

## **ROSELL MESEGUER. A history on dematerialization**

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Rosell Meseguer surprises us with this new exhibition, displayed in the space of La Fragua-Tabacalera, with a theme -the invisibility-, a concept related to others ideas that have inspired her last projects, such as UFO ARCHIVE (2007-2015). This implies a certain awareness of work that is likely to be organically presented, as a whole, in which her work tries to link together the erratic and the *idée* (fixe idea), the acceptance of contingencies and a rigour in the method.

Its main goal is the understanding of the role of visual representation in contemporary culture, as well as the development of our knowledge about the world in which we live: how are they able to impact in our imagination, how our personal memory is organized, how they are used for historical facts representation -our past, our future and our most intimate life. In fact how, they are part of our common life.

The assembly strength belongs to the nature of the documents, but also in the setting of a discursive accompaniment, and mainly in the pieces and installations displayed through space: reliefs or free-standing sculptures, objects, mirrors, picture frames, which are arranged in a room as minimalist, fragile, delicate in dialogue with the historical avant-gardes. Through them, Rosell underscores the fragility, variability and multiplicity of all artistic creation and its message, which is always held on weak changing and continuous balance structures.

The theme of invisibility has gone all over science history and also art, -including photography and film- but it is not until these last centuries that attempted studies have emerged, with the help of technological progress: the material seen from inside, the mass' origin - the Higgs Boson-, the elementary particles, and ultimately answering the big question that still persists: the nature of vacuum. In the field of science, it seems that a way to alter the effect of light on a physical body has been found, so to achieve the effect of invisibility by lens, capable of projecting light waves partially inclined - as mirrors- dispersing them so the object is hidden to the human eye.

But this idea, watching the view from nowhere, is scientific and, at the same time, metaphysical, such as the notions of energy and field in contrast to the visibility of the substance. During the 18th century, there began a scientific approach that sought to encase the real world in a rational system of "truths", ordered and governed by absolute and immutable laws. On the contrary, in the field of art, a process that focused primarily on the man, gave a subjective and introspective perception and vision to an inner reality, dealing with

the cathartic and therapeutic value of the phantom, the unconscious drama of the human being.

This double vision emphasized the misleading separation between art and science; but the reality is that both have always been part of the same interlaced knowledge field and practice, with points of intersection in which philosophical, scientific and aesthetic discourses overlap with mechanical techniques, institutional requirements and socio-economic forces.

Of course optical studies -different speculations around the colour from its symbolic and philosophical aspects, to the scientific study of behaviour of light - and its physical-sensorial consequences, decisively influenced the perception.

History of art is, in fact, a history of the perception and works of art and their changes over time are a clear record of how the own vision has been historically moving.

The visible is that possible of being picked up by the sense of vision, which is the sense that defines us as species, which has outlined our way of seeing the world (Worldview). It is in relationship, therefore, with all that constitutes the real, physical world and all objects that produce, by reflection, a certain distribution of light in the eye: the physical presence of the object, its qualities and sensitive attributes such as colour, trace, texture, form, proportions, etc.

All those objects that we can't see, are covered within the dimension of the invisible: the intrinsic qualities, the symbolic value, everything that we can only guess, perceive or feel. Unlike the visual, which is associated with the day and the Sun, the invisible is related to night, with terror, with the unseen, with the maximum expression of the mystery. Therefore divine manifestations are also mirrored, only reflections of what, precisely, cannot be seen.

The invisible, therefore, refers to an essential and absolute, of what could not be seen, as opposed to the not visible: a collection of objects that for certain conditions - especially lack of light - cannot be seen.

In the 19th century, the photographic image obtained a status of reliable proof, principal tool of scientific knowledge, coinciding with the ideals of mechanical objectivity, of a speech dominated by positivism.

This scientific appraisal lived with another opposite and much more subjective one, that one from the very beginning, considered photography as "the art of fixing a shadow" in the words of Henry Fox Talbot ("Some Account of the Art of Photogenic Drawing", January 1839): the most transient thing - the shadow - emblem of what is ephemeral and momentary. It can be chained by our natural

magic spells and retained in the position that seems destined to occupy a single instant.

