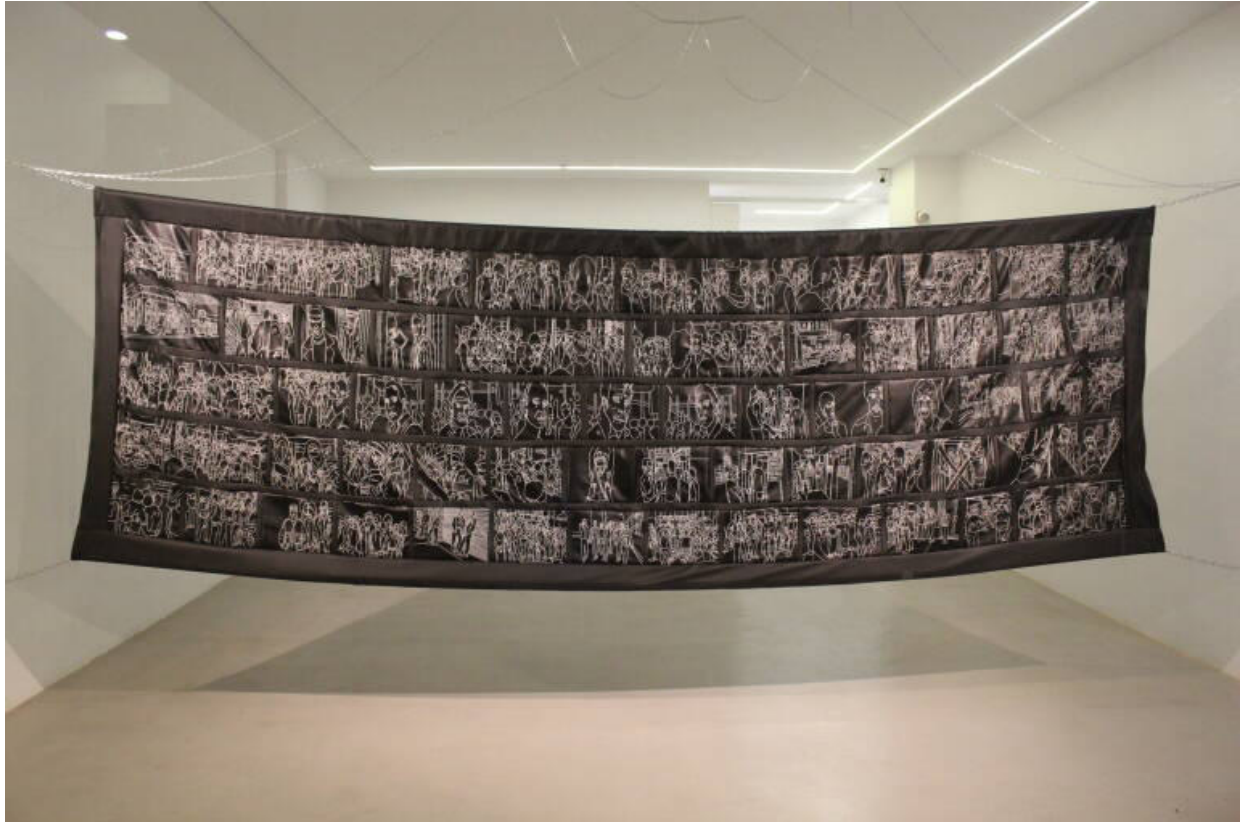


SOME NOTES ON CONTEMPORARY ART

Bartolomé Limón: and if they put streetlights on the river, we will turn them off**Carles Àngel Saurí**

09/18/2021 - VALENCIA. The needle penetrates the leather. The hand passes the pin and the thread, little by little in a white on black trace, the faces, bodies and sexual scenes in which the extras in the film participate are drawn. Sometimes a prick occurs and blood appears. The meat becomes violent and there is a little annoyance. “That seems nice to me, that violence, which is later repairing. There is something in sewing that has to do with violence: it is a needle that pierces a skin. A sharp object with which you prick yourself and bleed. It is something that can be seen in the work of artists such as Louise Bourgeois or Teresa Lanceta. Embroidering is a restorative act. **To embroider is to give a new life to a material that was going to be lost**”.

