

Ana Bidart

Sala de Nado

Possible Notes on Ana Bidart's Work

By Martín Craciun

I
Art is a way of thinking and engaging in dialog, an unusual way of producing knowledge for those who view it from a distance.

Ana Bidart (Montevideo, 1985) presents *Sala de Nado* (Swimming Hall) like an invitation to viewers to submerge themselves in quite a particular world. It is the product of investigation developed by the artist regarding time, by way of the body and the stuff of everyday life; it is a corporal exercise, where the results are sufficiently blurred, soft and diffuse to enable us to see and to feel through them. It may be that these works function like *speaking objects* that contribute to generating new experiences and new knowledge in an effective manner.

What kind of information can we obtain from Ana's work? She constructs a space that allows our thoughts to be creative; there is a blue surface delineated by the movement of bags of plaster, where movement leaves tracks and acts as a living memory of what is taking place; a group of paintings and small houses of a sort round out the installation.

Ana takes her time when processing the experiments she carries out. She tries to be aware of every movement she makes. She constructs a context of controlled work, and makes indetermination her field of experimentation. She is successful in directing our gaze and she tries out different strategies that leave enough space for our imaginations to enter into play as freely as possible.

This way, a new reality is born. It is not a traditional representation of a tangible reality, but rather a story, an attaining of images that are granted meaning by the person viewing them. Her paintings emit calm and simplicity—sensations—. Our subjectivity makes its presence known, proposing that we free ourselves to move through an intertextual space where subject and object move together. We are faced with a space where the elements in it are evidently linked to one another. We can discover new lines that connect them and open up new questions. If we manage to allow ourselves to enter into all the images, ideas and memories that present themselves to us, we will be susceptible to an area of associative

and adjacent experiences. We may well find ourselves in a rhetorical moment, where reflection, comprehension and assigning meaning are all transformed into a story of our own. It is a new possible story, new knowledge or a tentative answer to the original question.

II
We can understand *art thinking*¹ as a method for organizing knowledge that enables people to connect ideas. This approach facilitates a deeper comprehension of the conditions that lead to creating works of art, thereby preparing viewers' capacity to critically engage with art, instead of passively accepting it. It foments dialog between artist and public, situating viewers as collaborators in an exploration of meaning.

The works in *Sala de Nado* have the ability to permeate classical art taxonomies and categories so that imaginative spirit takes precedence. Priority is given not to technical expertise, but to a cognitive exercise capable of enriching us by encouraging connections between apparently unrelated concepts. In her works, Ana tries to avoid recognizable and unrecognizable gestures at the same time; she aims to generate a diffuse, intermediate situation. Some graphic marks seem to refer to images of space and the Milky Way, or to forms that we might recognize as representations of single-celled microorganisms, very distant objects that coexist in a play on scale. It is what we might define as some sort of universe, where several universes are there floating together. A kind of asemic writing is present in the form of plaster bas-relief pieces contained in box-houses arranged on the wall. They are engraved, inscriptions in something like rubble, and we do not know if they pertain to the past, or to some future. This ambiguity leads to a concrete type of thought that would be quite difficult for us to reach in any other way.

III
Art and play are interconnected concepts that reflect human experience through creativity and expression. Play is an activity characterized by its process, where the enjoyment comes from participating in the activity itself, not from producing a tangible result. In art—understood to be a conscious activity resulting from creativity, focused on the creation of images or as representations that evoke pleasure or provoke

thought—play can take on a central role, as is the case in Ana Bidart's work. She establishes procedures and ways of making what we could refer to as conditions of play. The fact is that any play needs at least some parameters.

Ana leaves the idea of dichotomy behind, in favor of a process of making that flows more easily between concepts like structure and play, rules and freedom or discipline and spontaneity, recognizing the possibility of going in and out, leaving and returning, tightening and loosening: it is her own method of investigation, one that has allowed her to explore in a sensitive manner and to produce with great dedication and enthusiasm. Ana has generated an environment to be experienced, and in the best of cases, played in. Stains, graphic marks and drawings that appear to be spontaneous or done without thinking are minimal gestures with which she attempts to underline everyday situations that generally go unnoticed, such as a footprint, a scratch, a current of air, the movement of the sun or the rotation of the earth.

Ana has concentrated on working in multiple scales within one same piece, and with a variety of strokes that require continual calibration on the part of our senses. In drawing, we might say that her gestures have a primordial, even elemental condition. She refers to them as "the drawings a person makes on a steamy pane of glass, or a dirty windshield or on a notepad while talking on the phone". There is something playful and at the same time fortuitous to them; they are loose, automatic drawings that seek to inspire multiple connections. The entire installation can be understood as a playing board, as a ground for playing a game whose rules we have to invent. Perhaps it will be one where the winners are those who manage to grasp the experience.

Epilog

Ana Bidart has steadily, unhurriedly composed a new order from which to view her work; an environment where our creativity can flourish and where free association of ideas is encouraged, in order to understand that art was able—without our realizing it—to transform us, at least for an instant.

1 Luis Camnitzer: «Art thinking» En <https://thearteducatorstalk.net/en/?interview=luis-camnitzer-art-thinking-2>



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