

NATALIA ESCUDERO. FORMULATING THE IDEA OF EMPTINESS

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In 2014 Natalia Escudero started to formulate the idea of emptiness which still centers her work nowadays. The idea was born in a dwelling, unoccupied after her grandparents' death, which she turned into her workspace. The period of estrangement and adaptation was followed by a time of observation and recognition of the traces that the course of time had left on the house: cracks, wet spots, torn fabric, forgotten plugs and cables, drawn blinds, windows with no curtains, curtains that cover nothing, lost things and prints of removed paintings from the walls. Georges Perec dedicated a chapter of his book "Species of spaces" to the inside of the apartment. It is important what happens on the walls. "I put a picture up on a wall. Then I forget there is a wall. I no longer know what there is behind this wall, I no longer know there is a wall, I no longer know this wall is a wall, I no longer know what a wall is. I no longer know that in my apartment there are walls, and that if there weren't any walls, there would be no apartment. The wall is no longer what delimits and defines the place where I live, that which separates it from the other places where other people live, it is nothing more than a support for the picture." In the meticulous reflection Perec does about the space we live in, Jesús Camarero notices a reflection about emptiness, since its formulation, he points, is the same thing as denouncing the accumulation or proliferation of objects. "We can tell little from the side we contemplate reality from: as soon as it is full, it empties dreadfully." So, he points, if the dynamics of emptiness suppose a fear that demands the presence of something, the dynamics of plenitude suffer from congestion and struggle to get rid of something. In both the dynamics of emptiness and the dynamics of plenitude the components are the same and the answer is strictly personal. Perec did not doubt. "There are pictures because there are walls. We have to be able to forget there are walls, and have found no better way to do that than pictures. Pictures efface walls. But walls kill pictures."

Space and time

There are no pictures in the grandparents' unoccupied house. Just walls. Emptiness. An emptiness that demands the presence of something; it happens, though, that it is only possible to summon the loss up by citing the idea of emptiness, so that the fear that goes together with it would be surpassed. Among things that are forgotten for being useless, Natalia Escudero rescues mourning envelopes that she encapsulates in glass. In addition, numerous photographs of the insides of the dwelling follow each other in a video projection at a slow pace, like still lifes, according to the time of observation and the materiality of space. Space and time are the two coordinates on which all the possible explanation of reality is located. Like in Perec, for whom the world was a set of multiple things that arise without an apparent order, although sometimes they can get organized. A procedure that Natalia Escudero realizes in

her installations, whose creative process she explained: "... I thought of disposing some objects together with others. Normally I stock them, put them in boxes and forget about them. I don't look for them, I find them... and keep an isolated memory of every of them. They are ordinary objects, imprints, fragments, little spaces...Placing them on the same surface, the table, I find out the relations that arise between them".

A procedure that has much to do with Perec's space-time organization, that, as Camarero analyzed, supposes a configuration of the matter dispersed in nuclear groups, in multiple parts, between which different relationships get established. Natalia Escudero shares with Georges Perec the attempt to collect the scattered fragments of a whole that only exists as a fluctuating idea.

Experience of the intangibles

Natalia Escudero entitled "White" her exhibition at the gallery "A del Arte" (2018), where she gathered scattered fragments of the "totality" of her project. The conditions of the exhibition space inspired her to cover one of the walls of the gallery with curtains, behind which she hid some of the photographs from the 2015 "Wall Collections" series. On the opposite wall she placed a large shelf on top of which she disposed a sequence of countless pieces of paper, the result of cutting across books and magazines. It is, she explained, "an abstraction, a reduction that allows us to see and look in a different way; a translation from written to visual language". In a corner she placed a desk occupied by objects she had found, resting, together with a double video projection that, like an echo, repeated the title of the exhibition: White. According to Nerea Ubieto, author of the text that accompanied the exhibition, Natalia Escudero situated white at the center of her discourse: white is white, however, Ubieto considered her proposition had little to do with the colour's immaculate qualities, it evoked the veneer that hides other layers beneath it: the walls of the grandparents' house, like a canvas primed by the past. The light that physically penetrated into the dwelling during all that time left its trace on the bare walls and floors. Lastly, a white book with numbers, corresponding with the CMYK code, designated the different shades of white light. Between the pages there were a few photos of the inside of the desolated house.

Everything changes, and still, everything remains the same. Natalia Escudero is interested in an evolutionary transformation of a process that helps her to submit to the initial epoch of memory, the start of so many roads, as José Jiménez wrote referring to *The Metamorphoses* of Ovid. The space of the house at Lapuyade Street in Zaragoza, where her grandparents lived, taught her to be attentive, to look in another way, to see. Everything starts, she says, when she finds something and looks for its history. In 2016 she proposed new tales for the "Emergency excavation" that lifted part of the floor in a hall in Kassel, where she studied. In 2017 the project "aquy.org" activated the memory of the stones in Genova, and the performance "Vanishing office" allowed to see and touch the books of the Regional Council of Kassel, that were to be digitalized and detached from the library. With the white, Natalia

Escudero explores the experience of the intangible.

http://www.elperiodicodearagon.com/noticias/escenarios/natalia-escudero-formular-idea-vacio_1280433.html