In 1979 William Friedkin shot *Cruising*, a film in which the homosexual scene, its codes and the practice of "cruising" are portrayed in a very sensitive way. The plot is

based on the search for a gay serial killer. The script attracted much criticism, from the homosexual community to homophobic campaigns. *Cruising* was a mainstream film, with a medium script but with excellent reading as "a document of the homosexual scene, its practices, codes and spaces", explains Bartolomé Limón.

Bartolomé is an artist and passionate about Friedkin and *Cruising* cinema . Seeing the film with him or listening to him comment on it, allows you to see the power of the feature film. Friedkin got part of the New York gay community to participate in the filming. The extras in the scenes and spaces were the scene, the usual ones. They were the reality of that fiction.

"I have seen the movie stopping each scene in which the extras appear. Those that appear in the foreground in some scenes then appear in the background in others "he comments. It is beautiful that someone watches a movie just by looking at the extras, he does. Every time he starts it again, he forgets the plot or that the protagonist is Al Pacino. For Bartolomé the important thing is the extras, those anonymous people who brought together the production.

"When you watch the movie stopping scene by scene, you start to discover very interesting things. It is not only a memorial to those people, who suddenly disappeared. It is also a tribute to the spaces that the narrative runs through ".

One day reading an interview with the director, Bartolomé, he found a phrase that reinforced his relationship with *Cruising* . "Ninety percent of those people must have died from AIDS." Here there was a before and after with the film. From this moment he began to embroider a leatherette tapestry with the scenes in which the extras appeared. The numbers Friedkin spoke of may not be exact, but the severity with which AIDS hit the homosexual community bodes well for the worst. For the artist, those anonymous figures became a symbol of silence and the memory of a time when the problems of the homosexual community were made invisible and silenced.

" *Elegy of cruising*, the tapestry, is a work I've spent a lot of time on. **Embroidering by hand has times that allow me to live with the image** . For me, the production of that piece, that memorial, is also the time dedicated to the memory of those people. It is time that I spent sewing the features of the face of an extra, to observe the bodies of these anonymous names, to reproduce their sexual scenes. It was time dedicated to making them present ".



Bartolomé's embroidery work began with the codes on the handkerchief: "I was making the tapestry for me because I had the need to tell this micro-story. In addition, *Crusing* was a movie in which the code of the handkerchief came out. I wanted to do something with *Cruising*, when I came across that phrase by Friedkin, I started doing something even though I didn't know if it was going to be exposed or how it was going to end".

In English they call it *handkerchief code*, *hanky code* or *flagging*, it was translated as "handkerchief code". A non-verbal means of communication with which to convey your sexual roles, your fetishes or if you are active or passive. A practice that spread in the early 70s, especially in local *leather* or BDSM culture. A handkerchief of a certain color hung from

your back pocket. The color was a code, gray for example, *bondage*, wearing it on the left meant you were active. The others read your role and with the minimum communication the framework in which the meeting was to be proposed was established.

Bartolomé likes these semiotic and almost invisible codes. "The other day I was in the English Court and I stared at the photo of a Levi's model who was wearing a red

scarf hanging down, coincidence? I do not know. But it is clear that I could do that reading and it allowed me to read the ad from another place ”.

He is interested in the handkerchief as a symbol and material, he has been embroidering on them for a long time, understanding them as support. **Poetically he understands that the fabric is skin on skin, a material in continuous friction with the body that wears it, that is attached to it; that touches it, constricts it and shelters it** . With the handkerchiefs, Bartolomé found his procedural basis, and thus, he began to embroider and draw sexual scenes in relation to the color of the handkerchief.

Codes, veiled languages, suggestion games, curtains and dark rooms. When Bartholomew exposed the tapestry, he did not hang it on a wall, he decided to break up the space of the room. Tensioned with chains, the memorial of the *Cruising* extras , hung in the middle of the space generating a game of insinuations in which you did not know what was behind. The arrangement of the tapestry generated an attraction towards that hidden part. Behind, the embroidery threads fell, generating a ghostly pattern.

