

ARTE

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10

FOLLOWING THE PATH OF GROUPS IN CUBAN ART
Iván Capote · Reynerio Tamayo · Ernesto Rancaño · Leandro Soto
Pedro de Oraá - Cuban Visual Arts Award 2015

Voyages of the Secret Noise

HÉCTOR ANTÓN

The mind is a muscle

– Yvonne Rainer

In one of the pages where the Apostle of the Cuban nation is humanized, Jorge Mañach distinguishes in José Martí a *feeler* instead of a *thinker*. For the vehement essayist, the essence of Martí's legacy concentrates in filtering the experience of life until transmuting it into a useful ingredient for useless constructs, a romantic tentative sheltering between what is fortuitous and what is concrete on what is real and imaginary.

Contemporary artists of any sex or region that in their process of strategic freezing lose interest because of feeling the words and the things before thinking on them are not scarce. In the worst case, it happens that the lack of ideas does not either implies a fluidity of sensations that might grant credibility to their fantasies.

Against tropical messianism, Glenda León and Diana Fonseca reject religious transgressions (Belkis Ayón) or public defiance with a media impact (Tania Bruguera). "That's not for play!" They stray off towards a lyrical implosion requiring some imagination. Opacity seeks and achieves to displace folklore and pamphlet. As if the infra-level of Duchamp would like to neutralize the Beuys revolution, abolished by the scatological frivolity of its bastard children. The work by Diana and Glenda is not affirmative, denying the domestic clichés of art made by women who were too much women.

The "artifact as pretext" oscillating between what is palpable and what is intangible constitutes the axis of gestural subversion in *La razón de lo irreal* (The Reason of the Unreal, Villa Manuela, November-December 2015). Just as young curator Claudia Taboada Churchman suggests in her notes on the catalogue, the "rarity of what is known" is the triggering of a two-person exhibition where the spectator—informed or casual—feels a fusion of compatible imaginaries.

So, unity doesn't make strength, but a dialogue ruled by a subtle complicity. All to reinstate a counterpoint between nature and craftsmanship, aura and void, moderation and comfort, what is trivial and what is virtual which transit from what is minimum to *minimalism* without a mood of identification or estrangement. A valuable lesson for alliances with a fleeting commitment.

An exercise on key orientation in the poetics of Glenda León (Havana, 1976) is her short essay *El devenir ausente de Ana Mendieta* (Ana Mendieta's Absent Development). In it the art historian detects "marks that slowly develop into nothing" as "different ways of abandoning herself". In fact, Glenda conceives the sensation without physically or emotionally getting involved in manipulating reshuffling. Turned into land, air or water, León intends, at times, to reconfigure Mendieta from an impersonality which would facilitate her to dissolve in the space: the metamorphosis of an invisible alibi or ecological simulation.

It is an anti-spectacular action denoting a reticence with the predominance of the text or the image, the sophism or the spelling, a feasible estimate to the challenge of transiting on a tightrope that Yoko Ono and José Luis Brea might hold.

