Expanding waves: Patricia Dauder's artistic practice

Mela Dávila Freire

> To form an impression might involve acts of perception and cognition as well as an emotion. But forming an impression also depends on how objects impress upon us.
>
> Sara Ahmed[1]

Patricia Dauder's creative career, employing such varied formats as film, drawing, painting, process works, sculpture, installations and publications, does not move forward in a straight line or in one single direction. One might say instead that it evolves in undulatory movements which gradually broaden the artist's fields of interest, at the same time reconfiguring time and time again the relationships between the various elements which shape these fields. Dauder displays the paradoxical virtue of having found the balance between constant faithfulness to her concerns and an equally constant inventive capacity for renovation. Certain themes and worries run through her work, criss-crossing almost all of it, but the artist tackles them from always changing perspectives and delves into them following a creative and intellectual path in which each step extends the weft of her senses. Thus, a warp is woven, which over time has grown in density and complexity as each new work triggers connections in multiple directions, shining new light onto existing works and finding in them resonances which widen their own range of meanings. Dauder's visual discourse grows in concentric circles which continually become wider, richer and deeper as they move away from a thematic nucleus toward which they do, however, remain firmly oriented.

That being the case, approaching the evolution of Dauder's practice from a purely chronological point of view might not be the best of methods: reviewing her career necessitates moving forward and back so as to take up arguments, link ideas or point out concerns which often, when they appear in her work, not only connect to the most recent pieces but also

explain aspects of earlier works which until then had perhaps not taken on sufficient importance.

So it is appropriate to begin at the beginning, but in the knowledge that the linear chronology will not be enough to unravel the abundant connections which link together a large part of this artist's formally very varied works.

I. Multiple spaces

> I remember when I wanted to catch clouds. I imagined myself putting my head out of an airplane window, putting them in plastic bags and tying them up tight to take home. (…) I think there's something medieval about this desire, to do with the visible and invisible, with presence and absence.
>
> Tacita Dean[2]

Patricia Dauder was born in Barcelona in 1973. Her early leaning toward drawing and graphic art led her to do a degree in Fine Arts in the city,[3] at a time when she felt a growing preference for sculpture and cinema. After finishing her university studies, she lived in the Netherlands from 1996 to 1999 where she furthered her training – consolidating her interest in drawing and photography – at the Hogeschool voor Kunst en Vormgeving in 's-Hertogenbosch and at Ateliers Arnhem. She later returned to Barcelona, where she has lived since with occasional breaks to take up artist residencies in New York, Prague, Porto, the Azores islands and Bregenz.

In the first stage of her activity, still in the 1990s, Dauder concentrated on exploring various forms of identity through drawing and photography. In the works she produced in this period she captured the bodies and heads of vaguely human figures, with imprecise features and a fragmented, unfinished, transparent or, in some other way, passing appearance, as if they were subject to an uncertain transformational process.[4]

From 2000, this first exploration began to start closing, as other lines of activity and research which would end up being more long-lasting opened up in her work. Human *figures* disappeared from her work but not human *presence*, which would come to be evoked, in a more abstract way, through references to inhabited environments, domestic utensils and memories of intimate spaces. It was at this point that a solid interest in space – in all its meanings – became established in Dauder's work and the artist has assiduously addressed this theme ever since, if from varied angles.

The contrast between full and empty, between the visible item which acts as container and that which is instead content and therefore remains hidden from view, is one of these angles. In Dauder's works there is an abundance

of allusions to concave spaces, in the shape of some kind of cavity or hollow, and representations of receptacles or other containers resembling bowls – in two or three dimensions – the inside of which are barely intuited through holes or cracks. In her drawings, the appearance of this kind of element often requires the implementation of the paper's white surface, which for the artist constitutes an element just as present and effective as the strokes drawn by her hand, almost always in dark tones. Although they were made almost two decades apart, both *Arbre-nafra* (2002) and *Grutas* (2021) illustrate this interplay between negative and positive, similar to that which, in acoustic media, seeks to activate the silences precisely through their opposite, sound: "But now there are silences and the words make help make the silences.[sic]"[5] In both *Arbre-nafra* and *Grutas* the artist represents, in images halfway between figurative and abstract, openings which go across a surface and allow one to observe, or at least intuit, the space they reveal. In the earlier work, the opening is a cut through the surface of a living being, causing a wound, while in the later one it represents a geological depression inside which lengthening shapes appear, seemingly growing from top to bottom, and materialising in the "not-drawn" spaces surrounding Dauder's dark strokes.