“ **Art is a game of hiding** . I am interested in their reading codes that you have to understand them, that they are not chewed. Learn, you learn by investigating when they give you something suggestive to which you feel attracted ”says Bartolomé. Meanwhile, the artist explains how for him darkness is a space in which your fears and your desires merge and leave you at the mercy of your attraction to discover what beats in it. That is why he is interested in handkerchiefs, cruising or dark rooms, because you have to let yourself be carried away by the codes and rethink the conventions of a heteropatriarchal society that suffocates other ways of understanding reality.

"In the end, all my work speaks of the hidden . From the handkerchiefs that already spoke of a language that was there but that we do not see, or that rather has been made invisible or has become taboo. The handkerchief code is something that in very historical periods it was there, but it was alien to the rest of the people. It was a game in broad daylight and it went unnoticed ”.

Obviously concealment has been a method of survival in the face of a society that stigmatizes you day after day. **Practices such as cruising have a lot to do with the**



need to build spaces outside the conventions, in remote places and on the fringes that allow stigmatizing relationships. However, this has also created some poetics and codes of the veiled and of the insinuation. A poetics of the occult in which the stony reality of heteropatriarchal culture dissolves and disappears.

“It is a bit what Jose Esteban Muñoz raises in *Cruising Utopia*. In these types of places where suddenly there is a code that activates certain things and all the impositions to which society continues to be tied are overcome. **I like the idea of "cruising utopia" and the**

relationship established between these two concepts: cruising as a space for utopia. A place where freedoms are given that society has not accepted”.

Cruising and darkrooms are relational architectures of the occult. The extras in Friedkin's film were the mainstay of these social architectures. “Saunas, dark rooms or cruising sites before the advent of social networks generated a collective. Jack Fritscher talks about how, for example, when he watches *Cruising*, he is watching a documentary because he recognizes many of his friends, many of whom are gone. Fritscher talks about how there was a community and some ties and affections between people who loved and respected each other in these spaces” explains Bartolomé.

“Cruising, dark rooms or saunas, all these practices are space construction. That is why the investigations of people like Andrés Jaque, Miquel Mariné or Pol Esteve are also interesting. Architects who are thinking about the architectures of the Grinder, the dark room or the discos. Some spaces like the dark room that may be lost and that had a utopian component. Spaces, going back to Esteban Muñoz, who could be there and not.

Precisely, we are at a time when I believe that these codes must be made explicit, because many have passed, or were from another time, and this is our culture. If nobody tells the story of the scarves, if nobody talks about it, this will be lost because nobody uses them anymore. They may be used in very micro contexts, such as at a tissue party. But you know you are going to a theme party, you know what you are

going to. It is no longer like in the photos of Peter Hujar of some testimony in Cristopher Street, in the "Meat Market", that he wore a handkerchief as part of his identity. There are very nice documentation exercises like Hal Fischer's *Gay Semiotics*. I believe it must be documented and made visible because **if we let our heritage disappear, everything disappears**".

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VALENCIA TO FULL VIROLLA

These geographies of Valencia live within a painting: from Santa Catalina to the Casbah

Vicent molins



When we visit a place, we are not only visiting a physical space, but we are carrying a multitude of symbolic loads, of acquired knowledge. A subjective test that draws maps that only you can decrypt yourself. Three art experts create their topographies

09/18/2021 - VALÈNCIA. Hace unos días el ilustrador (y abogado) Luis Ruiz del Árbol ('fromthetree'), de visita, titulaba: **"El interior de la Horchatería Santa Catalina (València) parece sacada de un cuadro de Hammershoi..."**. No porque sus estancias estuvieran sumergidas en el interior de un vaso de horchata, sino porque la comparativa, como una asociación intuitiva, daba como resultado un mismo horizonte de silencio, de frialdad y ausencia. Como si el pintor danés se hubiera dado un volteo por el cogollo histórico de València para reflejar un vacío entre fartons.

Parecía un juego de intuiciones y reflejos, una prueba más de cómo, cuando visitamos un lugar, **no solo estamos visitando un espacio físico, sino que arrastramos multitud de cargas simbólicas**, de conocimientos adquiridos. Una geografía subjetiva que dibuja mapas que solo puede descryptar uno mismo.