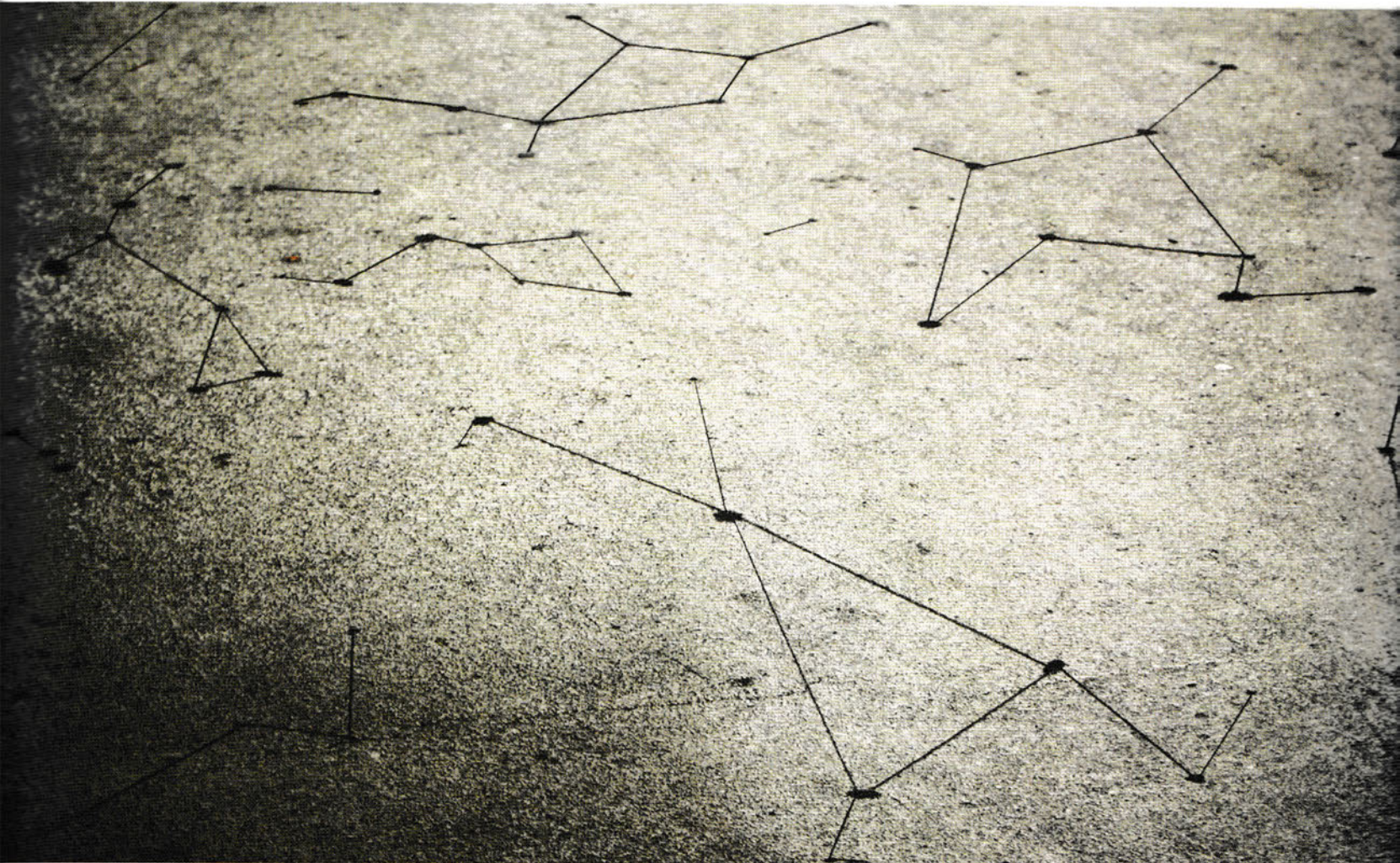
Sinning always by defect and never by excess is a latent obsession in Glenda that, for the approval of a curatorial project headed to synthesize, is also manifest in Diana.

The illusion to transform the *readymade* in extensive miniaturization is perceived in *El Libro de la Fe* (The Book of Faith, 2015). On a pedestal rests an archetypical book made with the pulp of sacred compendiums. A mixture of proximity and distance in what has to do with beliefs, dogmas or spiritual refuge is again evident.

Together with the "constructed sensation", Glenda generates a disconcert revealing her phobia to what is obvious and what is cryptic. Although her pieces can be read up to a certain point, distinguishing a gleam in what she *thinks* or *feels* in the loneliness of her conscience (whether critical or evanescent) would represent a misunderstanding.

A cold operation reticent to the simulacrum of merging art with life is *Campo de juego* (Sports Field, 2015). Here Glenda painted (or commissioned, what does it matter?) a football field replacing the habitual canvas for a thick mattress hanging on the wall: a useless "painting" to decorate the "empty space" of a refined collector.

In this way, a non-feminine topic as the sport of the multitudes allowed Glenda to transfigure the *new* Roman coliseum into a soft and untouchable structure, almost a dysfunctional pet to reduce at *absurdum vitae* those who rave with heads, torsos and legs and never think on the alien feeling of the fans.



Against tropical messianism, Glenda León and Diana Fonseca reject religious transgressions or public defiance with a media impact. They stray off towards a lyrical implosion requiring some imagination. Opacity seeks and achieves to displace folklore and pamphlet.