The urge the artist feels to unravel and open up does not only concern receptacles, whether more or less closed, but also reaches certain structures and spaces which a priori are merely functional and as a result not usually visible. This fascination is illustrated by the film *Sporadic* (2009), its footage including half-built architectural structures which are presented as open bodies, short-lived "skeletons" of concrete and steel awaiting their covering with finishing materials which will hide them away for ever.

Traces of receptacles also appear in *Night Shift* (2023), a horizontal floor work, comprising a base made up of various flat modules of white paraffin, of a size similar to that of an improvised bed, on which lie some ambiguous-looking pieces of ceramic which, although made of terracotta, appear soft and fragile. On the floor, to one side of the base, one sees the remains of a utensil, similar to a bowl or plate; on the other side there is a pile of papers onto which images taken from various sources have been transferred. "Thus, *Night Shift* may allude to a minimal, almost precarious living space, the essential to cover minimal needs: nourishment, rest, memory",[6] says Dauder. As with 2015's *Receptacle #1 (Nourishment and Repose)*, *Night Shift* points to weak and vulnerable forms of inhabiting space, in which human presence is reduced to a slight impression, similar to the indentations left by a body after resting on a mattress or other soft surface: an imprint lacking materiality and, at the same time, bearing the unmistakeable trace of an absence.

Paying close attention to detail, Dauder is focused on observing the porous boundaries which separate private areas from the public environment, in

which precarious extensions of domesticity and other ways of living on the margins may occur. It is in these boundaries where the artist observes certain perceptions of space which reflect her adoption of unconventional points of view. At times, these perceptions also arise in interior spaces: the sculpture *Tercer Espai* (2023) activates volumes which lie between imagination and reality, giving off glimmers of the nostalgia which seeps from the passage of time. In this piece, Dauder recreates the memory of a domestic space which was part of her own past, at the same time as she reflects more generally on the interstitial condition. *Tercer Espai* started with the drawing of an arabesque line, evoking the typical mouldings of old furniture or ceilings. The idea, according to the artist, consisted of giving form to a non-existent space which might evoke the empty gaps between pieces of furniture which make up part of her childhood memories. This initial stimulus was added to by other levels of meaning when Dauder decided to duplicate this volume and put face to face two identical pieces, reversing the conventional order of which should be above or below, making an apparently very heavy element levitate, and alluding to a third imaginary space, from which the artwork derives its title.

Sojourn (2017) bears witness to another approach to the idea of space, materialised in this case in the realm of stars and the universe, which hold a special attraction for Patricia Dauder. The drawings which comprise this work are daily records which Dauder made during a stay in the Azores islands, where each night she marked the points of light she could see in the sky; as a result they show the changes in position of these points over the course of a month, constituting a kind of personal lunar calendar. As with other Dauder pieces – such as *Press #1* (2005), or *Protoforma* (2018–2024) in which reproductions of cosmic landscapes appear – *Sojourn* seems to point to a connection with life philosophies and links to nature at variance with those of the west: ancient ways to understand the world which have disappeared or, if they still exist, they do so in distant geographical contexts. *Sojourn* thus reveals the existential aspect Dauder perceives in even the most mundane of objects or elements, an aspect which is accentuated and gains intensity in the celestial dome. Perhaps the firmament and its constellations function, in Dauder's cosmogony, as a counterpoint to the hidden interior of things to which the artist wants to penetrate when she perforates, rips or opens up whatever surface within reach. Although what is open and immeasurable lies in opposition to what is intimate and hidden, both are, in fact, opposite sides of the same concern.

