transfer), 2023. The former is composed of a set of fifteen burnt-ceramic pieces; the latter are sheets of Plasticine, resin, and fired clay of a similar appearance. The exhibition also includes a couple of films related to extraordinary events (*March 5th*, 1979, 2011, about an unexplained light phenomenon in the Canary Islands, and *Insulana* (From an Island), 2021, which focuses on the volcanic eruption in the Azores in 1957); slide archives; and some photographs—for example the series "Groundworks," 2015, which shows the process of degradation of some sculptures abandoned in a vacant lot near the city of Barcelona.

"Unform" catches the visitor in Dauder's web of small stories and fragments. However, the exhibition feels a bit disjointed, an impression that is perhaps accentuated by the contrast between the subtlety of the works and the cold impersonality of the museum building, which occupies the site of a former bus station. Nevertheless, the delicacy of these works manages to resist the distraction of concrete and colossal beams—a rare triumph of fragility.

—Joaquín Jesús Sánchez