GLENDALÉÓN - *Estrellas Masticadas*. 2015 / Creyon on photography / Photo: Alain Cabrera

DIANA FONSECA - *El Capital*. 2015 / Removing "o" letters from the three volumes of *Das Kapital* and only a number 1 / Photos: Rigoberto Otaño & the artist

Courtesy the artist & Villa Manuela Gallery

DIANA FONSECA
El peso de la inconsistencia. 2015
Bird feather on colonial table

Piedra preciosa. 2015
Common stone with cuts of a classic diamond

Photos: Rigoberto Otaño
Courtesy the artist & Villa Manuela Gallery

GLENDALÉON
Cada respiro (Tierra). 2015
Video still (Single-channel Video)
Courtesy the artist

Diana Fonseca still preserves a nuance of her personality unusual in the artistic world: the innocent projection. In the context of the so-called Generation 00, she is a sort of *rara avis*. Yes, Diana is shy, but she defends herself. She even flaps her wings among the wild animals that reject the fertile truce of creative silence.



Campo de juego insinuates that debt many visual artists in the island have to an artist given to similar *boutades* as those of the “universal Mexican” Gabriel Orozco. In another allegoric level, the piece leads to what is tactile and the erotic double meaning emanating from an accessory reserved for rest and pleasure. Ludic tautology with multi-sex accent.

“Once the representation begins, its closure is precisely unthinkable” (Jacques Derrida). Diana Fonseca (Havana, 1978) still preserves a nuance of her personality unusual in the artistic world: the innocent projection. Graduated from the High Institute of Arts in 2005, she has not developed a work and career suddenly, overnight, as a product of flirting (within or without) the Art Institution.

In the context of the so-called Generation 00 (a term coined by aesthete Lupe Álvarez to associate or label emerging proposals), Fonseca is a sort of *rara avis*. Yes, Diana is shy, but she defends herself. She even flaps her wings among the wild animals that reject the fertile truce of creative silence.

The restlessness to synthesize what is intimate and what is social reaches its best definition in a softly questioning video. In *Pasatiempos* (Hobbies, 2004), Diana stitches houses, cars, clouds, ships and planes on the palm of her hands. The simple complexity of reproducing a childish prank contains the Way of the Cross of the subject arrested and anxious to surpass limits. Dwelling. Flight. Drift. The dream of the child announces the nightmare of the adult, who will yearn (and, perhaps, will not reach) to found a home,

enjoy small privileges and know the world. Those small drawings appear as icons of third-world yearning. *Pasatiempos* outlines a logic of meaning (accumulative?) portraying the visible-invisible insomnia of societies closed to the comfort of the nomad as a possible desire for individual fulfillment.

La razón de lo irreal marked her return to the elite circuit of Cuban art with sufficient spirit to present a slap on the back to disappointment. *El peso de la inconsistencia* (The Weight of Inconsistency, 2015) results a sublime paradox of *that* surrealism assisted by peripheral glamour. On a marble colonial table, the feather of a bird lonely rests. But nobody knows what its origin is and, much less, the fate of a corporal fragment ready for interpretation.

It is not a replica of the goose feather with which Martí wrote his *Diario de Cabo Haitiano a Dos Ríos* (Diary from Haitian Cape to Dos Ríos). The ink which appended: “I know how to disappear” would lack. It is not an object found under the torpor of daily animality. We also ignore if the wear and tear of the dented marble is natural or artificial. The rest is an enigma.

El peso de la inconsistencia seems to erase the boundaries between a supposed romance of the republican past and the savage mixture of the present, although provocation-questioning displays an answer to counteract uncertainty. Everything remains in the fold of its content or in the beauty of its indifference. Pure Duchamp.



Something similar is experienced by one who opts to contemplate a small mound of “o” letters (represented by a surviving number 1), extracted from the three volumes of Karl Marx’s *Das Kapital*. Between the first deceit of the eye and the last verbal trap, Diana Fonseca’s ironical wink is discerned, concentrated on a will to evade the discourses of gender, a handy salvation before masculine domination.

This is reaffirmed by the absence of her maternal experience in the source of the visual framework. The reason for being a mother seems to dilute in the unreality of her fictions, an attitude allowing her to refuse to illustrate-assemble the character of the amorous or betrayed heroine. Perhaps Diana prefers her rhetorical gleams to arrive through paths ready to prevent her free access to mental slavery, assumed from a foreseen power relationship.