II. Swirling time

> The essence of the reflected light play is the production of light-space-time tensions in colour or chiaroscuro harmonies and (or) in various forms by kinetic means, in a continuity of motion: as an optical passage of time in a state of equilibrium.
>
> Lázsló Moholy-Nagy[7]

Dauder's work offers up spatial impressions which seem to observe not only topographical parameters but also emotional ones, and which can superimpose themselves in complex modulations. In this artist's work, Carles Guerra has written, "the places do not respect the chronology and overlap as in a double exposure",[8] a statement which convincingly describes Dauder's relationship with space, but even better the way she conceives of time. In many of the artist's works, different temporal coordinates seem to coincide and overlap, getting tangled together until they are inextricable. The appreciation of the passage of time as an unstoppable accumulation of rapidly passing moments accordingly triggers an urge to index and register, and the desire to capture and keep visible several chronological layers in a single surface. Dauder's first films – which the artist made with a Super 8 movie camera she acquired around 2003 – bear witness to this chrono-archivist impulse: in them, Dauder was not aiming to use film to delve into moving images but simply to preserve, through a series of still images, the different phases of the slow process of creating her large-format drawings. For her, drawing causes a series of shapes to appear on the paper, shapes which find themselves permanently subject to metamorphosis in a continual making and remaking, guided by intuition and without any prior plan; a succession of images which, to a certain extent, correspond to the multiplicity of visual associations which precede the lines of the mental plane. The dynamism of these associations, their own instability, rules out for Dauder the ambition to arrive, through drawing, at a conclusive or "finished" image, and at the same time explains her interest in reflecting the superimpositions of strata, her desire to materialise and preserve the phases of the process itself, not so much as (or not only) its final result.

At the beginning, filming these fleeting moments of drawing on her cine camera was a way of preserving them: an archiving exercise. However, the rhythm and sequential nature which the artist came to observe in the resulting film, as well as the very materiality of celluloid – which offered attractive potential for intervention and manipulation – ended up revealing a range of possibilities which Dauder went on to explore in later works, conceived now as properly cinematographic pieces.

March 5th, 1979 (2011) is one of these films, in which two of Patricia Dauder's favourite themes meet. The first is the inexorableness of natural cycles, which *happen again and again* without the influence of any human activity, and which materialise the force of nature, at once both destructive and redemptive. The event which lies at the root of this film was the observation of a strange light phenomenon which was visible over the Canary Islands on 5 March 1979, documented in photographs by several eye-witnesses in different parts of the islands. In order to make *March 5th, 1979*, Dauder selected nineteen of these photographs, which she found on the internet, and then re-photographed them using different lenses, so as to obtain medium shots and extreme close ups which she then filmed with a 16mm movie camera. The result is a film whose images, while difficult to decipher, are powerfully suggestive.

The second of these themes is the seduction the early stages of the history of cinema have for the artist, in particular the period of the invention of technical devices prior to the cinematograph – which had almost managed, but not yet entirely, to capture and transmit the moving image – to the beginnings of experimental film-making in the works of auteurs such as László Moholy-Nagy, Hans Richter or Man Ray, who probed the new medium's possibilities without depending on conventional narrative or verbal language. This interest boils down to two questions which have occupied and preoccupied Dauder since the beginning of her career: how to turn a still image into a moving one by means of cinematographic procedure, involving mechanical and visual processes as physiological as they are psychological, and how to make visible, if indeed there is a way to achieve this, that which is beyond the capabilities of human perception.

As with *March 5th, 1979*, the original idea for one of Dauder's more recent films, *Insulana* (2021), is to do with the impact of a natural phenomenon, in this case a much more destructive one: a precipitation of volcanic ash. The artist made her first trip to Faial, one of the islands in the Azores, in 2017 and there she discovered the story of the unexpected and violent eruption which had occurred in 1957, with devastating consequences for the small fishing population who lived on the island, whose homes along with the rest of the territory were completely buried under black ash and therefore rendered permanently uninhabitable. *Insulana* presents the aftermath of the catastrophe, visually through a series of almost abstract images and emotionally through the poetical recounting of memories spoken by the islanders. The film, whose narrative is not at all literal, embodies the unresolvable tension between the double condition of the image as document (bearing witness to the past) and monument (marking it as memorable), at the same time as presenting to its viewers a story wrapped in a halo of unlikely verisimilitude, set in a hazy timeframe in which different moments in time are presented as inextricably tied together. Throughout

the film, Dauder builds a crafted assembly of chronological strata which are partly hidden and partly mutually revealed.

