

EMOCIONAL, INNER SCENERIES

‘O pale Ophelia! beautiful as snow!
Yes child, you died, carried off by a river!
-It was the winds descending from the great mountains of Norway
That spoke to you in low voices of better freedom.’

Arthur Rimbaud: *Ophelia*

‘Like the breeze that the blood borders
over the darkened field of battle,
charged with perfumes and harmonies
in the silence of the wandering night,

symbol of pain and tenderness,
from the english Bard in the horrible drama,
the sweet Ophelia, lost to reason,
gathering flowers and passes, singing.’

Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer: *Rhyme VI*

Olga Simón does not belong to the kind of artists that pursue images of fast and easy understanding, but to the more reduced group that want to recreate an atmosphere, an environment, a situation, getting involved in the search and studying the results. *Polar Garden*, the exhibition that shows her work in ASTARTE Gallery, can be seen as a single story in which every image acts as a phrase or a word but also as a group of photographs that contains a tune of low voices, murmurings, -drastic and sensual- sifted confessions to use the language of images and photography. In both cases the viewer gets the impression of being in front of a landscape, this is an oniric landscape, where dreams mix up with reality: an inner scenario, with images that hold a dialogue, complement each other and question us, gaining prominence and importance the invisible and internal order [with its apparent chaos] of things.

It is a risky proposal: Olga Simón is aware of having made a personal experience the reflection theme of her work and also having chosen the language of art to do so, which requires a certain distance, cooling down the emotional side, measuring the scale, the rythm and the way every image is shown to the viewer. As a group they carry a misterious and secret flow, repeats an action that moves back and forward, it bursts and eases leaving a trace of images that are like trapped thoughts, feelings at the point of getting physical, change their state. The idea of mutation, transformation and change is constant, as it is the feeling of being in front of a reality with its own laws that affects the density of objects. Olga Simón allows them to be, as a privileged viewer, before detaining the instants that will be the chosen images, the stages of her story.

From the start, her dense, obscure photographies, show us liquid and solid features with a nighty inner air, resembling a microcosm with a surreal -and, at certain point, cinematographic- device, a backlight of a ring in the water. The immediate counterpoint is the group of bluish hued pictures, in which the water effects mix up with the appearance of strange aerial landscapes: a liquid tongue that moves forward over the surface, as in some of the bare sceneries of James Turrell. Inhabited landscapes.

Following the store -or starting it, due to the closeness of the entrance- we come across one of Olga Simón's beloved images, which she considers like an homage to the famous *Ophelia* by Millais. The photography captures the moment in which the ink in a piece of paper [a letter] is dissolved, *airs* and dyes the colour of the water, her scenery. Actually, it might be the image that best summarize the

whole for its lightness and neatness, its balance, or may be for the way it shows different states, even immateriality. 'I froze again the pieces in order to let everything reconstruct freely, in a different way', we are being warned, this is written in the wall. The avowal tone, with a poetic expression in the end, again points out the idea as a whole that the images reveal.

The artist points out that her devotion for Millais goes beyond the emotional and talks about colours, shades, related temperatures but what in *Ophelia* is seen as cloak, quietness, an offering image that requires observation, here in *Polar Garden* is an outbreak, activity, movement, previous state, mutation. The artist's work around temporal changes is assumed in the title as a battle between opposites [life in the garden and the stillness of cold] although her images invite us to discover the inner life and underwater sceneries. The conscience of being *trapped* in the apparent contradiction of the two opposites [the cave and the light, the cold and the warmth, the pain and the passion, the solid and liquid] is visible in each one of the images and Olga Simón insists on taking the rythm of her story towards an end but she also wants us to notice the limits, the stages and other possible routes. In fact, several photographies have a feeling of summary, like the scripts of a brief film story, carried with her bare hands, with no big technical resources.

After several isolated works, there are two that attract powerfully our attention while they fight between being or working as a dyptich, as they are placed very close together and represent almost opposite values [density and specificity against lightness and loss], in a frequent dialogue in the work of Olga Simón, we came up with a new

emotional landscape, achieved by doing without additional details and simple photographic resources.

The quiet appearance, the rest that this image captures has its counterpoint in a vigorous wall full of avowals and fragments, in which the chaos and diversity of scale and motifs are combined with the tidiness of its arrangement assessing the blank spaces. As closure, again the discussion between the landscape vocation of the images and the admissional detail that occasionally shows.

At the end of our route, the initial warning makes sense [‘let everything reconstruct freely, in a different way’] and that knowing wink to Millais’s but also Rimbaud’s and Bécquer’s Ophelia. No artful devices nor density, they are turned into ice blocks, encapsulated images, the emotions build the *polar garden*, a *jigsaw* that we could reinvent at any time. Like in an infinite story: a memory is recalled in the images, turning into a misterious, secret, inner scenery.

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