The shadow -the closest thing to dematerialization and invisibility for the man- was something logically opposite to the scientific discourse, since it was associated with magic, illusion, spiritist sessions (séance), to theatre and the phantasmagoria, finally to the trick and deception.

It seems that Talbot met personally Adelbert von Chamisso, the writer of, "The wonderful story of Peter Schlemihl" (Peter Schlemihls wundersame Geschichte), written in 1813 and clear antecedent of the famous science fiction novel, created by H.G. Wells, in 1897, "The Invisible Man". The character of Griffin - crazy and diabolic - who himself applied the formula that altered the refractory index of objects, achieving stopping of absorption and reflection of light and becoming, thus, invisible, had much impact in literature, art and film. What is this fate - mostly in early black and white films a play of lights and shadows? Slowly the world moves to another state: men and things move their corporeal presence by the unreality of flat and dark shadows.

The visibility of the invisible is an unsolvable issue. However art, from Romanticism, has been conceived as a space to make visible the invisible interior, opposite to the exteriority of the sensitive world.

This evolution of photography and cinema is also followed by the art world, since the post-impressionism, introduces a new model of representation and visual perception, in progressive order of mimetic codes and the referential, in contrast to 'realism' and positivism of the scientific culture.

From Wassily Kandinsky for which "the geometric line is an invisible entity", abstraction is the only way that can express invisibility, since it arises from an inner need, because "it is not in the world, but in a night dimension of subjectivity, where it finds its own being".

Art therefore no longer has to represent anything - the world, the subjective, neither life - it makes sensible the abstract content that is invisible life. With Marcel Duchamp, its readymade and "suicidal disappearance of art", we witness the extinction of art as a profession and the reduction of the artwork to a pure idea or intention.

The use of "Color Field Painting" at the school of New York - which was trying to transform the picture plane in to a field of intimate and enveloping perception - was a rupture of domestic limits of the

easel painting, reaffirmed by Cubism. The expansion of the picture plane abolished the dialectic of the window and the mirror on which, pictorial representation had built its space.

The suprematism work "White on White", painted in 1918 by Kasimir Malevich, without any reference to real world, represented a high point in the philosophical search for the spiritual: it is the nothingness that illuminates, in its vibration, nothingness.

This evolution continues with successive artistic movements from minimal to conceptual art. However the art –painting- occupies and deploys a place itself, a place that creates space. In "Meditation of the framework", by Ortega y Gasset, he claims that "the painted canvases are holes of ideal drilled into the silent reality of walls" and Martin Heidegger talked about the paragon, referring to the framework, as a contour and exchange zone between what unfolds outside and holds inside its boundaries. Jacques Derrida states that the framework is not a stranger to the work - to the ergon or work done - but "affects the operation inside and cooperates with it from the outside. It is not simply outside, or simply in".

In this artwork, Rosell Meseguer speaks about the "paradox of the frame", a framework that gives us access to the work of art, to the framed, which describes the insoluble relationship between interior and exterior, but, at the same time, is not neither inside nor outside. It is revealed at the same time as a "failure or lack of" and as an "opening" of the work, since what is first and foremost to discover is the semantic vacuum (the "something else" which is said).

Often invisible and empty are concepts that go together. Although Descartes already pointed out that the full or the empty are usually subjective terms, we usually understand vacuum as what surrounds the subject, what it is where there is nothing. Which turns out to be most of space.

The framework is also a threshold and as such tends to become itself an infinite space, as perspective in mirror boxes. The Mirror is the impossible synthesis since it continues to play with the changing environment of the world. For the same reason it has prompted innumerable speculations: the speculum attaches speculation to the mirror.

But it is also true that the catoptrica (science of mirrors) is an art of divination, an instrument of esoteric knowledge, a technique of the wonderful/marvelous (miroir (mirror) and merveille (marvelous), have the same root).