III. Overlays, transparencies

> These movements, of which we are hardly cognisant, slip through us on the frontiers of consciousness in the form of indefinable, extremely rapid sensations. They hide behind our gestures, beneath the words we speak, the feelings we manifest, are aware of experiencing, and able to define. They seemed, and still seem to me to constitute the secret source of our existence, in what might be called its nascent state.
>
> Nathalie Sarraute[9]

For Patricia Dauder, putting one element on top of another does not necessarily lead to its being hidden, but instead triggers dynamics of covering and partial revealing, in which images, although shown fragmentarily and incompletely, never completely disappear. Transparency and concealment form a fundamental axis in the *Index* (2021) series of lithographs, which is intimately linked to the process of creating *Insulana*, long and complex. Given that the production calendar initially planned had to be extended, the artist took advantage of the delay to carry out preparatory tasks, which included a series of drawings about concepts linked to the eruption and Faial Island – landslips, layers, astrological questions, the anthropology and history of the location, whaling, etc. – and a collection of photographs taken from different sources. In both sets of images, themes were similar: "impression" or "imprint", the effects of environmental change on living beings and nature, changes affecting skin and other surfaces giving rise to wrinkles and creases… In a new overlaying exercise, where the aim was to fuse together the two sets of images, Dauder concentrated on experimenting with the possibilities of lithography, printing on Japanese paper – smooth, but very strong – until she ended up with one single set of images, conceived so as to be mounted in such a way that they would cover, like a skin, an entire wall.[10]

Superimposition is also a structural element in the *Calendars* (2016–) series, made up of pieces which allude materially, precisely and palpably, to the existence of a something – images, perhaps also moments? – which remains secret, hidden beyond the reach of perception. Each of the *Calendars* is composed of groups of sheets of graphically altered paper which are piled up and only joined at their top edge – like the pages of a wall calendar – and as a result largely inaccessible from view. All the pieces

in this series were made using the same slow and laborious method: through a series of manual steps employing image-transfer techniques, the artist managed to move the image onto a thicker surface which she later stripped and finally polished.

This working process displays Dauder's resolute passion for cycles of destruction and reconstruction, a constant in her artistic practice. Making and unmaking, dismantling and putting back together, as is the case with three-dimensional objects; but also making *by* unmaking, working on the surface of the paper or canvas (as occurs in the works *Vida Primigenia #1*, *Vida Primigenia #2,* both from 2024, and *Darrere*, 2023, for example) in order to create an image which emulates, in a different materiality, the series of dynamic phases which are characteristic of her drawing practice as well as the multiplication of images to the detriment of a single conclusive image. In this sense, Dauder has stated that she does not consider herself to be a sculptor, nor strictly speaking a painter, but rather operates in an ambivalent zone halfway between the two mediums, the methods of which she uses and recombines according to the ideas she feels urged to make material.

Deconstruction and reconstruction – or dismantling and reassembling – are also connected to concepts of *process* and *fragment*, which Dauder identifies as fundamental. In her words, "I have always had a certain difficulty in understanding works of art as finished objects, and I've been more interested in the phases they go through in their formal and conceptual development, with the final result being a manifestation of an accumulation of these phases".[11] This emphasis on process links her work inextricably to the temporal dimension, where the possibilities of bringing about change and transformation unfold ad infinitum; in fact, it is not uncommon that she reuses elements from previous artworks in new compositions. The black sheets which make up part of the floor sculpture *Decapar-Trasladar* (2023), for example, come from stripping the material which covered a previous piece, *Pipe* (2004), which consisted of a piece of plastic tubing covered, both inside and out, by black plasticine. In a similar way, the ceramic which is part of *Protoforma* was taken from another previous piece of almost the same title.[12] This methodology highlights a very open way of understanding the idea of "fragment", an element which is not only inherent to every procedure of dismantling or deconstruction but also has a dual nature: it is a remainder, an imprint, a trace, but at the same time a generative beginning, blessed with the ability to open up the pathway towards new configurations.

