

Incidental Beings

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The correlations between artistic productions and the (historical) times in which they take place are complex and diverse in nature. They do not necessarily follow the (a priori demanded) logics that govern social or political dynamics, to cite merely two determining spheres in the spirit of each era. The sphere of ideas from which artistic manifestations are raised and also the means by which they are made public or visible are variable and respond to the particularities of each cultural context. Art, artists and their practices are shaped by various processes and registers of listening to the “roar of the world”, in the same way that their practical and theoretical formalisations show us various political drives, understanding that it is only from there that art can be constituted as an effective poetic tool for social transformation.

This political quality to which we are referring cannot be restricted merely to practices and performances that comment on and analyse the world here and now, namely those based on the ideas that hover above and define each era. Nor can they be restricted to the precise circumstances of each context, thereby only affecting the spheres, societies and territories of a given community. In fact, acting politically transcends the – global or local – urgencies of the now to also accommodate, above all, attitudes that position themselves and speak to the world about the occurrence of things, doing so from a state of full critical awareness.

These approaches from the “micro-political” unfold and affect an extensive repertoire of issues that are closely tied to everyday life or intimacy, namely everything that intersects with us and questions established values. Ever since the late 1960s, to set a politically and culturally emblematic date, art has been penetrating the spheres of subjectivity in the face of the dangers and dogmas of a single way of thinking. In other words, many artistic productions to which we are referring observe and analyse the particular and its possible impact on the global. The perspectives and themes are innumerable based on this central idea, and their common objective would be focused on making other possible worlds visible.

Patricia Dauder’s artistic practice has been developed with unusual rigour over the past twenty-five years. It is inscribed in and inhabits the present in a spirit of radical resistance. But also, paradoxically, not without certain difficulties arising from the material choices of her works, as well as from the actions to which they are subjected through long processes of activation, mutation and transformation. A few authoritative voices – and accomplices – have mentioned a certain extemporaneity in his work. On the one hand, the precariousness that shapes it leads us to consider other art moments and practices produced in the latter half of the 1960s, those formal conceptual investigations that Germano Celant and Jean-Louis Froment described both simply and fittingly as “antiform”.¹ Under this basic formula, they brought together a constellation of artists in 1982 who had simultaneously launched formulas in the mid-1960s from various affiliations and contexts that enabled coexistence between not only the sphere of ideas and its dematerialisation, but also the world of nature and its individuality, with its corresponding sensitive poetic manifestations.

¹ *Arte Povera, Antiform. Sculptures 1966-1969*. CAPC, Centre d’Arts Plastiques Contemporains de Bordeaux, 1982. The artists included in the exhibition were Giovanni Anselmo, Joseph Beuys, Barry Flanagan, Eva Hesse, Jannis Kounellis, Mario Merz, Robert Morris, Bruce Nauman, Richard Serra and Gilberto Zorio.

From this affiliation, which is actually more widespread than we think in a large part of today's artistic practices, Patricia Dauder's work nonetheless pauses and occupies a territory practically ignored during our time. This can suddenly be found in Maurice Merleau-Ponty's illustrative maxim according to which things are the prolongation of my body and my body is the prolongation of the world.

This interrelated conception of the universe, ranging from everyday experiences and events to the forces that govern the cosmological system, is poetically transferred to the sphere of art by establishing realities and knowledge of living and active essences that can produce noticeable effects. Patricia Dauder's artistic practice and way of thinking about the world establishes links between tangible or immaterial notions, namely time, history, the material entities provided by nature... giving rise to an organic, cohesive body of work – whatever its constitutive nature – that could be describe as “a landscape”. This apparently simple term actually alludes to a fragile, vulnerable mental space, articulated through mutating material realities. The dubious belonging of each of these entities to the reductive categories provided to us by art adds a definite value to the idea of landscape that we want to incorporate.

Let us examine two works included in *Unform*, the exhibition project that concerns us here. The first of these, *Balsa* (2011), is a sizeable horizontal surface made up of wood and charcoal planks that tenses and rises along the two walls that contain it. It is an architecture of chromatic intensity surface, while at the same time a sculptural form that lies impassable in the distance. The secondly is *Palafito* (Palafitte, 2024), once again a wooden surface, although this time raised above the ground by a number of ceramic cylinders. Its very configuration refers to the idea of a scenic space, as well as to a furniture structure on which some undefined forms that escape any aesthetic category are deposited and embedded, both because of their formal nature and the way in which they are inserted. Finally, as indicated by its name, we are also dealing with an architecture that is erected from two antagonistic cultural contexts.

The idea of landscape (“other”) as a heterodox, non-hierarchical territory in which diverse materialities, fortuitous rehearsals, dilated processes, transformations, cultural correspondences... subsist and are nourished operates effectively in a constrained space for thought and, as we have stated, welcomes the processual phenomena that form a constitutive part of each piece created by the artist. The legacy left to us by some of the most important works of *arte povera* referred specifically to the concurrence of invisible energies that were nonetheless essential for their configuration: gravity, energy, tension...!

Most of Patricia Dauder's works undergo alteration and mutation processes that are definite for consolidating new presences, in fact, to give rise to what we understand as works. An acting temporality that is actively staged in private affective spheres. During this process, the artist establishes times and mechanics, watching over, rectifying – in short – undergoing a slow, unpredictable ritual. There is not, therefore – or at least not always – a time of functional execution, to a certain extent sterile. On the contrary, we know that behind each work there is a previous invisible yet active biological life.

These particularities that we have just stated – namely a certain reluctance towards the formal, informative codes of art, as well as the differentiated conditions arising from the magnitude of the temporality that operates in each work – mark Patricia Dauder's practice with a certain atonality with the present and its machines of institutional “control”. From this particular mode of thought and intimate, well-localised production in the studio as a space par

excellence, as well as in the public sphere and in nature, Patricia Dauder firmly believes that the individual politics of subjectivity can only be developed by observing the world. And it is only from there that art has a place, as well as an inalienable public vocation. *Unform* brings together in the museum space a number of works that, as a whole and for the first time in such an extensive manner, must necessarily be articulated from the construction of a narrative. In each of the registers included – paper, photographs, ceramics, wood and other volumetric forms, engravings and two films – their respective material constitutions largely explain their ideological transmission, which in turn is based on that directed mutation “life” to which we alluded earlier. In the sets of pieces arranged and configured on structures – *Night Shift* (2023) and *Decapar – Trasladar (To Strip – To Move, 2023)* – the very arrangement of each fragment in its totality transports us to the idea of a fragmented, precarious history, as well as to the notion of rescue and restitution. There are various processes in the selection of papers that shift between drawing and painting or sculpture. Their subjects generally always refer to the lightness or disappearance that takes place in a temporal dimension that is always dilated, slow, constantly worked and eroded, and also occasionally illuminated. These small – or large – walls of history can be visualised as plastic texts, perhaps forgotten or barely insinuated. But in all of them we recognise a certain original, constitutive epic that sends us their faded warnings. The medium of film for Patricia Dauder is a recording not only of image, but also of presence, materiality and sonic qualities. *Insulana* (2021) also participates in that epic that is often associated with a specific film genre, which in this case is sensed as if on mute, thanks to the texture of the moving images and the calm tone of the narrative discourse.

Each of the technologies, and in turn the different works that are revisited in *Unform*, is a constituent part of what we have come to call “landscape”, a landscape not associated with a geographical territory, but with an entity organised from ideas and things. The narrative that is shown to us in *Unform* is therefore intersected by micro-narratives that tell us a great deal about our critical capacities and our will to imagine other possible worlds, or to launch ourselves into the practice of a radical imagination.