According to Foucault and "the body without space", it is thanks to the mirror that we learn that we have a body. This body has a

shape, a contour and a space. Although the image that we project onto the mirror is hosted for us in an inaccessible space, the mirror is the place where everything is, at the same time.

Rosell uses the mirror like reflection - with certain degree of tilt - of our body and its image, as well as everything that surrounds us; an illusion that manages to make it seem that it is precisely in the mirror, where "place is performed as a place, a type of splitting that throws the viewer at the middle of the room, to the absence, to its own body as an image, which itself has no place.

In addition, our perception is temporary and kinetic, so we can never access an object in its pure uniqueness. Our vision is always multiple, contiguous and superimposed to other objects, desires and vectors. Even the petrified exhibition space is able to escape from a world in which everything is in circulation.

Foucault uses the Jeremy Bentham Panopticon to explain the way in which human subjects became objects of observation, in the form of institutional control or scientific behaviour studies.

Our time of selfies, reality shows, drones, photography from satellites, Google Earth, closed-circuit surveillance cameras...- shows how all these devices focus on an increased visibility, including, of course, the everyday life of the people who often are not fully aware that they are being recorded. It is the ideology of the total visibility and transparency, considered as a social duty. Rosell reminds us that the subterfuge and prospects of power are like the scene of a crime or how to get rid of something, like the gesture that a magician uses to mislead us, like that juggling that diverts our attention from what he is really doing.

Current capitalism is determined by the forms of production that are immaterial and disembodied, since they do not produce physical objects, but non-physical objects, such as information and programs. The current surveillance, Big Data, is much more effective than the old Bentham Panopticon, who was satisfied with physical surveillance, subject to a perspective based on the perspective, where the dead angles were inevitable.

"We offer you a view of 360 degrees on your customers" is the slogan of Acxiom, the USA company of big data, sold as a capable system, not only for monitoring human behaviour, but also subjecting it to a psychopolitical control (Han Byung-Chul, Psychopolitik)

Rosell always accompanies her installations with documentary material, an archive that reinforces the concept and through which the artist, as an interpreter, builds a speech, a "fiction", an allegory carried out with texts and images "confiscated".

They provide a way of circulation and exchange, transit points between stories and the collection of other images, whose trail we continue. As in a Phantasmagoria projection, Rosell speaks of contemporary artistic practices, playing from the visible and invisible, on many occasions, from a clear social invisibility.

Covert by what it seems a rigorous objective research, actually, the fact of choosing, selecting, having an active role in the construction of the objective meaning, has just become a purely subjective task. They are materials out of context, with a certain vintage look, heirs of the comic book, science fiction, spirit photography, illusionism, science manuals, cosmos drawings, photographs of astronauts, films of robots, physics trading cards... collected with a playful and ironic look, creating personal and social worlds that mutually feed back from a collective imaginary, the result of an age -certain social conventions and cultural patterns Through them, she manages to create devices of significance that activate unexpected poetic and political yields.

Her file, using the method of "Atlas Mnemosyne", includes images, sentences, texts - press cuttings without intervening - that she has found and appropriated from various contexts, with a very particular combinatorial methodology: figurative or abstract reconstructions that overlap in different planes, which warns of the intention of rebuilding a new story.

It is not a chronological method, but something that is closer to a jigsaw puzzle, where the author systematically gathers, selects and associates, creating sets of relationships that give rise to the emergence of general structures. It is a game in which you never have a precise idea of the final result, since the viewer can change and break those combinations, creating other new and personal ones, because Rosell likes the freedom given to us, to make a distortion, modification, derivation or transformation.

As a passionate reader of literature and maker of lists, she allows herself to be impressed by the words, photographs, drawings and, as a detective, offers us tracks that -as often happens in all good endings of a black novel-, at first sight, can reveal itself as absurd or trivial. In fact, it finally forms the clues into a narrative in which the murderer has just been discovered. While ultimately they may appear insubstantial, the reality is that they reflect worlds dominated by invisible acts of violence, in which the state of surveillance and suspicion, the enigma, the secret, the fake of reality, false transparency and mechanisms of power concealment, reveal that the dust from the collapse and chaos has already blown over them.