

ON EMPTINESS

Words and silences as raw material

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“*Blanco*” (“White”). Installation by Natalia Escudero

A del Arte Gallery. C/ Fita, 19. (19 Fita Street, Zaragoza, Spain) From 1 to 24 March, 2017.

Among the different ways in which painting survives, there is a wide variety of evasive strategies. Some may invoke painting as a spectrum; others may codify it. The latter has been put into practice, for instance, by Ignasi Aballí, with his "*cartas de colores*" (“colour charts”), in which presence is replaced by description. Natalia Escudero (Zaragoza, 1991) —who was trained as a painter— also introduces colour indications through text, using computer code as a vector to represent complex colours, the so-called CMYK code. The hypothetical absolute white is easy to write (0, 0, 0, 0), but it is impossible to find in reality. The chimera of a pure white is one of the major aims of this artist's work at A del Arte. This is part of an exhibition fostered by the CALL project, a model project created by the gallery and devoted to emerging artists.

White can be understood as the background of a screen or the support of a painting. It is never pristine, but an erased surface to be rewritten. One of the key points behind Duchamp's art is the mistrust towards taking action or adding new layers of meaning that could later disappoint. Recalling Vila-Matas, it is a generalized Bartleby disorder, one that should not turn into inaction, but into a never-ending work in the verge of language. In the case of Natalia Escudero, this territory is embodied in her grandparents' abandoned house, where emptiness and absence are only apparent and traces of the past still remain: impressions of removed pictures, reliquaries, and photo frames filled with secrets. As Nerea Ubieto says in the leaflet: "this is how the walls of the artist's old family house are understood, as a canvas primed by the past."

The installation starts with a set of curtains covering the walls. It is necessary to give in to curiosity and look behind them. We will discover the remains of what was formerly on display. In front of the curtains, we will find the transformation of a number of books and magazines, unified into an object using a paper guillotine, a process that the artist describes as painful. "The cross section of the printed paper simultaneously covers and reveals the content", she explains. "It is an abstraction, a reduction that allows us to see and look in a different way; a translation from written to visual language." It is an operation both complementary and opposite to the codification operation mentioned before. This is so because, with its lightness, the work of Natalia Escudero shows us life and art as a cycle.