The reverse of passion is her fighting weapon to successfully face a ruse (not precisely of the innocents),¹ disqualified by the critic around pink and trivially aestheticized feminism in Cuban visual arts: the discourse of “dressmaking”.

The horrors of how much is lacking tends to be heavier than the levity of how much is exceeded. We would have to meditate on what has happened behind the scenes of these unfinished fables, to charge without pity against the seductive breath of *their* hermeticism. A probable hypothesis of a suspicion: what Diana and Glenda hide should be more convincing than what is revealed through their concealment tactics.

The face or the mask of coldness or warmth emanating from bodies and souls is a mystery gravitating around the adventure of contemporary art. *La razón de lo irreal* proposes to go beyond the threshold of this labyrinth, ideal to leave misplacement and find renewed confusions.

To comment on the unknown implies the risk of falling into the claws of erroneous certainties and legitimate misplacements. “Words, words, words”—a deceased infant would mutter returning from the imagined future fed up with unpleasantness.

If now no one (or almost no one) squanders time in thinking (or rethinking) on art, at least there is the hope of attempting to feel it alone with the illusory movement of a plant, the placidity of a gesture or the shaking of philosophical scaffolds. Down these paths diverging in the present dynamics, the work of Glenda León and Diana Fonseca wants to continue breathing between immaterial, political and commercial fundamentalisms. ◀

1. The author makes a reference in his pun to the exhibition *El ardid de los inocentes* (The Ruse of the Innocents), which was held in Factoría Habana, and included the work of Celia y Yuniór, Grethell Rasúa, Nestor Siré, Luis Gárciga, Rigardo Miguel Hernández, Marianela Orozco and Renier Quer. (Editor’s Note)

TRAVESÍAS DEL RUIDO SECRETO

Héctor Antón

En una de las páginas donde humaniza al Apóstol de la nación cubana, Jorge Mañach distingue en José Martí a un *sentidor* por encima de un *pensador*. Para el vehemente ensayista, la esencia del legado martiano se concentra en filtrar la experiencia de vida hasta transmutarla en ingrediente útil para constructos inútiles, tentativa romántica de anidar entre lo aleatorio y lo concreto de lo real e imaginario.

No escasean los artistas contemporáneos de cualquier sexo o región que en su proceso de congelación estratégica pierden el interés por sentir las palabras y las cosas antes que pensarlas. En el peor de los casos, sucede que la carencia de ideas tampoco implica una fluidez de sensaciones que le pudieran otorgar credibilidad a sus fantasías.

Contra el mesianismo tropical, Glenda León y Diana Fonseca rechazan transgresiones religiosas (Belkis Ayón) o desacatos públicos de incidencia mediática (Tania Bruguera). “¡Con eso no se juega!”. Ellas se desvían hacia una implosión lírica que requiera un poco de imaginación. La opacidad busca y consigue desplazar al folclor y el panfleto. Como si el infra-leve duchampiano quisiera neutralizar a la revolución beuysiana, abolida por la frivolidad escatológica de sus hijos bastardos. La obra de Diana y Glenda no es afirmativa, negando los clichés domésticos del arte hecho por mujeres demasiado mujeres.

El “artefacto como pretexto” oscilando entre lo palpable y lo intangible constituye el eje de subversión gestual en *La razón de lo irreal* (Villa Manuela, noviembre-diciembre 2015). Tal como sugiere la joven curadora Claudia Taboada Churchman en sus notas al catálogo, la “rareza de lo conocido” es el detonante de una exhibición bipersonal donde el espectador -avisado o casual- siente una fusión de imaginarios compatibles.

Así, en la unión no está la fuerza, sino un diálogo regido por una sutil complicidad. Todo para restituir un contrapunto entre naturaleza y artificio, aura y vacío, parquedad y desahogo, lo banal y lo virtual que transita de lo mínimo a lo *minimal* sin ánimo de identificación o extrañamiento. Una lección valiosa para alianzas de compromiso fugaz.