IV. Erosion and wear

> …through the growing dazzle of the light in my eyes, I suddenly saw, amidst the darkening colours, the sails of the long-vanished windmills turning heavily in the wind.
>
> W.G. Sebald[13]

During the spring and summer of 2015, Patricia Dauder decided to move her workplace to one of the few remaining empty plots still left in L'Hospitalet de Llobregat, a municipality adjoining Barcelona. By then, she had already spent a good while exploring the world outdoors, after a long period when she had concentrated on the space enclosed by the walls of her studio. The site in L'Hospitalet enabled her to fulfil her desire to continue perforating, making holes, passing through the epidermis of a surface so as to bring out into the light its contents, what had been hidden inside, now shifting her searches and inquiries into a true dimension for a few months, working physically with so elemental a material as soil.

Once she had excavated a series of holes in the ground of that plot – placed so that they subtly drew a diagram of what might perhaps be the remains of a blueprint for a house, or a replica of an imagined living space – Dauder, in an exercise in *reverse archaeology*, decided to bury in these cavities some of the artworks she had in her studio: small ceramic objects, drawings, paintings and also items of daily life such as newspapers, photographs and pieces of wood or cloth. The result was a landscape, in a certain way, similar to the one which was to be her inspiration for *Insulana* a few years later: an expanse in which unrecognisable fragments of almost completely buried items stick out, rather like an archaeological site where fate and the passage of time had tightly piled up several historical eras, one on top of another.

After a few weeks, she dug up these objects, now transformed by the erosion caused by nature. The unearthing process, which the artist documented in photographs and transparencies, left behind cavities in the ground which replicated, in reverse, the shapes which had been removed, as if the site had been turned into a mould – a container – for those shapes. Many of the objects had undergone apparent deterioration which was, however, not a loss for the artist but a gain: a new layer of meanings which could be attributed to them, and thus a different version of the regenerative processes she had previously been working with.

The outcome of these months in L'Hospitalet was *Groundworks*, a project which is difficult to categorise because of its complexity. Dauder took to the extreme working methods involving long processes and repeated

preparatory actions, whose results, described as "directed mutation 'life'",[14] were at least partly beyond the artist's control. A sediment of sensitive memory arises from these methods: a "trace" or "sign" which is to be found in many of her artworks, be they sculptures, paintings, audiovisual pieces or any other format she works with; a condition which adds a narrative element to the multiple levels of meaning which are so common in her work.

Groundworks was pivotal in Dauder's career, in that it successfully expanded the artist's previous investigations and concerns into a more physical dimension, at the same time prefiguring new developments which would arise in her later work. One of these developments can be observed in *Weather Sticks* (2018), a collection of sixty ceramic rods which Dauder fired at a low temperature to ensure they remained porous and then buried in the garden of a house in the historic part of Cuenca, in Ecuador, and later exhibited at the city's XIV Biennial.

Echoes of some of the ideas in *Groundworks* reverberate in the large-scale sculpture *Palafito* (2024), whose title alludes to the dwellings built on flood plains which are typical of local building tradition. In *Palafito*, the idea of a dismantled home or dwelling of which a trace barely remains – which in *Groundworks* had been hinted at by the holes in the ground – is evoked by a fragment of worn wooden flooring, heavy and sturdy-looking, which paradoxically seems to float in the air, delicately supported by fine ceramic tubes as if levitating a few centimetres off the ground. *Palafito*'s wooden planks, which came from an old house, are remains of a real old floor, on which pieces of ceramic – some of which are fragments of earlier works such as *Protoformas* (2018) – have been slightly embedded in the wood as if in bas-relief. This combination of elements taken from reality with others created by Dauder herself is a recurring feature in her work, as has been described above, and can be observed in very different artworks, such as her films, her slideshow series or the engravings in *Index*, to mention just a few examples. *Palafito* also exemplifies a type of sculpture where material, instead of being added, is removed so as to create recesses inside which other elements can be inserted: here, some ceramic pieces have been added to the wooden planks.