Cuando comento esto mismo con la gestora cultural **Isabel Puig**, habitual de las trastiendas expositivas, repentinamente comienza a trazar sus propias líneas asociativas. Parece colarse por el zaguán de un agujero negro para saltar de una realidad próxima a las pinceladas de una obra. **Jorge López**, director de la galería Punto, ve intuitivamente la cercanía entre los interiores de uno de sus edificios favoritos y las imágenes de uno de sus artistas predilectos, formando en apariencia una realidad única. La educadora de museos **Anna Peris** reacciona asaltando una misma sala museística que en realidad está dividida entre este mundo y el mundo de lo simbólico.

La Casbah X Patio con nube (Georgia O'Keeffe)

Por esas cosas, cuando Isabel Puig recorre la calle Casbah en el Saler ("la pienso como un pequeño oasis que jamás podríamos ver construido en la actualidad") de la misma manera está recorriendo las obras de **Georgia O'Keeffe** alrededor de su rancho de Abiquiú, en Nuevo México. Sus visiones de las puertas. "En esta búsqueda ha venido a mi mente el rancho de O'Keeffe. Supuso para ella un espacio de libertad y misticismo, que fue clave para su carrera. Este año, he tenido la inmensa suerte de conocer más de cerca a esta gran artista, puesto que he desarrollado el contenido de la audioguía, de la gran retrospectiva que el Thyssen le dedicó a la artista antes de verano. El silencio de los muros, la plasticidad de los materiales y la luz, vinculan de una manera orgánica estas dos construcciones en mi mente". **La distancia entre la Casbah y Abiquiú es de cerca de 8.600 kilómetros, pero se difumina en su totalidad cuando forman parte de un mismo plano artístico.**

Espai Verd X *This is not my Paradise* (Victoria Iranzo)



Cuando Jorge López, el director de la Punto, ve a lo lejos **Espai Verd** como esa estructura aterrazada que escala sobre el vacío señalando lo desconocido, entonces consigue saltar sobre la obra de **Victoria Iranzo** *This is not my Paradise* logrando un paralelismo que solo es posible a partir de su propio acervo artístico. “Espai Verd está sostenido en estructuras sólidas, imponentes, entre lo artificial y lo natural, entre el cemento y la naturaleza, casi como si fuera una estructura vestida, un espacio que te permite encontrarte con la naturaleza, camuflar el hábitat, vegetar el gris cemento, por ello -explica López al otro lado- me recordó a la obra de Victoria Iranzo, que utiliza en sus obras representaciones visuales de escenarios imaginarios, cuyo exotismo apela a los mundos de ensueño, como lugares de encuentro entre lo público y lo íntimo. **Una imagen fragmentada como recorte de escenarios planificados y contruidos, como si miráramos a este edificio de Antonio Cortés desde un rincón**, entre las plantas observando los planos intercalados, superpuestos entre la vegetación. Como un diorama cargado de experiencias. Una obra y un edificio que se hacen visibles e invisibles por momentos, un hábitat o escenario donde resguardarse de un entorno hostil y encontrar confort; un espacio lúdico donde la pintura y el edificio se transforman en medio y refugio”.

Al fin, Antonio Cortés *meets* Victoria Iranzo. Sus 'obras' sostenidas sobre una misma pared.

Sala Ferreres, Centre del Carme X *El Museo*, 1973 (Equipo Crónica)



En ocasiones la asociación de ideas se conforma deslizándose del espacio conformado al espacio pictórico, sin solución de continuidad. Es lo que le pasa a Anna Peris, educadora museística, que cada vez que se planta en la Sala Ferreres del Centre del Carme -con sus columnas dóricas, sus arcos carpaneles y sus lucernarios al estilo del Prado- se ve escudriñando por dentro la obra *El museo*, 1973 de **Equipo Crónica**. “Es una obra de dos metros por dos metros -comenta Peris- donde el fondo toma un gran protagonismo por la arquitectura. Me traslada rápidamente a la Sala Ferreres en el Centre del Carmen de Cultura Contemporània, por su amplia sala

central y sus columnas que resuenan al Museo del Prado. **Me cautiva este enlace entre ambos lugares** porque me gusta pensar que ambos se distinguen por su compromiso y el carácter innovador en las propuestas artísticas”.

No sé sabe qué fuerzas neuronales provocan las conexiones, pero los episodios de inmersión suceden e invierten la lógica entre los lugares y las obras pictóricas. **Una obra, qué si no, es también un lugar.**

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