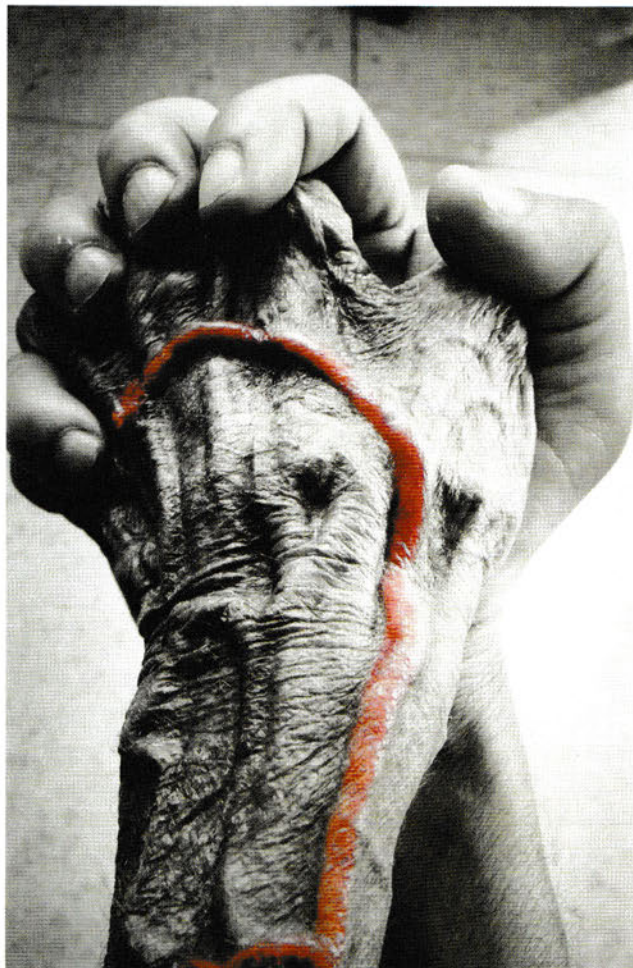
(...) El rostro o la máscara de la frialdad o calidez que emana de cuerpos y almas es un misterio gravitando en torno a la aventura del arte contemporáneo. *La razón de lo irreal* convoca a traspasar el umbral de este laberinto, ideal para salir del extravío y hallar renovadas confusiones.

Glosar lo desconocido implica el riesgo de caer en las garras de certezas erróneas y legítimos extravíos. “Palabras, palabras, palabras” -mascullaría un infante difunto regresando del futuro imaginado harto de sinsabores.

Si ya nadie (o casi nadie) derrocha su tiempo en pensar (o repensar) el arte, queda al menos la esperanza de intentar sentirlo a solas con el movimiento ilusorio de una planta, la placidez de un ademán o el temblor de los andamios filosóficos. Por estos senderos que se bifurcan en la dinámica actual, el quehacer visual de Glenda León y Diana Fonseca desea continuar respirando entre fundamentalismos inmateriales, políticos y comerciales. ◀

ERNESTO RANCAÑO: “FUERA DE CUBA EL MUNDO ES DIFERENTE”

Lilian Mariana Boti Llanes



A.D.N. 2015 / Caja de luz / 170 x 130 cm / Cortesía del artista

En el CEART (Centro de Arte Tomás y Valiente), perteneciente al Ayuntamiento de Fuenlabrada en Madrid, España, del 5 de noviembre de 2015 al 17 de enero de 2016, Ernesto Rancaño Vieites exhibe parte de su más reciente creación en la muestra titulada *La carta que nunca te escribí*. Las obras allí exhibidas fueron realizadas expresamente para esta exposición y según el artista también se fueron enriqueciendo y modificando en el diálogo con el artista español Chema Madoz, cuya muestra coincide con la de Rancaño en el mismo espacio. *La carta que nunca te escribí* comprende fundamentalmente instalaciones, fotografías y objetos intervenidos. De ella hablamos con particular emoción de una obra, la que dedicó al fallecido artista y profesor cubano Vicente Rodríguez Bonachea. Durante muchos años fueron amigos muy cercanos e incluso colaboraron en el 2005 en la expo *ArtCuba* en la sede de las Naciones Unidas en Ginebra en ocasión de la celebración del Día de la Cultura Cubana. Al morir, la viuda de Bonachea le entregó sus materiales para que Rancaño los conservara. Y allí están, irreconocibles, pero eternos, en el reloj de arena.