V. Journeys toward the (un)known

> In my grandmother's dining-room there was a glass-fronted cabinet and in the cabinet a piece of skin. It was a small piece only, but thick and leathery, with strands of coarse, reddish hair. It was stuck to a card with a rusty pin. On the card was some writing in faded black ink, but I was too young then to read.
>
> Bruce Chatwin[15]

Patricia Dauder's gestures of concealment go far beyond the literalness of burying, and suggest absences or vanishing points which may lack physical materiality but are nevertheless perceptible.[16] When they are more abstract these gestures may evoke semantic and symbolic fields closely related to each other, such as, for instance, a number of artworks whose titles and materiality may awaken echoes of expeditions across undefined and barely known lands, like those described in the western genealogy of adventure books, in which there is never a lack of remote islands (*Insulana*) nor exotic architecture (*Palafito*), nor ships (*Balsa*, 2011), sea creatures (*Finning*, 2019 and *Whale Lines*, 2021), or worn-out maps showing the way to civilisations as yet unknown, such as the ones hinted at in artworks like *Migration* (2013) or *Water Lily* (2023).

These echoes are, at times, almost literal: *Balsa*, a large sculpture, could actually be a boat or more precisely its remains: a huge fragment of a vessel whose proportions, according to the size of what we see, would be massive. At other times, these hints may present more complex levels of interpretation, as in *Finning*, a sculpture comprising a set of burnt earthenware sheets. The title of this work derives from the English word *fin*, but the piece implicitly carries certain and more dramatic connotations: the word *finning* describes a catastrophic fishing practice, widespread in some parts of Asia, in which sharks have their fins cut off and then are thrown back into the sea, where they soon die, stranded in the depths and unable to swim.

Migration was created during a residency in New York's International Studio and Curatorial Program in 2011. Here, Dauder had planned to experiment with colour, not applying it to a given surface, as would be usual, but rather removing it by erasure, erosion and wearing out. She bought offcuts of coloured cloth which she bleached time and time again in her studio. The cloth's original tones were thereby transformed, either mellowing or becoming pure colours like those which had been the basis for the "visible" colours. *Migration* resulted from the bleaching of a black cloth which became increasingly weakened and began to disintegrate. Placing the resulting pieces on a white surface, the artist tried out various

compositions in such a way that they resonated with the nautical terms used to describe the various kinds of debris which end up in the sea from a boat.[17] Finally, after choosing one of the compositions, Dauder stitched the discoloured fragments together into one big piece of cloth.

Literally, then, *Migration* makes reference to the intentional transformation of material. In a more abstract interpretation, this artwork also has a bearing on movement between places and ways of life which are far from similar, and it invokes the far away, the strange, the foreign, through an implication of "otherness" which can be linked to Dauder's frequently demonstrated predilection for ways of life and thinking of non-western cultures which derive their knowledge from detailed observation of their environment and follow their own logic in order to interpret the natural world. For the artist, these ways of relating to the world are rich and complex, although when observed from afar they may seem intangible or immeasurable, remain hidden, or even indecipherable. Perhaps the air of melancholy some of Dauder's artworks breathe is rooted in the intensity with which the artist perceives and represents the western inability to use similar instincts so as to preserve human beings' relationship with their natural environment; an inability – or rather a *loss* of ability – which causes a radical denaturation from the environment, and can even lead to the most terrible cruelty. The allusion to forms of savage extractivism implicit in *Finning* could be an example in this respect.

VI. By way of conclusion

In order to shape her ideas and feelings – which, as she underlines, arise profusely before taking on any material form, Patricia Dauder employs an enormously wide range of methods and techniques, which include the reuse of previously existing elements, the superimposition, addition and subtraction of fragments and, of course, the transformation of original materials, be it manual, mechanical or biological… To this must be added Dauder's ability to place herself in interstitial, ambivalent positions: between the two-dimensionality of painting and the volume of sculpture, between figurative depiction and abstraction,[18] between photography's static nature and film's movement, between the inside and the outside, the familiar and everyday and the mysterious and legendary… also, of course, between present and past, what is real and what is remembered and imagined. From this intermediate position, contrasts between antonymic terms lose their power, absolute categorisation blurs, and definitions acquire relativity and contingency. "For years I have seen my work as a set of contradictory, antithetical concepts: empty-full, construction-destruction,

material-immaterial, visible-invisible. The question of how to represent the non-visible logically was always looming in the air. In recent years I have begun to understand that there are no such opposites, but that there are transitory states. (…) In my opinion, it is more a question of a certain time and space than a question of materiality and visibility".[19]

On the basis of apparent ambiguity, Dauder's artworks are subtle yet complex mechanisms which not only bring into play their visual attributes but also display sophisticated strata of intellectual meaning and a powerful ability to emit emotional resonances. "Things", Hito Steyerl reminds us, following Walter Benjamin, "are never just inert objects, passive items or lifeless shucks at the disposal of the documentary gaze. But they consist of tensions, forces, hidden powers, which keep being exchanged".[20] Patricia Dauder is particularly adroit in the handling of these tensions through processes of movement and contact between her objects and those who perceive them, so as to create "impressions" which are both visual and also intellectual and emotional. The artist has demonstrated her desire to work with materials as a means to get closer to the world which surrounds her and, through them, to "touch it": perceive it, understand its structure and grasp it. In an equivalent process of discovery, those who contemplate her artworks need to be aware that their material configuration is only the starting point of a journey in search of meaning which will probably take them unexpectedly far.

Notes:

1. Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (2004). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014 (2nd ed.), p. 6.
2. Tacita Dean, "A Bag of Air", in *Tacita Dean.* Barcelona: MACBA, 2000, p. 24.
3. In the Faculty of Fine Arts at Universidad de Barcelona.
4. I am grateful to Patricia Dauder for sharing with me in conversation this and many other aspects of her work; this essay drinks in abundance from the fountain of her generous comments.
5. John Cage, "Lecture on Nothing" (1949), in *Silence.* Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1973, pp. 100–110.
6. *Patricia Dauder: Interiors* [exhibition brochure]. Barcelona: ProjecteSD, 2023.
7. Lázsló Moholy-Nagy, *Painting, Photography, Film* (1925). London: Lund Humphries, 1969 (trans. Janet Seligman), p. 23.
8. Carles Guerra, "Natural History of a Film: on *Insulana* by Patricia Dauder", in *Patricia Dauder. Ground and underground* [exhibition brochure]. Barcelona: La Virreina Centre de la Imatge, 2021, p. 8.
9. Nathalie Sarraute, *Tropisms* (1939). New York: George Braziller, 1967 (trans. Maria Jolas), p. vi.
10. A site-specific version of the lithographs which make up *Index* was shown in 2021 in the *Patricia Dauder. Ground and underground* exhibition at La Virreina Centre de la Imatge in Barcelona, curated by Carles Guerra.
11. "Patricia Dauder", interview with Jesús Castaño, in *WhitePaper By*__Nº 16, 2023. (Available in whitepaperby.com).
12. *Protoformas* (2018).
13. W. G. Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn* (1995). London: Harvill Press, 1998 (trad. Michael Hulse), p. 237.
14. Juan de Nieves, "Incidental Beings", in *Unform* [exhibition brochure]. Vitoria-Gasteiz: Artium Museoa, 2024, p. 29.
15. Bruce Chatwin, *In Patagonia* (1977). London: Penguin Books, 1988, p. 1.
16. The artist indicates that such expressions are premeditated, since she does not want the meaning of her artworks to be understood – or consumed – immediately, at first sight, but rather the opposite: she expects that the task of getting the sense of each artwork will demand some time and effort from the viewer.
17. *Flotsam* (floating remains of a shipwreck), *jetsam* (goods thrown overboard), *lagan* (goods thrown overboard with a buoy attached such that they can be found) and *derelict* (vessels floating adrift).
18. In this respect, Dauder has said: "Non-form predominates in my work, but I have no intrinsic interest in abstraction in the historical sense; I am interested in non-form, in the unclassifiable and the unnameable of which I think the artistic object partakes a lot". In "A Conversation between Patricia Dauder and María Minera", in *A Segunda Imagem / The Second Image* [exhibition catalogue]. Porto: Fundação Serralves, 2012, p. 37.
19. "Patricia Dauder", interview with Jesús Castaño, in *WhitePaper By*__Nº 16, 2023. (Available in whitepaperby. com).
20. Hito Steyerl, "The Language of Things", in *Transversal Texts*, June 2006 (available at https://transversal.at/transversal/0606/steyerl/en).